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## OLMSTED NOW PARKS EQUITY & SPATIAL JUSTICE GRANTS HIGHLIGHT A NEW PROCESS AND OVERWHELMING DEMAND TO CULTURALLY ANIMATE BOSTON GREENSPACE

The Olmsted Now Committee of Neighborhoods and Emerald Necklace Conservancy announce 16 awardees among deeply talented local applicants who envision more vibrant, verdant, equitable and welcoming parks and public spaces.

**BOSTON, MA July 7, 2022** — For the 2022 Bicentennial [Olmsted Now](#), 16 inspiring proposals from local creatives have been awarded *Olmsted Now Parks Equity & Spatial Justice Grants*. Rather than focus exclusively on the history or landscapes of Frederick Law Olmsted, Olmsted Now invites all to explore the contemporary relevance of Olmsted's legacy values: shared use, shared health and shared power across all parks and public space. Olmsted Now's core grant program is likewise values-driven: parks equity and spatial justice guiding the process in which decisions are centered in community and resources are de-centered across neighborhoods. Grant decisions were made by the [Committee of Neighborhoods](#): trusted Boston neighborhood leaders respected for their commitment to amplifying under-heard voices and under-resourced open spaces with a dedication to opportunity, advocacy and justice. Inspired by Olmsted's vision of parks as places to "Come together and be seen," the grantmaking is supported by the "Come Together" Fund of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy Board and the broader Olmsted Now [coalition](#).

Following the development in 2021 of the Committee of Neighborhoods by [Grayscale Collaborative](#) in partnership with the [Franklin Park Coalition](#), the Conservancy commissioned [Design Studio for Social Intervention \(DS4SI\)](#) to guide the Committee as it collaboratively shaped the grant process. Committee members described DS4SI's long-form facilitation as "authentically equitable," a "thoughtful yet critical" safe space to "both contribute and learn" with decisions that were "intentional and intense but never rushed." The group self-determined its own form of [participatory action grant process](#) to determine grant criteria for \$200,000 in grant funding, including award amounts, request for proposals, outreach and selection process. The Committee ultimately chose to allocate \$20,000, \$10,000 and \$5,000 grants to projects that strive to "turn the idea of parks equity into strategic action." The Committee received 87 proposals totaling \$1,175,000 in requested funding – nearly six times the granting capacity – a testament to both the deep talent and overwhelming and outsized demand for more culturally inclusive, neighborhood-determined greenspace programming in Boston.

A grant review task force of the Committee of Neighborhoods selected projects with the potential to make the most revitalizing or reparative impacts on Boston public space across cultural scope, scale and format. The task force also strove to fund both projects that might expand already highly admired programs into locations needing new voice or visibility, and those that launch new initiatives in established and highly visible locations. The use of artistry and greenspace sites to amplify each other was a prime consideration. The task force ultimately responded to the scale and ambition of the overwhelming majority of submitted proposals and worked in dialogue with the Conservancy to award \$205,000 to 16 projects that best represent the spirit of Olmsted Now.

Awarded projects will take place in the remainder of the Bicentennial season, July – October 2022. They were selected for their strong potential and diverse approaches to modeling parks equity across more than 10 Boston neighborhoods ([Follow this link to a map of project sites in progress](#)). The grantees bring a vast range



of experience to their proposals: some have built trust in Boston over many decades, while others are testing terrain to mark new chapters in greenspace activation and spatial justice. Each proposes to engage participants through intersections of movement, making, music, storytelling, ritual, history-keeping and future-making. Cultural affirmation and themes of healing and revitalization run through all of the projects. (Click links in proposal descriptions by applicants).

Project Lead	Proposal	Date(s) Location(s) TBC	Award
<b>Andre Strongbearheart Gaines Jr.</b> <a href="http://andrestrongbearheart.com">andrestrongbearheart.com</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/no_loose_braids">@no_loose_braids</a>	<a href="#">Indigenous cultural revitalization</a> in Boston, making a mishoon (traditional canoe) as a bridge between the Nipmuc and Massachusetts tribes.	7-10 days in early fall, site proposals forthcoming	\$20,000
<b>Anita Morson-Matra</b> <a href="http://anitamorsonmatra.com">anitamorsonmatra.com</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/a_anita_anita_a">@a_anita_anita_a</a> with <a href="#">Jean Appolon Expressions</a>	<a href="#">Baldwin in the Park: Collective Healing through Movement &amp; Meaning</a> , featuring Baldwin texts & Afro-Haitian rhythm to guide relationship building & explore/reclaim freedom in parks.	Fall, Boston Common and Rose Kennedy Greenway, Downtown	\$10,000
<b>Asian Community Development Corporation</b> (Christine Nguyen) <a href="http://asiancdc.org">asiancdc.org</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/asiancdc">@asiancdc</a>	<a href="#">Hudson Street Stoop/ Chinatown Backyard</a> , ongoing anti-displacement series in which residents collaborate with artists to recreate “stoop culture.”	Fall, One Greenway Park at 66-88 Hudson Street, Chinatown	\$10,000
<b>Boston Liberation Center</b> (Rachel Domond) <a href="http://liberationnews.org/boston-liberation-center">liberationnews.org/boston-liberation-center</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/bostonliberationcenter">@bostonliberationcenter</a>	<a href="#">1-year anniversary celebration &amp; reflection event on public land</a> with local food, music/art & family activities for a working-class community center.	August 21, reclaimed lot next to the Boston Liberation Center, 194 Blue Hill Avenue, Roxbury	\$5,000
<b>Bridgeside Cypher</b> (Jillian Girardin) <a href="http://linktr.ee/BridgeCyph">linktr.ee/BridgeCyph</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/bridgecyph">@bridgecyph</a>	<a href="#">Public Outdoor Hip-Hop Open Mic Series</a> , cypher sessions to expose & invite passersby of all backgrounds to celebrate the energy of live hip-hop.	Dates TBC, along the Emerald Necklace parks, various neighborhoods	\$10,000
<b>Dzidzor Azaglo &amp; Crystal Bi</b> <a href="http://dzidzor.com">dzidzor.com</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/dzidzorazaglo">@dzidzorazaglo</a> <a href="http://crystal-bi.com">crystal-bi.com</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/crystalbi_b">@crystalbi_b</a>	<a href="#">Wildermess Bittersweet Vynes Project</a> , collectively-created art installation of messages on ribbons tied to Asiatic bittersweet vines to preserve lessons on being, native tongues, recipes, stories, poems, proverbs and prayers.	Date TBC, Franklin Park, Dorchester/Roxbury	\$20,000
<b>Hyde Square Task Force</b> (Barbara Civill Montoya) <a href="http://hydesquare.org">hydesquare.org</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/hydesquaretf">@hydesquaretf</a>	<a href="#">Afro-latin cultural affirmation</a> with live concert, new visual arts activities by BIPOC artists, mural celebrating Latin music and youth dance performances across 3 locations.	Dates TBC, Mozart Park, Blessed Sacrament & Mildred C. Hailey Apts, Latin Quarter Cultural District, Jamaica Plain	\$5,000
<b>Ife Franklin</b> <a href="http://ifearts.com">ifearts.com</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/ife_franklin_slave_narrative">@ife_franklin_slave_narrative</a>	<a href="#">Series of ancestor processions</a> to communally honor gravesites & bring justice to the ancestral spirits of Boston’s enslaved African Americans.	Dates TBC, cemeteries in neighborhoods including the North End and Brookline	\$10,000

<b>Karen Susan Young</b> <a href="http://karensusanyoung.com">karensusanyoung.com</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/karensusanyoung">@karensusanyoung</a> , Mica Rose and Mel Taing with elders of <a href="#">Older &amp; Bolder</a> and <a href="#">Elizabeth James-Perry</a>	<a href="#">Taiko and the Parks</a> , three events led by an intergenerational team to center Boston elders, acknowledge our lands, share sustainable gardening practices and celebrate the power of taiko to hold and highlight our green spaces.	August-September, McConnell Park, Savin Hill, Iacono Park, Hyde Park, and Fallon Field, Roslindale	\$20,000
<b>Kera Washington /Zili Misik</b> <a href="http://Zilimisik.com">Zilimisik.com</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/zilimisik">@zilimisik</a> with sculptor <a href="#">Walter Clark</a> .	<a href="#">Festival to highlight Afro-diasporic arts</a> with interactive dance workshops, performances by 4 music troupes and temporary installation of sculpture.	July 31 or August 13 TBC, Pope John Paul II Park, Neponset	\$20,000
<b>Linda N. Wells</b> <a href="http://lindawellnesswarrior.com">lindawellnesswarrior.com</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/lindawellnesswarrior">@lindawellnesswarrior</a>	<a href="#">Platform for Black and indigeous yoga practitioners</a> to lead sessions for all "shapes, sizes, abilities in the elements."	Dates through October 5, Franklin Park, Dorchester/Roxbury	\$5,000
<b>MetaMovements Latin Dance</b> (Eli Pabon) <a href="http://metamovements.com">metamovements.com</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/metamovements">@metamovements</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/ladyelipabon">@ladyelipabon</a>	<a href="#">Salsa in the Park</a> bringing live performance and dance instruction for people of all abilities and backgrounds back to where it all began in Boston's South End in 2008 and to Jamaica Plain.	Dates TBC, proposed locations near Blackstone Community Center, South End and Flaherty Playground, Jamaica Plain	\$10,000
<b>Nakia Hill</b> <a href="http://nakiahill.com">nakiahill.com</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/nakia_hill">@nakia_hill</a>	<a href="#">Writing our truth in the Park</a> intergenerational workshops for BIPOC women and girls to write about their memories and relationship to Boston parks. Their nonfiction stories will be eligible to be professionally bound in a published book.	Dates TBC, parks along/near the Emerald Necklace, various neighborhoods where BIPOC residents reside	\$20,000
<b>Ngoc-Tran Vu</b> <a href="http://tranvuarts.com">tranvuarts.com</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/tranvuarts">@tranvuarts</a> with <a href="#">Asian American Resource Workshop</a>	<a href="#">Public interactive arts exhibition</a> with local music, mural, food, stories to amplify critical spatial justice and displacement issues within the Asian American Pacific Islander community.	Date TBC, Town Field, Dorchester	\$10,000
<b>Robert Peters &amp; Erin Genia</b> <a href="http://creativeground.org/profile/robert-peters">creativeground.org/profile/robert-peters</a> <a href="http://eringenia.studio">eringenia.studio</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/emgenia">@emgenia</a>	<a href="#">Ceremonial Circle and Medicine Fire</a> on behalf of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe to gift educational programs & healing from loss on Boston public land.	October 10 (Indigenous Peoples' Day), site proposals forthcoming	\$20,000
<b>Veronica Robles</b> <a href="http://Veronicaroblesculturalcenter.org">Veronicaroblesculturalcenter.org</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/vroccboston">@vroccboston</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/veronicaroblesmariachi">@veronicaroblesmariachi</a>	<a href="#">The Day of the Dead Celebration &amp; Parade</a> , inviting local community to co-create visual elements that reaffirm Latin immigrant culture.	October 30, Central Square Park, Meridian & Water Streets, East Boston	\$10,000

## **Next for Olmsted Now Parks Equity & Spatial Justice Projects**

“We’re so grateful to the Olmsted Now Committee of Neighborhoods,” said Christine Nguyen of Asian Community Development Corporation. “*Chinatown Backyard* has been a refuge and space for connection and creativity for the community since its inception a few years ago. This grant will help us usher in its next phase of community gardening and arts and culture.”

Writer and educator Nakia Hill said of her proposal to publish a book featuring stories of women and girls of color and their connections to Boston parks, “I think this is a really great way to archive Olmsted’s legacy *and* for community members to have an intimate keepsake for future generations to look back on their Boston park experiences.”

The Conservancy and DS4SI will continue to support the Committee through October as Committee members pivot to championing the remarkable vision, ability and agency of the grantees. In addition to providing funds, the Conservancy will advocate for grantees and promote programs as they are finalized via media alerts, web and social media posts and documentation. Acknowledging the range of applicant experience and proposal scope, the Conservancy has also developed opt-in benefits for grantees to realize their projects, including an introductory meeting with civic partners, permitting and production guidance, promotional toolkits, published project profiles, access to volunteer networks and more.

Jen Mergel, Director of Experience & Cultural Partnerships at the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, works closely with the Committee and observed: “What is most exciting about these proposals is how they seek to move the needle, not only on how cultural activities can enrich Boston’s greenspace, but how greenspace can be essential to enriching Boston’s cultural landscape. As the bicentennial invites neighborhood leaders and local creatives to seed this fertile ground, now the key question is how to learn from and sustain this work going forward – through *and beyond 2022*.”

Follow the grantees’ journeys as their proposals become scheduled programs through October 2022, and learn more about event dates, locations and ways to get involved at [olmstednow.org](http://olmstednow.org) and [@olmstednow](https://twitter.com/olmstednow).

## **About the Grant’s Diversity of Applicants**

87 proposals were received from collectives (37.5%), individuals (31%), organizations (22%) and small businesses (9.5%). Over 61% of the applicants self-identified as female/women-led and over 14% as non-binary/gender-variant/trans/queer-led. A majority of applicants self-identified in proportions exceeding [Boston’s own census counts \(see link\)](#): 40 (45.5%) are Black/African American, 13 (14.5%) are multi-racial or bi-racial, 11 (12.5%) are Asian, 7 (8%) are Native /American Indian; while some counts were fewer than Boston averages: 11 (12.%) are Latino/Hispanic and 27 (30%) are white/Caucasian. In addition, 33% of applicants identified as immigrant or first-generation American. Geographically, applications came from a variety of locations within Boston, including Allston, Chinatown, many parts of Dorchester, East Boston, Hyde Park, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, Roslindale and Roxbury, and from Greater Boston communities, including Belmont, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Malden, Medford, Quincy, Somerville, Watertown, Wellesley and as far as Leominster and Northampton.

## **About the Committee of Neighborhoods**

To orient Bicentennial planning, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy commissioned [Stephen Gray](#), Harvard Associate Professor of Urban Design, and his firm [Grayscale Collaborative](#) to conduct an [equity analysis and action plan](#). This foundation has guided Olmsted Now organizers to do more than “include” communities that have historically been structurally excluded from park decision-making in Greater Boston. The Bicentennial has become the opportunity to recognize and affirm the power within neighborhoods to imagine new ways to experience and activate public space, and to re-center programming decisions where they need to be: in the community.



The [Committee of Neighborhoods](#) was formed in 2021 to achieve this. Based on Grayscale's research highlighting equity gaps around Franklin Park and collaboration with Jay Lee, volunteer board member of [Franklin Park Coalition](#), the Committee was developed around Franklin Park's Roxbury, Grove Hall, Mattapan and Dorchester neighborhoods. [Design Studio for Social Intervention](#) (DS4SI), Boston's experts in spatial justice and public-making, turned the concept of the Committee into a living cohort community. DS4SI's Art & Creative Placemaking lead Joelle Fontaine intentionally nurtured the Committee into a community of critical and creative voices, including artists and educators, non-profit directors, and community and small business organizers. She has facilitated Committee member training 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.

### **Members of the Committee of Neighborhoods (\*Indicates Grant Review Task Force):**

Andrew Sharpe, Authentic Caribbean Foundation

\*Anita Morson-Matra, Urban planner & Cultural Producer: Baldwin in the Park

\*Ambar Johnson, LivableStreets Alliance

\*Barrington Edwards, Artist

\*Biplaw Rai, Comfort Kitchen

\*Jay Lee, Franklin Park Coalition

\*John Linehan, Franklin Park Zoo/ Greater Grove Hall Main Streets

\*Karenlyn Bunch, Greater Grove Hall Main Streets

\*Karen Young, Artist

Kay Savage, Mattapan Food & Fitness

\*Nakia Hill, Educator and Writer, 826 Boston

\*Paul Willis, Hip Hop Artist and DEI Consultant

Pat Spence, Urban Farming Institute

Shavel'le Olivier, Mattapan Food & Fitness

Facilitators: \*Joelle Fontaine, DS4SI & \*Lori Lobenstine, DS4SI

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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 neighborhoods 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 the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site (Fairsted), with generous support from Paul and Katie Bittenwieser, Kate and Ben Taylor, National Collaborative for Health Equity, Verizon, Four Lucky Dogs, Davis Family Charitable Foundation, Brooke and Jeff Cook, Marjorie and Nicholas Greville, Hastings Family Foundation, The Caroline Loughlin Fund, The Lawrence & Lillian Solomon Foundation, Sarah Freeman, Focus Real Estate, Highland Partners Charitable Fund, Lois R. Kunian, the “Come Together” Fund of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy Board and other individuals, organizations and businesses. [www.olmstednow.org](http://www.olmstednow.org)

### **About the Emerald Necklace Conservancy**

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy is a community-supported non-profit founded in 1998 to steward and champion the Emerald Necklace, Boston’s largest park system of seven distinct parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted to connect over a dozen neighborhoods with 1,100 acres of meadows, woodlands, waterways, paths and parkways. Working with civic and neighborhood partners, the Conservancy strengthens parks, people and policy by advocating for the Emerald Necklace and advancing access, maintenance and restoration, park stewardship and education through volunteer and youth programs and inclusive public programming. The parks serve as a healing 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 as a safe and socially distanced destination for recreation and reconnection since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. [www.emeraldnecklace.org](http://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](http://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 the Greater Boston region as their unceded ancestral territories. This acknowledgement is a starting point toward right relations with Indigenous neighbors and their understandings of land stewardship.

<https://www.boston.gov/news/city-council-offers-land-acknowledgement>

### **For more information, please contact:**

Edwina A. Kluender  
KLÜNDER Communications  
617 888 5859 / [ekluender@gmail.com](mailto:ekluender@gmail.com)

