



Connecting People and Parks and Conserving the Emerald Necklace

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Karen Mauney-Brodek, *President*

April 24, 2019

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Franklin Park Open Space Restoration (Shattuck Hospital Site)

Dear Representative Malia:

Sometimes a city encounters a rare, pivotal moment when we can make a decision to invest in the long-term needs of our city, its communities and climate by adding in a significant manner to Boston's open space inventory. We are in one now.

In 1949, 13 acres of Franklin Park, the "crown jewel" of Frederick Law Olmsted's Emerald Necklace, were converted into massive buildings and vast parking lots.

Today we have the opportunity to repair the area and restore the 13-acre parcel to its previous use as parkland. We must take the time to explore all options and opportunities to provide the most public open space possible in this high-needs area and at this critical time for climate resilience.

Last year, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) announced that the 12-story Shattuck Hospital building, currently located within the original boundaries of Franklin Park, would be demolished and replaced with a new development elsewhere in the city. Throughout the summer and fall of 2018 in meetings and letters, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, and others including the Franklin Park Coalition, asked the state Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) managing this process to consider returning this land to its original purpose as public open space. We also supported the request for an open public process to develop the options for this unique opportunity.

Since then, however, it has become clear that the ensuing process and decisions about land use and the site have not been transparent. **At the last public meeting on January 16th, DCAMM announced without discussion or question that it needed to develop a minimum of 600,000 square feet of new buildings on the site and thus would require use of the entire area.** This came as a surprise, as those leading the process had only discussed the need to provide housing for the formerly homeless, with related uses and existing services adding up to approximately 200,000 square feet. No options or other locations or alternatives have been explored, despite suggestions and feedback from the public.

Given this situation, it is incumbent upon supporters of Boston's parks, communities, and open space—and those concerned with our needs for climate resiliency—to propose a vision for restoring this area, as part of the vital public discourse for this unprecedented opportunity.

Returning open space to the Park and community, as the Emerald Necklace Conservancy advocates, would provide several crucial benefits*:

- Thirteen new acres of restored space would provide needed park amenities for the neighborhoods surrounding Franklin Park, areas that deeply deserve environmental justice.

- Given the thousands of new housing units added in and around Franklin Park in recent years, this land would provide much needed additional open space for these new communities and residents.
- With an investment of \$28 million in Franklin Park over the next several years and a the imminent development of a new master plan, the Mayor and the Boston Parks and Recreation Department are leading with improvements to the Park. This is exactly the right moment to provide this new, restored open space to this landmark plan and investment.
- Today the city and other leaders are looking to add open space, even by purchase. The Shattuck Hospital site presents a wonderful opportunity to return 13 acres of existing public land, land originally intended for that purpose, to the community and public at large.
- The area is currently covered in buildings and parking lots. Converting it back to green space, planting trees and removing impervious surfaces, provides needed benefits and helps achieve the Mayor's and city's goals for a Climate Ready Boston.
- This side of Franklin Park lacks needed pedestrian and bike connections: the Shattuck complex blocks access to the park from and along Morton Street. Adding such connections would have the benefit of improving access to, from and along the street and through this large portion of what had been parkland.

The new uses proposed for incorporation into Franklin Park in the current process include housing for the formerly homeless and related healthcare uses, which would require 200,000 sq. ft. But this site is clearly not the best place for these uses, as it is not integrated into a community; instead these uses would be far better located nearer to transit and other activity areas. Though the process has not explored other options, we request consideration of nearby state-owned property, the under-utilized 18 acres at the Arborway Yard, which could provide at least 200,000 sq. ft. of space. It is located near the park, but is closer to transit and less isolated, making it a far better location. (see attached diagrams)

We ask our elected representatives and other leaders to consider the long-term needs for Boston, our communities' and our climate. The 1949 process through which the open space was converted predates our current Article 97 legislation and would never be allowed today. Today we have a rare opportunity to do something transformational for the park and the public. Let's think harder, more creatively and seize it.

Sincerely,



Karen Mauney-Brodek, President
The Emerald Necklace Conservancy

**Each of these transformational benefits from the restoration of the open space to Franklin Park is further detailed in the following attachments: Benefits of the Restoration of Open Space in Franklin Park.*

Cc:

Senator Will Brownsberger

Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz

Representative Chynah Tyler

Representative Jon Santiago

Representative Nika Elugardo

Representative Russell Holmes

Senator Nick Collins

Marylou Sudders, Secretary of HHS, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Carol Gladstone, Commissioner, DCAMM, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Boston City Councilors (all)

Chief Christopher Cook, Chief of Environment, Energy, and Open Space

About the Emerald Necklace and the Emerald Necklace Conservancy:

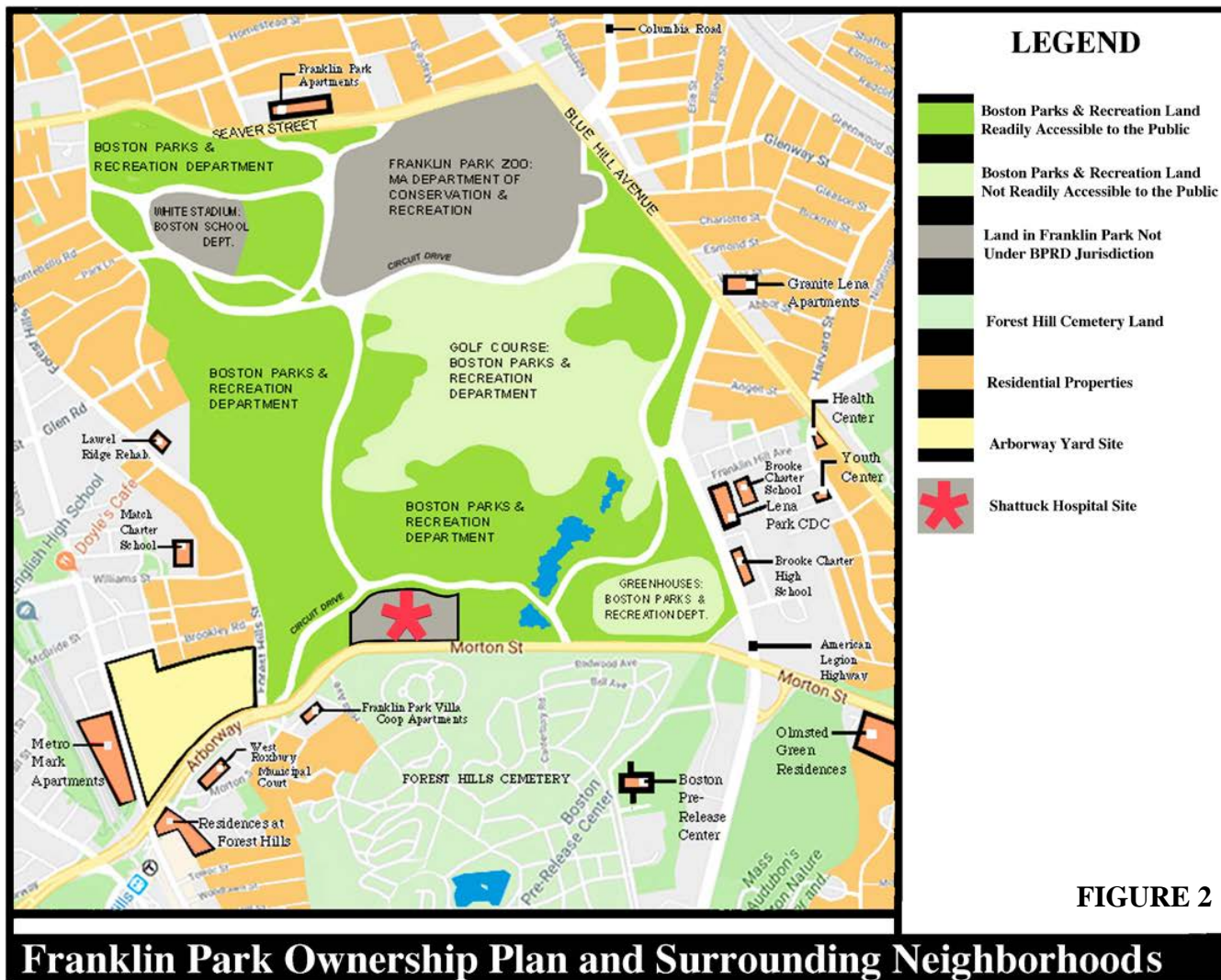
The Emerald Necklace Conservancy supports and advocates for the Emerald Necklace's 1,100 acres of parkland extending from Boston's Back Bay through Brookline and Jamaica Plain to Franklin Park in Dorchester. The Conservancy's work includes advocacy, maintenance and restoration, education and access improvements, and promoting park stewardship through volunteer and youth programs. The Emerald Necklace was designed by Fredrick Law Olmsted in the 1800s and Franklin Park is known as the "crown jewel" of the system. In collaboration with the City of Boston, the Town of Brookline, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Conservancy serves an invaluable role as convener and facilitator of the many parties with a stake in the future of the Emerald Necklace. The Conservancy's leadership includes a committee of Park Overseers which convenes the institutions, organizations and friends groups sharing a common interest in the preservation, restoration and public enjoyment of the Emerald Necklace now and in the future.



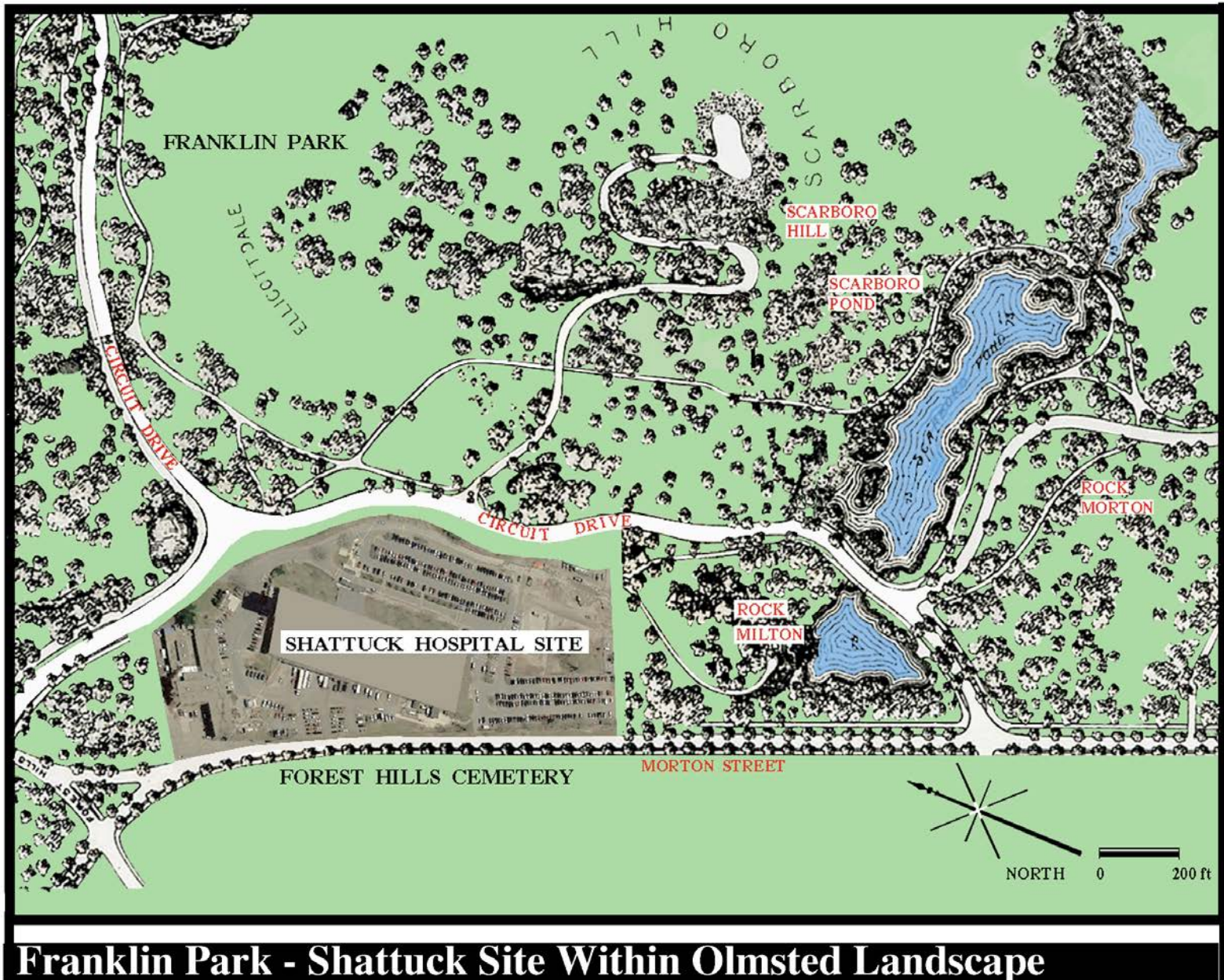
FIGURE 1

Emerald Necklace - City of Boston

The Emerald Necklace is Boston's primary park system

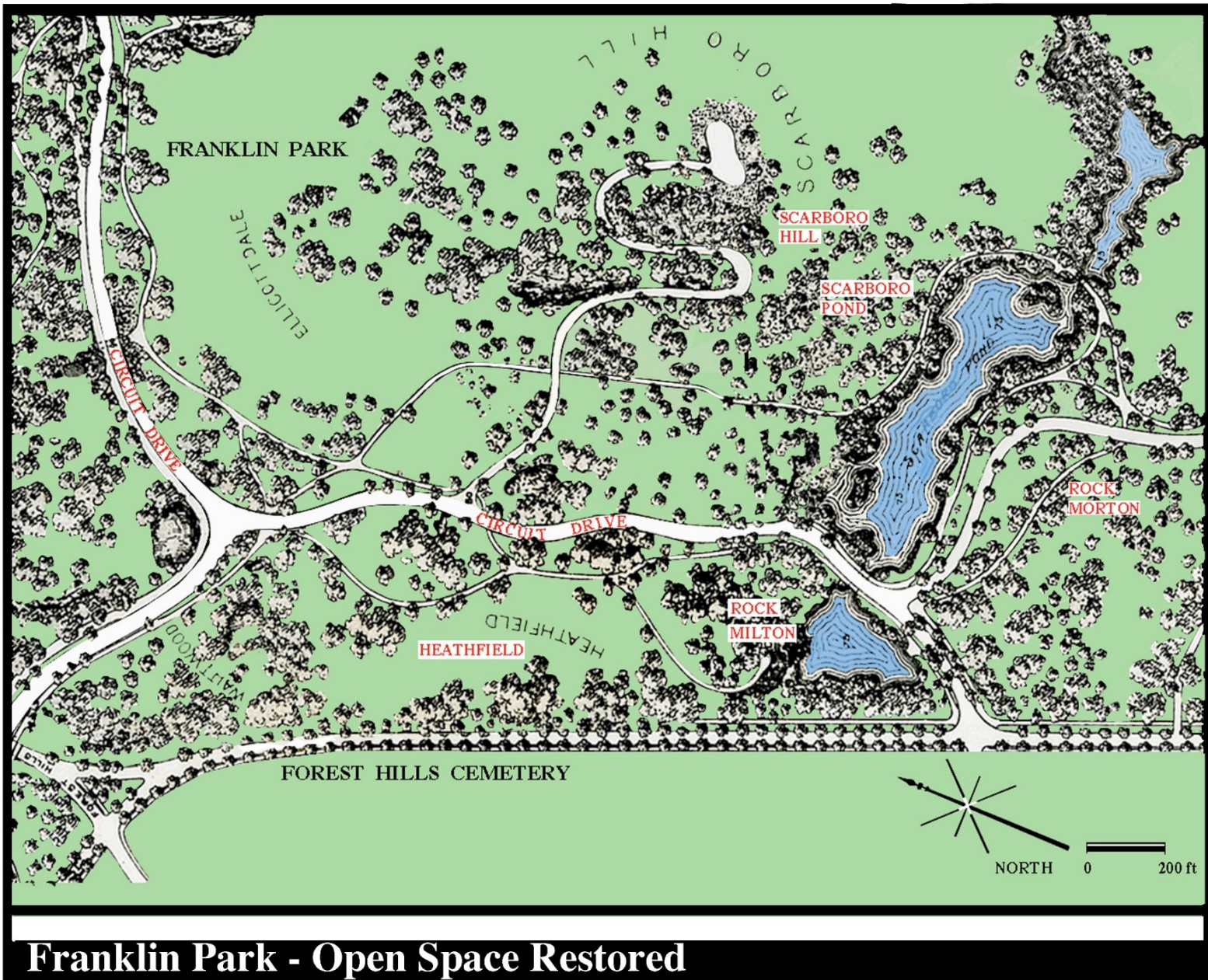


This diagram shows 1) the extent of the park not freely available to the public, 2) significant new housing in the area and resulting need for open space and 3) current location of Shattuck Hospital



This shows the current area of the Shattuck Hospital

FIGURE 3



Example of the area restored to parkland

FIGURE 4



Community Events



Performances



Natural Playground



Special Events



Nature Walks



Kite Flying



Enhanced Tree Canopy



Outdoor Movies



Planting for Pollinators

Open Space Ideas for former Shattuck Hospital Site

These are some of sample images of open space ideas suggested by community members.

FIGURE 5



This diagram indicates the existing, state-owned, underutilized Arborway Yard located near Franklin Park with greater access to transit.

FIGURE 6



FIGURE 7

Proposed Arborway Bus Yard Plan

This diagram shows opportune areas that would provide the square footage needed for the new housing and existing services



FIGURE 8

Proposal to accomodate 200,000 SF of development at Arborway Yard Site

This diagram shows the calculation for more than the 210,000 sf needed.

Benefits of Restoring Open Space in Franklin Park

Open Space for a High-need Environmental Justice Neighborhood

- Franklin Park is surrounded by neighborhoods that deserve far more environmental justice. By converting this site back to open space, we would be providing more public park land for the people of Roxbury, Mattapan, Jamaica Plain, and surrounding neighborhoods.
- As the population near the park continues to grow, environmental justice requires that people have high-quality, low-to-no-cost opportunities close to home for outdoor recreation and connecting with nature. As shown in the diagrams attached to this memo, much of what appears to be “green space” in the area is not freely available to the general public (golf course, zoo, etc.). This makes it crucial that the city ensure free recreational opportunities for families and individuals in the area, including spaces where they can simply spend time in nature. The recent transformation of other parks in Boston and around the country demonstrate what can be done when city and citizens invest in open space and commit to improving connectivity and access.
- We all know of the health benefits that open space provides for urban communities. When Frederick Law Olmsted created the Emerald Necklace in the 19th century, he was guided by the notion that for city dwellers to be healthy, they require access to natural settings where they can escape the hustle and bustle of their daily lives. Today this is ever more important. Many studies document the benefits that trees offer to our physical health and that spending time in nature offers to our mental health.

With **thousands of new housing units added in and around Franklin Park** and the area, residents require more open space than ever before.

- In recent years, hundreds of new units of housing have been added to the neighborhoods surrounding Franklin Park, such as Olmsted Green along Morton Street. In addition, thousands more units of housing and tens of thousands of square feet of new retail are under construction and about to open in the Forest Hills neighborhood.
- Today the city and other leaders are looking to add open space, even by purchasing it; this is an opportunity to add 13 acres from existing public land, originally developed for that purpose, to the community and public at large.

The Mayor and Boston Parks and Recreation Department are leading the way, investing \$28 million in Franklin Park for improvements over the next several years and developing a new master plan starting this year. This makes right now the ideal moment to provide this new open space for this landmark plan and investment. The city has made significant improvements in the past several years, including an investment of over \$7 million for pathways and other improvements, with more to come.

The area is currently covered in buildings and parking lots; converting it into green space, including planting trees, would provide needed benefits and help achieve climate goals.

- Many key leaders—including Governor Baker, Mayor Walsh, and the Legislature—state that climate resilience is a high priority. Green space, in the form of pervious surfaces, is a cost-effective and crucial element as the city plans to cope with the impacts of climate change: increased precipitation, sea level rise, flooding, heat waves, etc. Paved impervious surfaces are our enemy when it comes to climate resilience.

Needed pedestrian and bike connections are absent along and through this end of Franklin Park, as the Shattuck Complex blocks access to the park from and along Morton Street. This change could provide improvements to, from and along Morton Street and through this large portion of what had been parkland.

- Continuous greenways for active transportation, with bike and pedestrian connections, are important for public health. This area would connect to the new Casey Arborway improvements with new bike lanes and sidewalks. Renovations could extend the bike and pedestrian improvements to connect to other communities and parts of the park.

- By reintegrating the Shattuck site into Franklin Park and the broader Emerald Necklace and pending Emerald Network, we can break down the divides between different sections of Boston, and also improve connectivity between them and strengthen our sense of community. Neighbors will have more places to gather, to hold events, to enjoy outdoor activities, and to connect with nature and each other.

Summary of Planning Process to Date Managed by the Commonwealth's Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM)

July 2017 DCAMM prepared an RFP for a 2-acre parcel of the Shattuck campus for 75 to 100 units of supportive housing plus all required services; it was to go to private developers. The public was given no opportunities for input. It is our understanding that this RFP did not go forward at that time. At this meeting DCAMM expressed its intention to have a transparent and inclusive process in planning for the use of the 13 acre parcel.

4/26/18 Public meeting at English High School: public announcement to award a 99-year lease to a private entity to build 75 to 100 units of low-threshold housing (housing for the formerly homeless) on a 2-acre parcel and begin a 12-month planning process for that portion of the site. Various groups submitted comments; these included the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, the Franklin Park Coalition, and the Boston Parks and Recreation Commission. Among the questions raised: Would this use for housing be in keeping with the public health requirements of the land tenure?

9/27/18: Public meeting in the clubhouse of the Franklin Park Golf Course. The presentation still referred to 2 acres of housing. See presentation here: <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2019/01/31/community-meeting-1-9-27-2018.pdf>

1/16/19: Public meeting at Franklin Park led by consultant HRiA presenting a series of site plans showing approx. 600,000 sf. of new building (120,000 sf. of supportive housing, 70,000 sf. of existing services and 410,000 sf. of health offices/institution) covering the full site.

At this point in the process the community and neighbors have lost confidence that they will be given any chance to express their opinion about the use of the site for the following reasons:

- Although DCAMM has expressed its intention to have a planning process that would be both transparent and inclusive, an RFP for private developers (for a 2-acre parcel) was drawn up prior to the first public announcement about the project.
- Until January 16th of 2019 the agency had never stated explicitly that it intended to use the whole site for its purposes. At that meeting the public were shown conceptual plans showing coverage of the entire site. The audience was given no real choices, only four similar options to consider, and a request that they represent their own preferred schemes using "a minimum of 600K sf" of coverage on the site. When a couple people in the audience asked why this assumption of 600K sf was not open to discussion, no other explanation was offered, only that this would be required to fund the site's development.
- The Community Advisory Committee convened for this project does not adequately represent the need for open space and other community uses. The "advisory meetings" have not allowed for community guidance or discussion and feedback on the process, on the content of the meetings or on the assumptions of the plan.