

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**GOVERNOR DUKAKIS SENDS GOVERNOR BAKER LETTER  
URGING LEADERSHIP FOR FRANKLIN PARK**

**States that “the Commonwealth, the City and the Community Deserve Better”**

**Boston, MA 29 October, 2021** – Former Governor Dukakis delivered a letter to Governor Baker last week calling for leadership and a coordinated vision as it relates to the [redevelopment](#) of the Shattuck Hospital site in Franklin Park. In the letter, he outlined how the Commonwealth’s decision to redevelop the site contradicts the Baker administration’s stated priorities “for open space, climate resilience, and natural resource conservation.” Governor Dukakis states that, “rather than engaging community members and thinking holistically for the neighborhood and Greater Boston’s needs, the Commonwealth has decided to move forward with a plan to demolish the outdated building, which sits on parkland, and lease the land to a private developer.” The full letter can be read online [here](#).

Shattuck Hospital, now slated for demolition, currently occupies 13 acres of parkland, 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 green space by roughly 200 acres. Now, the Commonwealth proposes a new plan: a 99-year lease for a private developer to build housing for the formerly homeless. Housing for the formerly homeless is extremely important; however, the Commonwealth did not evaluate alternative sites, conduct a feasibility study, involve the many of the communities around the park, nor provide any State funding for the new facilities. This new plan requires numerous legal waivers, and the housing, if all goes according to plan, may take five years to build and does not include supportive services in the latest proposal.

In his letter, Governor Dukakis continues: “the redevelopment of the Shattuck Site would directly contradict your administration’s priorities for open space, climate resilience, and natural resource conservation. Franklin Park, which has already had 40% of its land carved out for other uses, has been a key open space for neighboring communities for decades, providing recreational space and an escape from urban heat islands. The Department of Health and Human Services proposal will effectively strip land from an Environmental Justice Community who depend on Franklin Park for a gathering space for events and a welcome respite from city life.”

Noting his support of accommodating urgently needed social services, Governor Dukakis questions Governor Baker on why this is the only site being considered. “The current site does not align with current best practices for the formerly unhoused — is not an ideal location, as the site is exceptionally isolated; it does not have access to reliable public transportation; is adjacent to high-speed roads without sidewalks or bike lanes; its nearest non-park neighbor is a cemetery. It is totally lacking in essential neighborhood amenities like stores, schools, or job opportunities. Additionally, with no clear plan and construction slated in 2025 or later, the current proposal does not even address the critical and urgent need for services across the Commonwealth.

Massachusetts Health and Human Services (HHS) has already announced that they will be demolishing the hospital building and moving the Shattuck Hospital inpatients to the Newton Pavilion at Boston Medical Center, and the State agency now proposes that some of the services remain in Franklin Park without evaluating alternative options or sites. As a result, the [Emerald Necklace Conservancy](#) collaborated with Northeastern University on [three studies](#) over the past year to identify possible relocation sites for Shattuck Hospital's services, while returning 13 acres of lost parkland to the City of Boston and local communities.

Led by Ted Landsmark, Professor of Public Policy & Urban Affairs at Northeastern University, the study identified the more suitable underdeveloped 18-acre MBTA Arborway Yard Bus Facility nearby and adjacent to Franklin Park. This alternate Commonwealth-controlled public property is superior in its proximity to public transit 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 accommodate the MBTA's electric bus fleet; and
- continued direct access to Franklin Park.

A growing coalition of local organizations, including the [Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council](#) and [Garrison Trotter Neighborhood Association](#), also understand that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to restore parkland to Franklin Park and to find a much better location for these services. In addition, leaders from these two organizations submitted letters to the governor's office requesting his engagement with this important opportunity for open space in these important neighborhoods. These letters can be provided upon request.

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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](http://www.emeraldnecklace.org)

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