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**Written Comments of the Olmsted Network
Hearing Docket #0512, April 4, 2024
Submitted by Anne Neal Petri, President and CEO**

The national Olmsted Network, based in Washington, DC, supports the provision of needed social services but opposes the location of a massive new substance use treatment facility in Frederick Law Olmsted's historic Franklin Park. Locations for these services can and must be identified elsewhere.

A new building – of any size – will take parkland from a neighborhood that has already borne the brunt of racism and inequitable investment. This environmental justice community should not be victimized once again. We urgently call on the City to tear down the Shattuck Hospital and restore parkland to the people.

The purpose of a park, Olmsted opined, was to create “a ground to which people may easily go after their day's work is done, and where they may stroll for an hour, seeing, hearing, and feeling nothing of the bustle and jar of the streets.” He railed at politicians and public officials who viewed parks as simply places to build. “The very ‘reason for being’ of the park,” Olmsted said, is “the opportunity for pleasurable and soothing relief from building.”

The fact is: The City can regain 13 acres of parkland, while simultaneously serving the important mental and physical health needs of its constituents. Social services and parkland are not either-or propositions.

Numerous alternative sites have been proposed, many of which would provide smaller and more accessible treatment facilities for substance use disorder throughout the region. The City's budget proposal has suggested floating hospitals – an idea Olmsted implemented during the Civil War. Thoughtful and deliberative analysis of available options is in order. So is continuing outreach to and input from neighbors adjacent to the affected property.

The projected redevelopment plans cannot be viewed as minor intrusions on Franklin Park. The Boston Medical Center proposal envisions the largest substance use treatment facility in North America. Elsewhere in the Park, plans are underway to increase the size and footprint of White Stadium, further

reducing the amount of open green space available to neighbors and the broader community.

While treatment facilities serve a purpose, so too does park space. A recent report examining the *Health Superpowers of Parks* by the Trust for Public Land, shows that “green spaces are increasingly valuable, cost-effective public health resources that can drive mental, physical, and environmental outcomes for communities.”

Despite these recognized benefits, city and state officials have appropriated more and more parkland for nonpark and private purposes. Today, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy states that 40%, or 200 acres, of Franklin Park cannot be accessed freely by the neighborhoods and the general public. This has got to stop.

Debating the scale of a new building in Franklin Park is not the answer. No size will be acceptable. Options for needed social services must be identified elsewhere. Keep restorative and healthful Franklin Park open for all people. No more building in Franklin Park!

Founded in 1980, the Olmsted Network, based in Washington, DC, champions Olmsted parks, places and principles through advocacy, education, and stewardship. In 2022, the Olmsted Network served as the managing partner of the bicentennial of Olmsted’s birth, Olmsted 200. Our international network includes Birkenhead Park in Liverpool, England; the Emerald Necklace Conservancy; Biltmore; Bok Tower Gardens; the Olmsted Parks Conservancy (Louisville); Lake Park, Milwaukee; Central Park Conservancy; and Olmsted Linear Park in Atlanta. For more information, go to www.olmsted.org.

PARKS, PLACES & PEOPLE