

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OLMSTED NOW ANNOUNCES PARKS EQUITY AND SPATIAL JUSTICE GRANT

**Committee of Neighborhoods launches grant in partnership
with the Emerald Necklace Conservancy**

BOSTON, MA May 3, 2022 — The **bicentennial of the birth of Frederick Law Olmsted** is marked by Greater Boston with [Olmsted Now](#), a collaboration to amplify the vibrancy and inclusivity of parks and public space. Olmsted Now aims to strengthen equity and community connection in Boston by centering decision-making for bicentennial programs with a [Committee of Neighborhoods](#)—Boston leaders trusted for their commitment to under-heard voices and under-served open spaces. Committee of Neighborhoods members draw from around Boston and especially areas adjacent to the southern parks of the Emerald Necklace and those that are especially valued by neighbors who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). To create opportunities for equitable and community-based parks programming for the Bicentennial, the Committee of Neighborhoods has launched the *Olmsted Now Parks Equity and Spatial Justice Grant*, offering 20 grants in total.

The grant application is open to all now through May 27, 2022. Five grants at \$20,000, five grants at \$10,000 and ten grants at \$5,000 will be available, with grant decisions announced mid-June. Grants will be awarded to projects that explore how to turn the idea of “parks equity” into strategic action. Unsung and/or emerging creatives and organizations, as well as well-known artistic voices, are invited to animate greenspaces—either high-profile, well-trafficked parks or lesser-known neighborhood greenspaces, such as greenhouses or urban farms. The *Olmsted Now Parks Equity and Spatial Justice Grant’s* goal is to draw visibility to both site and artistry, people and spaces that might invoke a new kind of energy around spatial justice in Boston for shared use, shared space and shared power.

The full grant criteria and application are available [here](#). Two free [informational sessions](#) will be held on May 9 and May 17 for applicants to ask questions and learn more about the criteria and expectations of the grant. Funded projects will be required to take place between July and October 2022. In addition to financial support, awardees will receive assistance with permitting for in-park program, operational and marketing support from the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and mentorship. The \$200,000 in grant making funds has been raised by the “Come Together” Fund of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy Board of Directors and the larger Olmsted Now coalition and entrusted to the Committee of Neighborhoods.

Initiated by [Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site \(Fairsted\)](#) and the [Emerald Necklace Conservancy](#) with more than [100 organizations](#) within a 60-mile radius of Boston, Olmsted Now: Greater Boston’s Olmsted Bicentennial explores the legacy values of America’s great placemaker and designer of the Emerald Necklace park system with a season of public events from April through October 2022. The initiative also fosters co-learning through monthly [public dialogues](#) to dive deeper into issues related to the themes of shared use, shared health and shared power in parks and public space. And the bicentennial is an opportunity to pilot cross-neighborhood collaboration to create in-park



programming through the monthly series [Parks as Platform](#) in the Emerald Necklace parks. Olmsted Now welcomes direct donations [here](#).

About the Committee of Neighborhoods

To orient bicentennial planning, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy commissioned [Stephen Gray](#), Associate Professor at Harvard, and his firm [Grayscale Collaborative](#) to conduct an [equity analysis and action plan](#). This foundation has guided Olmsted Now organizers to do more than “include” communities that have historically been structurally excluded from park decision-making in Greater Boston. The bicentennial has become the opportunity to recognize and affirm the power within neighborhoods to imagine new ways to experience and activate public space, and to re-center programming decisions where they need to be: in the community.

The [Committee of Neighborhoods](#) was formed to achieve this. Comprised of intergenerational leaders working around Franklin Park's Roxbury, Grove Hall, Mattapan and Dorchester neighborhoods, the Committee includes voices from youth and seniors, artists and educators, non-profit directors, as well as community and small business organizers. [Design Studio for Social Intervention](#) (DS4SI), Boston's experts in spatial justice and public-making, facilitates Committee member training in public-making and spatial justice, effective requests for programming proposals, criteria for grant selection, grantee cohort-building, event promotion, audience cultivation and authentic community feedback—all through a cultural equity lens. DS4SI has guided the Committee of Neighborhoods to refine criteria to distribute \$200,000 in funding for community-generated bicentennial programs.

Members of the Committee of Neighborhoods:

Andrew Sharpe, Authentic Caribbean Foundation
Anita Morson-Matra, Baldwin in the Park
Ambar Johnson, Liveable Streets Alliance
Barrington Edwards, Artist
Biplaw Rai, Comfort Kitchen
Jay Lee, Franklin Park Coalition/ City of Boston
John Linehan, Franklin Park Zoo/ Greater Grove Hall Main Streets
Karenlyn Bunch, Greater Grove Hall Main Streets
Karen Young, Artist
Asiyah Herrera, 826 Boston
Nakia Hill, 826 Boston
Paul Willis, 826 Boston
Youth Literary Advisory Board, 826 Boston
Pat Spence, Urban Farming Institute
Shavel'le Olivier, Mattapan Food & Fitness
Kay Savage, Mattapan Food & Fitness

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About Olmsted Now

Visionary American landscape architect, journalist, social critic and public administrator Frederick Law Olmsted (April 26, 1822 - August 28, 1903) turns 200 in 2022. Many ideas that drove Olmsted's 19th-century work remain urgent, including fostering civic dialogue, building healthy environments and championing community access to greenspace. Olmsted Now, Greater Boston's Olmsted Bicentennial formed as a coalition-led platform to connect neighborhoods and organizations in making parks and public space more vibrant, verdant and welcoming for all. Olmsted Now is a forum to share, discuss and act on Olmsted's enduring legacy, and to advance contemporary ideas of shared use, shared health and



shared power in parks with the “fierce urgency of now,” in the words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. To inspire local programming from April through October 2022, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site (Fairsted) co-organized monthly meetings for a growing multidisciplinary coalition to connect and learn from each other, and to coordinate Greater Boston’s planning with the national effort *Olmsted 200*. Olmsted Now is an opportunity to collectively grapple with what parks and public places will mean for years to come, and to affirm and advance Olmsted’s impact on civic life and public health, engage residents in learning about shared stewardship and intentionally build more resilient and inclusive places together.

Olmsted Now is made possible by Emerald Necklace Conservancy and Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site (Fairsted), with generous support from Kate and Ben Taylor, Four Lucky Dogs, Davis Family Charitable Foundation, Brooke and Jeff Cook, Marjorie and Nicholas Greville, Hastings Family Foundation, The Caroline Loughlin Fund, The Lawrence & Lillian Solomon Foundation, Sarah Freeman, Focus Real Estate, Highland Partners Charitable Fund, Lois R. Kunian, the “Come Together” Fund of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy Board and other individuals, organizations and businesses.

www.olmstednow.org

About the Emerald Necklace Conservancy

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy is a community-supported non-profit founded in 1998 to steward and champion the Emerald Necklace, Boston’s largest park system of seven distinct parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted to connect over a dozen neighborhoods with 1,100 acres of meadows, woodlands, waterways, paths and parkways. Working with civic and neighborhood partners, the Conservancy strengthens parks, people and policy by advocating for the Emerald Necklace and advancing access, maintenance and restoration, park stewardship and education through volunteer and youth programs and inclusive public programming. The parks serve as a healing respite from the city, a valuable commuting connector and a community convener for more than one million residents and tourists each year, and have taken on a special significance as a safe and socially distanced destination for recreation and reconnection since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

www.emeraldnecklace.org

About Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site (Fairsted)

Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site preserves the home, office, surrounding landscape and abundant archival collections associated with Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted firm. Frederick Law Olmsted is widely recognized as the founder of the profession of landscape architecture in America. From this location, Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted firm designed over 6,000 projects across North America, from expansive public parks to intimate private gardens. Located in Brookline, Massachusetts, the National Historic Site offers unique opportunities for visitors to learn about and be inspired by the life and work of Frederick Law Olmsted and his sons and successors, and the central role they played in defining landscape architecture, city planning and scenic preservation in the United States.

www.nps.gov/frla

Acknowledgment

For millennia before and in the centuries since Olmsted designed a park system for a rapidly industrializing city and metropolitan area, the lands and waters of and around Greater Boston have served as a site of exchange among communities including the Massachusett, Pawtucket, Wampanoag and Nipmuc peoples. Olmsted Now acknowledges these as their unceded ancestral territories. This acknowledgement is a starting point toward right relations with Indigenous neighbors and their understandings of land stewardship.

<https://www.boston.gov/news/city-council-offers-land-acknowledgement>

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