



March 12, 2025

Boston Planning Department
Attention: Stephen Harvey, stephen.j.harvey@boston.gov
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Via online form.

Consider Arnold Arboretum in development of 920 Centre Street

Dear Mr. Harvey,

The Olmsted Network is opposed to current plans for the development of a four-story condominium building at 920 Centre Street in Jamaica Plain, overlooking the Arborway entrance to the Arnold Arboretum.

The Arboretum was carefully designed nearly 145 years ago by famed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted in conjunction with the facility's first director Charles Sprague Sargent. The site was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1965 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1966. Today, it houses over 6,000 varieties of trees and shrubs and is known as one of Olmsted's best-preserved works.

The proposed structure, designed to be 52 feet tall and nearly 400 feet long, would loom over the Arboretum's historic Hunnewell Building and impact its prized magnolia collection, a particularly sensitive location within the Arboretum. This would not only disrupt the public's experience of the Arboretum by altering a historically open viewshed but also threaten the integrity, health and longevity of the Arboretum's specimen trees and landscape. The obstruction of sunlight will negatively affect the wellbeing of current and future trees.

We believe, as the Arnold Arboretum does, that there is a design solution for this project that can create new housing without endangering the health of the Arboretum's collections or devaluing the nationally-significant Olmsted design, the experience of the Arboretum's more than 1 million visitors per year and the positive economic impact it has on the community. We urge you to look at these alternatives before the current project goes forward.

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As the national voice for Olmsted parks and places, the Olmsted Network is calling on the City of Boston to protect this vital Olmsted resource and advocate for a redesign of the proposed plan for the site so that the Arnold Arboretum can continue fulfilling its scientific and conservation missions to care for its magnificent trees— many of which are threatened or endangered in the wild— while providing a place for the public to enjoy for generations.

Sincerely,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature on the left is 'P. Schultz' and the second signature on the right is 'W. Bell'.

Philip Schultz & William Bell
Board Chairs,
Olmsted Network

PARKS, PLACES & PEOPLE