



Connecting People and Parks and Conserving the Emerald Necklace

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Emerald Necklace Conservancy and Partners Present “Once in a Lifetime” Opportunity to Restore Greenspace to Boston’s Franklin Park

Commonwealth’s alternative plan called “short-sighted” and may have lasting harm to the environment and residential health

Boston, MA April 09, 2021 – Together with numerous community and civic organizations, the [Emerald Necklace Conservancy](#) lays out [an opportunity](#) for the development of the supportive services and housing for the formerly homeless from the proposed Franklin Park location in Boston to a nearby underdeveloped transit-accessible location following the planned demolition of the aging Shattuck Hospital. The proposal raises the importance of patient accessibility and greenspace by placing critical health services near public transportation and returning the current site to the original park use after seven decades.

“Shattuck Hospital, now slated for demolition, currently sits on park land, a site that was taken from the community in 1949 and over the years has joined other sites that reduced Franklin Park’s free and public offerings to all by over 40%—roughly 200 acres of parkland that are not freely accessible to the public,” said Karen Mauney-Brodek, President of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy. “The Commonwealth’s proposal to simply replace the facility does not consider alternate sites that can better serve the planned users or Boston’s climate goals. This is a once in a lifetime, win-win opportunity to relocate these important health services to where they can do the most good while returning parkland to the community. At this moment, there is a national conversation for climate-resilient investments in public transportation and health infrastructure, and we hope to stimulate a long overdue conversation about meeting the needs of the City’s underserved communities in the present while aiding efforts to protect our climate for years to come. Boston can do better!”

Massachusetts Health and Human Services (HHS) has already announced that they will be moving the Shattuck Hospital inpatients to the Newton Pavilion at Boston Medical Center and the State agency now proposes that some of the remaining services remain in Franklin Park without evaluating alternate options or sites. As a result, the Conservancy collaborated with Northeastern University on [three studies](#) over the last year for possible relocation sites for Shattuck Hospital’s services while returning 13 acres of lost parkland to the City of Boston. Led by Ted Landsmark, Professor of Public Policy & Urban Affairs and Director of the Kitty and Michael Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy at Northeastern University, the study identified the more suitable underdeveloped 18-acre MBTA Arborway Yard Bus Facility nearby and also adjacent to the Emerald Necklace parks, Boston’s largest park system. This alternate Commonwealth-controlled public property is superior in its proximity to public transportation and improved access to community services, and will offer:

- a more accessible site for supportive services and the 75–100 housing units for the formerly unhoused, as proposed by HHS
- eight acres for community-serving development, residential units and affordable housing
- the opportunity to provide space for the MBTA’s electric bus fleet

- Continued direct access to Franklin Park

“The Commonwealth’s short-sighted proposal, ignoring Northeastern University's [study](#), which clearly identified far better alternatives, continues to turn a deaf ear to city residents who have been seeking the return of this land to its original use,” said former Governor Michael Dukakis, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Northeastern University and Life Trustee on the Board of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy. “The Emerald Necklace, and Franklin Park specifically, were shaped by Frederick Law Olmsted to benefit all of Boston’s residents. By continuing to keep this land from its intended use for another 99 years is an insult to the very people the State says they wish to help. I will be giving my testimony at the upcoming public hearing.”

The Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) intends to issue a request for proposals to develop 75-100 housing units for the formerly unhoused on this former park land for a 99-year lease. A growing coalition of local organizations feels that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to restore parkland to Franklin Park and find a much better location for these services. Proximity to transit and other essential community services is key to the success of the housing effort and outpatient services – these must be placed in a location that optimizes these services.

DCAMM will host a **virtual public hearing on Tuesday, April 13** to present the draft request for proposals and the public is welcome to speak up and spread the word to encourage city and State officials to work alongside the community to find the best suited site as well as restore the park. **Pre-register for the public hearing [here](#). DCAMM requires those interested in speaking to sign up by April 12.**

“We are deeply supportive of building more facilities that provide accessible and supportive services and housing – these are desperate and urgent needs in Boston. However, the current plan falls short. The State has not explored opportunities to keep services nearby during construction nor have they looked for opportunities to rebuild on a State-owned site that would offer greater access to bus routes for those seeking services while offering the co-benefit of restoring the park lands,” shares Stacy Thompson, Executive Director, [LivableStreets Alliance](#).

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About Emerald Necklace Conservancy

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy is a non-profit organization founded in 1998 to steward and champion the Emerald Necklace, Boston’s largest park system. The Conservancy protects, restores, helps maintain and promotes the Emerald Necklace’s seven distinct parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, and comprises 1,100 acres of meadows, woodlands and paths. In collaboration with its public partners, the Conservancy provides maintenance of the parks and capital restoration projects, free cultural events, visitor services and environmental education. The parks serve as a 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 over the past year as a safe and socially distanced destination for local residents and regional visitors. www.emeraldnecklace.org

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