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February 12, 2025

The Honorable Liz Sheehan  
Councilperson - 5th District  
200 East Main Street  
Lexington, KY 40507

Dear Councilperson Sheehan,

We oppose proposed plans to construct massive sidewalks immediately adjacent to Henry Clay's historic Ashland. The area is part of the Ashland Park Historic District, placed on the National Historic Register in October 15, 1966. It was named a National Historic Landmark in 1961. The property at issue is a series of green islands designed by the famed Olmsted Brothers firm in the early 1900s at the request of Judge Henry McDowell, a member of the Clay family.

*Contemporaneous accounts, published in correspondence from John Charles Olmsted and 1907 specification documents, indicate the importance of planting large trees along the streets in close proximity to the residential blocks. These reports discuss the intentional positioning of trees and their contribution to the beauty and attractiveness of the subdivision. The 1917 General Plan for Ashland illustrates this design as intended.*

If the suggested sidewalk reconstruction is implemented, the essential green area recommended by the Olmsted firm abutting Henry Clay's historic home will lose its scenic and historic character. The proposed plans would be clearly contrary to the plans of the Olmsted Brothers firm and diminish the integrity of the National Historic District. Introducing these sidewalks would significantly reduce the amount of green space and introduce built features that are antithetical to the landmark. Moreover, the introduction of intrusive sidewalks will require significant construction work that will predictably and irrevocably damage the beautiful and mature trees that were part of the Olmsteds' original plan.

While the sidewalks have been proposed as safety measures, they appear to be a solution without a problem. There have been no pedestrian or automobile accidents at this location. The speed limit is intentionally low to ensure the travel remains slow and safety is paramount.

Regardless, communities across the country have addressed safety in ways that would be far cheaper and more sensitive to the landscape design. In fact, 101 members of the immediate neighborhood have suggested that stop signs be installed as a far preferable alternative. The Olmsted Network support this alternative.

Sincerely,



Philip Schultz  
Co-Chair

cc: The Honorable Linda Gorton  
Mayor of Lexington

Ms Bettie Kerr  
Director, Historic Preservation

Jeffory Clymer, PhD