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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Boston's Emerald Necklace Conservancy announces critical restoration of Charlesgate Park as an essential link to connect the Emerald Necklace parks, Charles River Esplanade and Commonwealth Avenue Mall**

*This transformational project is being realized in partnership with Charlesgate Alliance, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and Massachusetts Department of Transportation*



**Left drawing:** Charlesgate Park lies at the juncture of several regional park systems, including the Emerald Necklace, the Charles River Esplanade and the Charles River Reservation.

**Right drawing:** Proposed improvements to Charlesgate Park would directly connect regional park systems like the Emerald Necklace and the Charles River Esplanade for the first time in more than half a century.

**Photo credit:** Landing Studio

**Boston, MA June 11, 2020** – The [Emerald Necklace Conservancy](http://www.emeraldnecklace.org) is announcing the re-envisioning of Charlesgate Park in Boston. This critical project will be a major improvement for urban recreation and public health, including a universally accessible children's play area, one of the largest dog parks in the city, new pathways for bike and pedestrian use, the implementation of green infrastructure and resilience throughout including the completion of a major transportation link.

Charlesgate Park, located at the intersection of Boston's Back Bay, Fenway and Kenmore neighborhoods, was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted as the first part of the Emerald Necklace, connecting the Charles River Esplanade, Commonwealth Avenue Mall, several neighborhoods and the five-mile, six-park linear park system known as the Emerald Necklace. In the 1950s and 1960s, prioritization of road construction over parkland (Storrow Drive) compromised this once-idyllic space, overshadowing it with a highway overpass (Bowker Overpass), and dividing it with new roads and on-

ramps, ultimately increasing pollution of the Muddy River and deteriorating the park's usability. Stripped of its amenities, Charlesgate Park – originally a neighborhood green space and a local destination – now functions primarily as a pass-through for pedestrians and vehicles, devoid of recreational services.

In 2017, Emerald Necklace Conservancy President Karen Mauney-Brodek partnered with a new community group, the [Charlesgate Alliance](#), and developed and implemented a public process in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation to revitalize this 13-acre area to a vibrant, environmentally healthy and active green space. Since then, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy has received funding from several sources, including a seed grant from The Lawrence & Lillian Solomon Foundation and \$650,000 in State funding from the Department of Conservation and Recreation and Boston's Community Preservation Act to create plans and a full shovel-ready design. The plan also has the active support of local elected officials including State Senator William N. Brownsberger, State Representative Jay D. Livingstone and Boston City Councillor (District 8) Kenzie Bok.

Together with internationally renowned, Somerville-based architecture firm Landing Studio, a conceptual revitalization plan for Charlesgate Park was developed, supported by numerous public meetings, engagement events, site walks and buy-in from public partners and the community. "The Charlesgate section of the Emerald Necklace is so compromised today that most visitors don't recognize it as parkland. We have a once-in a-lifetime opportunity to bring this parkland back," said Karen Mauney-Brodek, President of Emerald Necklace Conservancy. "We have a unique opportunity to make 13 acres of Olmsted's park good again, and provide a people-friendly and safe pathway network, a children's playground, dog park and other much-needed amenities in this dense and active part of the city."

**Resilience and green infrastructure enhancements include:**

- Improved flood resilience with increased water storage capacity
- Water quality improvements through drainage infrastructure and shoreline vegetation
- Shoreline restoration
- Habitat restoration
- Green stormwater infrastructure
- Urban heat island mitigation via increased tree canopy and street trees
- Groundwater recharge and water table restoration
- Carbon sequestration
- Improvements to urban public health through air and water quality

**Mobility, transportation and access enhancements include:**

- Shared-use pathways for pedestrians and cyclists
- Rest areas for users of different ages and abilities
- Safe street crossings through signalization, crosswalks, lane reduction, curb extensions and protected lanes
- Universal accessibility
- Improved lighting and sight lines
- Connective routes to promote safety and security
- Critical regional bike and pedestrian link connecting the Charles River Esplanade, Memorial Drive, Commonwealth Avenue and the Emerald Necklace parks to further regional networks.

**Park user amenity enhancements include:**

- Universally accessible play area
- Fitness stations
- Dog play area
- Seating areas
- Safety and security through site activation
- An accessible neighborhood destination for fitness and recreation

"This multi-layered project will restore the spirit of Olmsted's Emerald Necklace at Charlesgate as a mobility and water management network," says Dan Adams, Founding Co-Principal of Landing Studio.

Over the last two years, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and Charlesgate Alliance have taken action to achieve this vision, including scheduling clean-ups of the Muddy River; holding a series of community meetings and walkabouts; staging an outdoor family movie night for community members; repairing fencing; replacing lighting; organizing frequent trash removals and pruning trees in partnership with the Emerald Necklace Conservancy's Olmsted Tree Society program and the Friends of the Public Garden.

In a second major milestone, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation is planning a significant renovation to the bridge carrying Storrow Drive eastbound over the northern end of Charlesgate Park, which will create an unprecedented opportunity to reconnect Charlesgate and the Emerald Necklace to the Charles River Esplanade. To realize the Charlesgate Park Revitalization Project, the Conservancy and the Charlesgate Alliance endeavour fundraising efforts and are in conversation with public and private sources to reach the overall fundraising goal. Over \$70 million in public funds have already been committed to restore and reconnect the Charlesgate portion of the Emerald Necklace to the Esplanade for pedestrians and bicyclists by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. "We are hopeful that the agency will continue to look at further investments in that area to make truly extraordinary investments for access and resilience in the heart of Boston," said Karen Mauney-Brodek.

"What was our wildest dream is now our default design," says Parker James, co-founder of the Charlesgate Alliance. "None of this would be happening without our advocacy and enthusiastic support from the Emerald Necklace Conservancy. This is truly an alliance."

To support the re-envisioning of Charlesgate Park including the establishing of a maintenance endowment, please visit [www.emeraldnecklace.org/charlesgate-alliance](http://www.emeraldnecklace.org/charlesgate-alliance).

To learn more and join the Emerald Necklace Conservancy's free Virtual 2020 Annual Meeting "Charlesgate Park Revitalization: Re-Building Connections and a Community Park in the Emerald Necklace" on June 17 at 6pm, please sign up here:  
<http://www.emeraldnecklace.org/events/annualmeeting>.

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### **About the 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 is guided by its mission *to restore and improve the Emerald Necklace for all* as it protects, restores, helps maintain, and promotes the Emerald Necklace's six distinct parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, and comprising 1,100 acres of meadows, woodlands, paths and waterways. In collaboration with its public partners – City of Boston, Town of Brookline and Commonwealth of Massachusetts – 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. Learn more at [www.emeraldnecklace.org](http://www.emeraldnecklace.org).

### **About Landing Studio**

Landing Studio is an architecture and urban design practice based in Somerville, founded by Dan Adams and Marie Law Adams. The work of Landing Studio is focused on improving infrastructure and the public realm through the design of landscapes, buildings, lighting, installations, events, and exhibitions. Landing Studio has been recognized with awards including a Progressive Architecture Award, the Architectural League Prize, AIA Institute Honor Awards, Waterfront Center Awards, and the Design Biennial Boston. Learn more at [www.landing-studio.com](http://www.landing-studio.com).

### **About Charlesgate Alliance**

The Charlesgate Alliance launched in January 2017 to bring positive change to the Charlesgate neighborhood. The Alliance is dedicated to improving Charlesgate Park and knitting together the Kenmore, Back Bay and Fenway neighborhoods around a central Charlesgate district. Learn more at [www.charlesgatealliance.org](http://www.charlesgatealliance.org)

