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OLMSTED
PARKS

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**Testimony of the National Association for Olmsted Parks
In opposition to construction in Franklin Park**

**Anne Neal Petri
President and CEO**

Shattuck Campus at Morton Street AMB Public Hearing
April 13, 2021

My name is Anne Petri, President of the National Association for Olmsted Parks. We were founded in 1980 are the only national organization dedicated to protecting the legacy, vision and values of Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted firm. We are based in Washington, DC and currently serve as the managing partner of Olmsted 200, the national celebration in 2022 of the bicentennial of Olmsted's birth. We are pleased to be working with many partners including the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and scores of Olmsted parks and places to prepare for this historic milestone.

On behalf of Olmsted parks and places across the country, I am here to oppose proposed construction plans and to underscore the precedent-setting importance of recapturing 13 acres of parkland in historic Franklin Park.

In too many places, from coast to coast -- cities view parks as places to build, often in high need neighborhoods.

Franklin Park is a case in point. Over its history, the park has been subjected to numerous intrusive uses; the transformation of the Meadow into a golf course and buildings; the adaptation of the Greeting promenade into the Zoo and its structures; the addition of a stadium and parking; the building of a maintenance yard; and the construction of the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital. Today, 40% or 200 acres of Franklin Park cannot be accessed freely by the general public. Now the Department of Health and Human Services is proposing to enter into a multi-year lease with a private developer to build another facility.

To be sure: The Commonwealth has an obligation to provide important health services outlined. However, building in Franklin

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Park is not the answer since a far better location – adjacent to public transportation and public services – exists in the Arborway Yard Bus Facility.

What happens here in Franklin Park reaches far beyond Boston to ALL who are dedicated to the importance of parks and green space in our daily lives.

As a matter of environmental and social justice, high need neighborhoods deserve expansive and well-maintained public parks and the mental, physical and ecological benefits they provide. They should not be subject to building – simply because the building is called a Public Health Campus. As Olmsted made clear, “the very reason ...of the park is soothing relief FROM building.” (emphasis supplied)

We are working with the American Public Health Association and others to emphasize compelling evidence that parks reduce stress, improve mental health and help mitigate the pressures of climate change. This is especially clear as we find ourselves in the midst of a global pandemic where parks and open space have been critical to mental and physical health.

THIS, I SHOULD ADD, WAS clear to Olmsted who understood when he designed Franklin Park that outdoor spaces play an important role in the health and well-being of communities. Olmsted viewed the creation of public parks as a “ democratic development of the highest significance” – open to all people and all communities.

And yet, across the country, thriving public parks ARE NOT AVAILABLE TO ALL COMMUNITIES: Parks in lower income communities are often neglected. And too many parks become easy locations for non-park and private projects. At a time when 85 percent of Americans live in urban communities, **preserving, enhancing and expanding parks is essential to public and global health and to environmental justice.**

As many others have eloquently outlined, we are not faced with an “either or.” Boston and the State can easily achieve two goals –ensure accessible health services and recapture 13 acres of Olmsted’s original Franklin Park.

Restoring parkland would be a fitting tribute to Olmsted as we prepare to celebrate his 200th birthday. And it would set a national example for how cities and states can - and MUST-- redress decades of environmental injustice by restoring park land to high need neighborhoods while creatively addressing public needs in other locations.

Thank you.