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July 10, 2024

Mayor Sean Reardon  
Office of the Mayor  
60 Pleasant Street  
P.O. Box 550  
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Mayor Reardon:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Olmsted Network, the national champion for Olmsted parks and landscapes. Based in Washington, DC, the Network was founded in 1980 to protect and preserve great places by Frederick Law Olmsted and his professional colleagues through advocacy, education, and stewardship. We were recently recognized by the American Society of Landscape Architects for our "environmental leadership, vision, and stewardship."

Joe Morgan, a resident of Newburyport, has brought to our attention the proposed alterations to the Bartlet Mall and the adjoining Frog Pond. **Based on our understanding of the proposed plans, we are concerned that elements will adversely impact and alter the park's historic design.**

The city of Newburyport is fortunate to be the home of this unique landscape, listed on the state and national historic registers. The designer, Charles Eliot, was a partner in the Olmsted firm as well as an independent landscape architect. He was an immensely influential figure in the field of American landscape architecture and extended and refined Olmsted's principles, significantly shaping American parks and regional park systems. You can read more about him on our website, [www.olmsted.org/](http://www.olmsted.org/)

The natural kettle pond basin (now called Frog Pond) within the Bartlet Mall is an excellent example of Eliot's visionary design. It illustrates Eliot's use of existing topography to design a natural and harmonious landscape. The wide "beach" created by filling and stabilizing portions of the pond perimeter enhances the public's enjoyment and access while preserving the integrity of the natural pond edge –a notable geologic feature. The depression of the kettle pond provides a natural contour which in turn creates an intimate space. The view across the pond to the Bullfinch courthouse is uninterrupted by manmade structures, consciously ensuring the unique pastoral character and a restorative and restful experience in contrast to the stress of urban life.

Eliot deliberately avoided ornate or artificial structures that would detract from the natural beauty of the place. In Bartlet Mall, this principle is evident in the simple paths that wind through the park, allowing visitors to meander without distraction. Benches and other amenities are thoughtfully placed to blend with the surroundings rather than

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dominate them, ensuring that the focus remains on the restorative natural scenery. Utilitarian structures are limited to the playground at street level and above the kettle pond basin.

This is a unique place whose beauty and design merit protection for future generations. Going forward, we urge the city to limit any changes to those that ensure the park's natural and historic integrity. Much like Frederick Law Olmsted, Eliot strove to preserve a site's natural beauty and ecological integrity while also making it accessible and beneficial to the public. These remain important values and should guide any current or future renovations.

Sincerely,

Anne Neal Petri  
President, Olmsted Network

Cc: Connie Preston, Newburyport City Councilor  
Glenn Richards, Chairperson, Newburyport Historical Commission  
Ted Boretti, Chairperson, Newburyport Parks Commission  
Andrea Gaut Eigerman, President, Port Parks Alliance  
Joe Morgan, Citizen of Newburyport