

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OLMSTED NOW MEETS MILESTONES FOR 2022 BICENTENNIAL

Coalition generates partnerships that promote equity and community connection

BOSTON, MA December 15, 2021 — In 2022, Greater Boston will mark the bicentennial of America's great placemaker and designer of the Emerald Necklace park system: Frederick Law Olmsted. To mark the moment, in early 2020, [Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site \(Fairsted\)](#) and the [Emerald Necklace Conservancy](#) initiated [Olmsted Now](#), a coalition-led platform to connect communities and organizations in making parks and public space more vibrant, verdant and welcoming for all. Since then, the Olmsted Now coalition has hit an array of foundational milestones in equity, support, partnerships and outreach. To model anti-racist and trust-based resource development and distribution by and for park communities, Olmsted Now introduces the **Committee of Neighborhoods**; announces support through a **"Come Together" fundraising initiative**; and, in the past year, has doubled and diversified its partners, while expanding its communication channels.

Community Power in Action: In 2020, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy commissioned Harvard professor Stephen Gray and [Grayscale Collaborative](#) to guide Olmsted Now through an [equity analysis and action plan](#) that would not merely "include" but would center communities who could potentially most benefit from bicentennial programming and investments, yet have historically been structurally excluded from park decision-making. As a case study, the Grayscale team researched local neighborhood leaders already working on environmental and racial justice and health equity on behalf of youth and elderly communities identifying as Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) around Franklin Park, the largest park of the Olmsted-designed Emerald Necklace park system yet with the fewest organizations involved with the Emerald Necklace Conservancy. This past spring and summer, Grayscale discussed with local neighborhood leaders ways to refine the idea of a [Committee of Neighborhoods](#): trusted neighborhood voices acting on experience and ability to solicit, determine and promote Olmsted Now bicentennial programs. These input informed the plan to raise funds for compensation, facilitators and programming. This past fall, Olmsted Now engaged [Design Studio for Social Intervention](#) (DS4SI), Boston's experts in spatial justice and public-making, to launch and support the Committee of Neighborhoods through 2022. Led by Joelle Fontaine (previously at [Fairmount Innovation Lab](#)), DS4SI will facilitate training for the Committee of Neighborhoods members 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. Importantly, DS4SI will guide the Committee of Neighborhoods on how to distribute \$200,000 of funding toward programs that promote “shared use, shared health and shared power in parks and public spaces.” Funds will be raised by the larger Olmsted Now coalition and entrusted to the Committee of Neighborhoods, as a concrete step to equalize, affirm and amplify power centered in neighborhood communities.

“Come Together” in Support: In 1866, Olmsted wrote of parks as potential spaces of democracy, equitable access and connections across all walks of life: “In a park, the largest provision is required for the human presence. [We] must come together and must be seen coming together.” Olmsted’s Bicentennial is Greater Boston’s moment to come together and create connective capital across sectors and neighborhoods that remain siloed. The Committee of Neighborhoods is central to this goal, and Olmsted Now has prioritized securing a minimum of \$200,000 in grants to be distributed by the Committee of Neighborhoods in support of its equity agenda to center power and bicentennial programming in communities. The Board of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy has taken the lead by establishing a “Come Together” Fund to raise the first \$100,000 by end of 2021, matching this with another \$100,000 from Conservancy leadership and external donors by March 2022. The Board is also committed to 100% philanthropic participation in Olmsted Now via the “Come Together” Fund, seeking to demonstrate the trust-based philanthropy that is critical to catalyzing Olmsted Now’s equity-driven programming April through October 2022. Olmsted Now welcomes direct donations [here](#).

Growing Multidisciplinary Partnerships: Since January 2021, Olmsted Now has hosted 10 coalition planning meetings, and has grown volunteer participation from 60 individuals representing more than 40 organizations to, today, more than 140 individuals representing over 90 organizations within a 60-mile radius of Greater Boston. The coalition’s scope and depth of interdisciplinary interests has grown to encompass advocacy, arts and culture, community organizing, education, environment and health, food and transit justice, landscape history and park design, philanthropy, stewardship and more. This is exemplified by partners including: in Mattapan, the [Urban Farming Institute](#) that grows fresh food, supports community health and combats food injustice; in Downtown Boston, the [Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center](#) at the Boston Public Library, planning a Bicentennial exhibition that will foster geographic perspectives on the relationships between people and places; and based in Plymouth, the [Community Art Collaborative](#), which makes art accessible as a community healing modality with partners such as the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe and Plymouth Public Schools. The bicentennial year is a “practice field” for all to join in new forms of collaboration and resource sharing, and Olmsted Now encourages coalition partners to try something new: to connect existing programs to new audiences, form new partnerships or develop entirely new programs and events. The latest list of organizations represented by individuals engaged in planning is [here](#).

Free Resources to Connect: Olmsted Now offers partners and the public a range of easy-to-use communications and publication tools which can be found on www.OlmstedNow.org. Since its launch in

April 2021, the website has expanded considerably, doubling the number of community-generated [stories](#). The site also hosts an events [calendar](#) for partners to share countless public offerings to celebrate, challenge and learn from Boston's open spaces, and partners are able to download Olmsted Now branded signage tools and templates. The Instagram [@OlmstedNow](#) account introduces website stories and promotes partner events to broader audiences and invites partners to "take over" the account to share and reach new followers. Starting in January 2022, a new monthly newsletter will launch as well as monthly public dialogues focused on Bicentennial themes of shared use, shared health and shared power in parks and public space.

All are welcome to get involved and informed [here](#).

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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 communities 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, Hastings Family Foundation, Brooke and Jeff Cook, Lois R. Kunian and the "Come Together" Fund of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy Board. www.olmstednow.org

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 20 months as a safe and socially distanced destination for local residents and regional visitors. 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. Learn more: <https://www.boston.gov/news/city-council-offers-land-acknowledgement>

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