



**July 26, 2024**

**Comments of the Olmsted Network**

Dear Members of the Boston Park Commission:

The Olmsted Network joins with our park partners around the country – including those from Nashville, Seattle, Cambridge, Atlanta, Buffalo and Boston – in urging you to take no action until pending litigation is resolved.

Earlier this year, twenty individuals and our Olmsted Network partner the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, filed a lawsuit against the City of Boston, the Trustees of the George Robert White Charitable Trust, and Boston Unity Soccer Partners. Their litigation raises important issues of privatization and regulatory compliance that deserve thoughtful consideration, making action by the Commission premature until the litigation is resolved.

As a national champion for Olmsted parks, we know that – in too many cities – our public parks are being handed over to private partners to the detriment of the public. The modus operandi is the same: find a private entity, enter into a lease for many years, and, in exchange, allow that entity to enter into an array of activities for commercial purposes. Typically, revenue is pledged, but with strings attached, resulting in access fees, limitations on public participation, and disregard for the fundamental notion, central to the work of Frederick Law Olmsted, that public parks should be free and open to all.

It is these concerns that are front and center when it comes to the Demolition and Design proposal. There is no dispute that the White Stadium project will impose new fees, variously limit school and public access, and introduce new lighting and noise that are contrary to the restorative nature of a park. There is no dispute that this is just one of multiple commercial developments in or near the Emerald Necklace which we contend threaten to fragment and dismantle this irreplaceable City landmark under your purview. [Read more from the Olmsted Network.](#)

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According to The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, the Boston Parks Commission has played a crucial role in protecting and preserving Boston's Parks since its founding. The records reveal that the Commission and Olmsted regularly discussed the proper usage of a park, with the politically-appointed commission members then OPPOSING the introduction of numerous activities – like this one -- that would have distracted from the quiet enjoyment and universal access Olmsted intended. See The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Vol. IX, The Last Great Projects, 1890-1895, Editors David Schuyler and Gregory Kaliss (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), 32.

We respectfully request that the Commission embrace this responsibility today. If the Parks Commission will not protect the parks, who will?

**This is not just a Boston issue – this is an issue for all Americans who believe, like Olmsted, that urban parks belong to ALL the people.** For these reasons, **we ask you to postpone action on this project until the pending litigation is resolved.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Dede Petri, President and CEO

*The Olmsted Network is a nonprofit based in Washington, DC. Founded in 1980, we champion Olmsted parks, places and principles through education, advocacy and stewardship. [www.olmsted.org](http://www.olmsted.org). Our network partners work with cities and others around the country to steward Olmsted parks and places.*