



July 29, 2026

Boston Planning Department
Submitted via online form

Comments re: 920 Centre Street

As the national voice for Olmsted parks, places, and principles, the Olmsted Network writes to express its concern with the current design of the proposed development at 920 Centre Street, adjacent to the Arnold Arboretum, and to urge the Planning Department to require design changes that protect this nationally significant historic landscape for future generations. We support the position outlined by Arnold Arboretum Director Ned Friedman in his July 24, 2026, letter to the Planning Department.

Though we respect Boston's need for additional housing, we believe the proposed building's massing is incompatible with its location beside the Arnold Arboretum—the only arboretum designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and a National Historic Landmark. The site's location within a Conservation Protection Subdistrict likewise reflects the need for development that protects the natural and scenic resources of this historic landscape.

The current proposal would increase growing-season shadow on the Arboretum's living collections and diminish the historic open views at one of its principal entrances. These avoidable impacts would compromise both the Arboretum's scientific stewardship and the public's experience of one of Boston's most significant designed landscapes.

We support the Arboretum's proposed compromise: stepping back the building's wings to reduce shadow impacts and preserve key sightlines while allowing the developer to recover the displaced square footage elsewhere on the site, behind the required buffer. We urge the Planning Department to require this modification before approving the project.

Sincerely,

Sue Breitkopf
President

PARKS, PLACES & PEOPLE