



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION for
OLMSTED
PARKS

Board of Trustees

Philip Schultz, Chair and Treasurer
Fox Point, WI

Douglas Luetjen, Vice-Chair
Seattle, WA

Lane Addonizio, Secretary
New York, NY

Mark Buscaino
Washington, DC

Stephanie Crockatt
Buffalo, NY

Patrice Kish
Boston, MA

Lucy Lawliss
Bradenton, FL

Arleyn Levee
Watertown, MA

Steven Livengood
Washington, DC

Paul Daniel Marriott
Washington, DC

Alida Silverman
Atlanta, GA

Spencer Tunnell
Atlanta, GA

Barbara Yaeger
Madison, CT

Anne "Dede" Neal Petri
President and CEO

Aga Simmons
Administrator

December 24, 2020

Brookline Preservation Commission
Attention: Valerie Birmingham & Tina McCarthy
Brookline Town Hall
333 Washington Street
Brookline, MA 02445
Via email: vbirmingham@brooklinema.gov;
tmccarthy@brooklinema.gov

**Re: Reject the Request to demolish the homes of
John Charles Olmsted (Cliffside, 222 Warren Street)
and Henry Hobson Richardson (25 Cottage Street)**

Dear Preservation Commission:

Some rare neighborhoods hold a unique place in our history because they were home to an extraordinary confluence of talented individuals. That is surely the case in the Green Hill neighborhood of Brookline, MA, listed on the National Historic Register, where Frederick Law Olmsted (FLO), John Charles Olmsted (JCO) and Henry Hobson Richardson worked within yards of one another, shaping 19th and early 20th century architecture and landscape design in ways that continue to reverberate today.

Given this singular history, the National Association for Olmsted Parks urges the Commission to reject requests to demolish the homes where JCO and Richardson lived and worked.

This Green Hill part of Brookline could, accurately, be described as "Mr. Olmsted's Neighborhood" filled with family and friends closely associated with landscape architect FLO, who resided at Fairsted (99 Warren Street). It was also home to Isabella Stewart Gardner and Charles Sprague Sargent, among other notable Bostonians, whose taste and teachings influenced cultural trends in architecture, landscape and horticultural design in America.

Advisory Council

Eleanor Ames
Portland, ME

Kathleen Conner
Seattle, WA

Julie Crockford
Boston, MA

Eliza Davidson
Seattle, WA

Rolf Diamant
Woodstock, VT

Robert Doyle
Oakland, CA

Erin Gallentine
Brookline, MA

Betsy Shure Gross
Davis, CA

Esley Hamilton
St. Louis, MO

Donald Harris
Seattle, WA

Faye Harwell
Alexandria, VA

Thomas Herrera-Mishler
San Diego, CA

John Karel
Ste. Genevieve, MO

Anne Knight
Seattle, WA

Francis Kowsky
Buffalo, NY

Phil Loughlin
Cambridge, MA

Rosemarie Murane
Denver, CO

Christine Edstrom O'Hara
San Luis Obispo, CA

Ed Orser
Baltimore, MD

Elizabeth Barlow Rogers
New York, NY

Ann Satterthwaite
Washington, DC

The neighborhood constituted a veritable “artists’ colony” and working campus of national significance. In fact, it was at the suggestion of Richardson that FLO moved to the Green Hill area of Brookline in 1883. The proximity of their homes made family interaction and professional collaboration between these two great friends easy, as they created a unique aesthetic for buildings integrated into their landscapes.

FLO’s home, Fairsted, is now part of the National Park System because of the enduring importance of the work by FLO, his sons and firm over a period of a hundred years, working with Richardson and others. Indeed, Fairsted served as home and office and became the first full-scale landscape architecture practice in the country.

JCO, Olmsted’s son, played a critical role in establishing the profession of landscape architecture, shaping professional business practices at Fairsted and designing its landscape. He worked as a partner with his father and then established the Olmsted Brothers firm with his brother Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. in 1898 after FLO retired. During his career, JCO was responsible for nationally-significant park designs in Seattle and Portland as well as Essex County, NJ, and Louisville KY, where FLO offered initial consultations. JCO was also a founding member and first president of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

The proposed development of nearly 4.5 acres, and attendant destruction of the homes of JCO (222 Warren) and Richardson (25 Cottage), would obliterate this unique neighborhood. Both houses have significant historical associations, substantial integrity, and are critical pieces of a historic design community, chosen specifically by FLO to be the home of his visionary practice. The neighborhood embodies a vital part of the heritage of Brookline, the greater Boston area, and American cultural history.

The homes also sit upon valuable open green space, essential to Brookline’s community character and ecological health. The proposed development would destroy both environmental and historical assets and significantly undermine the integrity of this unique and historic residential neighborhood.

2022 will mark the bicentennial of FLO’s birth. In that year, Americans everywhere will be asked to participate in ***Olmsted 200***, a coordinated national and regional celebration that will explore the life, leadership and enduring influence of Olmsted, Olmsted’s sons, and the Olmsted Firm whose projects have literally transformed American life and culture.

That legacy includes the historic undertakings in the Green Hill neighborhood.

In the face of a global pandemic, there is no more important time to preserve, protect and educate about the collaboration of these American innovators who explored the intersection of design and social welfare and promoted the economic, social, health and environmental impacts of thoughtful design on all communities.

We urge you to reject the demolition requests so that parties may identify ways to preserve this historic and nationally significant community.

Sincerely,



Anne Neal Petri
President and CEO

Founded in 1980, the National Association for Olmsted Parks is the only national organization dedicated solely to advancing the legacy, vision and values of Frederick Law Olmsted. NAOP is also the managing partner of Olmsted 200, the national celebration marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of Frederick Law Olmsted in 2022, www.olmsted.org.