



Emerald Necklace

CONSERVANCY

Proposed Redevelopment in Historic Franklin Park

Overview

- The City of Boston and Boston Unity Soccer Partners LLC recently unveiled a proposal for the massive expansion and reconstruction of Franklin Park's White Stadium for a professional, for-profit soccer team, without proper environmental review or community process. This proposal has alarmed many community leaders around the park and city-wide, and is not in the best interest of this important and historic park, the environment or the communities it serves.

Key Points:

- This proposal will privatize and remove free use and enjoyment of a public recreation treasure. Franklin Park is one of only four of Olmsted's famous "country parks" in the U.S. that remain as seminal work in the field of landscape architecture. All of the stadium and surrounding grounds would be limited to ticketed fans of the professional soccer team for over 75% of the Saturdays from spring through fall. Music and cultural festivals, access to basketball, cross country running, track meets and tennis courts would take a backseat to the professional soccer team schedule.
- White Stadium was constructed in the 1940's using the George Robert White Fund—a public, charitable trust of and for the City of Boston—and the 14-acre stadium includes many recreational facilities and greenspace/parkland used by the park-going public. Enacted in 1972, the [Massachusetts' Constitution Article 97](#) protects public park and recreation land and restricts the often-attempted use of "free" public park space for private or purposed public but non-recreational purposes. This proposal does not comply with the constitutional protection of White Stadium.

Lack of Coordination and Unified Thoughtful Vision for Franklin Park

- White Stadium is an essential recreational facility used by the Boston Public Schools; it has been neglected for decades and needs investment. The recently completed (and award-winning) [Franklin Park Action Plan](#) did not conceive, discuss or engage in public conversations about options for a major expansion, change in use, rezoning and 30-year leasing to a professional soccer team.
- Boston's Emerald Necklace is on the National Register of Historic Places and is a City of Boston Landmark and was designed by renowned landscape architect [Frederick Law Olmsted](#). Franklin Park is by far the largest park in Boston [but has already lost a third of the original public and free open space over the decades, including the land for Shattuck Hospital, the Franklin Park Zoo, the William Devine Golf Course and other changes](#). It serves some of the most important communities in Boston, including Dorchester, Mattapan, Roxbury and Jamaica Plain, all of which are considered "Environmental Justice Communities" with a significant population of BIPOC residents. Franklin Park is considered by many to be the cultural park center for many of Boston's communities of color, with the location of the annual Juneteenth Celebration, [BAMS Fest](#), the Caribbean Festival and much more.

[SAVE WHITE STADIUM FOR THE PEOPLE OF DORCHESTER,
MATTAPAN, JAMAICA PLAIN AND ROXBURY!](#)



Lack of Public Process:

- The “public” process for this project started during the busy holiday season, with a massive report released on December 18, 2023 and rushed public meetings via Zoom. White Stadium is in disrepair and needs investment, but this process allows no time for a true public process to discuss options.
- It has been announced that this project would be in construction in the fall of 2024 and available to the professional women’s team in 2026.
- The community was never given the opportunity to evaluate alternatives – this is the one option presented. The community and general public was not involved in this process, or in determining why a “partnership” of this sort is in the public interest: where the city provides most of the funding but the professional, for-profit soccer team receives preferred weekend use.

Lack of Appropriate Environmental Review:

- There are many concerns with the current plan; two key issues are:
 - Traffic Concerns: Lack of clear traffic plans – no new parking has been proposed; instead, an ill-conceived plan for hundreds of shuttle buses to serve suburban soccer fans.
 - Landscaper and Use Impacts: The new design is not compatible with Olmsted’s design for the park. It creates a berm (high wall) between the Playstead – the main playspace in the heart of the park, and removes parkland for free public use, and breaks up the historic connections between the Overlook area and Playstead. The proposal also includes the removal of numerous trees.
- Many other red flags are present, but there has been no time to adequately review, ask questions or propose changes. These include the displacement of Boston Public Schools’ football program and other sports, community events and programs, the proposed new restaurants, retail and alcohol sales, and potential light and sound pollution.

Key Links:

Proposal by the Boston Unity Investment Group/Soccer LLC on the City of Boston Webpage:

<https://www.bostonplans.org/projects/development-projects/white-stadium>

Proposal Issued on BPDA website December 18:

<https://bpda.app.box.com/s/qmgi7fbuyxuova9dcsxnh7foifjeywff>

Projected Budget:

- \$50+ Million from the City of Boston
- \$30+ Million from Boston Unity

Key Proponents: Boston Unity Soccer Partners LLC and the City of Boston

Key Agencies: The George Robert White Fund, a public charitable trust of the City of Boston, Boston Public Schools, City of Boston, City of Boston Parks and Recreation Department