

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**EMERALD NECKLACE CONSERVANCY AND  
GRAYSCALE COLLABORATIVE AWARDED  
THE JURY SPECIAL RECOGNITION FOR  
“OUTSTANDING SOCIAL IMPACT”  
BY THE BOSTON SOCIETY OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS**

*Partners are recognized for Olmsted Now Committee of Neighborhoods*

**Boston, MA May 29, 2024** – The [Emerald Necklace Conservancy](#), [Grayscale Collaborative](#), and numerous project partners have been awarded the Jury Special Recognition for **Outstanding Social Impact** for the work on Olmsted Now’s *Committee of Neighborhoods* by the [Boston Society of Landscape Architects](#) (BSLA). Completed in 2022, Olmsted Now was Greater Boston’s contribution to the bicentennial project of the Olmsted Network. This local effort focused on not only honoring the life of America’s first landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, but also expanding and carrying forward his ideas into the present to explore the contemporary relevance of Olmsted’s legacy values: shared use, shared health and shared power across all parks and public space.

Given Olmsted’s big hopes for the Boston region, and the overlapping crises of racial justice and public health unfolding during the 2020-21 planning phase, the team led a multi-prong campaign to reify the role of landscapes as essential infrastructure for community well-being and democratic exchange. With the *Committee of Neighborhoods*, a group of 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, the team convened an unprecedented spread of community partners to address disparities in park governance, access, and representation. From April to October 2022, the Committee’s community grant making campaign, known as the *Parks Equity and Spatial Justice Grant* with support by the “Come Together” Fund of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy Board, successfully funded 16 programs across 14 neighborhoods (see below for full list of projects). This process transformed how Boston’s public spaces are activated and perceived by under-represented communities, including youth and Bostonians of color. The impacts continue on, with dozens of new partnerships, an actionable model of shared decision-making, and a renewed understanding of parks equity and spatial justice for Greater Boston. [Here](#) is the report summarizing the efforts, measuring the impacts, and recording lessons learned to guide the Emerald Necklace Conservancy’s future work.

“This project showcases a unique and powerful activation campaign that contextualizes Olmsted parks for today’s communities. The methodologies elevate community voices to raise awareness and reveal new opportunities for contemporary users,” shared the **jury of BSLA**.

"The Committee of Neighborhoods represents a paradigm shift in parks management: increased transparency, community-led initiatives driving budgetary allocations and operational decisions, and the creation of new, permanent positions for resident leaders on governing boards. Special recognition of this work by the Boston Society of Landscape Architects demonstrates a real and growing appetite for racial equity in cities, and the Olmsted Now Committee of Neighborhoods is proof of concept that true power-sharing works. It sets a new standard for Boston by putting communities in the driver's seat to imagine a better and more inclusive world," shared **Stephen Gray, Principal and Founder of Grayscale Collaborative**.

"We are honored to be recognized by BSLA for the program we sponsored and fostered, a truly collaborative project. We all learned a lot through this program, working with community leaders, thinking deeply about Olmsted's legacy and belief in free public space. The Olmsted Now project made clear how important community voices and decision-making power is in true public park and community stewardship. Learning and analysis from this work and relationships formed around all of our parks, inform and guide our work, including our support of community voices for Franklin Park, the largest park in the Emerald Necklace, which serves some of our most important environmental justice communities. These principles are employed as we have proactively worked to develop alternative plans for the redevelopment of the current Shattuck Hospital site, which was once parkland, and standing alongside with community members advocating for the protection of public parkland in the current proposal for White Stadium," said **Karen Mauney-Brodek, President of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy**.

The 16 projects across 14 neighborhoods selected by the Committee of Neighborhoods that were aligned with the guiding values of shared use, shared health, and shared power were:

1. **HYDE SQUARE TASK FORCE:** Activation of 3 park spaces in the Boston's Latin Quarter Cultural District with Afro-Latin Cultural Activations: a live concert with Puerto Rican music, public art activities, a celebration of a mural focused on the history of Afro-Latin music/dance, and performances of HSTF youth.
2. **BRIDGESIDE CYPHER:** Public outdoor hip-hop open mic cyphers across Boston parks to expose passers-by of all backgrounds to celebrate the energy and welcome of live hip-hop.
3. **KAREN SUSAN YOUNG,** with Mica Rose and Mel Tiang with elders of Older & Bolder and Aquinnah Wampanoag artist and scientist Elizabeth James-Perry: 3 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.
4. **LINDA WELLNESS WARRIOR:** Free yoga in Franklin Park, expanding a platform for other black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) yoga & wellness instructors to connect to learners in the park.
5. **BOSTON LIBERATION CENTER:** 1-year anniversary celebration & reflection event on public land in reclaimed green lot with local food, music/art & family activities for a working-class community center.
6. **METAMOVEMENTS LATIN DANCE COMPANY:** Reprising Salsa in the Park after the pandemic pause, the goal was to bring live performance and dance instruction for people of all abilities and backgrounds.

7. KERA WASHINGTON OF ZILI MISIK: Festival to highlight Afro-diasporic arts with interactive dance workshops, performances by 4 music troupes and temporary installation of sculpture for Black and Brown residents of Boston.
8. NGOC-TRAN VU: Public interactive arts exhibition with Asian American Resource Workshop including local music, mural, food and stories to amplify critical spatial justice and displacement issues within the Asian-American, Pacific-Islander community in Dorchester.
9. IFÉ FRANKLIN: A processional at Copps Hill Burial Ground, North End to communally honor gravesites and bring justice to the ancestral spirits of Black Bostonians.
10. DZIDZOR AZAGLO AND CRYSTAL BI: Wilderness Project, an interactive art installation inviting participants to write ancient and new prayers, proverbs, and poems on ribbons tied to woven structures of Asiatic Bittersweet vines.
11. ASIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION: CHRISTINE NGUYEN AND JEENA CHANG: Hudson Street Stoop/Chinatown Backyard: an ongoing anti-displacement series in which residents collaborate with artists to recreate “stoopculture” through anchor points that rotate every 18 months.
12. NAKIA HILL: Intergenerational workshops for BIPOC women and girls to write about their memories and relationship to Boston parks, with their stories archived in a published book.
13. ANITA MORSON-MATRA: Baldwin in the Park: Collective Healing through Movement & Meaning for all ages and abilities to explore James Baldwin’s ideas and Afro-Haitian rhythm to reclaim bodily freedom in Boston’s most popular greenspaces, especially by those who have felt unwelcome.
14. VERONICA ROBLES: Expand New England’s largest Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead Celebration and Parade to East Boston’s Central Square Park inviting local communities to co-create visual elements that reaffirm Latin immigrant culture with children and elders.
15. ANDRE STRONGBEARHEART GAINES, JR.: Indigenous cultural revitalization within Boston; making a mishoon (traditional canoe) as a bridge between the Nipmuc and Massachusetts tribes and as reparative justice within the City limits.
16. ROBERT PETERS: Re-establish an intertribal medicine circle on public land, Scarboro Hill in Franklin Park, to provide a spiritual, cultural and educational space for usage by Indigenous people and the public in Boston

For full details of the Outstanding Social Impact recognition, please visit:

[www.bsfieldbook.com/olmsted-now-committee-of-neighborhoods](http://www.bsfieldbook.com/olmsted-now-committee-of-neighborhoods)

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### **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:**

Andrew Sharpe, Authentic Caribbean Foundation  
Anita Morson-Matra, Baldwin in the Park  
Ambar Johnson, Liveable Streets Alliance  
Barrington Edwards, Artist  
Biplaw Rai, Comfort Kitchen  
Jay Lee, Franklin Park Coalition/ City of Boston  
John Linehan, Franklin Park Zoo/ Greater Grove Hall Main Streets  
Karenlyn Bunch, Greater Grove Hall Main Streets  
Karen Young, Artist  
Asiyah Herrera, 826 Boston  
Nakia Hill, 826 Boston  
Paul Willis, 826 Boston  
Youth Literary Advisory Board, 826 Boston  
Pat Spence, Urban Farming Institute  
Shavel’le Olivier, Mattapan Food & Fitness  
Kay Savage, Mattapan Food & Fitness

### **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 Bottenwieser, 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 Grayscale Collaborative**

Grayscale Collaborative was founded in 2015 as a 100% minority-owned urban design and planning firm to work with public and private clients in diverse cultural and political environments as they address equity challenges, build relationships, and advance more inclusive communities. Our cross-disciplinary team supports a range of project goals, including technical design work as well as collaborative programs and strategies that shape the spaces and places we share. At Grayscale, we work with a range of partners to imagine and create more inclusive communities, infrastructures, and plans by leveraging urban design and planning processes toward more equitably distributed resources, opportunities, and power. We approach every project as a new opportunity to build partnerships between cities, institutions, and communities, often working with clients who want to do things differently.

[www.grayscalecollaborative.com](http://www.grayscalecollaborative.com)

### **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.

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

### **About the Boston Society of Landscape Architects (BSLA)**

Founded in 1913, the BSLA were the first local chapter of ASLA. Today, from Portland to Provincetown, Amherst to Augusta, the Berkshires to New Bedford to Boston, BSLA connects, convenes, and celebrates landscape architects and the greater design community, and strives to advance the profession of landscape architecture, and support the creation of extraordinary – resilient, equitable, beautiful -- environments throughout the region and the world. BSLA believe in inclusion, and value everyone working to create outdoor spaces that uplift individuals, families, neighborhoods, and regions. BSLA are volunteer led, volunteer driven, and aims to serve the entire landscape architecture community. [www.bslanow.org](http://www.bslanow.org)