



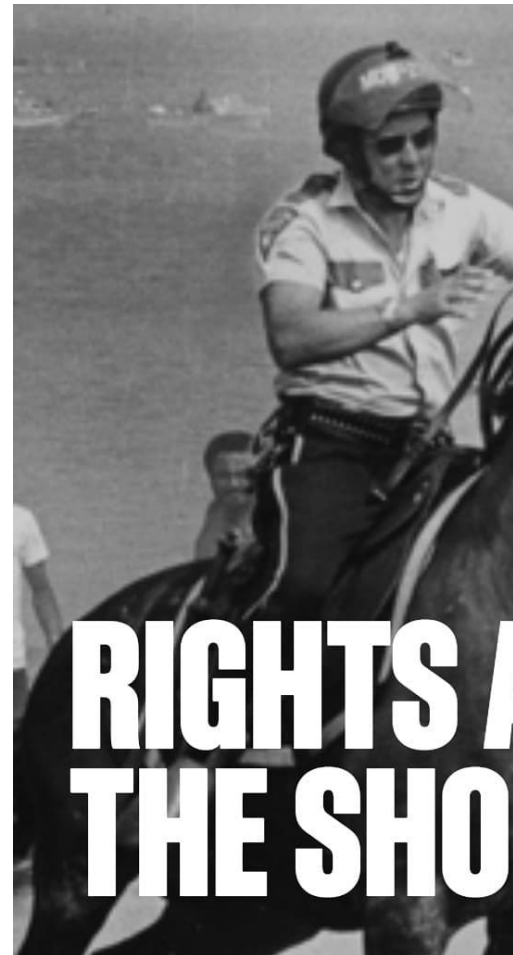
OLMSTED NOW

Impact Report

**OLMSTED
NOW**



**GREATER BOSTON'S
OLMSTED BICENTENNIAL**





graphy of Wellness:
shaped the American

WHO GETS TO BELONG IN BOSTON?

“We need to be very intentional about welcoming Boston’s diverse communities back into public spaces.

“We have an opportunity to imagine new, more welcoming and just ways to be together, but we are also facing greater fear of the other.

“Without care, we will re-inscribe who already gets to feel welcome in public.”

Front Cover: Olmsted Now Parks Equity & Spatial Justice project Taiko and the Parks by Karen Young with Mel Tiang and Mica Rose. Elders of Grove Hall and Blake Estates perform with guest artists Elizabeth James Perry and Michelle Fujii in Boston’s Iacono Park on August 23, 2022. Image: Jen Mergel. Endpapers: selection of Instagram posts from [@olmstednow](https://www.instagram.com/olmstednow).

A man with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a bright red hoodie, stands on the left side of the frame, gesturing with his right hand as he speaks. He is positioned in front of a white pop-up tent. In the background, two women are seated at a table. The woman in the foreground wears a dark blue jacket and a matching hat, looking towards the speaker. The woman behind her is also wearing a red hoodie and is partially visible. The table in front of them is covered with a white cloth and holds various items: a laptop displaying a map, a green folder, a clear plastic cup with yellow liquid, a white bowl, and some papers. To the left of the man, there is a sign that says "ASK US ABOUT..." and a small sign that says "watch". The background shows a grassy area with trees and a clear sky. The overall scene suggests an outdoor community event or a public consultation session.

**“Measure what you value and
others will value what you measure.”**

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy presents this report to summarize the efforts and measure impacts of Olmsted Now: Greater Boston's Olmsted Bicentennial to strengthen equitable engagement, diversify connections and grow opportunities for shared use, health and empowerment in parks and public spaces. The recorded accomplishments and lessons learned are intended to guide the Conservancy's future work, and to serve as a lasting community reference and resource.

The report has been drafted by Jen Mergel for the Conservancy, which commissioned CultureHouse to collect and analyze data on the Parks as Platform program and to oversee overall data presentation and publication. It follows guidelines commissioned from Mendelsohn, Gittleman & Associates, data commissioned from Grayscale Collaborative and reflections facilitated by Design Studio for Social Intervention.

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Muddy Water Initiative teen volunteer Preston speaks to attendees of Parks as Platform in Olmsted Park on April 23, 2022. Image: Tyahra Angus, Afrocentered Media. Quote: John Bare, "Evaluation and the Sacred Bundle," *The Evaluation Exchange* Volume XI, No. 2, Summer 2005.



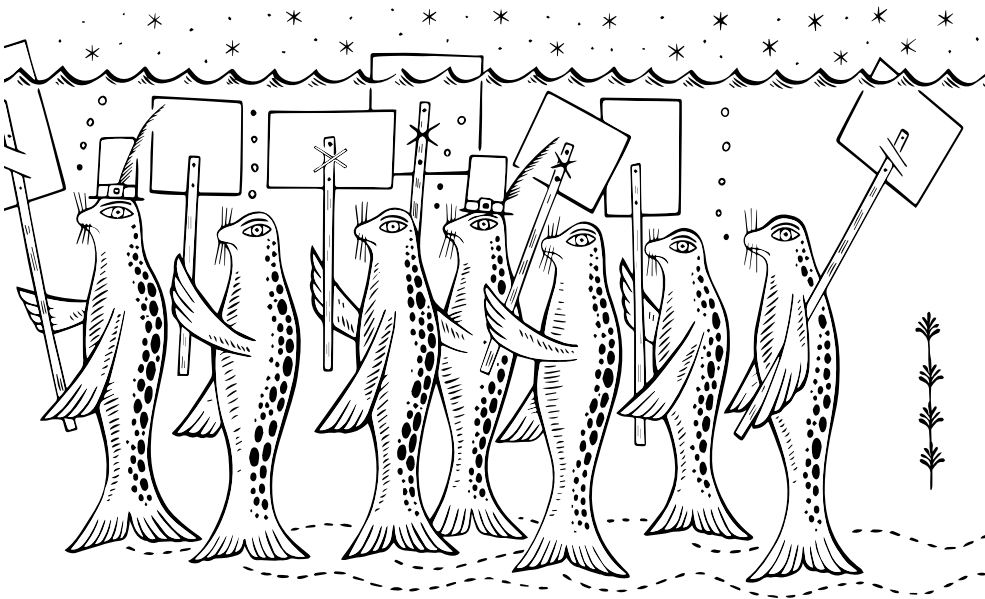


TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THIS REPORT	5
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	9
INTRODUCTION	15
PARTNERSHIPS	23
POWER SHARING	53
PARKS AS PLATFORM	99
RECOGNITION	139
KEY LEARNINGS	157



Emerald Necklace Conservancy
President Karen Mauney-Brodek with
Olmsted 2022 Founder Gerry Wright
and Supervisory Park Ranger at
Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic
Site Brianne Cassetta at Parkfest in
Franklin Park on September 24, 2022.
Image: Sarah Freeman



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Olmsted Now: Greater Boston's Olmsted Bicentennial was collaborative by design. Rather than focus on a single person, date or place, the 2022 programming for Olmsted Now has been an opportunity to explore Olmsted's vision for parks to help us "come together, and be seen coming together."¹



Indigenous communities across their territories, now Greater Boston and eastern Massachusetts. Image: (Wikimedia Commons)

1. Annual Reports of the Brooklyn Park Commissioners, 1861-1873: Reprinted by Order of the Board, with Such Acts of the Legislature in Their Amended Form, as Relate to the Brooklyn Parks, and Their Management. (1873). United States

As an effort to explore past, present and future relationships to landscape through the lens of justice, this report follows the practice across Olmsted Now communications and program introductions: to first acknowledge that Greater Boston is the ancestral and unceded territory of the Massachusett people, also long stewarded by the Nipmuc and Wampanoag people. This statement is a first step and call to action: to honor and learn from their ongoing relations to these lands and waters.

The bicentennial planning and administration was co-organized by the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, whose non-profit team could serve as fiscal sponsor, fundraiser, communications coordinator and program permit applicant; and Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, whose team of National Park Service Rangers and experts gave the effort a federal reach, archival depth and excellent interpretive scope. This Greater Boston effort was inspired by decades of initial planning by Olmsted 2022, and presented in coordination with the national bicentennial Olmsted 200, organized by National Association for Olmsted Parks (now Olmsted Network).

While bicentennial partnerships were extensive (and are documented in the Partnerships section), the following individuals were invaluable contributors to the vision, organization, and execution of Olmsted Now from 2019 through 2022:



First planning meeting hosted by the Emerald Necklace Conservancy with Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site at Curley House, February 7, 2020. Image: Jen Mergel

OLMSTED NOW: SPECIAL THANKS

EMERALD NECKLACE CONSERVANCY

Karen Mauney-Brodek, President
Erin Baker, Administrative Assistant to the President
Adam Banks, Program & Events Coordinator
Declan Battles, Marketing & Communications Manager
Alyx Britton, Volunteer & Field Maintenance Coordinator
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Sharon Rice, Events Manager
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OLMSTED NOW CHAMPIONS ON THE CONSERVANCY BOARD OF DIRECTORS*

Benjamin Taylor	Lisa Hastings
Sonya Bhabhalia	Ted Landsmark
Jeff Cook	Barbara Millen
Sarah Freeman	JoAnn Robinson

*100% of the Board supported the "Come Together Fund," credited in the Recognition section

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Jason Newman, Superintendent
Brianne Cassetta, Supervisory Park Ranger
Sophia Bass Werner Jordan, Lead Park Ranger
Akea Cader, Youth Development & Employment Coordinator
Mathew MacDonald, Olmsted 200 Community & Youth Engagement Specialist
Anthony Reed, Archivist
Isabel Schulman, Community & Youth Engagement Intern
Jill Trebbe, Site Manager

FRIENDS OF FAIRSTED

Phyllis Andersen	Lauren Meier
Alan S. Banks	Jay Olmsted
Alison Bassett	Sam E. Valentine
Arleyn A. Levee	Maddie Webster
Wendy Machmuller	Tom Woodward
Nance McGovern	Kyle Zick

OLMSTED 2022

Gerry Wright
Sarah Freeman
JoAnn Robinson

Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in Brookline hosted partners at the Olmsted Open House on November 5, 2022. Seated on "Never Too Much, Always Enough," a series of adirondack chairs created for the bicentennial by the historic site in collaboration with teens in the City of Boston Mayor's Mural Crew: Lead Park Ranger Sophia Bass Werner Jordan, Mural Crew founder Heidi Schork, Authentic Caribbean Foundation founder Andrew Sharpe, Jen Mergel of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and Mural Crew artist Jerome Jones, with props of Olmsted Sr. and his sons/partners. Image: Isabel Schulman



**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
OLMSTED PARKS/OLMSTED
NETWORK & OLSTED 200**

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Letta Neely

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Paul McCaffrey
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BROOKLINE PARKS & OPEN SPACE

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OF CONSERVATION AND
RECREATION**

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Jenny Norwood
Janice Parlon

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Jerome Jones
Elizabeth O’Brien

ARNOLD ARBORETUM

Courtney Allen
Jon Hetman
Sarah Nechman
Janetta Stringfellow

BAMS FEST

Catherine Morris
Lauren Schrieber

FENWAY PORCHFEST

Leah Camhi
Genevieve Day
Marie Fukuda

JP PORCHFEST/DUNAMIS BOSTON

Neo Gcabo
Eliza Malecki

CHARLESGATE ALLIANCE

Randall Albright Margaret Pokorny
Pam Beale Madeline Segal
H. Parker James



From left: Conor McCoy, John Lincan, Robert Peters, Andre StrongBearHeart Gaines, Jr., Kera Washington, Ifé Franklin, Karen Susan Young, Andrew Sharpe, Lia Kahan and (not pictured) Joelle Fontaine, Ngoc Tran Vu, Jen Mergel, Anita Morson-Matra, Dzier Azaglo, Crystal Bi, Nakia Hill, and Christine Nguyen meet at Curley House to review options to support Parks Equity & Spatial Justice Projects on August 16, 2022. Image: Jen Mergel

FRANKLIN PARK COALITION

Sandy Bailey
Jay Lee
Christine Poff
Rickie Thompson

EMBRACE BOSTON

Imari Paris Jeffries
Tammy Tai

And those who centered Olmsted Now:

THE COMMITTEE OF NEIGHBORHOODS and PARKS EQUITY & SPATIAL JUSTICE

PROJECT LEADS See the Power
Sharing section dedicated to their work.

INDIVIDUALS generous with time, ideas
and expertise included:

Danielle Abrams ***
Rachel Boesenberg
Ethan Carr
Garrett Dash Nelson
Debbie Dietrich-Smith
Maria Finkelmeier
Ashleigh Gordon
Stan Greenberg
Edwina Klünder
Joshua Meyer
Herb Nolan
Gretchen Rabinkin
Kendall Reiss
Daniela Rivera
Mary Ellen Strom

IMPACT REPORT: SPECIAL THANKS

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CULTUREHOUSE: Rishika Dhawan led
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**DESIGN STUDIO FOR SOCIAL
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facilitated essential reflection sessions and
authentic talkback forums that were the
source of several quotes and takeaways.

EMERALD NECKLACE

CONSERVANCY: Along with Jen Mergel,
Declan Battles, Kayla Crawford, Ciara
Culligan and Conor McCoy assembled,
visualized and edited data.

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED

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Schulman gathered essential partner data.

GRAYSCALE COLLABORATIVE: The
team's equity framework visualizations
and maps that guided Olmsted Now are
essential report references.

MENDELSON, GITTLEMAN

& ASSOCIATES: Julia Gittleman
established evaluation guidelines and made
recommendations for the Conservancy to
leverage learnings from Olmsted Now.

STUDIO UMMO: The team designed
brand fonts and palettes, and
commissioned artists Ben Jundanian and
Duke Riley, whose illustrations appear
throughout these pages.

PHOTOGRAPHS by Tyahra Angus
of AfroCentered Media, Artemesia
Luk of A.Luk Photo, Nannapat "Mild"
Laohapoonrungsee of M7 Art Studio and
Zeke Coleman. Additional photographs
were shared by Conservancy & NPS staff.

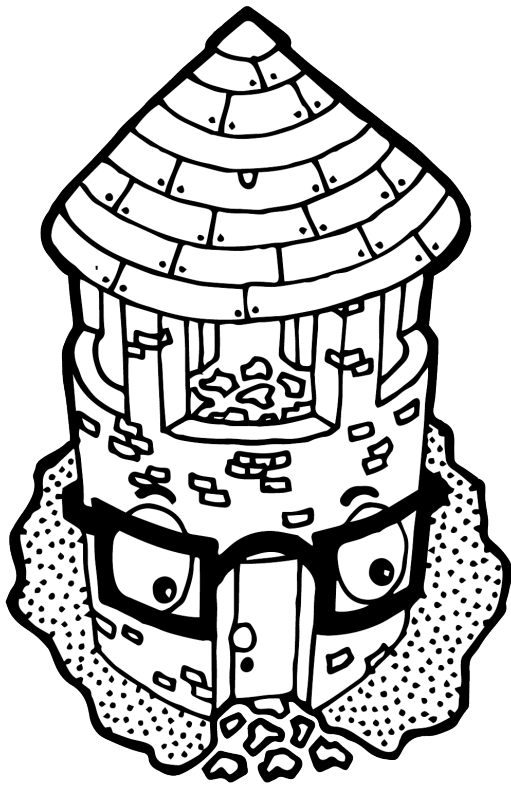
The Boston community was heartbroken
by the sudden loss of artist and educator
Danielle Abrams (1968-2022). She passed
away just after opening her exhibition with
Mary Ellen Strom Rights Along the Shore,
presented by the Boston Center for the
Arts as part of Olmsted Now. This Impact
Report is humbly dedicated to her spirit.

Danielle Abrams. Image: Jandra Cisneros/Tufts
University



Francois Noel with A Trike Called Funk
leading attendees in dance moves at
Parkfest in Franklin Park on September
24, 2022. Image: Artemisia Luk, A.Luk
Photo





INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

Visionary maker of parks and public places Frederick Law Olmsted (April 26, 1822–August 28, 1903) would have turned 200 in 2022. Much has changed in the centuries since his birth. Yet the ideas central to Olmsted’s work are still relevant today: from encouraging social exchange to building healthy environments.

While known by most worldwide for his first design, Central Park in New York, and symbolic sites like the U.S. Capitol grounds, Olmsted had a special relationship to Greater Boston. This is where he chose to move his family and his firm and establish his professional legacy in the last decades of his career. By the 1870s, his mature philosophies about how access to nature could heal individuals, communities and an entire divided nation were central to his designs for Greater Boston’s Emerald Necklace park system, and his mentees’ and firm’s designs for the broader Metropolitan District of Boston. These

projects intended for greenspace to be accessible by people of all walks of life, and to connect over a dozen neighborhoods in a rapidly expanding and urbanizing Boston, and by extension the region.

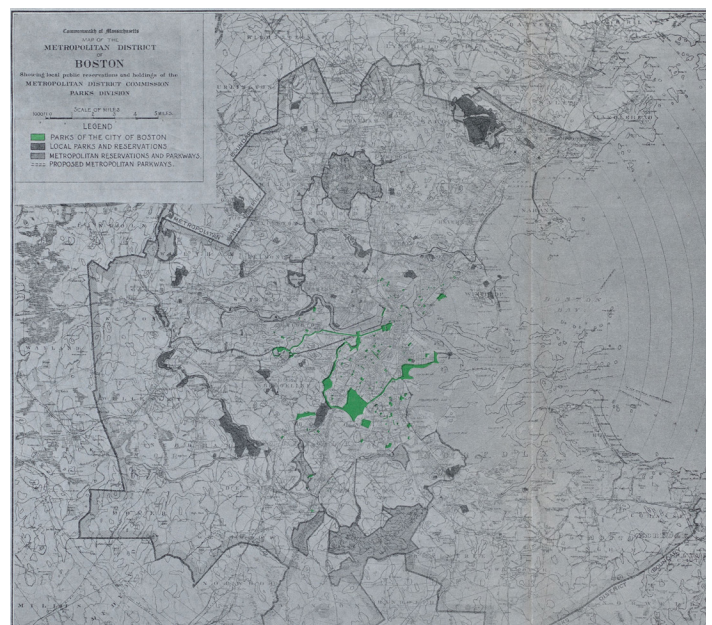
Near the end of his career in 1893, Olmsted implored his sons and mentees to “Decline any business that would stand in the way of doing the best for Boston all the time.”² That “best” work for Boston, what Olmsted determined retrospectively was his “most important work,” was not simply the design of parks, but the manifestation of big ideas. Olmsted had a vision to create places with the quality to heal, reconnect and empower people with a sense of “enlarged freedom” so they might be their best selves for each other. By the end of his career, this just and humanizing relationship to place and society is what Olmsted sought to inspire in Boston, in his profession, and in next generations.

2. Jane Holtz Kay. (2006) Lost Boston. United States

Map of Metropolitan District showing Boston park system in relation to other parks and public open spaces. From 1925 Report of City of Boston Park Department. See Olmsted’s designs including the Emerald Necklace Park System highlighted in green. Image: Leventhal Map and Education Center.



Frederick Law Olmsted c. 1895 by Bartlett F. Henney. Image: National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site



ESTABLISHING OLMSTED NOW

How could Olmsted's Bicentennial "do the best for Boston?" Given Olmsted's big ideas and hopes for Greater Boston, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy team and rangers at Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site aimed to co-organize a bicentennial responsive to this region's diverse local histories and potentially impactful on its most immediate needs. Knowing the nation-wide bicentennial, Olmsted 200, organized by the National Association for Olmsted Parks, would acknowledge Olmsted's many firsts across many places, the local effort had more latitude to be specific to this place. The Conservancy and Historic Site sought a bicentennial plan and outcome reflective of both Olmsted's vision and of Boston today.

Initial planning meetings in 2019 led to a first Greater Boston convening on February 7, 2020 co-organized by the Conservancy and Fairsted and hosted at the Conservancy's new offices at The James Michael Curley House in Jamaica Plain. Local programming strengths

3. Julia Africa, Cheri Ruane, Gary Hilderbrand, and Chris Reed, "Parks are essential – especially during the coronavirus pandemic," BostonGlobe.com

Left: May 5, 2020 piece in *The Boston Globe*. Screenshot.
Right: May 27, 2020 piece in *The New York Times*. Screenshot.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, parks should be celebrated, protected, and ultimately leveraged to support public health.

By Julia Africa, Cheri Ruane, Gary Hilderbrand, and Chris Reed Updated May 6, 2020, 4:51 a.m.



Visitors to Jamaica Pond on March 24. LANE TURNER/GLOBE STAFF

and interests were discussed, but what was immediately clear with only 2 of 33 attendees self-identifying as people of color, was that this planning group was not reflective of Boston as a majority-minority city. If the effort sought to meet Olmsted's ideals and introduce them to all of Boston, planning would need to be restructured.

Then came COVID-19 and all that followed. What was essential was being questioned daily. As all institutions of learning, business, faith, culture, health and recreation, political organizing and problem-solving shut down and even transit came to a halt, parks remained open and began to serve all of these social functions. As Olmsted had known in the 19th century, these greenspaces that could serve multiple functions were again being recognized as "essential public infrastructure," with experts arguing in *The Boston Globe* on May 5, 2020 that "Not unlike essential workers, their contributions during a pandemic should be celebrated, protected, and ultimately leveraged to support public health."³ Less than three weeks later, the "universal" and essential

NEW YORK | The Bird Watcher, That Incident and His Feelings on the Woman's Fate



An image of Amy Cooper from a video that went viral on Tuesday. Christian Cooper

right to access urban parks hit a harsh reality when, on May 25 a Black birder, Christian Cooper, noticed an unleashed dog and recorded white dog owner Amy Cooper calling 911 to send police because “an African American man is threatening me” —this on the same day George Floyd was later murdered at another public intersection in another American city 1000 miles away. Despite Olmsted’s hopes, whom have parks and public spaces truly welcomed? Who feels they have a right to fully be in open space? According to Christian Cooper: “We should be out here. The birds belong to all of us. The birds don’t care what color you are.”⁴

While invested in ideas of spatial justice and parks equity since fall of 2019, by summer of 2020, the bicentennial project for Greater Boston was focused on “NOW.” The project was named for the goal of bringing Olmsted’s ideas forward with what Rev Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called the “fierce urgency of now” because tomorrow is too late.⁵ This justice focus echoed Olmsted’s own racial and social justice work, such as his 1861 publication of *The Cotton Kingdom*, a time-sensitive abolitionist argument before the Civil War against Southern States’ presumption of sovereignty over land and people as slaves, and the resulting dehumanizing relationship to landscape. Olmsted’s arguments and his subsequent service as head of the Union Army Sanitary Commission grounded his convictions that access to nature could humanize, could affirm freedom, could heal.

Ultimately, Olmsted Now aimed to be as aspirational as Olmsted. The effort was not a hagiography of the man, and did not shy away from complex histories of “land stewardship.” Debate and criticism were welcome on these issues. That said, the overall focus of Olmsted Now was not “about” Olmsted. The effort never assumed that the important benefits of Olmsted parks, places or ideas could not be appreciated and advanced by those who did not know his name. Instead of his historical life, Olmsted Now sought to explore, expand and carry forward his ideas in his 200th year.

Olmsted was a “multihyphenate” of many skills across many disciplines—social observation and politics, agriculture and irrigation engineering, physical and mental health, transit and urban planning, artistry and design, tracking and shaping history—all of which came together in the American profession he shaped: Landscape Architecture. For Olmsted Now, his ideas about parks and public places were distilled into these themes by spring of 2021:

- Shared Use
- Shared Health
- Shared Power

Olmsted Now invited Greater Boston organizers, creators and institutions to explore and expand these themes in a way that met the moment. Throughout the past few years of global pandemics and political divisions, democratic access to open space has proved just as essential as it was when Olmsted asserted its value to America in his era of Civil War and reconstruction, rapid urbanization and Sanitary movements. Parks continue to play a critical role in nurturing the mental, physical and social health of communities—but only if people feel welcome to “come together” in them.

After COVID-19, Olmsted Now co-organizers recognized that honoring Olmsted’s ideals was historically fitting, but the concrete need to encourage and desegregate park use was also urgently pressing. A 2021 Boston Globe article about numerous university studies on “segregated mobility” showed that months-long pandemic “silos” continued to adversely impact the education, economic and violence outcomes of Black and Brown Bostonians: “After COVID... residents of the country’s 25 largest cities had less interaction with people of different racial and economic backgrounds... Less time in the finest city parks.”⁶

4. Sarah Maslin Nir, “[The Bird Watcher, That Incident, and His Feelings on the Woman’s Fate](#),” NYTimes.com
5. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, [1967 Speech at Riverside Church: “Beyond Vietnam,”](#) Sfuhs.org
6. David Scharfenberg, “[Where White People Go, Where Black People Go: Cellphone data reveals how segregated Bostonians are in their movements.](#)” BostonGlobe.com

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF OLMSTED NOW

Olmsted Now is a coalition-led effort to make parks and public spaces better for all through shared use, shared health and shared power. This ambition demands honesty and openness. To that end, Olmsted Now is guided by the following values:

Practice makes progress. Olmsted was accomplished but by no means perfect. His work and his views — spanning journalism and abolition, public health and emergency relief, urban planning and natural preservation, art and ultimately landscape architecture — shifted over time. Olmsted Now looks back at this body of work from the perspective of our current moment. Olmsted Now is also a human experiment, a safe space to question and critique with care.

Land stewardship is living wisdom. For millennia before Olmsted's work, people have been stewarding the lands and waters that now comprise the many parks across Greater Boston. This remains the traditional and unceded territory of the Massachusetts tribe, and a site of exchange with the Nipmuc and Wampanoag tribes. It is fundamental to both acknowledge these legacies and actively seek right relations with local Indigenous leaders as a way to re-center understandings of shared open space. This acknowledgement will evolve with shared learning.

“The fierce urgency of now.” Olmsted Now is driven by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1963 caution against acting too late to correct long-standing injustices. The time is now to explore how Olmsted's ideals for parks and open space relate to today's calls for environmental justice and spatial justice. These movements counter disparities in people's access to healthy environments or freedoms within public space based on race, culture, class, ability or gender identity.

Diverse perspectives strengthen focus. Olmsted valued thinking across professional disciplines and lived experiences. Olmsted Now is likewise a product of multiple voices. It is a platform to prioritize people, process and partnership over the production of big projects. All outreach, internal planning decisions and external programming is guided by an equity agenda that explicitly centers those best positioned to assess and lead impact in communities: neighborhood youth, elders, activists, artists and others who have been shut out from positions of power.

Days after this article was published, Michelle Wu became the first elected woman and person of color to be Mayor of Boston, declaring on election night that “Boston has spoken. We are ready to become a Boston for everyone.”⁷ With 2022 just ahead, the Olmsted Now organizing team saw these developments as a call, a mandate, to pilot bicentennial initiatives and programs to counter siloing consequences and affirm greenspaces as part of Wu’s vision of a “Boston for everyone.”

INITIATIVES OF OLMSTED NOW

Olmsted Now pursued these initiatives to both honor Olmsted and meet the need of the moment to counter silos and increase shared use, health and power across Greater Boston greenspace:

PARTNERSHIPS

This multi-sector network of multi-disciplinary organizers, most within Boston or a 90-mile radius, was invited to share experiences and resources about dynamic, imaginative, healthy and equitable park use. This was a way to “relearn” how to collaborate, while “meeting partners where they are.” The spirit was opportunity not obligation, process not product. A menu of options to engage briefly or deeply with Olmsted Now were offered:

- **PLANNING** on bicentennial themes, equity goals, decision-making, project ideas and collaborations
- **PUBLICATION** stories, ideas, interviews and new creations shared on olmstednow.org and [@olmstednow](https://twitter.com/olmstednow)
- **PUBLIC DIALOGUES** co-learning about shared use, shared health and shared power from a peer and personal perspective
- **PARK EVENTS** Parks Equity & Spatial Justice Projects, Parks as Platform, and numerous parallel projects

What was measured:

Who engaged? From where? Why? How did this shift over time (from outreach to inreach)? What partnerships were expected or not? What will last? What will the Conservancy build upon to hone its criteria and evaluation of partnerships across all mission areas?

POWER SHARING

This new model of neighborhood-centered leadership was focused on programming that would yield greatest use, health and power impacts for communities of BIPOC youth and elders. The Conservancy offered itself as a case-study for improvement:

- An ad-hoc Committee of Neighborhoods was empowered with funds, facilitation and administrative support to determine core bicentennial programs. The group selected programs to amplify artistry with site and site with artistry to bring visibility to voices and spaces under-represented or under-resourced in Boston. The trust-based philanthropy and participatory action yielded history-making experiences.
- The Committee selected proposed Parks Equity & Spatial Justice Projects, programming to expand belonging and what’s possible in Boston parks. These projects’ leaders likewise chose to share resources and their programming platform with many other creatives.

What was measured:

Who is making park decisions? Whose voice has been missing? Who is a leader to step in? Where can the greatest impacts be made? How can deciders bring a range of experience to the table: generationally, culturally, professionally? What will the Conservancy build upon in its governance and decision-making?

PARKS AS PLATFORM

These were pilot collaborations on park programming to counter neighborhood silos, listen to park users, and connect diverse program creators to broader audiences, using the parks as platform. The monthly events activated all seven parks of the Emerald Necklace and were

7. Michelle Wu, Boston Mayoral Election Speech on November 2, 2022. [Youtube.com/MichelleWu](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MichelleWu)

occasions to gather feedback from both park programmers and users on how the Conservancy could best break down silos, while also taking risks and trying something new. Goals were to :

- **AMPLIFY:** Through program partnerships, build upon, rather than compete with, equity-driven park programs already being offered
- **BENCHMARK:** Establish a baseline on post-pandemic feelings, expectations and appetites for park experiences
- **CONNECT:** Offer a park-wide event to test if users would cross neighborhoods to build new relationships and see the park as a neighborhood (re)connector.

What was measured:

Who is coming to parks in general vs who comes during monthly events? Are they coming across town or from the neighborhood? What park experiences do people hope for? What partnerships do programmers need?

THIS REPORT

This report archives and analyzes each initiative—Partnerships, Power Sharing and Parks and Platform, but goes further. It also summarizes the reception of efforts in the final two sections:

RECOGNITION

Documented here is the attention and appreciation of Olmsted Now through awards, press, invitations, public proclamations, personal reflections and philanthropic donations.

What was measured:

The variety, quantity and quality of inputs.

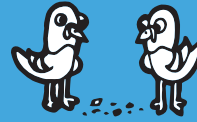
KEY LEARNINGS

Learnings are summarized for two potential uses:

- As a general community resource and reference about Olmsted Now for all interested in organizing citywide collaborations.
- As a specific guide for the Conservancy on its potential role in Greater Boston

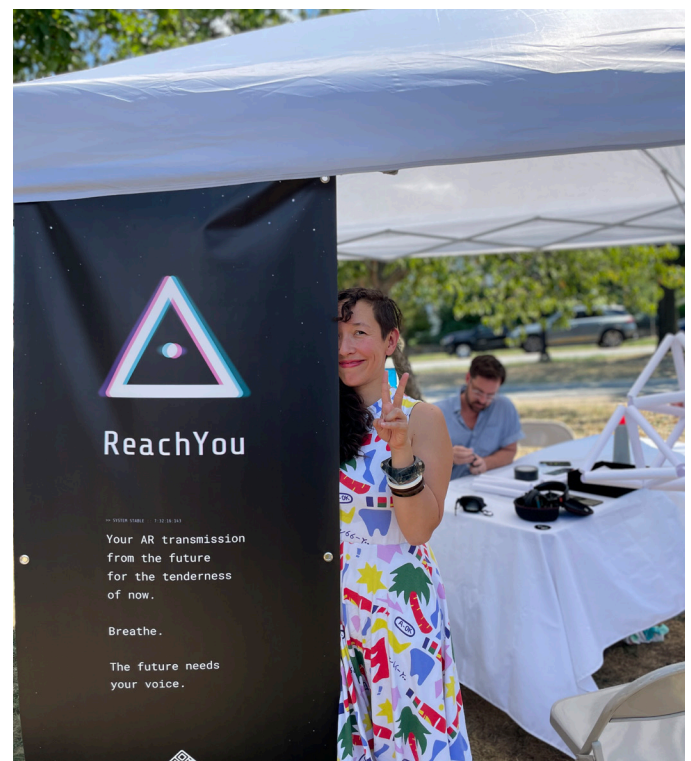
as a leading advocate for cultural partnerships to increase spatial justice and parks equity.

The Conservancy will measure the longterm value of these learnings in its 2023 strategic planning process, which will set the direction and scope of mission commitments for the years ahead.



“Rather than a physical conservation project, [Olmsted Now] sought to conserve and renew community connections. We poured energy into what Olmsted cared about most: the potential of greenspace to connect, uplift and empower people when they needed it most. He believed increasing access to common ground could reinforce our common humanity—it could break down silos, heal divisions, reconnect us. *If we chose to live up to this ideal.*”

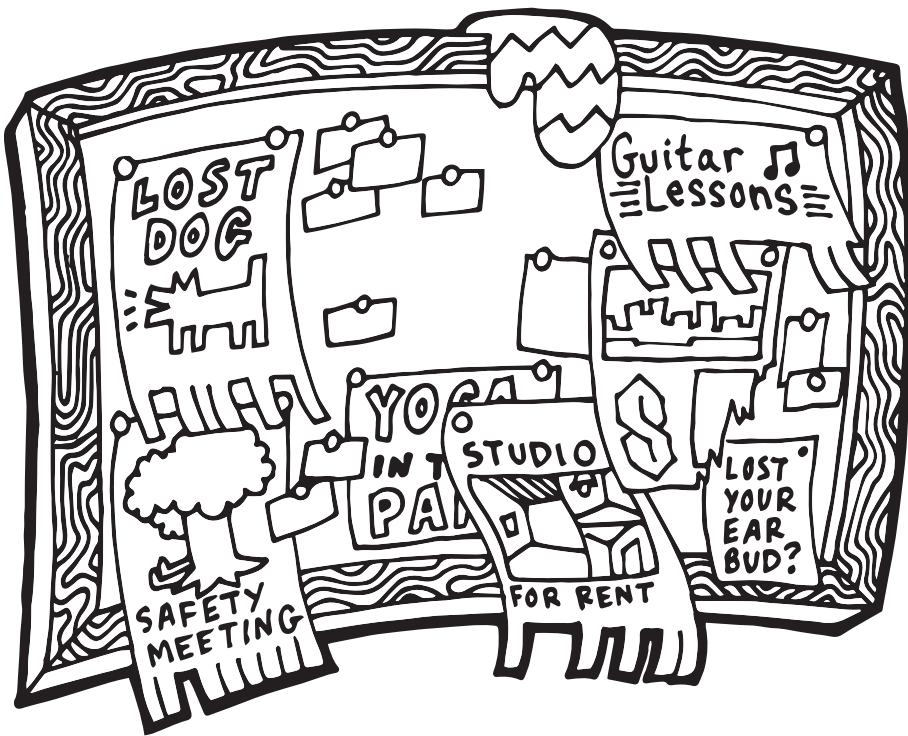
—Jen Mergel, acceptance of The Trustees Charles Eliot Conservationist of the Year Award on behalf of Olmsted Now



Katrina Goldsaito invited participation in the AR project REACH YOU at Parks as Platform at Jamaica Pond on August 20, 2022. Image: Grace Ramsdell.

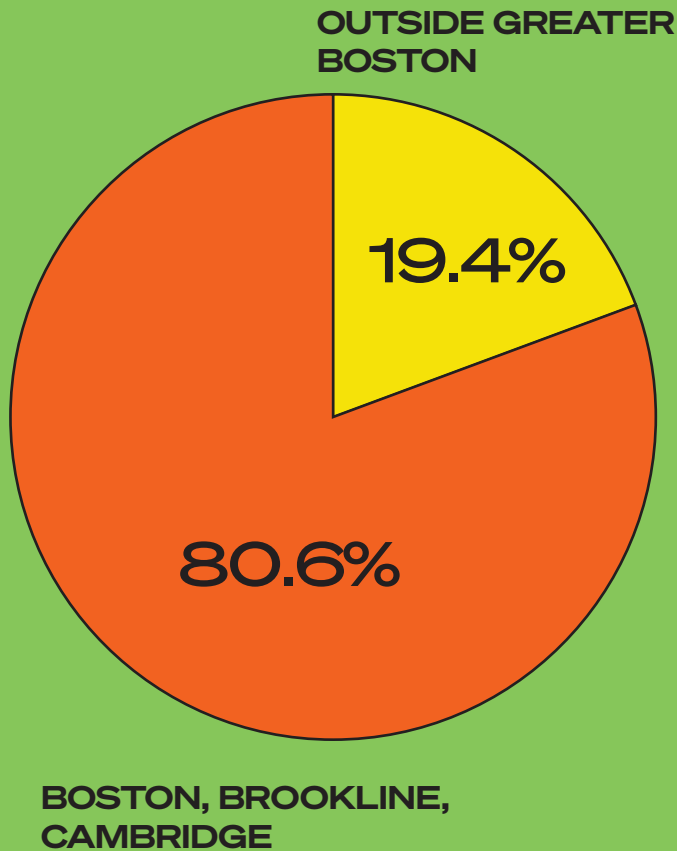


D Smoke performs as a headliner at Boston Art & Music Soul Fest (BAMS Fest) on June 11, 2022. Image Tyahra Angus, AfroCentered Media.



PARTNERSHIPS

186 PARTNERSHIPS



25

TOWNS/CITIES INCLUDING BOSTON, BROOKLINE, CAMBRIDGE, NEWTON, SOMERVILLE PLUS:
AMHERST, ARLINGTON, ASHLAND, BEVERLY, BOYLSTON, BRAINTREE, FALL RIVER, HARTFORD, MALDEN, NATCHITOCHES, NEW BEDFORD, NEW YORK CITY, NORWOOD, PLYMOUTH, PROVIDENCE, SALEM, WALTHAM, WAKEFIELD, WASHINGTON D.C., WORCESTER

“Thank you for a fantastic collaboration with Culture House and The Conservancy! Who would have known that the boat house could come to life in such a way!

We’re truly grateful to have connected and joined forces to create such a lovely and uplifting event with great community leaders such as yourselves! We hope this is the beginning of a long and fruitful relationship to continue this work!”

— Message after Parks as Platform JP Porchfest collaboration from Neo Gcabo, Director of Marketing and Community Development at Dunamis Boston



22

PARTNERS ACTIVE IN
10 PUBLIC DIALOGUES ON ZOOM

83% (157 of 191 participants in 10 dialogues)
engaged by sharing information: answers,
reflections, images



65

PARTNERS SHARED
241 EVENTS ON OLMSTEDNOW.ORG

4 exhibitions, 5 ideas forums



31

PARTNERS SHARED
74 STORIES ON OLMSTEDNOW.ORG

1 original work of fiction writing, 9 new musical
compositions, 1 performance art piece



3

PARTNERS CHOSE TO LEAD
IG TAKEOVERS OF @OLMSTEDNOW



32

PARTNERS INVOLVED IN
7 PARKS AS PLATFORM EVENTS



42

PARTNERS OR ~23% INVOLVED IN
16 PARKS EQUITY & SPATIAL JUSTICE
POWER-SHARING PROJECTS

OLMSTED NOW HAS BEEN A GROWING COALITION OF PARTNERS



Logos of organizations involved in planning, programs, and postings for Olmsted Now since 2019.

PEOPLE FROM:



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION for
OLMSTED
PARKS

ARTISTS

BLUEbikes.



Design
Museum
Everywhere



Emerson
COLLEGE



The Emerald Tutu

US
ATE



FRANKLIN
PARK
COALITION



FRIENDS
OF THE
PUBLIC GARDEN



Friends of the Malden River



ISABELLA
SEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM



LYRIC STAGE
COMPANY OF BOSTON



Harvard University
Graduate School of Design



Mass Audubon



MASSACHUSETTS
HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
THE GARDENS AT ELM BANK



Norman B. Leventhal
Map & Education Center
at the Boston Public Library



Northeastern
University

NOW
+ THERE



OLMSTED
2022



THE
ROXBURY LATIN
SCHOOL

Studios
Without
Walls



STONEHURST

Samuels & Associates

ON CENTER



Thriving Places
Collaborative



Tufts University
Art Galleries



Urban Land
Institute

Boston



WALTHAM
MASSACHUSETTS
"The Watch City"



Linda Wells
Wellness
Warrior



ZOO
NEW ENGLAND
Franklin Park Zoo • Storo Zoo

WHO'S INVOLVED?

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy served as the non-profit fiscal sponsor and co-organizer of Olmsted Now with Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site (National Park Service) in Brookline. Greater Boston's planning for Olmsted Now was coordinated with the national effort Olmsted 200.

From 2019 through 2022, Coalition partners invited their networks across many areas of interest: advocacy, arts and culture, civic and community organizing, placekeeping, education and empowerment, environment and health, food and transit justice, landscape history and park design, philanthropy and stewardship, and more. Individuals from these initiatives, studios and organizations were part of planning, posting and presenting public offerings for Greater Boston.

Click each for hyperlinks to their websites.

This key notes ways that partners were engaged with the bicentennial effort:

PESJ: PARKS EQUITY/SPATIAL JUSTICE #1-16

PL: PLANNING

PAP: PARKS AS PLATFORM #1-7

PD: PUBLIC DIALOGUE #1-10

EV: EVENT

IG: IG TAKEOVER

WS: WEBSITE STORY

*** BEYOND GREATER BOSTON

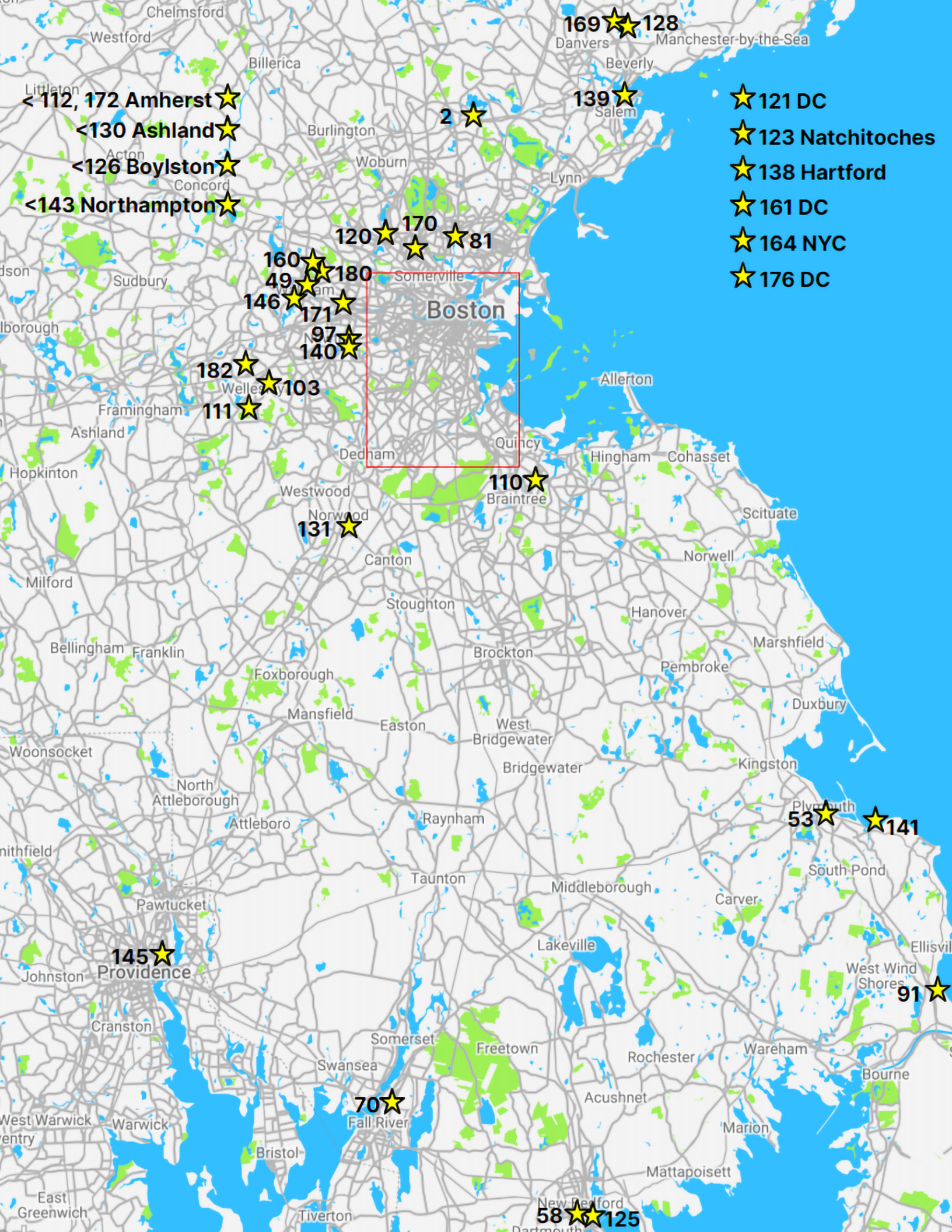
* NO OFFICE, EVENT or STEWARDSHIP SITE

1. 826 Boston PESJ EV
2. Ace Mentor Program Greater Boston *** PL
3. ActionPact Boston * PAP #6
4. The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University EV PAP #2,6
5. Arborway Coalition PL, PD #10
6. Asian American Resource Workshop PESJ #8
7. Asian Community Development Corporation PESJ #11
8. Authentic Caribbean Foundation PESJ PAP #6 EV
9. Baldwin in the Park PESJ #13 PD #2, 10
10. Barr Foundation PL
11. Beacon Hill Village EV
12. Berklee College of Music PL
13. Beyond Artists * PAP #6
14. Bikes Not Bombs PL
15. BlueBikes PAP #6
16. Boston Art & Music Soul Fest (BAMS Fest) PESJ PAP #3 WS
17. Boston Art Review PESJ
18. Boston Book Festival PL
19. Boston Center for the Arts PL EV
20. Boston Committee Action Team * PL
21. Boston CyberArts EV WS
22. Boston Design Week * EV
23. Boston Food Forest Coalition PL
24. Boston Green Ribbon Commission * EV
25. Boston Harbor Now PL PD #9
26. Boston Liberation Center PESJ #5
27. Boston Lyric Opera * EV
28. Boston Nature Center-Mass Audubon PD #4

29. Boston Parks and Recreation PL PD #7 EV
30. Boston Planning & Development Agency PESJ #15
31. Boston Public Health Commission PD #7
32. Boston Red Sox Foundation PL
33. Boston Society of Landscape Architects * PL IG EV
34. Boston University PL PAP #7 EV
35. Bridgeside Cypher PESJ #2 PAP
36. Brookline GreenSpace Alliance * PL PAP #1, 6 EV
37. Brookline Commission for the Arts * PL
38. Brookline Parks & Open Space PL PAP 1, #6 EV
39. Bruner Foundation* PL
40. Caribbean Integration Community Development PL
41. Castle of Our Skins PL EV
42. Center for Sustainability & Environment-Colleges of the Fenway EV
43. Charles River Conservancy PL EV
44. Charles River Watershed Association PL EV
45. Charlesgate Alliance PL PAP #6, 7
46. Charlesgate Petanque PAP #6, 7
47. Charlestown High School PESJ #15
48. City of Boston PESJ PAP #3-7 EV
49. City of Waltham ***PL
50. Civic Space Collaborative PL
51. COG Design * EV
52. Combined Jewish Philanthropies PL
53. Comfort Kitchen PESJ
54. Commission on Indian Affairs PESJ #15
55. Community Art Collaborative ***PL PD #5 IG WS
56. Courageous Sailing PAP #6
57. CultureHouse PAP #1-7
58. DATMA *** PL EV
59. Department of Conservation & Recreation PESJ #6 PL PA #6,7
60. Department of Time + Space * PL
61. Design Museum Everywhere * PL
62. Design Studio for Social Intervention PESJ EV PD #1, #4
63. District 7 Tavern PESJ
64. Dunamis Boston PAP #5
65. Emerald Necklace Conservancy PESJ PL PAP#1-7 PD #1-10 EV IG WS
66. Emerald Network PL
67. Emerald Tutu * WS
68. Emerson College PL
69. Esplanade Association PL EV
70. Fall River MoCA ***PL
71. The Fenway Alliance PAP #4 EV
72. The Fenway News * PL
73. Fenway Civic Association * PAP #4
74. Fenway Community Development Corporation PAP #4
75. Fenway Garden Society PAP #4, 6
76. Focus Real Estate PAP #5, 6
77. Franklin Park Coalition PESJ WS EV
78. Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site PL PAP #1-7 PD #1-10 EV IG WS
79. Friends of Fairsted PL EV
80. Friends of Jamaica Pond PL EV
81. Friends of the Malden River ***PESJ
82. Friends of the Public Garden PL

83. Garden Club of America- Boston Committee * PL EV
84. Grayscale Collaborative * PESJ PD #6 WS
85. Great Runs * PL
86. Greater Grove Hall Main Streets PESJ
87. Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council * PESJ
88. The Grist PL
89. The Guild PL
90. Harvard Graduate School of Design PL EV
91. Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe *** WS
92. Hyde Square Task Force PESJ #1
93. Ife Arts PESJ #9
94. Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum PL
95. Jamaica Pond Association PL
96. Jean Appolon Expressions PESJ #13
97. Jewish Arts Collaborative *** PL WS
98. JP Centre/South Main Streets PL EV
99. JP Monument PL
100. Juventas New Music Ensemble * EV
101. King Boston [now Embrace Boston] PL PD #6
102. Landing Studio PL PESJ
103. The Lawrence & Lillian Solomon Foundation *** PL WS
104. Linda Wellness Warrior PESJ #4 PD #10 EV
105. Little Uprisings * PL
106. LivableStreets Alliance PESJ
107. Lyric Stage Company of Boston PL EV
108. Marathon Daffodils PL
109. Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag PESJ #15
110. Massachusetts Historic Preservation Corps ***PD #8
111. Massachusetts Horticultural Society *** EV
112. Massachusetts Open Space Network *** EV
113. Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition PESJ PD #3,10 PAP #6?
114. Mayor's Mural Crew * EV PAP #6
115. Mendelsohn, Gittleman & Associates PL
116. MF Dynamics * PL
117. Mothers Out Front-Boston * PAP #6
118. Muddy Water Initiative PAP #1, #6
119. Museum of Fine Arts Boston PL WS
120. Mystic River Watershed Association *** PESJ
121. National Association for Olmsted Parks *** PL EV
122. National Parks of Boston * PL WS
123. National Center for Preservation, Technology & Training *** EV
124. Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay PL
125. Neponset River Greenway Council PL
126. New Bedford Whaling National Historic Park *** PL
127. New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill *** EV
128. New England Foundation for the Arts PL
129. New Entry Sustainable Farming Project *** PD #3
130. No Loose Braids *** PESJ #15
131. NOPI *** PESJ #16
132. Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center PL EV WS

133. North American Indian Center of Boston EV
134. Northeastern University EV WS
135. Now + There PL EV
136. Office for the Arts at Harvard PL WS
137. Olmsted 2022 PL EV
138. Park Watershed *** PL
139. Peabody Essex Museum *** PL EV
140. Pressley Landscape Architects *** PL
141. Plimoth Patuxet Museums *** PL
142. Project Misik: Neponset River Yard-Kera Washington PESJ #7 PD #10
143. Reach You *** PAP #5
144. REI Co-Op Boston PAP #6 EV
145. Rhode Island School of Design *** PL
146. Rose Art Museum *** PL
147. Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway PESJ #13
148. Roxbury Latin School EV
149. Roxbury Tenants of Harvard PL
150. RozzieBikes * PL
151. Salsa in the Park-MetaMovements-Eli Pabon PESJ #6
152. Samuels & Associates PL
153. Save Crane Ledge Woods PAP #1
154. Savor the Square PESJ #16 EV
155. School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts PL EV WS
156. Schoolyard Concerts-Eliot School EV
157. Southwest Corridor Park -PMAC PD #9
158. Speak for the Trees PAP #1
159. Stewards of the Future * PD #8 PAP #4-5
160. Stonehurst, the Robert Treat Paine Estate *** PL
161. Student Conservation Association *** PAP #6
162. Studios Without Walls EV IG
163. Summer Exploratory Experience in Design PD #8
164. Sweet Readers *** PL
165. Taiko and the Parks- Karen Young, Mica Rose & Mel Tiang PESJ #3
166. Thompson Island Outward Bound PD #4
167. Thriving Places Collaborative * PL
168. Toadstool Walks * PL
169. The Trustees of Reservations: Moraine Farm *** PAP #6 EV WS
170. Tufts University Art Galleries *** PL
171. Ummo *** PL WS
172. UMass Amherst *** PD #6 EV
173. Urban Farming Institute PESJ PD #3
174. Urban Land Institute * PL
175. Urban Outdoors Association * PESJ
176. USDA Urban & Community Forestry Program *** PD #3 PAP #6
177. Verizon in Boston PAP #6
178. Veronica Robles Cultural Center PESJ #14
179. WalkBoston PL EV
180. WalkUp Boston * PL EV
181. Waltham Land Trust *** PL EV
182. Wellesley College *** PL PAP #4-6 WS
183. Who Belongs Here? Who Doesn't?-Tran Vu PESJ #8
184. Wilderness Art-Dzidzor Azaglo & Crystal Bi PESJ #10
185. Writing Our Truth in the Park-Nakia Hill PESJ #12
186. Zoo New England PESJ





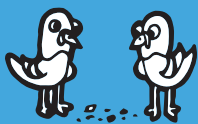
33

PARTNERSHIPS

CONTEXT

From its very inception, Olmsted Now was driven by partnership. And this was for more than one reason. First, as a co-organizer, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy has operated as a coalition convener since its founding in 1997, coordinating groups who are now its Board of Park Advisors as a united voice for system-wide advocacy. It was a natural step in its own DNA to partner closely with local organizations like Fairsted, Olmsted 2022, the Arnold Arboretum and Franklin Park Coalition, with whom the Conservancy has had longstanding relationships.

Then there was the legacy of Olmsted himself, who never worked alone. His unique interdisciplinary and multigenerational profession necessitated he work with engineers and architects, arborists and botanists, politicians and administrators, as well as his own children and mentees, whose diverse expertise and perspectives might see his projects through beyond his lifetime. Likewise, Olmsted saw parks as places where convening improved each other's experience:



"In a report to San Francisco's city government in 1868, Olmsted wrote how spending time in a public park infused citizens 'with a common purpose, not at all intellectual, competitive with none, disposing to jealousy and spiritual or intellectual pride toward none, each individual adding by his mere presence to the pleasure of all others, all helping to the greater happiness of each.'"

—Garret Dash Nelson, "Do Beautiful Parks Strengthen Democracy?"

Importantly, conditions coming out of COVID made it imperative to try to break down silos and foster new forms of partnership. This might be reparative not only given the pandemic, but given Boston's much longer history of neighborhood segregation, and of institutions "going it alone." The city simply has not had a reputation for innovative collaboration and the single year Bicentennial was a low-risk occasion to make the effort, a "practice field" to see what could be learned.

From 2019 through 2022, Olmsted Now partnerships grew from 17 organizations to 186. Over this time, a menu of options for partners to engage briefly or deeply with Olmsted Now was offered:

- **PLANNING** bicentennial themes, equity goals, decision-making, project ideas and collaborations (2020-2021)
- **PUBLICATION** of stories, ideas, interviews and new creations shared on olmstednow.org and [@olmstednow](https://twitter.com/olmstednow) (April 2021 -April 2023)
- **PUBLIC DIALOGUES** for co-learning about shared use, shared health and shared power from a peer and personal perspective (monthly January-October 2022)
- **PARK EVENTS** encompassing Parks Equity & Spatial Justice Projects, Parks as Platform, and numerous parallel projects (April-October 2022)

Partners were densely based in Boston, but many came from far outside of Boston. Outside of Greater Boston's Route 128-95 loop, regional partners engaged from cities as far as New Entry Sustainable Farming and Moraine Farm, a Trustees site, in Beverly (~25 mi north), No Loose Braids in Ashland (~120 mi west) and UMass Amherst (~90 mi west), RISD Museum in Providence, RI (50 mi. southwest), DATMA and the Whaling Museum and National Historic Park in New Bedford (~60 mi

south) and even Thompson Island Outward Bound (8 mi east in Boston Harbor).

Other outer cities and towns included these partners: Plimoth Patuxet and the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe in Plymouth, Fall River MoCA, Wellesley College and Mass Horticultural Society in Wellesley, Waltham Land Trust, Stonehurst, Rose Art Museum and City of Waltham, Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Mystic River Watershed association, in Arlington, Friends of the Malden River in Malden.

National partners included: National Center for Preservation Technology and training, National Association for Olmsted Parks (now the Olmsted Network), USDA, Urban & Community Forestry Program, Mothers Out Front (Boston Chapters), Garden Club of America (Boston Committee).

See maps on prior spread for geographic scope of partnerships.

ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIPS

After meetings through summer of 2019 with Conservancy Board members and Park Advisors, Conservancy president Karen Mauney-Brodek and Jen Mergel met in September at Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site with Superintendent Jason Newman, Supervisory Ranger Brianne Cassetta and their team. All sought to further understandings of Olmsted's impacts here and elsewhere through a lens of partnership.

We asked: "What can we do together that we cannot do alone? And what strengths and perspectives are we missing to make this bicentennial matter, not only for national or regional organizations but at the hyper local neighborhood and community level?"

As co-organizers, the Conservancy and Fairsted agreed to bring unique strengths to the bicentennial effort: As a private non-profit working closely with State, City, Town and neighborhood partners since the late 1990s, the Conservancy could build on existing relationships, and could also serve as a fiscal sponsor for a project, and fundraise. As a federal agency stewarding

Olmsted history since 1980, Fairsted could use its national reach, research acumen and archives, best practices in interpretation and youth education, as well as access to significant federal grants and staffing to ensure a strong foundation for the local effort. Both teams were fully staffed.



NPS Superintendent Jason Newman and Supervisory Ranger Brianne Cassetta gifting Karen Mauney-Brodek a framed archival print of the Olmsted firm's planting plans for the Curley House on February 7, 2020. Image: Jen Mergel.

PLANNING

The first in-person meeting in February 2020 drew 33 colleagues from 17 organizations. The group was not representative of Boston's diversity as a majority-minority city and the very first follow up email was a call to "widen the circle." Inclusion and outreach were agreed upon as a priority. Then COVID hit.

As did all organizations, the Conservancy and Fairsted pivoted to organize online offerings, working out responsibilities to track meeting invitations to an ever growing group. Through 2020, some organizations folded and others were born. The uncertainty of the pandemic reframed what "partnership" might mean:

- It was clear early on partnerships were established for individuals to represent themselves first, and any professional affiliation(s) second.
- In a similar vein, individuals were welcome to plan and inspire ideas without any expectation to "deliver" a program.

- The effort was framed as an opportunity to amplify good work already in development, not an obligation to create custom programming on top of all else.
- All were welcome to invite others to the planning table for input at any level, or simply to witness developing ideas.

Through 2020, monthly meetings began to grow with a sense of purpose and focus. Partners weighed in on concrete deliverables:

- The equity analysis commissioned from Grayscale Collaborative (see Power Sharing Section) and
- The bicentennial website design commissioned from Studio Umno (see below)
- Ideas and approaches for potential funding or resources
- Ideas to cultivate program and partnerships inclusively.

By 2021, planning had grown to individuals representing approximately 60 partners, meetings were formalized and Task Forces were established:

- Inclusion, with overarching input on all of these areas:
 - Programming and Partnerships
 - Communications
 - Resource Development

In a co-organizing capacity, staff of the Conservancy and Faisted attended and documented each meeting, setting agendas, drafting presentations, and following up on ideas based on each prior group discussion or individual partner outreach. Efforts were made to cultivate a planning culture that was inclusive, creative, transparent to and supportive of partners, meeting them where they were:

- Online meetings were scheduled for 90 minutes on the last Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning of the month to accommodate as many partner schedules as possible
- All were recorded with minutes and resource links shared via email
- All meetings were opened with a land acknowledgement to ground discussions of land stewardship legacies.
- All agendas were structured predictably with time to socialize, work and inspire:
 - “Coffee” or “Cocktail” time & “Refreshers”
 - Task force breakout groups to “Get Stuff Done” with a report back
 - “Our Good Idea” presentation & Q&A



Rights Along the Shore: Danielle Abrams performance with Mary Ellen Strom video featuring *The Boston Globe* photo by George Rizer of the 1975 picnic protest to desegregate Carson Beach in South Boston. Image: Boston Center for the Arts

- “Our Good Idea” was established as an open charette for partners to share behind the scenes resources, expertise or programming in development:
 - February 24, 2021: Danielle Abrams of School of the Museum of Fine Arts on a forthcoming public art project with Boston Center for the Arts: *Rights Along the Shore*
 - March 30, 2021: Sophia Bass Werner Jordan of National Parks Boston on authentic youth engagement and place-based storytelling

PARTNER PLANNING IN ACTION: 2021 “OUR GOOD IDEA” SERIES

This invitation was emailed to partners:

OUR GOOD IDEA:

For monthly Olmsted Now Bicentennial planning meetings, we set aside the last 30 minutes for a community volunteer to speak briefly on a working concept or relevant project (aka “our good idea”); we then open up a Q&A session with our volunteers and consider how it might align with Olmsted Bicentennial values, programming and partnerships.

WHAT:

Our Good Idea is a ~15-minute spotlight to informally discuss one cool project with ~15min for Q&A with the full group. This is meant to be an edifying, social and productive exchange that highlights the range of offerings being conceived by Bicentennial partners. The Q&A for each presentation will likely start with a question like: What can further or extend this project? We hope everyone leaves our monthly meetings with these good ideas to feel constructive in supporting fellow planners and inspired to hone, amplify and share their own work.

To make this as easy, edifying and constructive as possible, this can be “low prep”:

-You could use the time to ask the group for relevant feedback, contacts, research resources or future project partners (or talk about whatever you wish)

WHY:

In general, we are looking to build community and inspiration among volunteers by highlighting projects that are doable, either still in a conception phase, and/or with big potential to connect our past to present. We shine a light on projects that can get others thinking about ways to support each other, expand their own work, and learn about great resources out there!

WHEN:

This would be the last half hour of our one of our upcoming Zoom meetings.

SHARE YOUR STORY

A marathon finish. A first kiss. Winter sledding. Summer concert. Protest, picnic, celebration, self-care. Parks and public places are made of common purpose and private moments. Share yours.

Stories from partners and the public are added on a rolling basis. By submitting your story, you allow Olmsted Now to record, copy, edit, reproduce, broadcast, transmit and/or exhibit your story.

Choose an image

Add another image

Story title*

Story location

Your story*

Tag your story

Use tags to make it easier for people to find your event

Name*

Share what you prefer: full name, first only, initials, "Anonymous."

Email*

This will NOT be shared. It's only for story follow up.

Is there anything else you would like us to know about your story?

This site is protected by reCAPTCHA and the Google Privacy Policy and Terms of Service apply.

Submit

By clicking submit you allow Olmsted Now to record, copy, edit, reproduce, broadcast, transmit and/or exhibit your story, listed name, and the images you've shared.

Invitation and simple form at OlmstedNow.org/share-your-story/ Screenshot.

- April 28, 2021: Garrett Dash Nelson of Leventhal Map & Education Center on the forthcoming exhibition: More or Less in Common
- May 25, 2021: Tammy Tai of King Boston on coalition building toward justice in Boston
- June 30, 2021: Neda Movaghar of Studio Umno & artist Ben Jundanian in dialog on behind-the-scenes decisions on the look of Olmsted Now
- July 27, 2021: Anthony Reed of the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site on using the NHS archives to inform public learning about Olmsted
- August 25, 2021: Gretchen Schneider Rabinkin of Boston Society of Landscape Architects on the pilot year of the Youth Landscape Architecture Studio with the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and Boston Architectural College and design firm mentors
- September 28, 2021: Akea Cader of Stewards of the Future on the insights gained while working with youth to create online projects to engage the next generation in local historic sites
- October 27, 2021: Joshua Meyer of Plimoth Patuxet on bringing landscape knowledge to life in a "living history" museum through diverse methods, from dialogue with Wampanoag colleagues on land acknowledgements to experiments with AR app overlays of archival site images
- December 7, 2021: Plenary on proposed projects by cultural producers Maria Finkelmeier, Anita Morson-Matra, Kendall Reiss and more.

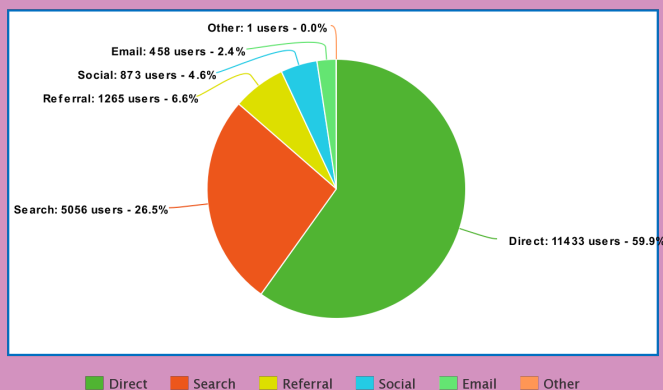
BY COMPARISON: OLMSTEDNOW.ORG SITE DATA AND VISITATION FROM APRIL 1, 2021 - DECEMBER 31, 2022

To draw initial conclusions about website impact, here is a comparison of OlmstedNow.org with the Conservancy's site EmeraldNecklace.org. While a much smaller and shorter term project, the partnership-focused community-generated content of the Bicentennial site gathered proportionally more visits (3.5x) and users (2.5x) for the volume of pages:

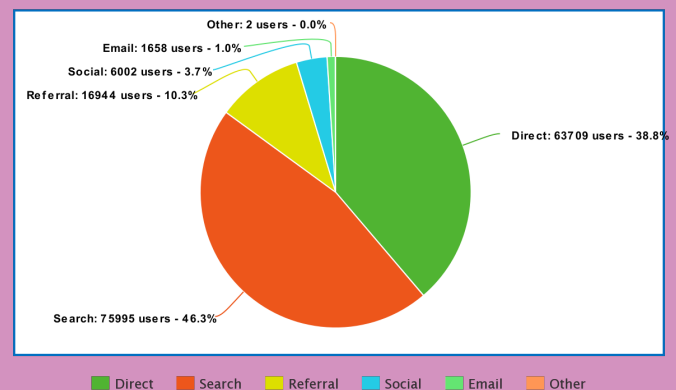
Olmstednow.org	Emeraldnecklace.org	Comparitive Analysis
681 unique pages published in 20 months	15,005 unique pages published over decades	> 4.5% of the Conservancy's pages
52,630 page visits (includes repeat views)	335,294 page visits (includes repeat views)	> 15.7% of the Conservancy's visits
19,086 new users	162,199 new users	> 11.8% of the Conservancy's new usership

Comparing HOW site users found the websites: Given Olmsted Now was new and intentionally temporary, rather than a 20-plus-year old organization stewarding a 150-year old park system, there were proportionally fewer search engine driven users finding the site "organically." This was to be expected for a project, site and search term that had a short life space.

Olmsted Now New User Acquisition



Emeraldnecklace.org New User Acquisition



Notable spikes in website traffic occurred during events or major press coverage [See Recognition section]:

- **April 26, 2022:** Olmsted's 200th birthday with public event
- **June 12, 2022:** Major article on Olmsted Now in the The Boston Globe Sunday edition
- **July 5, 2022:** First airing by Chronicle on WCVB-TV of 4-part Olmsted series
- **August 27, 2022:** Rebroadcast of Chronicle series
- **Leading to September 24, 2022:** Various small spikes leading up to Parkfest on that date
- **November 3, 2022:** Major article on the Mishoon Burn project in The Boston Globe



Story by Sophia Bass Werner Jordan about authentic youth engagement with National Parks Boston, posted as a story on OlmstedNow.org after presentation for “Our Good Idea.” Screenshot

PUBLICATION

To create a shared online forum for ideas and offerings among partners, the Conservancy commissioned Studio Ummo to design the website and communication tools for OlmstedNow.org. The site was organized to be a dynamic publishing forum of community-generated content including stories and events, as well as a means to share programming ideas about bicentennial and post feedback and press on the effort.

Why not use an existing organization website? As [Olmsted Now](https://OlmstedNow.org) was a temporary and collaborative initiative with a parallel but unique identity to the ongoing institutional missions of the co-organizers and participants, the Conservancy commissioned and maintained this separate project website. After beta testing since fall of 2020, the project site was launched April 26, 2021, on [Olmsted's](https://OlmstedNow.org) 199th birthday, for the year leading up to and including his bicentennial.

From April 2021 to March 2023, OlmstedNow.org has served as a collaborative resource for partners and the broader public to share values, ideas, stories, events and milestones. It now serves as a living record of Greater Boston's [Olmsted](https://OlmstedNow.org) bicentennial. After the content is archived, the project site will be sunsetted in April 2023.

To further drive traffic to OlmstedNow.org and give voice to partners on social media, the [@olmstednow](https://www.instagram.com/olmstednow) Instagram account was

established in June 2021. By the end of 2022, over 700 followers had tracked the 170 posts of the 18 prior months.

The Conservancy and Fairsted staff took turns every 3 months to post about stories and events also archived on the website. They also welcomed partners to lead short “Instagram takeovers” to reach more [Olmsted Now](https://OlmstedNow.org) contacts, and direct their followers to the Bicentennial. Takeovers were led by:

November 3-7, 2021: Community Art Collaborative (based in Plymouth)

February 9-14, 2022: Boston Society of Landscape Architects

May 28-June 3, 2022: Studios Without Walls (based in Brookline)

These takeovers allowed [Olmsted Now](https://OlmstedNow.org) to expand its community contacts both digitally and geographically, and to highlight the many voices and activities of the coalition.

PUBLIC DIALOGUES

Following internal planning meetings and “Our Good Idea” talkbacks throughout 2020 and 2021, the Conservancy and Fairsted were eager to keep connective momentum between partners going, but also open up exchange with public audiences who might follow activity on OlmstedNow.org. This was a shift from “planning” to “programming,” from “proposing” to “practicing in public.”

From January through October 2022, each third Wednesday of the month featured Public Dialogues. These became [Olmsted Now's](https://OlmstedNow.org) online forum to discuss bicentennial themes: shared use, shared health and shared power in parks and public spaces.

Each hour-long session started with a land acknowledgement, partner program highlights and good news, and then attendees collectively explored an announced topic. Each meeting was recorded, with the big questions and ideas summarized in a group email to the broader partner coalition and a wider

instagram post on @olmstednow so that others not in attendance could follow and extend the dialogue.

These discussions were intended to be a social sanctuary and platform to:

- Reinforce partners' participation in bicentennial with "low-lift" programming opportunities.
- Explore what bicentennial themes of shared use, shared health and shared power meant across different generational, professional and social perspectives.

Rather than an "expert" talking "at" an audience, Public Dialogues were intended to dive into experiential understandings with new colleagues through different meeting formats, such as Quaker-style sharing, a guided creative activity, a facilitated call and response and more. Success of these dialogues were measured by the qualities, not quantity, of audience experiences. Were people feeling welcome enough to engage and participate? Engagement was measured by active participation: typing in the chat or speaking on screen.

Looking back on the Bicentennial season, it is clear that less formal, more discursive CO-LEARNING opportunities yielded stronger engagement. For example, a live "expert-led" panel and Q&A with university professors as part of the Embrace Ideas Festival yielded 54% audience engagement, while sessions structured around sharing (art activities, jamboard sessions and Quaker style dialogues) yielded nearly 100% engagement. Takeaways from this series included:

- Prioritize experience rather than expertise, engagement rather than reach and the participation rather than number of attendees.
- Practice "passing the mic" and decentering/recentering ideas among coalition members.
- Build community and continuity through informal learning and reflection over time.

EVENTS

By early 2022, the Conservancy and Fairsted teams were co-organizing a wide range of events for audiences of all backgrounds, ages and interests with a number of partners.

ANTICIPATED PROGRAMS

Many greenspace programming collaborations were eagerly anticipated with partners who had been planning since 2019 and had long-standing commitments to landscape architecture, site conservation and mapping and histories of Olmsted himself. These were nationally known forums or traditions that could anchor other hyper-local programming that was still to be determined and mark the open and close of the bicentennial season from April through October across Greater Boston. Among others, these events included:

- March 30 - April 2, 2022: Olmsteds: Landscapes and Legacies, a symposium coordinated with Olmsted 200 organized by the Fairsted team with the NPS National Center for Preservation Technology and Training, hosted at the Leventhal Map and Education Center and Boston Society of Architects.
- April 27, 2022: Marking the 200th Birthday of Olmsted as a continuation of the annual Boston tradition carried on by Gerry Wright, with partners of Olmsted 2022 and Friends of Jamaica Pond as well as the National Park Service, Friends of Fairsted and the Conservancy's civic partners of Boston, Brookline and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- October 14-15, 2022: Olmsted: Bicentennial Perspectives, a symposium with Harvard's Graduate School of Design and Arnold Arboretum coordinated with Olmsted 200.

EXPANDED PROGRAMS

The Conservancy and Fairsted teams also had existing program partnerships that could be expanded on the occasion of the bicentennial to explore ideas, develop focus areas, build professional experiences and mark new milestones. Examples included:

- April 25, 2022: For the Garden Club of America's Boston Committee Annual Meeting: a panel moderated by the Conservancy forging new connections between Friends of Fairsted and Boston Art & Music Soul Fest (BAMS Fest) with presentations on Franklin Park's past and present significance for Boston.



BAMS Fest founder Catherine Morris speaks with Lauren Meier of Friends of Fairsted and Jen Mergel of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy at Franklin Park with the Boston Committee on April 25, 2022. Image: Claire Curran.

- April 29, 2022: For Boston Design Week, the Conservancy secured free participation and could offer the free tour Olmsted's Charlesgate Park: The Green Link to Boston's Future while connecting organizer Tony Fusco to new spatial justice speakers.
- June 7, 2022: For WalkBoston, the Conservancy led discussion for the Muddy River Walk, newly named in honor of late WalkBoston Founder Bob Sloane.
- July 9 and August 20, 2022: Through Stewards of the Future, Fairsted colleagues added "hosting public park events" to stewards' professional portfolio to "bridge the National Park Service to the Youth Community."

INNOVATION IN PARK EVENTS THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

Olmsted Now also introduced new park experience "interventions" that inspired moments to pause, rethink and road test new ways of being and "belonging" in parks. Olmsted Now co-organizers engaged in new partnerships to realize these innovative projects:

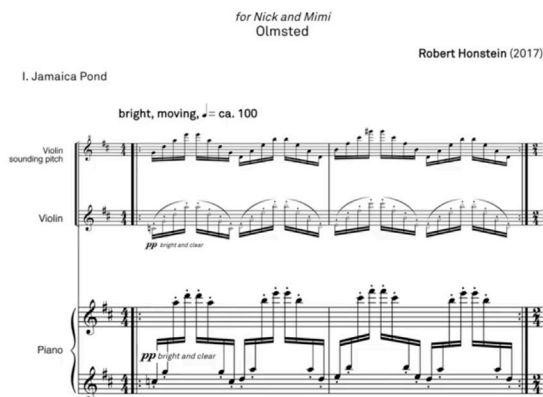
- May 11 - August 10, 2022: InPUBLIC: REST, organized with Design Studio for Social Intervention and co-hosted by the Conservancy, Franklin Park Coalition and the Rose Kennedy Greenway, REST provided people with blankets and a soundtrack to pause, rest and nap in parks with the "nap ministry" resistance movement.
- August-November 2022: Never Too Much, Always Enough, organized by the Fairsted team, teens of the Mayor's Mural Crew of the City of Boston upcycled the old spruce pole fence of Olmsted's home office into a new series of adirondack chairs placed for communal seating around the Necklace parks with signs about Olmsted's vision for how parks can be social spaces.

Ultimately, a major shift took place in partnerships after April 2022, where the Olmsted Now co-organizers noticed they were not the only organizations initiating partnerships, as organizations began to reach out with proposals to be part of the Bicentennial. In this watershed moment, the bicentennial became a draw to partner organizations to reach out with ideas for how their programming could enhance the year's exploration of shared use, shared health and shared power in parks and public space. This demonstrated a trust and respect for the programming's values and potential positive impacts. Examples of outreach to the Conservancy included:

- June 5, 2022: Authentic Caribbean Foundation inviting the Conservancy to be part of Cricket Lovely Cricket in Franklin Park
- July 15, 2022: King Boston invited the Conservancy to be part of the Embrace Ideas Festival leading up to Juneteenth.

Overall, the breadth of the Bicentennial's cultural partnerships achieved the goal of expanding approaches to Olmsted's legacy ideals beyond the expected perspectives to the most creative, innovative interpretations, such as original works of fiction, musical compositions and cutting edge technology for AR exhibitions. Notable artistic presentations by partners included:

- The Sea Lettuce, An Owl's Assassination, the Bag Company, the Space Billionaires, the Bad Mirror, a New Dream: Original work of fiction by Lucy Ives, inspired by The Emerald Tutu storm protection infrastructure project, published on olmstednow.org



Music by Robert Honstein from the first movement of Olmsted for Violin and Piano, inspired by Jamaica Pond. Screenshot

- Olmsted for Violin and Piano: Amusic composition by Robert Honstein featuring vignettes of Olmsted parks like Jamaica Pond on the Emerald Necklace and Worlds End in Hingham, described and linked on olmstednow.org
- More or Less in Common: Environment and Justice in the Human Landscape: Free exhibition presented by the Leventhal Map & Education Center at the Boston Public Library from March 18 - December 28, 2022. Organized by Garrett Dash Nelson, this exhibition interrogated who gains benefit, or risk, from environmental factors in Greater Boston as part of Olmsted 200 and Olmsted Now, and was featured in Olmsted Now planning, on olmstednow.org and with the symposium Olmsted's: Landscapes and Legacies.

- Lungs of the City: Olmsted Parks in Music: Live and online concert hosted by Juventas New Music Ensemble at Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center on March 26, 2022, co-organized with Landscape Music, co-commissioned with American Wild Ensemble and Michigan Technological University, and featuring the world premiere of eight chamber music pieces inspired by Frederick Law Olmsted composed by Oliver Caplan, Nell Shaw Cohen, Michael-Thomas Foumai, Libby Meyer, Ayumi Okada, Justin Ralls, Christina Rusnak and Ryan Suleiman. Presented in collaboration with Fairsted as part of Olmsted 200 and Olmsted Now.



Anne Howarth, Wolcott Humphrey and Wei Zhao perform in the hybrid concert Lungs of the City: Olmsted Parks in Music. Screenshot

- Seeing the Invisible: This augmented reality exhibition organized by Jerusalem Botanical Gardens with partners around the world was presented by Massachusetts Horticultural Society at the Garden at Elm Bank in Wellesley as the only US venue from April 1, 2022 onward. The project placing views of international contemporary art in the Elm Bank landscapes designed by Olmsted's sons was featured on olmstednow.org.



Artist El Anatsui's sculptures in the augmented reality exhibition Seeing the Invisible. Image: Jen Mergel

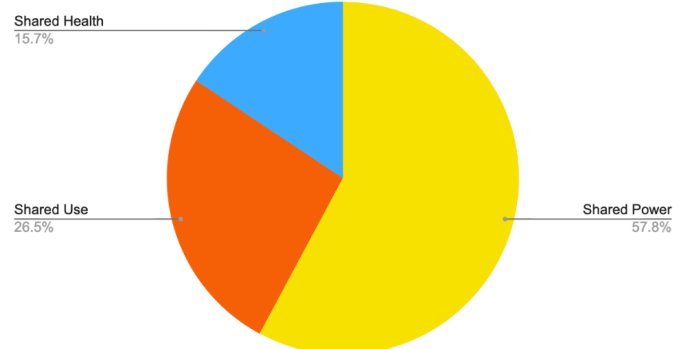
- **Rights Along the Shore**: Free exhibition presented by artists and educators Danielle Abrams and Mary Ellen Strom at Boston Center for the Arts from April 2 - May 28, 2022, along with the colloquium **Freedom in Water, Body of Water, Bodies in Water** presented on April 15, 2022. Both projects explored histories of recreational segregation and resistance, not only in the United States' Jim Crow South, but also in Boston as recently as the 1970s, and were featured in Olmsted Now planning and olmstednow.org.
- **Alpha 60**: Free augmented reality exhibition presented by Boston Cyberarts and curated by Michael Lewy featuring 19 Boston artists along the Emerald Necklace park system from May 22 through December 31, 2022. With a focus on futurism and science fiction, the project invited exploration of Olmsted Park, Jamaica Pond and Franklin Park and was featured on olmstednow.org



Rangers and Fairsted staff with large scale theatrical props designed for Parkfest pop-up activities. Image: Isabel Schulman

Ultimately the 186 partnerships of Olmsted Now involved organizations and initiatives across scale and mission. After comparing organizations' missions (on the web) to the three Olmsted Now themes of Shared Use, Shared Health and Shared Power, the breakdown of mission alignment was notable. Nearly 58% of organizations were primarily committed to missions of SHARED POWER, defined as cultural affirmation, education, expression and advocacy (schools, art galleries, museums, concert festivals, performance groups, writing and reading centers, community organizing and more):

Partner Missions, As Aligned to Olmsted Now Themes:



Sonja Tengblad and puppet performer/opera singer from *Mr. Twister* in Franklin Park on September 24, 2022. Image Artemesia Luk of A.Luk Photo

- **Mr Twister and the Tale of Tornado Alley** by Marc Hoffeditz: A free opera for youth and families using puppets and music to explore the impacts of climate change. Organized by Sonja Tengblad of Mothers Out Front with puppetry and stage direction by Brenda Huggins for Parkfest on September 24, 2022 in Franklin Park.

This creativity from collaborators in turn inspired organizers to utilize their creative juices to engage park visitors.

FOCUS IN: OLMSTED SUMMER SUNDAYS

CONTEXT

Ironically, during the 2022 Bicentennial season, just when the park rangers of the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site were eager to host many experiences at Olmsted's historic home office of 99 Warren Street in Brookline, the Fairsted building and grounds had to undergo significant construction. This included the complete rebuild and replacement of the signature spruce pole fencing along the exterior of the grounds as well as building windows, roofing and more.

That said, the National Park Service team had funding for additional interpretative staff to rove to other Olmsted-designed landscapes to share information about Olmsted's landscape-architecture principles and personal history in Boston. Supervisory Ranger Brianne Cassetta proposed the hope that some rangers and trainees could visit Emerald Necklace sites and the idea of a concrete partner program was born.

NEW PROGRAM:

From June 26 through September 18, the Conservancy and Fairsted staff piloted a new series that introduced rangers from the National Historic Site who were usually based in the residential neighborhood of Brookline to the dynamic cultural campus of Boston's Back Bay Fens at the Conservancy's Shattuck Visitor Center at 125 The Fenway. The series Olmsted Summer Sundays was posted on OlmstedNow.org as well as both organizations' websites, and promoted on social media.

For 10 Sundays from 10am to 4pm, two rangers came to the Fens to set up a tent, table and prompt activity along the pedestrian path in front of the Visitor Center. They could share deep archival insights with hands-on experiences, while also directing people to the resources inside the Visitor Center, including free restroom access, water, air conditioning and educational displays about the park and the Conservancy's mission.

The practical partnership included storage for Fairsted staff of furniture and supplies at the Conservancy site, interpretative programming at the site by Fairsted's trained team, and cross promotion of each other's programs.



Conservancy staff offered white boards to the Fairsted team to promote the weekly opportunity to meet a park ranger. Image: Emerald Necklace Conservancy

IMPACT

The Sundays had beautiful, comfortable outdoor weather for nearly the entire summer season. The only Sundays when rangers did not staff the program were on July 24, during a heat advisory, and September 4, during the national holiday weekend of Labor Day.

At each session, the Rangers agreed to ask questions of park users and take field notes. Their questions included:

- Why did you stop by today?
- Did you learn anything new today? If so, about what?
- What do you value in parks ?
- Would you like to learn more about Bicentennial values and events?

These questions engaged nearly 2750 park users over 10 weeks, and inspired deeper curiosity about the Bicentennial effort among over 100. This was more than 10x average visitorship inside the Shattuck Visitor Center and has sparked planning for more seasons of this program.

VISITOR DATA FROM OLMSTED SUMMER SUNDAYS

DATE	FIELD NOTES	WHY DID YOU STOP BY TODAY?
6/26/2022		To answer the pop-up question: "What is your best Boston?" Find a good place in the park to read and hang out To ask about the connection between Olmsted and the founding of the National Park Service
7/03/2022	WHAT DO YOU VALUE IN PARKS? Biodiversity amid the city Fresh Air Picnic and Family Silence	
7/10/2022		Complain about no one stopping at the crosswalk What are they doing about and with the phragmites? When was the Back Bay filled? Landscape architect visiting the "Mecca of design" How do you get to Fenway Park?
7/17/2022	Fun Fact from Visitor: Inside Doyle's Cafe (now closed, at the corner of Washington & Williams Streets), a floorboard would open to reveal the Stony Brook running underneath, in which kegs were lowered to keep them cool.	New to the city, want to learn Tell us how appreciative she is of the parks, thankful this land wasn't developed Does the Boston Half Marathon run through the Emerald Necklace?
8/07/2022	Heatwave meant early closure this day and no program the following Sunday	Thank someone for Muddy River Improvement How do you get to the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum?

LEARN ANYTHING NEW TODAY? IF SO, WHAT?

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BICENTENNIAL VALUES/EVENTS?

Olmsted designs in Tennessee and Boston, as well as Jr. standing in for the Singer Sargent photo at the Biltmore Confirm that Olmsted wrote The Cotton Kingdom	$12/237 = 5\%$
	$8/239 = 3.3\%$
Olmsted Now events Olmsted's design intention with the Necklace Olmsted's move to Boston	$15/368 = 4\%$
Olmsted Worldview online resource Collaboration between landscape architects and architects Can get NPS Park Stamps at Fairsted Map isn't entirely accurate because more land was purchased for Arnold Arboretum after Olmsted's map of Necklace	$13/281 = 4.6\%$
Olmsted and Isabella Stewart Gardner were neighbors in Brookline Stewards of the Future upcoming Scavenger Hunt at NPS sites	$5/103 = 4.9\%$

VISITOR DATA FROM OLMSTED SUMMER SUNDAYS CONTINUED

DATE	FIELD NOTES	WHY DID YOU STOP BY TODAY?
8/21/2022		Visiting from Canada Is this area a National Park?
8/28/2022		Which way is the end of the Emerald Necklace? How do you get to the Esplanade? RA at Berklee looking for events and volunteering opportunities for students
9/11/2022		Information on biking rules and paths Information about archives and events at Fairsted Olmsted fans came to say hi Where is the Museum of Fine Art?
9/18/2022		Is there rowboating at Jamaica Pond? What is happening with the restoration of the area? How do you pronounce Calvert Vaux's name?

This table represents just a fraction of the visitor questions and comments shared by park users.

LEARN ANYTHING NEW TODAY? IF SO, WHAT?

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT BICENTENNIAL VALUES/EVENTS?

National Parks in the area Olmsted's role in the Civil War and the United States Sanitary Commission	8/208 = 3.8%
Olmsted designed LSU and City Park in Louisiana Non-pedestrian friendly area of Charlesgate Linear park system of Buffalo before Boston Shattuck Visitor Center was old gatehouse	18/440 = 4.1%
Showed best bike paths around Emerald Necklace On site archives, how to access online, and Olmsted Now event page Directions to Museum of Fine Arts Partnership between National Park Service and Emerald Necklace conservancy for Olmsted Now	5/316 = 1.6%
Vaux isn't French, so you pronounce the X in his name Legos to show bridges designed by Olmsted in Back Bay Boat rentals in Jamaica Pond	2/236 = 0.8%

TOTAL:
3.9% from park to bicentennial engagement

108/2740

IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Partnerships via planning, publication and events expanded avenues to access Greater Boston greenspace in the following ways:

Strengthening equitable engagement

GRACEFUL EXPECTATIONS: From the start, especially as Covid unfolded, meeting partners “where they were at” gave essential space for colleagues to engage as they could. Being driven by people rather than production, and allowing this relational process to BE the project, showed respect and built trust for potential future engagements.

ACCESSIBLE ENTRY POINTS: Flexible meeting times and multiple ways to access the effort via one on one meetings, the website, social media, word of mouth, information sessions and more, allowed more porous access to the effort

GENEROUS TIMELINE: Giving partners necessary time to bear witness to actions, not just words, then encouraged the essential pivot point when Olmsted Now not only sought partnerships, but had outside partners actively come forward to propose Bicentennial ideas.

Diversifying connections

WIDE UMBRELLA: Ensuring partnership opportunities could come across a wide range of commitment levels and diverse themes of shared use, shared health and shared power invited more welcome and belonging whether someone was a devoted “Olmsted head” or new to his work but inspired by his legacy. All perspectives were welcome.

HUMBLE and HUMAN: Neither presuming perfection in Olmsted, nor the organizers for Olmsted Now, meant an openness to critique and learning. This meant the coalition could be more diverse, even welcoming opposition and difference. We did not need to agree on everything all of the time, and allowed conflict to unfold as needed toward resolution.

Growing opportunities for shared use, health and empowerment

POWER: The collective network of 186 partners became the power of the Olmsted Now initiative. With a renewed commitment to the mindset of “doing together what cannot be done alone,” Olmsted Now practiced a new way of doing that resisted silos and embraced potential relationships.

The Fairsted team hosting Olmsted Summer Sundays at the Conservancy's Shattuck Visitor Center, and promoting the activity on instagram. Screenshot



USE: This also meant a rejection of territorial or either/or thinking about space use. As Olmsted saw parks as multifunctional connective spaces, use across discipline or experience type was encouraged: to rest and to invigorate, to learn and to express, to steward and be cared for. This was *both/and* use.

HEALTH: Partnering with Olmsted Now was meant as a low stress, high benefit resource. The goal was to allow partners to grow across an arc of relationship: whether they simply enjoyed the network planning, or had work promoted or published, or were support with event production, or engaged in assessment after the fact. If we could learn to collaborate better across disciplines, sectors, and types or scales of organization, we would leave Greater Boston healthier.

NEXT FOR 2023:

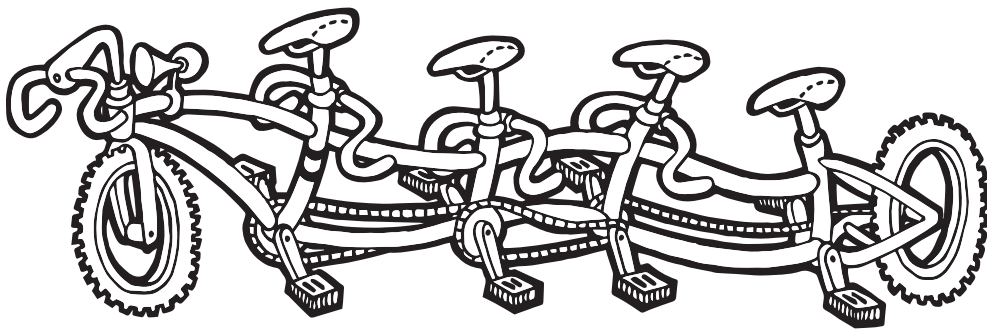
Based on learnings through 2022, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy has reviewed how PARTNERSHIP can be a lens for all of the organization's mission initiatives, governance recruitment and even fundraising approaches. After bicentennial co-organizing with the National Park Service Rangers, the partnership with Fairsted is stronger than ever with the solid success of the Olmsted Summer Sundays program to build upon for future seasons. And cultural partnerships have become an exciting lens to engage broader audiences with Olmsted's legacy and greenspace stewardship to focus a greater sense of inclusion and belonging across cultural backgrounds.

Speak for the Trees volunteer engages visitor to Parks as Platform in Olmsted Park on April 23, 2022. Image: Tyahra Angus, AfroCentered Media



Ethnomusicologist Kera Washington and Phil Baccari of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation plan for the Parks Equity & Spatial Justice project Project Misik: Neponset River Yard at Pope John Paul II Park, Neponset.
Image: Jen Mergel





POWER SHARING

COMMITTEE OF NEIGHBORHOODS



14

BRILLIANT
COLLEAGUES
ON THE COMMITTEE
OF NEIGHBORHOODS



18

GROUP MEETINGS
OVER 8 MONTHS
(12 for selection,
6 to support/assess)



230

COLLECTIVE HOURS
OF PAID WORK
(Likely more than 280 hours total)



87

PROPOSALS
REVIEWED
(16 selected by Committee,
6 more selected by project leads)

ALLOCATED FOR 16 PROJECTS

\$205,000

\$1,175,000

TOTAL REQUESTED FOR 87 PROJECT
APPLICATIONS

PARKS EQUITY & SPATIAL JUSTICE PROJECTS

16 PROJECTS SELECTED

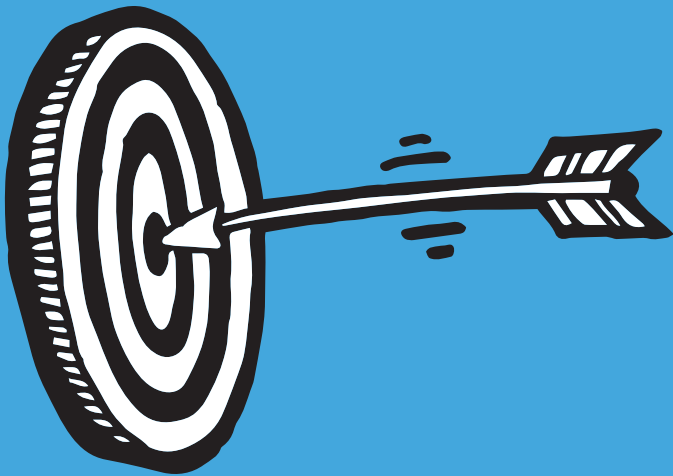
24 BOSTON LOCATIONS

43 UNIQUE EVENTS

100% BIPOC LED

100% INVITED
INTERGENERATIONAL
PARTICIPATION

100% PROJECT
LEADS SHARED FUNDS
TO ALSO HIGHLIGHT
OTHER CREATIVE
COLLABORATORS



THE CONSERVANCY'S ROLE

COMMITTEE OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Offered to all: Paid member hours, group facilitation and documentation. **100% Requests honored.**

PARKS EQUITY & SPATIAL JUSTICE PROJECTS

Offered to all: Production and documentation support.
100% Requests honored as follows:

6 projects with permit
advocacy

8 projects with video
interviews

7 projects with loaned event
supplies

13 projects with stories
published on olmstednow.org

POWER SHARING

CONTEXT

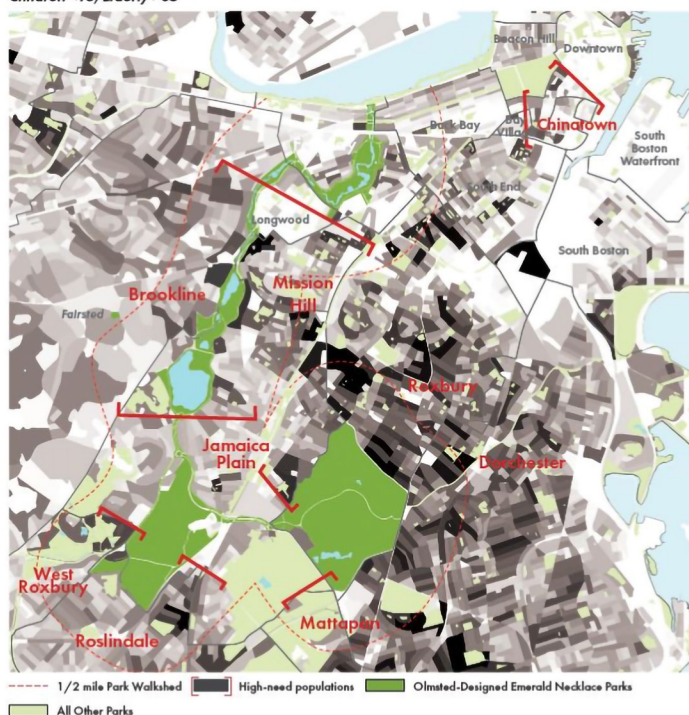
The Olmsted Now Committee of Neighborhoods was formed to rectify a structural inequality in park decision-making in Greater Boston, on the occasion of Frederick Law Olmsted's Bicentennial in 2022. Comprised of intergenerational leaders working in the Roxbury, Mattapan, Grove Hall and Dorchester neighborhoods across a wide array of disciplines, the Committee re-centers programming decisions to the communities that are impacted the most by them, and distributed over \$200,000 in grants to fund community-generated Bicentennial programs focused on parks equity and spatial justice.

Olmsted Now plans began from the start in fall 2019 as equity-centered. Jen Mergel had seen Professor Stephen Gray's display on Boston's racialized open space histories of ecology, migration, redlining and planning in the 2018 exhibition Urban Intermedia at Harvard Graduate School of Design, and met Gray in fall 2019 about bicentennial plans as they related to his

work for Franklin Park Action Plan and clients across the US. Planned before May 2020—a watershed month in which George Floyd was murdered by police and Christian Cooper video-recorded Karen Cooper's racist call to the police from Central Park—was a June 2020 public webinar panel that aligned thinking and people. Gray joined [Emerald Necklace Conservancy](#) President Karen Mauney-Brodek and founder of [Design Studio for Social Intervention \(DS4SI\)](#) Kenny Bailey in the public webinar panel [Green Space, White Space: Racial Equity and Public Places](#), hosted by The Boston Foundation and moderated by Philip Barash, who had designed original Olmsted 200 branding, as Olmsted Now plans were underway. The discussion explored the issues that would drive Bicentennial plans moving forward.

By June 2020, the Conservancy commissioned Barash and colleagues at [Studio Ummo](#) on accessible bicentennial branding and website design for Greater Boston, and by July 2020, the Conservancy commissioned Stephen Gray and his firm [Grayscale Collaborative](#) to assess the planning for Olmsted Now

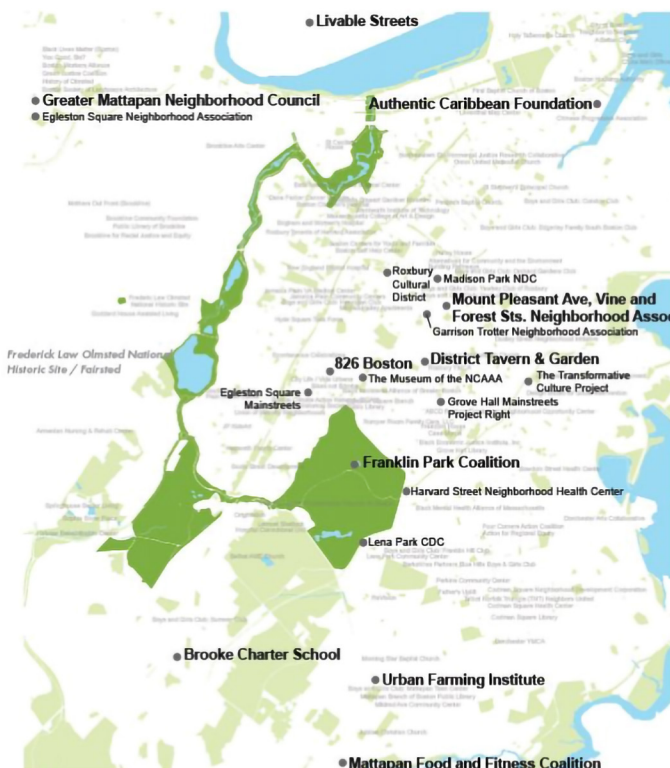
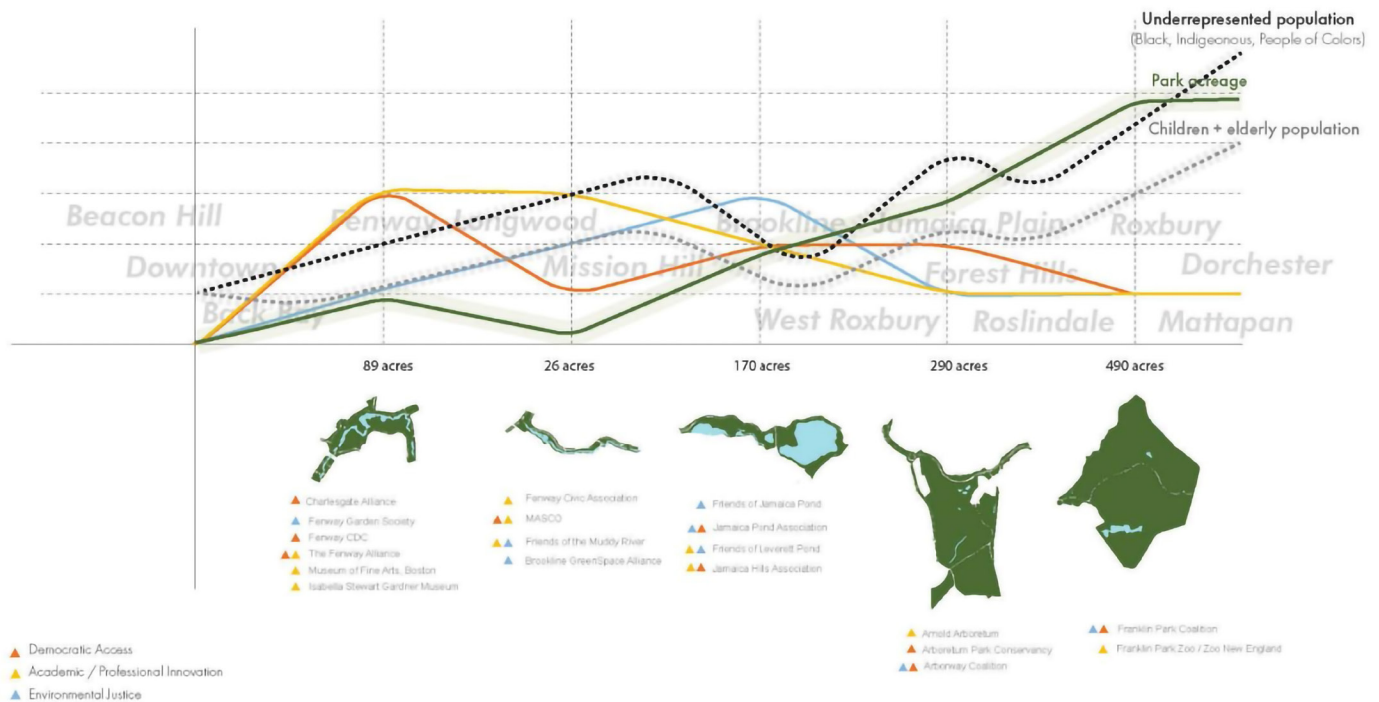
BLACK, INDIGENOUS, PEOPLE OF COLOR + CHILDREN + ELDERLY
Children <18, Elderly >65



GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD OF BOARD OF PARK ADVISORS
As of August 2020



The **more park acreage and need** there is, the **less representation**. How can Boston's Olmsted Bicentennial process allow us to improve this?



At left, Grayscale Collaborative used census data to map the populations of highest park need around the Emerald Necklace Park System: BIPOC children and elderly. They asked: “How well are these groups being served? Are there targeted strategies, projects and programs for these groups? If not, who is making decisions on programming? Who is missing from decision making?” To assess this and target gaps, Grayscale also mapped the neighborhood locations of Conservancy’s Board of Park Advisors (as of August 2020). With gaps identified, Grayscale researched groups who might fill those gaps.

Above: Grayscale identified gaps in neighborhoods around Franklin Park, which guided recommendations. Images: [Grayscale Collaborative](#)

through an equity lens. Grayscale weighed in on the website's voice and focus on "shared power" and was asked to recommend inclusive structures and partnerships for the Boston-area bicentennial to achieve the greatest equity impacts. By late 2020, the Grayscale team had analyzed the Conservancy leadership and advisors as a case study. Their findings pointed to a chronic structural racial imbalance between those historically making parks decisions (white Bostonians) and those who could benefit the most: youth and elderly who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color). So, how could Olmsted Now test new models for more equitably "shared power" in parks and public spaces?

To break old cycles, Grayscale proposed the concept of a "Committee of Neighborhoods." This group of trusted BIPOC leaders across neighborhood associations and councils would have direct relationships and insights on their communities and could solicit, select and allocate funds raised by the Conservancy for programming that they determined could be most positive for their neighbors. Committee members would be compensated for their expertise in networking and decision-making over the course of their work for the bicentennial. By early 2021, the dozens of Olmsted Now coalition members unanimously agreed to pursue this recommendation as an equity model to learn from.

Grayscale sought a trusted partner to envision and guide this Committee. Jay Lee, a board member of Franklin Park Coalition (FPC) who is familiar with Grayscale's and the Conservancy's work for the Franklin Park Action Plan, agreed to co-organize the Committee. In spring, invitations to an information session were sent to prospective members, with meetings to road test and solidify the Committee concept from summer through fall 2021. Active neighborhood leaders from groups such as District 7 Tavern, Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council, Brooke Charter School, Mount Pleasant Ave Vine and Forest Streets Neighborhood Association and more all agreed that

compensating time for decision-making from these perspectives would inspire programming relevant to BIPOC neighbors.

With Grayscale's proposed model confirmed, the Conservancy then turned to DS4SI as Boston's leader in Spatial Justice scholarship to finalize the committee member mix and facilitate a participatory action process from the call for proposals to project selection and production support. Facilitator Joelle Fontaine followed up on Gray and Jay Lee's initial list and selected additional cultural leaders and artists to round out the Committee to work together from January through December 2022.

OLMSTED NOW COMMITTEE OF NEIGHBORHOODS MEMBERS:

Andrew Sharpe, Authentic Caribbean Foundation

Anita Morson-Matra, Baldwin in the Park

Ambar Johnson, Livable 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

Nakia Hill, 826 Boston

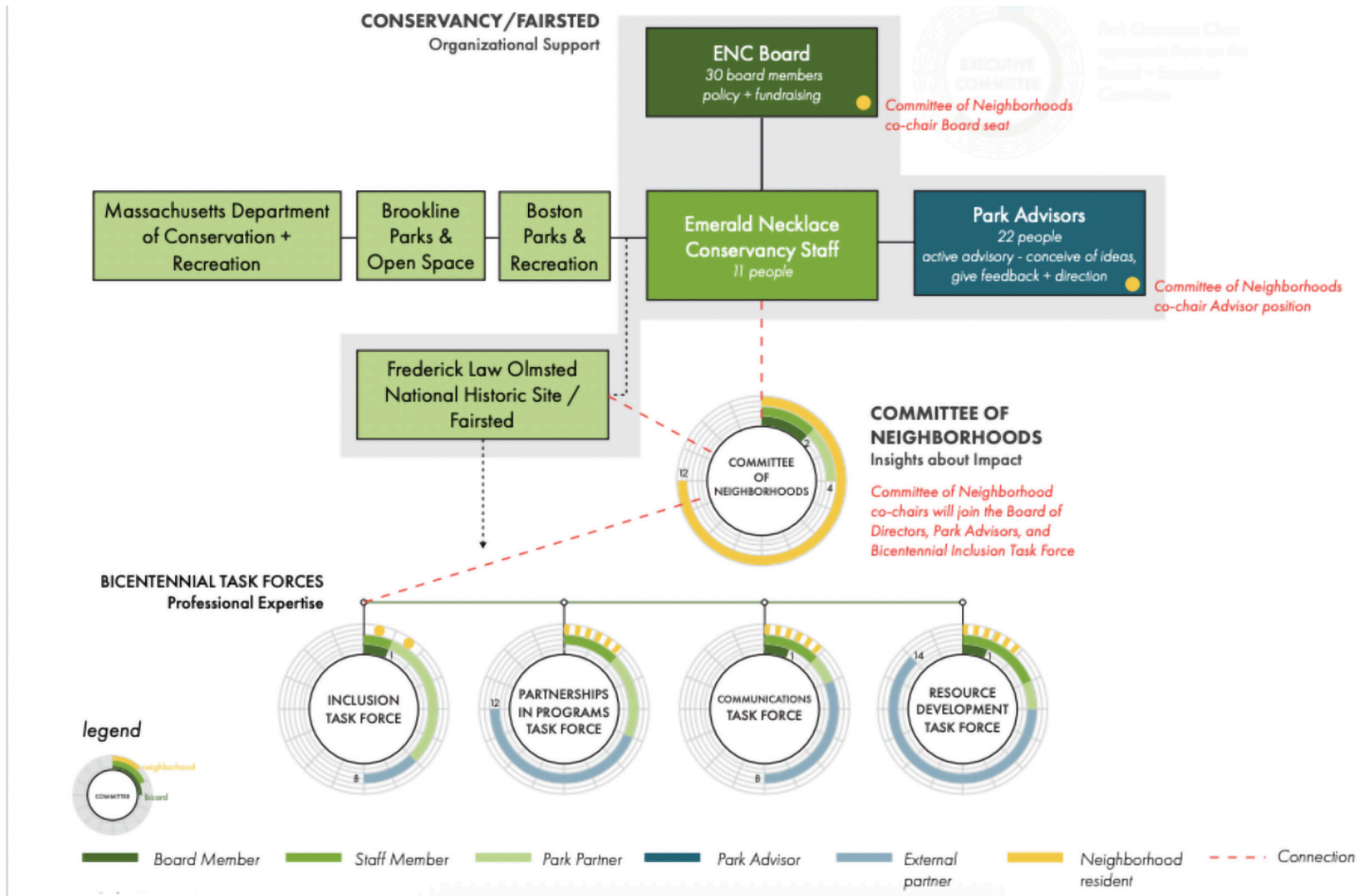
Paul Willis, 826 Boston

Pat Spence, Urban Farming Institute

Shavel'le Olivier, Mattapan Food & Fitness

Kay Savage, Mattapan Food & Fitness

At right: For Olmsted Now, Grayscale Collaborative recommended the pilot structure of a "Committee of Neighborhoods" to ensure equitable representation for bicentennial program decision making, with the longer-term potential to increase civic and political capital on under-represented residents. Images: Grayscale Collaborative.



Committee of Neighborhoods Goals:

- Increased democratic and equitable control of public space by increasing input and feedback in Bicentennial planning & design, particularly from underrepresented residents along the Emerald Necklace
- Increase and broaden the park user base by creating a space to share ideas and surface concerns across neighborhoods, particularly for previously underrepresented neighborhood residents for longer term, beyond the Bicentennial
- Improve access to park governance and budgetary decision-making by shaping programming and operations for the bicentennial celebration and deciding on use and dispersement of \$220,000 initial funding
- Review and advise on Boston's Olmsted Bicentennial brand and messaging (with UMMO).

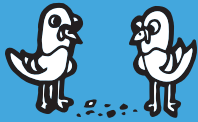
Hyperlink to Olmsted Now

<https://xd.adobe.com/view/23be5bb9-b26f-4778-a617-c16239486d02-76ed/>

Who should be on a Committee of Neighborhoods to ensure equitable representation along the Emerald Necklace?

What programs or processes would maximize the goal to increase civic and political capital of previously underrepresented residents?

How should budgetary decisions be made? (e.g. three-committee consensus, Committee of Neighborhoods, participatory budgeting, targeted outreach to specific organizations, specific types of programs that will be prioritized, etc?)



“There was such diversity at the table. And the freedom to create the process was incredible... We made those decisions in a collaborative way... and ultimately I think that we got something that was really beneficial for applicants and for us as reviewers to say these are the projects we wanted to highlight to create different outcomes for our communities.” —Paul Willis

Olmsted Now Committee of Neighborhoods: Andrew Sharpe, Anita Morson-Matra, Ambar Johnson, Barrington Edwards, Biplaw Rai, Jay Lee, John Linehan, Karenlyn Bunch, Karen Young, Nakia Hill, Paul Willis, Pat Spence, Shavelle Olivier, Kay Savage and facilitator Joelle Fontaine. Image compilation: Ciara Culligan

Fontaine guided the Committee with grace and affirmed their agency. Those who were able to attend meetings took the lead in determining how best to support applicants’ most visionary and least stressed proposals. They announced the grants on April 20, 2022, and offered two online and recorded information sessions in May to answer questions.

Rather than focus exclusively on the history of or only landscapes by Frederick Law Olmsted, Olmsted Now and the Conservancy invited proposals that opened up programming. They encouraged funding requests that explored the broader contemporary relevance of Olmsted’s legacy values: shared use, shared health and shared power across all parks and public space, not just the Emerlad Necklace Park System. Olmsted Now’s core grant program was likewise values-driven: parks equity and spatial justice guided the process in which decisions were centered in community



and resources were de-centered across neighborhoods.

When the massacre in Uvalde, Texas at Robb Elementary School struck on May 24 right before applications were due, the Committee unanimously chose to extend the deadline to June 3, and honored the space creative leaders might need to process the traumatic news. Once applications were closed, a self-selected task force of the Committee who had the time for reviews transparently discussed selection criteria that would foster the strongest equity impacts and offer the most diverse range of experiences for Boston audiences. Meeting minutes were taken by Conservancy staff to report back on decisions to the full group.

PARKS EQUITY AND SPATIAL JUSTICE PROJECTS

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.

For the 2022 Bicentennial, Olmsted Now Parks Equity & Spatial Justice Grants funded 16 inspiring proposals from local creatives.

The Committee ultimately chose to allocate \$20,000, \$10,000 and \$5,000 grants to projects that strove 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 demand for more culturally inclusive, neighborhood-determined greenspace programming in Boston.

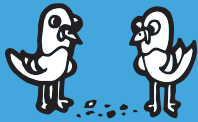
The grantees brought a vast range of experience to their proposals: some have built trust in Boston over many decades, while others were testing terrain to mark new chapters in greenspace activation and spatial justice. Each proposed to engage participants through intersections of movement, making, music, storytelling, ritual, history-keeping and future-making. Cultural affirmation and themes of healing and revitalization run through all of the projects.



Adjustments to achieve Equity Impacts

Ultimately, the Committee of Neighborhoods let the best proposals reshape their originally planned selections to support the most visionary and impactful projects. Rather than more projects of smaller budgets, they chose fewer projects that were more ambitious. The group also made the case for \$5000 in additional funds to ensure projects could realize their goals as needed. The result was a program series driven by what was best for the community, rather than inflexible structure maintained for its own sake. This responsiveness to need became a hallmark of Olmsted Now power sharing.

Committee's Proposed Awards	Committee's Award Selections
\$20,000: Five Projects	\$20,000: Six Projects
\$10,000: Five Projects	\$10,000: Seven Projects
\$5,000: Ten Projects	\$5,000: Three Projects
TOTAL: \$200,000	TOTAL: \$205,000



“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.”

—Jen Mergel

ROLE OF THE CONSERVANCY

The Conservancy commitment was to offer not obligate, to serve as a backbone organization through trust-based philanthropy.

BEFORE THE PROJECT: Applicants were not required to fill out extensive paperwork nor required to confirm permitting approval prior to applying. The criteria was expansive vision, not proving navigation of approvals. The application was a 90-second video answering key questions about who the parks experience envisioned could meet key equity goals for Boston.

DURING THE PROJECT: Project leads were offered an Olmsted Now media kit with logos, website tools (event calendar and published interviews) and language to promote their work, as well as access to the Conservancy’s paid PR consultant, permitting support if needed. The group conceived of an idea to share park event resources (tents, chairs, tables, A-frame signs), and the Conservancy supplied this with a pilot lending system. Conservancy staff also attended many events, shared photos/videos as documentation resources and promoted events via social media. As projects navigated approvals, then were permitted and scheduled, the Conservancy sent out weekly updates to

the Committee and Project leads, building community threads for communal cheers and questions answered.



Hybrid meeting with Committee of Neighborhoods and Olmsted Now Parks Equity and Spatial Justice project leads at Conservancy offices at the Curley House, August 16, 2022. From left: Jen Mergel, Tran Vu, Andre StrongBearHeart Gaines, Karen Young, Krea Washington, Ife’ Franklin, Conor McCoy and Joelle Fontaine. Image: Lia Kahan

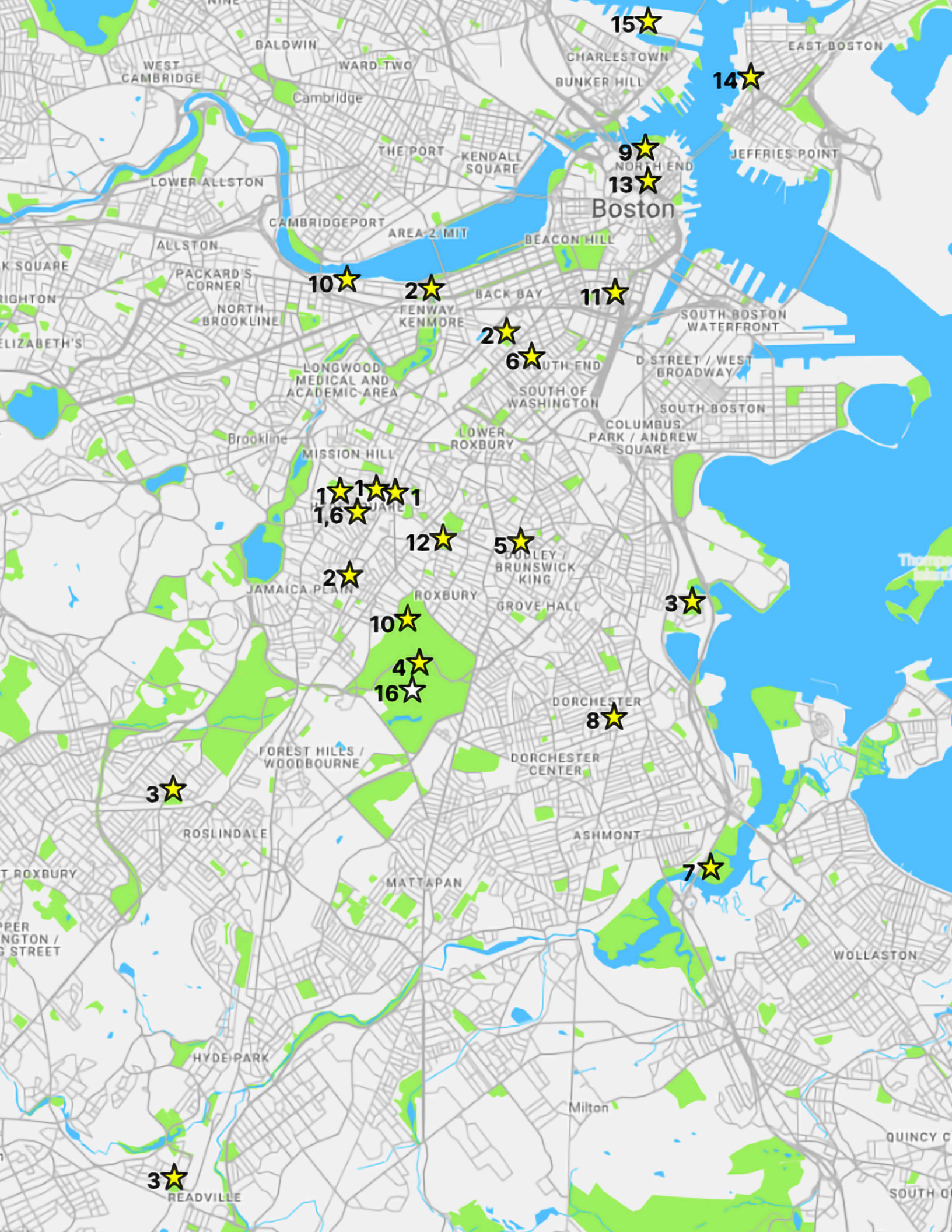
AFTER THE PROJECT: Project leads were invited to reflect on the experience and document their project in a video interview. No formal reports were required, though many volunteered project photographs, footage and appreciation.

10 of 16 project leads were able to attend a reflection convening, while 8 colleagues shared video interviews about their experience.



Cohort supporting The Wilderness Project in Franklin Park Overlook Ruins on October 2, 2022: Project lead Crystal Bi with fellow project leads Nakia Hill, Ife’ Franklin and Linda Wells. Image: Jen Mergel

Each number on this map corresponds to the numbers listed in the Projects in Detail section (below)



PROJECTS IN DETAIL

1. HYDE SQUARE TASK FORCE

(HSTF) hydesquare.org, [@hydesquaretf](https://twitter.com/hydesquaretf)

Proposal: Partner with artists to activate 3 park spaces in the Boston's Latin Quarter Cultural District with Afro-Latin Cultural Activations: a live concert with Puerto Rican music, live public art activities with two local BIPOC artists, a celebration of the completion of a mural focused on the history of Afro-Latin music and dance, and performances of HSTF youth. ([VIDEO](#))

Resulting Project: Received \$5000 to supplement other funding and achieved all aspects of the 2022 proposal. ([VIDEO](#))

Dates/Locations:

- July 21: Lawn Concert with David Rivera y la Bambula from Puerto Rico at Blessed Sacrament Church, 361 Centre Street, Hyde Square ([HSTF post](#))
- July 27: "Drumming Up Safety in Jackson Square" with Cornell Coley at 1500 Columbus Ave, near Mildred Hailey Apartments, 30 Bickford Street, Hyde Square ([HSTF post](#))
- August 4: Tito Puente Latin Music Series: Astoria Salsa Company, Mozart Park, at 10 Mozart Street, Hyde Square ([HSTF post](#))
- August 10: Pa'La Calle performances bringing the art of HSTF Jóvenes en Acción youth to the streets at Blessed Sacrament Church, 361 Centre Street, Hyde Square ([HSTF post](#))
- November 5: Mozart Park Mural Celebration at 10 Mozart Street, Hyde Square, emceed by José Massó of WBUR's Con Salsa with lead mural artists Roberto Chao and Eyevan Richiez, Bombazo Boricua featuring Jorge Arce, Charmaine Santiago, Cornell Coley, and more. ([@bostonlatinquarter post](#))



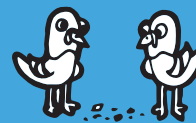
HSTF Jóvenes en Acción youth performing at Pa'La Calle on August 10, 2022 Image: Mark Saperstein.



8 additional creatives highlighted/
supported by Project Lead

Conservancy Support:

- Project documented as a published interview: ["Dancing Well Into the Night": Hyde Square Task Force Reflects on Summer Programming](#)
- Promoted on [Instagram](#)
- Posted [November 5 event](#) on olmstednow.org events calendar



"We saw what the pandemic did to the mental health of our youth. And so, to me ... the parks represent a place for healing."

—Ken Tangvik



Key Learning: The Conservancy did not learn of most events until after they happened, so could have been more supportive as a promoter and attendee if clearer channels for updates (on social media) were established and followed to stay up to date.

2. BRIDGESIDE CYPHER: Giovanni Duran, Jillian Girardin and Aaron King bridgecyph.com, [@bridgecyph](https://twitter.com/bridgecyph)

Proposal: Program public outdoor hip-hop open mic cyphers across Boston parks to expose and invite passersby of all backgrounds to celebrate the energy and welcome of live hip-hop. ([VIDEO](#))

Resulting Project: Received \$10,000 to produce the *Boston Parks Tour* across three neighborhoods: South End, Jamaica Plain and Kenmore/Charlesgate.

Dates/Locations:

- July 31: Hip-Hop and R&B live band concert with Open Mic featuring Amanda Shea, Dio Gin, DJ WhySham, Gio Davinci, Space Dolphin, DSticks, William Mabuza, Kazi and Eva Davenport at Titus Sparrow Park, 75 West Rutland Square, South End ([@bridgecyph post](#))
- August 27: Hip-Hop and R&B live band concert with Open Mic featuring Mistiko Bloodfire, Young Dawg Music, Maryann Murray, Amanda Shea, Kazi, The Reverend Kook DeVille, Blondie and Safari Hat King at Titus Sparrow Park 75 West Rutland Square, South End ([@bridgecyph post](#))
- September 24: Hip-Hop and R&B live band concert with Open Mic featuring Eva Davenport, Sassy D'Estany, Aditi, Karim, Kae Alayah with live band including Omari Fortune, Michael Carr, Eli Boninger, Jonathan Birch ([@bridgecyph post](#)) at Charlesgate Park North Field
- September 24: Hip-Hop and R&B live band concert with Open Mic featuring Gasoline Monk, Deemy, 13PM, Amber Flowz and Space Dolphin ([@bridgecyph post](#)) at Jamaica Plain Skatepark, 2 Lawndale Terrace



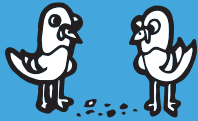
26 additional creatives highlighted/
supported by Project Lead

Conservancy Support:

- With additional funds, the Conservancy commissioned Bridgeside Cypher to perform on September 24 at Parkfest in Charlesgate Park
- This performance was then presented and promoted in the 12th Annual Street Talk with LivableStreets Alliance



Safari Hat King on sax, the Reverend Kook De DeVill on bass, Kazi on keys and Blondie on drums perform with Boston Parks Tour on August 27, 2022 at Titus Sparrow Park. Image: Bridgeside Cypher



“That band that played in Charlesgate was excellent and made me feel like I could see the future of the park once it gets activated.”

—Randall Albright, Charlesgate Alliance on Bridgeside Cypher



Key Learning: Future partnerships would benefit from more production support for performing artists (more funding, more staffing for set up and trouble shooting) and advance promotion (on social media, with signage).

3: KAREN SUSAN YOUNG

karensusanyoung.com, [@karensusanyoung](https://www.instagram.com/karensusanyoung) with Mica Rose and Mel Tiang with elders of Older & Bolder and Aquinnah Wampanoag artist and scientist Elizabeth James-Perry

Proposal: *Taiko and the Parks*—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. ([VIDEO](#))

Resulting Project: Received \$20,000 for *Taiko and the Parks* across three neighborhoods where participants had favorite greenspaces: Dorchester, Hyde Park and Roslindale.

Dates/Locations:

- August 3: Session 1 introduction with elders from BCYF Grove Hall and residents from Blake Estates and guest artist Yurika Chiba from San Jose Taiko at Savin Hill Park in Dorchester
- August 23: Session 2 training with elders from BCYF Grove Hall and residents from Blake Estates and with guest artist Michelle Fujii, Unit SouZou in Iacono Park in Hyde Park
- September 3: Finale performance with elders from BCYF Grove Hall and residents from Blake Estates with a group procession and guest performances by Alex Pine (Taiko Maine Dojo), Brian Forbis (ONE Taiko), Crissy Lau, (OMNY Taiko), Sam Leung and Yilan Sun (Gendo Taiko) at Fallon Field in Roslindale ([@karensusanyoung post](#))



Promotional graphic by Aaron King tagged on instagram with participant handles to drive attendance to August 27 event. Screenshot



“Especially those who might be in wheelchairs or have some kind of physical disability, the parks aren’t as accessible. So the fact that this grant allowed us to ensure that the setup was going to be for THEM made a huge difference.”

—Karen Young



Finale performance September 3, 2022 at Fallon Field.
Image: Lee Daniel Tran



Poster for Taiko and the Parks event on September 3, 2022. Screenshot



7 additional creatives highlighted/ supported by Project Lead

Conservancy Support:

- Project documented as a video interview and as a published interview: "It Gets In Your Soul": Taiko and the Parks with Karen Young
- Promoted on Instagram
- Loaned pop-up tents and A-frame signs for event use
- Recommended GHP Powered for solar powered sound amplification
- Offered permit advice for approval of large tent

4: LINDA WELLNESS WARRIOR:
Linda Wells lindawellnesswarrior.com,
[@lindawellnesswarrior](https://www.instagram.com/lindawellnesswarrior)

Proposal: Offering an 8th season of yoga in Franklin Park free of charge, and expand a platform for other BIPOC yoga and wellness instructors to connect to learners in the park (VIDEO)

Resulting Project: Received \$5,000 to create *Yoga in Franklin Park Remixed* and curated 3 months of offerings with 10 practitioners, promoted on social media with directional videos, traffic updates, and inclusive welcome for all to join.

Dates/Locations: All healing movement sessions offered on Schoolmaster Hill in Franklin Park:

- August 6 & 20: Yoga 4 All Shapes, Sizes and Abilities with Linda Wells (post)
- August 13: Moving Meditation & Tea Ceremony with Irischa Valentin (post)



Key Learning: Ease can increase equity—not only in the creation and approval of projects, but how invitations and announcements are shared. Even posters and promotion for an event can encourage access and inclusion for more ages and abilities with notations about path surfaces, walking time and free parking. This example designed by Karen Young also promotes support of small local businesses!

- August 17: Brazilian Dance with Maestra Isaura Oliveira ([post](#))
- August 24: Moving to Asanas with Maestra Isaura Oliveira
- August 27: Restorative Yoga with Born Bi-Kim ([post](#))
- August 29: Tai Chi with Bagua Joe ([post](#))
- September 3: DIY Tea Party: Herbs for Stress Management with Sequoia “Coco” Dickerson of Root 2 Wellness ([post](#) and [post](#))
- September 3, 10, 17 & 24: Yoga 4 All Shapes, Sizes and Abilities with Linda Wells ([post](#))
- September 12: Hatha Yoga with Rosie Docanto ([post](#))
- September 21: Vinyasa Yoga with Alisha Josey ([post](#))
- September 28: Mindful Yoga with Juan Sosa ([post](#))
- October 1: Family Yoga with Marlene Boyette (rescheduled from September 17, [post](#))
- October 22: Forest Bathing with Tasha Harris at a different location in Franklin Park: the Shattuck Picnic Area ([post](#))



Isaura Oliveira leading asanas for *Yoga in Franklin Park Remixed* on August 24. Image: Courtesy Linda Wells.



10 additional creatives highlighted/ supported by Project Lead

Conservancy Support:

- Posted [classes](#) on [olmstednow.org](#) events calendar
- Project documented as a [video interview](#)



“I love the work that I do because I give people an opportunity to inhabit their bodies... and to feel at home in public space.”

—Linda Wells



Key Learning: Compensation that honors labor, even labors of love, is a key to sustaining healing practices that are equitably accessible. “As a practitioner, being paid for one’s time, and being able to pay others for their time—not having to count on donations—is huge.” —Linda Wells.

5: BOSTON LIBERATION CENTER

Rachel Domond, President Mass Liberation and Andira Alves, Director of Mass Liberation liberationnews.org/boston-liberation-center, [@bostonliberationcenter](https://twitter.com/bostonliberationcenter)

Proposal: 1-year anniversary celebration & reflection event on public land in a reclaimed green lot with local food, music/ art & family activities for a working-class community center. ([VIDEO](#))

Resulting Project: Received \$5,000 for neighborhood walks with door flier invites, green lot “community clean up,” new fundraising T-shirts, a recap video, and full-day family-friendly “1st birthday celebration” in the Dudley/Roxbury neighborhood. ([Post](#))

Date/Location:

- August 21: Boston Liberation Center Anniversary Celebration in the green lot at 190A-192 Blue Hill Avenue and the offices of 194 Blue Hill Avenue, Roxbury with:
 - Live performances from Puerto Rican Afro-Caribbean musician Jorge Arce (jorgearce.org) and the Boston Dabke Troupe (teaching the Middle Eastern Levantine folk dance of “dabke” in support of Palestinian liberation, bostondabketroupe.com)
 - Free food, a mural by Roxbury artist Rob “[Problak](#)” Gibbs community painting
 - Political programming presentations:
 - “Discussion: When We Fight We Learn” on BLC organizing victories
 - “Teach-In: What is Black August?” tracking the roots of this commemoration with a musical performance
 - “Panel: The People United Will Never be Defeated” with reportbacks on recent travels by BLC organizers to Cuba and Venezuela



Jorge Arce leads music session at Boston Liberation Center Anniversary, August 21, 2022. Image: [Boston Liberation Center](#)



3 additional creatives highlighted/
supported by Project Lead

Conservancy Support:

- Green lot “community clean up” supplies donated and delivered
- Project documented as a published interview: [Boston Liberation Center Celebrates One Year](#)
- Promoted on [Instagram](#)
- Posted [August 21](#) event on olmstednow.org events calendar

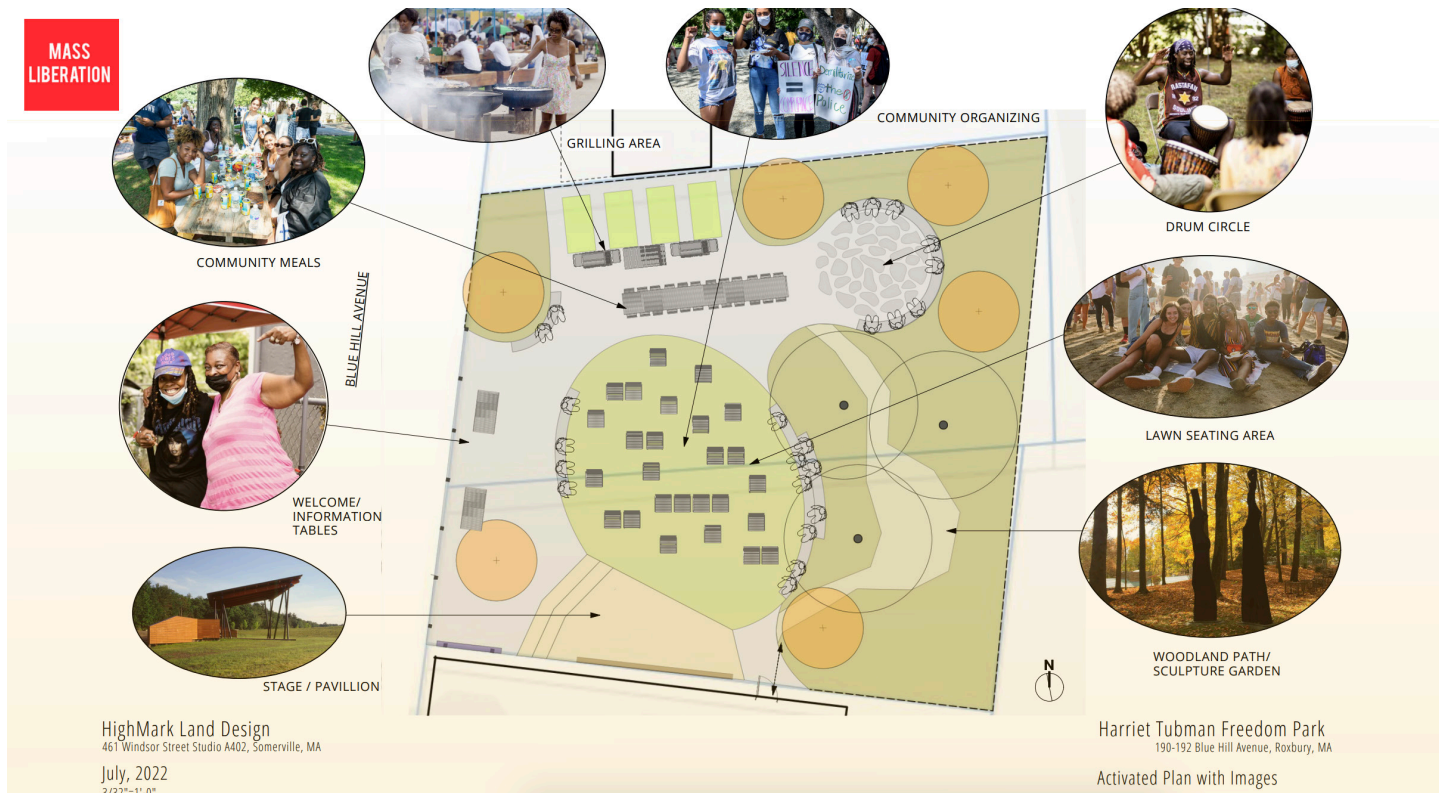


“This plot of land is part of the Blue Hill Action Plan... Our nonprofit actually put in a proposal to get the land so we can maintain it as green space. So we’re just trying to really reclaim the public space through this event... Roxbury really doesn’t have a lot of parks and space to just use. I think doing this type of programming demonstrates to neighbors and also to the people who make these decisions that, in fact, this is space that we need... I think it’s super important that Olmsted Now has these types of grants to continue to let regular people in the community cultivate and do programming in these spaces.”

—Rachel Domond



Key Learning: Programming open green space makes visible the communities’ “use” and needs that can seem invisible to developers. Occupying and animating space holds power. Since August 21, Mass Liberation proposed preserving the green lot as Harriet Tubman Freedom Park, using the August 21 event as an example of their site stewardship and neighborhood use.



July 22 plan for Harriet Tubman Freedom Park presented by Mass Liberation to City officials for the Blue Hill Avenue Action Plan: B4 site on September 27, 2022. Screenshot

6: ELI PABON OF METAMOVEMENTS LATIN DANCE COMPANY

@ladyelipabon, metamovements.com,
[@metamovements](https://www.instagram.com/metamovements)

Proposal: Reprising Salsa in the Park, a MetaMovements Program. After the pandemic pause, the goal was to bring live performance and dance instruction for people of all abilities and backgrounds back to where it all began in Boston's Blackstone Community Center Courtyard in the South End in 2008 as well as to the William Flaherty Playground in Jamaica Plain. ([VIDEO](#))

Resulting Project: Received \$10,000 to lead outdoor Latin Dance sessions with numerous guest artists at two sites, and document the project ([VIDEO](#)).

Dates/Locations:

- August 25: Salsa in the Park with:
 - Dance floor set up and breakdown crew Francois Noel, Brittany Lee, Alicia Vida Ortiz and Michal Shapiro

- Salsa & Casino instructors Boston Casineros' Amanda Rodrigue, Alejandro Miguel Castro and Anara Frank
- Spinning by DJ Rob Suave
- Performances by Phunk Phenomenon Salsa Kids led by Phut Ortiz, Eli Pabon, Agosto Gloria, Yaya Mzuri, Oscar Noel Carrasco who lead Music Corner, and JP Jitterbugs with Boston Lindy Bomb Squad
- Videography and photography by Carven Boursiquot; O'Day Park 75 W Newton St, South End ([post](#))
- September 15: Salsa in the Park as a kick off to Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month with Salsa and Casino dance lessons with Anara Frank, Timba line/follow-alongs, performances, a music corner and social dancing with DJ D.Martinez, Jenny Oliver of Modern Connections Collective and Moves & Vibes Dance and Entertainment Co. Ladies Team, in Mozart park, 10 Mozart Street, Jamaica Plain ([post](#))



Dancing in O'Day Park on August 25, 2022. Image: Carven Boursiquot



15+ additional creatives highlighted/
supported by Project Lead

Conservancy Support:

- Project documented as a video interview



"When attendees say 'This is healing, this is community, thank you for continuing to find ways to bring Salsa In The Park to different communities,' we say 'THANK YOU for being part of the movement of Salsa In The Park!!' When people come together with positive and supportive energy and when funding opportunities like the #OlmstedNow Parks Equity & Spatial Justice grant exist, we are in a great position to continue this work."

—MetaMovements Collective



Eli Pabon September 15 at Mozart Park. Image: Anara Frank



Key Learning: The call to generously, inclusively serve one's community with culture is often generational. Eli Pabon has acknowledged the influence of her Puerto Rican family's long history with music in many ways, such as her personal post about her "welo" Arsenio Pabon, her professional biography, and her dialogue with Committee of Neighborhood members who grew up hearing her father's family bring live Latin music to New England. Family ties often inspire neighborhood ties, like Eli's choice for program sites and partnerships.

7: KERA WASHINGTON OF ZILI MISIK
(wellesley.edu/music/facstaff/washington,
projectmisik.com, [@zilimisik](https://twitter.com/zilimisik))

Proposal: 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 to occupy Pope John Paul II Park in July. (VIDEO)

Resulting Project: Received \$20,000 and funds from the Wellness Collaborative and Boston Ujima Project to present Project Misik: A Neponset River Yard: with a blessing and acknowledgement of the ancestral lands, dance and music workshops, live performance, free food, water and Covid vaccinations and more on the banks of the Neponset River to "build common knowledge, community and respect among us, particularly for marginalized people of African descent."

Date/Location:

- September 18: Afro-diasporic Arts at Pope John Paul II Park on Hallet Street, hosted by Zili Misik and featuring:

blessing and dance with Afro-Brazilian mestra choreographer Isaura Oliveira and Afro-Haitian maestro Peniel Guerrier, steel pan with Becky Bass, Cabo Verde music with Lutchinha (Maria Neves Leite), Haitian mizik rasin with Tjovi Ginen, roots music and poetry with Letta Neely, mixed beats by DJ Lady Ly, youth performance of “Impossible is Possible, sculptures by Walter Clark and Pneuhhaus and food by Gourmet Kreyòl



“One thing that I really appreciate about this process is that it asked me to dream in a way that I don’t really say it out loud often. So this process from the whole [video] application encouraged ‘Speak it, speak your dream.’”

—Kera Washington



8 additional creatives highlighted/ supported by Project Lead

Other Project Leads came to help with event

Conservancy Support:

- Project documented as a video interview and a published interview: Kera Washington’s Project Misik: Vulnerability and Exploration through Collective Music-Making
- Posted September 18 on olmstednow.org events calendar
- Promoted on Instagram
- Loaned pop-up tents, chairs and A-frame signs for event use
- Significant advocacy with Department of Conservation and Recreation to approve project permit and site plan



Peniel Guerrier leads Haitian dance to live music by Zili Misik. Image: Jen Mergel



Key Learning: If at first you don't succeed: Try, try again—AND question why. While the initial application for a July event faced an initial “no” without a just explanation, Kera Washington neither gave up nor ignored the issue. She recalled telling herself: “Keep trying. Okay, we’re creatives. So we can think about how to creatively traverse this problem.” Calling out the challenge in the press, she realized the project two months later, turning the struggle into a call to action. For 2023, the Conservancy commits to lead advocacy for more transparent and equitable permit processes.

8: NGOC-TRAN VU tranvuarts.com, [@tranvuarts](https://www.instagram.com/tranvuarts)

Proposal: 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. ([VIDEO](#))

Resulting Project: Received \$10,000 to present and document *Who Belongs Here? Who Doesn't?*, “a free outdoor multimedia arts exhibition amplifying southeast asian stories on home, deportation, and displacement” in Fields Corner neighborhood of Dorchester, Boston's Little Saigon Cultural District ([VIDEO](#)).

Date/Locations:

- September 24, 2022 Town Field at 1565 Dorchester Avenue; featuring local food, staged performances and community organizing curated by Tran Vu, Sam Lê Shave, Asian American Resource Workshop, with support from the City of Boston Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, including:

- The Mekong River art installation
- Performances by Princess Moon, Y-Binh Nguyễn, Mica Rose, and The Flavor Continues
- Visual art by Anny Thach, Sam Lê Shave, Ammany Ty, Crystal Bi and Dzidzor with the Wilderness Art Exhibit, and Vanguard with Khanh Nguyen.
- Video documentation by Elías E. Mendoza Vivas
- Tabling by Dorchester Not for Sale and AARW, who sponsored a ZINE with Sam Lê Shave, with Dianara Rivera promoting the event online and Kevin Lam sharing a press release on their organizing effort against Southeast Asian deportation through the Southeast Asian Relief & Responsibility (SEARR) Campaign

16 • Thursday, September 15, 2022 • BAY STATE BANNER

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Afro-diasporic equity

A long-fought-for festival comes to Pope John Paul II Park

By CELINA COLBY

On Sept. 18, Pope John Paul II Park along the Neponset River in Dorchester will come alive with the sights, sounds and movements of the African diaspora. “Project Mula: A Neponset RiverKink” is a celebration of Afro-diasporic art work pioneered by local musician Kera Washington with the help of one of the Oldest Equity grants intended to diversify Boston's green spaces.

The festival will include workshops in Haitian and Afro-Brazilian dance taught by Issam Oliveira, a mobile vaccination clinic specifically targeting children under age 5, food trucks, and temporary public art installations by Walter Clark and Penchuan Studios. Live music will be provided by Cape Verdean singer Lurichinho, Haitian mizik enns band Tèt Ginen and Kera Washington's all-female Afro-diasporic band Zili Mula. The day is meant to be celebratory and educational, bringing the culture of the surrounding neighborhood into Pope John Paul II Park. The project has been a long time coming. Washington has been working to bring this festival to life for months, often fighting against pushback from the Department of Conservation and Recreation. According to Washington a DCR representative told her the event was not appropriate for Pope John Paul II Park for various and changing reasons. She reports that even community members asked why the event wouldn't be held somewhere like Franklin Park. But the location is important.



Kera Washington. PHOTO BY JACQUELINE BERNARDI FOR BAY STATE BANNER

“I hope people think about how one way of making our Boston spaces more equitable is to go to those spaces together and make space for each other in them.” —Kera Washington

“PJP Park is a public park, just blocks away from and in one of the most diverse neighborhoods of Boston, but also in one of the most segregated,” says Washington. The event is open to everyone, all creeds and all backgrounds, but, she says, “We particularly want to invite the Black and brown folks, whom I don't see a lot of in this park, to experience the beauty of PJP and the beauty of African diasporic arts, on the banks of the Neponset River.” Thanks to Washington's tireless efforts and the support of Boston Harbor Now, Oldest Now, Better Beaches Program and some of the DCR staff, the project has come to fruition. The Oldest Equity grants are specifically intended to make Boston public green spaces more inclusive to all. “Project Mula: A Neponset RiverKink” is that bill to a T, bringing in the local community to a park they may not feel welcome in.



Walter Clark art installation. PHOTO BY JACQUELINE BERNARDI FOR BAY STATE BANNER

“I hope people interact with black Afro-diasporic artists and arts they would like to spend more time with,” says Washington. “I hope people think about how one way of making our Boston spaces more equitable is to go to those spaces together and make space for each other in them.”

Stay tuned for the event schedule: www.projectmula.com



Zili Mula. PHOTO BY JACQUELINE BERNARDI FOR BAY STATE BANNER



Dianara Rivera. PHOTO BY JACQUELINE BERNARDI FOR BAY STATE BANNER

Bay State Banner highlights Kera Washington's event, and the fight to get it permitted.



Princess Moon performing September 24, 2022 at Town Field in Dorchester. Image: Courtesy Tran Vu



11 additional creatives highlighted/
supported by Project Lead

Other Project Leads came to help with
event

Conservancy Support:

- Project documented as a video interview and a published interview: Ngoc -Tran Vu on Bringing Social Issues into the Open on olmstednow.org
- Posted September 24 on olmstednow.org events calendar
- Promoted on Instagram



Key Learning: Curate or Create? While an artist, Ngoc-Tran Vu chose to activate space as an “exhibition organizer and curator” of others’ art, crediting Sam Lê Shave as “lead artist.” Like 100% of other Olmsted Now Parks Equity Project Leads, she shared a public space platform for visibility and funding. While this was not a requirement of the grant, the question is: if the “logistics” and “hoops” were less drain on her energy and focus, could Vu have also have shared her artistic work? Should she have to choose?



Vu holding exhibition poster (art by Anny Thach, designed by Sam Lê Shave) in Town Field with team for *Who Belongs? Who Doesn't?* in Town Field.



“I want my energy and focus to be on the work itself and the issues, but there’s so much logistics that can be really frustrating and also so many hoops that I have to jump through. To create more equitable ways and to really make the process a lot simpler I think is so important and it’s going to encourage a lot more participation from the community, from artists, from organizers, to really create a space for the public that’s for all of us.”

—Ngoc-Tran Vu

9: IFÉ FRANKLIN facebook.com/ife.franklin/, [@ife_franklin](https://twitter.com/ife_franklin) slave narrative

Proposal: “A procession at Copp’s Hill Burial Ground, North End to communally honor gravesites and bring justice to the ancestral spirits of Black Bostonians” (VIDEO)

Resulting Project: Received \$10,000 for the Egun (Ancestor) procession and celebration of more than 1000 souls in unmarked graves from Boston’s New Guinea community, to bring spiritual justice and an affirmation that these ancestors are *not* forgotten, unlike a 2022 essay might fear. The event was an open invitation across generations and backgrounds: “Whoever shows up is who it’s supposed to be for,” but tourists

and onlookers were asked to refrain from photography as Franklin noted: “It’s not a performance, it’s not spectatorship; it is moments of silence, story sharing, laying there, and transferring frequencies of love.”⁸ ([VIDEO](#))

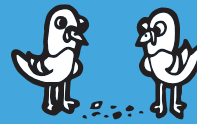
Date/Location:

- September 25: Copp’s Hill Burying Ground at 45 Hull Street in the North End; Ifé Franklin invited participants to wear white (and a mask). She prepared juju bags, and provided ancestor sticks to mark rhythm, a ring of fresh flowers, unlit candles, fruit and libations as offerings, percussion, amplification and ASL interpretation. The event engaged dozens of collaborators in an indigenous blessing, ring shout with song and dance, and spoken affirmations at the burial site as hundreds watched respectfully from a distance. Community organizers, history keepers, educators cultural stewards and performers who contributed included:
 - Kera Washington with friends on percussion and amplification
 - Chali’Inaru Smilez Dones (member of Iukaieke Guaina and Liaison of The United Confederation Of Taino People) as guide of Indigenous blessing
 - Sabrina Pilet-Jones, Milly Henry, Shanti Charles, Tisha Doubleu, Lula Christopher, Bayan Santana DaGraca, Angel Brooks, and Lolita Parker Jr added their voices as “Conjure Queens”
 - Riot Aphrodite Diaz assisted with video assembly and Nohemi Rodriguez documented with still photographs
 - Cassandra Cato-Louis, Jesse Cardoso, & Po protected the site
 - L’Merchie Frazier, Chalaun Lomax, Carlos Anlonzo, Martina Tanga, and numerous others were also in attendance



Egun Procession participants line up along Hull Street to enter Copp’s Hill Burial Ground, September 25, 2022.

Image: [Nohemi Rodriguez](#)



“We the artists, Olmsted Now and the Committee of Neighborhoods are part of a beautiful expansion, a changing of the tide. Let us continue to walk together as we assist with “opening the parks” for us all. I am thrilled to be a part of this amazing cohort, to be in connection with folks who see the future and are not afraid of what that looks like.”

—Ifé Franklin



Franklin with Lula Christopher for Ring Shout at Copp’s Hill Burial Ground. Image: [Nohemi Rodriguez](#)

8. Chenoa Baker. Self-Emancipated: Ifé Franklin in Conversation with Chenoa Baker. [BostonArtReview.com](#)



12+ additional creatives highlighted/
supported by Project Lead

Other Project Leads came to help with
event

Conservancy Support:

- Project documented as a published interview: *Fear and Shame, Love and Thanks: Facing History with Ifé Franklin* on olmstednow.org
- Posted September 25 on olmstednow.org events calendar
- Promoted on Instagram
- Guidance and advocacy on permitting with City of Boston Special Events, and on-site event assistance



Key Learning: Franklin described her permitting process as “#seamless.” Yet despite her preparation she was anxious: “I am concerned about the White folks of the North End.”⁹ Franklin intentionally prioritized creating a “safe and respected place for BIPOC folks” by setting boundaries: no recording or photography, requesting white guests remain at a distance. Ultimately, the positives outweighed the negative. While Franklin’s colleagues Milly and Sabrina were taken for “groundskeepers” and a white individual struggling with mental illness “broke” the ring before being escorted away, the project was met with generosity and appreciation: A neighbor at 44 Hull Street offered their restroom to procession participants, and even the Boston Park Ranger closing the Burial Ground that day identified herself as from the Caribbean and thanked Franklin for honoring the ancestors.

10: DZIDZOR AZAGLO dzidzor.com, [@dzidzorazaglo](https://www.instagram.com/dzidzorazaglo) & **CRYSTAL BI** crystal-bi.com, [@crystalbi](https://www.instagram.com/crystalbi)

Proposal: “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.” (VIDEO)

Resulting Project: Received \$20,000 and funds from Boston Ujima Project, Live Arts Boston, and City of Boston Arts and Culture to present *Wilderness*. This communal project of site exploration, plant learning and online dialogue resulted in a public art exhibition that invited participants to write on ribbons then tied to seven Asiatic bittersweet vine sculptures, in hopes to preserve and honor memory, traditions and cultures, especially those considered “invasive” despite centuries of presence. Coordinated with Event Producer Flavia DeSousa ([instagram.com/wilderness.artexhibit](https://www.instagram.com/wilderness.artexhibit))

Dates/Locations:

- August 31: Launch of Instagram/wilderness.artexhibit featuring:
 - Portraits: with makeup by Ashley Cooper of Saturn Makeup and taken by Jamaican creative Stephanie Belnavis of The Diahann Project and A Bucket for the Well
 - Prompt: Who are you Uninterrupted? with Reflections on Wilderness and Belonging by Marlene Boyette, Letta Neely, Nabila Anandira
 - Quotes by Ousmane Sembène, Lawrence Agyei, bell hooks
- September 10: Workshop on foraging mugwort (an “invasive” species known by Native Americans as the “dream plant”) with Letta Neely and making cyanotypes from Japanese knotweed, Queen Anne’s lace and mugwort with Crystal Bi at Overlook Ruins, Franklin Park (post)

9. Ifé Franklin, Email to Jen Mergel and Andrew Sharpe on August 22, 2022.

- September 29: Making dream pillows and pouches of gathered mugwort and lavender and Cyanotype fabric with Letta Neely and Crystal Bi at the Design Gym, 572 Columbia Road, Upham's Corner
- October 1-6: *Wilderness* in Franklin Park's Overlook Ruins, Roxbury. Opening on October 2 (due to inclement weather) in the Overlook Ruins, Franklin Park (post) with:
 - Sound bowl performance by Marlene Boyette (post)
 - Open mic session with Black Cotton Club (accompanied by Jorry on drums and Bob Hartley on bass, with performances by Dzidzor, Ifé Franklin, Pelaia Auset, Shanti Charles, and more. (post))
 - Writing activity on ribbons to activate the Asiatic bittersweet sculptures by Crystal Bi (post)
- October 7: *Wilderness* EP release at Boston University's Marsh Chapel, 735 Commonwealth Avenue, near Kenmore Square. Project culmination with live performances by: Letta Neely, Zamy Maa, Mel Chanté, Mestre Chuviquinho, accompanied by Sharla Solomon and Thamanaï Justine with Akili Jamal Haynes, Kavayah Wright, Kwame Ofori Amanfo, Charles Murrell III and Leam Thomas (post)



Marlene Boyette creates a sound bath with singing bowls in the Overlook Ruins among sculptures from the *Wilderness*. Image: Nohemi Rodriguez



Text tied to Asiatic bittersweet sculpture in Franklin Park Overlook Ruins. Image: Nohemi Rodriguez



20+ additional creatives highlighted/
supported by Project Lead

Other Project Leads came to help with
event

Conservancy Support:

- Project documented as a video interview and a published interview: *A Bittersweet Exploration of Place with Dzidzor Azaglo and Crystal Bi* on olmstednow.org
- Promoted on Instagram
- Posted October 2 and October 7 on olmstednow.org events calendar
- Recommended GHP Powered for solar powered sound amplification
- Guidance and advocacy on permitting with City of Boston Special Events
- Guidance on site history (Elma Lewis research) and site preparation (clearing growth)
- Storage of sculptures



Key Learning: Amplification after dark is still a challenge to permit in Boston parks, and resulted in Dzidzor and Crystal rescheduling and relocating activities to daytime or another indoor location. Despite this, Dzidzor noted the historical significance of prior activations in both sites: “From the Franklin Park Overlook Ruins where Elma Lewis activated to the Marsh Chapel, where MLK and Howard Thurman activated with their words.”



“We picked Franklin Park [as] it borders so many communities that have large immigrant populations. ... [The vine] Asiatic bittersweet is an immigrant to this country. We’ve been looking at it like a metaphor for: What does it mean to belong to this land, to stolen land? Especially as immigrants ourselves or children of immigrants ... bringing the stories that have historically been at the margins into a focal point, or bringing them into public space: that does something to consciousness and is an element of spatial justice.”

—Crystal Bi

“bell hooks says, ‘When we love the earth, we are able to love ourselves more fully.’ I think this call for folks to take up space in the parks and public spaces, a call to create what love looks like for ourselves and to love fully.”

—Dzidzor Azaglo

11: ASIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION: CHRISTINE NGUYEN AND JEENA CHANG asiancdc.org, [@asiancdc](https://www.instagram.com/asiancdc)

Proposal: “Hudson Street Stoop/
Chinatown Backyard: an ongoing
antidisplacement series in which residents
collaborate with artists to recreate “stoop
culture” through anchor points that rotate
every 18 months. (VIDEO)

Resulting Project: Received \$10,000 for
programs to activate Storytell & Sway
(2021-22) swings by Gianna Stewart,
the first Hudson Street Stoop project
which was funded by City of Boston
Arts & Culture, MassDevelopment, Mass
Humanities, NEFA and Tufts University:
engaged the community in summer
programs and a closing celebration as well
as visioning sessions with artist finalists
and a Community Share & Tell for the
2023-24 installation. (POST)

Dates/Locations:

- August 2: Artist Visioning Session with Katherine Chin and Parke McDowell (dinner, childcare and interpretation provided) at the Community Room, 66 Hudson Street, Chinatown
- August 4: Artist Visioning Session with Vivian Ho, Shaina Lu and Tiandra Ray (dinner, childcare and interpretation provided) at the Community Room, 66 Hudson Street, Chinatown
- August 9: Artist Visioning Session with Amanda Beard Garcia and Jacob Garcia of Likemind Design (dinner, childcare and interpretation provided) at the Community Room, 66 Hudson Street, Chinatown (post)
- September 16: Online call for community memories to say farewell to *Storytell & Sway* with submissions on Belonging, Community, Stories, Resident Power, A Place to Relax and A Community Resource, as part of a Tufts Public Health study on the works impact to “(1) build empathy across diverse backgrounds; (2) increase access to open space, (3) create a sense of belonging, (4) foster residents’ sense of self-efficacy & power”
- October 8: At One Greenway Park, 66-88 Hudson Street, Chinatown: an afternoon of free refreshments, arts & crafts, a historical timeline of Hudson Street and the Stoop project, dialogue with artist Gianna Stewart, and more (post and post):
 - Event music by Juk Sing (Ashley Yu, JK Wong, and Jeff La)
 - Solo performance by Ava Sophia
 - Visit from Hudson Street Chronicles writer Cynthia Yee
 - Photography by Devin Edwards
- October 11: Community Share & Tell on Artist Finalists for 2023-24 at the Community Room, 66 Hudson Street, Chinatown (post)



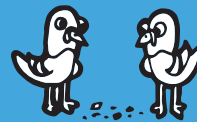
Jeena Chang of ACDC and neighbors to Hudson Street Stoop and artist Gianna Stewart with postcards and in front of Storytell & Sway, October 8, 2022.
Image: Devin Edwards



12+ additional creatives highlighted/
supported by Project Lead

Conservancy Support:

- Project documented as a published interview: “To bring back the front stoop of Chinatown”: ACDC’s Efforts toward Community Greenspace on olmstednow.org
- Posted October 8 on olmstednow.org events calendar



“Feels like I have a front yard, like a porch where I can sit down and people watch... Everybody is out with their families... people working and living together and coexisting and blossoming.”

—Hudson Street Resident, age 29,
Puerto Rican

“It’s a place with community cohesion... Now, with the swing, more people are willing to come down from their apartment.”

—Hudson Street Resident, age 48,
Taiwanese



Key Learning: ACDC did not simply invite but fully welcomed community input in placekeeping for its greenspace with intentional investments in language, location, timing, food, family care options and relevant questions. Bilingual and engaging activities in temperature controlled residential community spaces within view of the outdoor site reduced barriers for in-person feedback, while invitations for online input expanded options.

The Stoop program's 12-18 month "anchor" project presence to prompt lingering has directly inspired the Charlesgate Alliance to explore a similar placekeeping model.



Bilingual activities for residents to imagine a next 2023 Hudson Street Stoop project, with Storytell & Sway seen through the window. Image: Mabelle Zhang

12: NAKIA HILL nakiahill.com, [@nakia_hill](https://twitter.com/nakia_hill)

Proposal: Intergenerational workshops for BIPOC women and girls to write about their memories and relationship to Boston parks. Their stories would be archived in a published book. ([VIDEO](#))

Resulting Project: Received \$20,000 for *Writing Our Truth in the Park*, launched with a call for registrants and workshop series, offering participants writing prompts including:

- Describe one of your earliest childhood memories of a Boston public park: What did you do in that particular park that sparked a memorable experience? What is this park's legacy in our city?

- Write about the special people who occupy our parks: Is there an unsung hero that frequents a park in your neighborhood? Who makes our parks the place where we feel welcome, safe, loved and at home?

Dates/Locations:

- October 15 & 29: In Horatio Harris Park, at 85 Harold Street in Roxbury: two free outdoor communal writing sessions with furniture, flowers, food, writing materials, gift bag, portrait photography and mental health support provided to registrants.

Through spring 2023, Hill will work with participants and her female creative team—designer [Joelle Riffle](#) and portrait photographer and mental health professional Stephanie Belnavis of [The Diahann Project](#) and [A Bucket for the Well](#)—to produce an intergenerational anthology of BIPOC women and girls' perspectives on spatial justice and Boston parks ([post](#))



Writing Our Truth in the Park at Horatio Harris Park. Image: Stephanie Belnavis



2 additional creatives highlighted/
supported by Project Lead so far, more in
2023

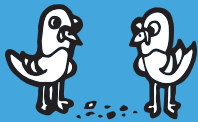
Conservancy Support:

- Project documented as a published interview: *Ownership Through Archiving: Nakia Hill's Anthology of Boston Stories* on olmstednow.org
- Posted October 15 and October 29 on olmstednow.org events calendar
- Loaned A-frame signs for event use
- Guidance on site history (designed in 1912 by Olmsted firm)



Key Learning: Hill sought guidance and scouting support from her mother to select the park location for her project. By starting with her own family history, Hill noted that the project preparation was “useful personally” as she rediscovered with fresh eyes the park across from which she, her mother, grandmother and great mother had lived, a place that held so many memories.¹⁰

Before each of her events, Hill noticed her posted signs removed. Aware of gentrification as neighborhoods change, she sought to affirm a balanced hold on her connection: “This is our space. These are our parks. We lived here. You now live here. We’re one community, and it’s important that one person’s not welcome more than the other. That’s a huge task.”



“Connecting my home, connecting our home, to this bigger legacy of Olmsted in our public places I think is really important. And I think it’s important to share that history with residents who may not be aware—or maybe they have their own stories about how their family has connections to nature and public spaces in the city.”

—Nakia Hill

10. Nakia Hill. In phone call with Jen Mergel. September 23, 2022.



Nakia Hill prompts sharing by workshop participants. Image: Stephanie Belnavis

13: ANITA MORSON-MATRA

anitamorsonmatra.com, @a_anita_anita_a
with [Jean Appolon Expressions](#)

Proposal: *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. (VIDEO)



Anita Morson-Matra workshoping ideas for Baldwin in the Park with the Conservancy's Youth Leadership Program members, April 12, 2022. Image: Jen Mergel

Resulting Project: Received \$10,000 to offer two movement sessions in a specially-selected site where in 1670, Zipporah Potter Atkins purchased her home as a free woman, the first and only person in Boston of African decent to do so in the 17th century. The location at the intersection of Hanover, Cross and Salem Streets was significant historically for Black belonging in Boston, symbolic personally for Morson-Matra as an urban planner invested in housing as a platform for creative freedom, and resonant poetically with Baldwin's quote: "The place in which I fit will not exist until I make it."

Dates/Locations:

- October 22 & 29: On the Rose Kennedy Greenway, near 36 Cross Street, North End, the sessions provided a welcome site acknowledgement from Greenway Conservancy staff and Morson-Matra,

a flower ring honoring Potter Atkins, T-shirts, water and snacks, photography by Kyeana Jones, live percussion by five musicians (Akili Jamal Haynes and Chibuzo Dunun) and high-energy movement processions across the site led by Jean Appolon and Meghan McGrath (post)



Jean Appolon leads movement across Greenway on October 22, 2022. Image: Kyeana Jones



4 additional creatives highlighted/
supported by Project Lead

Conservancy Support:

- Project documented as a published interview: Grounded by Baldwin, Anita Morson-Matra and JAE Bring Movement to the Parks on olmstednow.org
- Promoted on Instagram
- Posted October 22 and October 29 on olmstednow.org events calendar
- Loaned A-frame signs for event use
- April 12 workshop on Baldwin in the Park with Conservancy's Youth Leadership Program



Key Learning: Key Learning: Contracting focus can benefit a project. Morson-Matra ultimately held both sessions at the Greenway, rather than securing additional permissions for the Boston Common. This made promotion, set up and repeat visits more streamlined for all involved and preserved energy for healing movement over venue logistics.



"I don't think that folks really understand the depth and breadth of the history of Black and brown people particularly around the North End with the Rose Kennedy Greenway, and Beacon Hill with Boston Common and many other neighborhoods throughout the city. Even though they feel more like business districts and financial districts, they are indeed neighborhoods, and they were proper neighborhoods with full communities before."

—Anita Morson-Matra

"Programming like this, to come in parks, it really gives the public the understanding of like, 'This is our home. This is our backyard. This is our space where we can be.' We even talk about an expression that we have in Haiti: 'lakou.' This means backyard, this means, like, where we can gather together as public to connect."

—Jean Appolon

14: VERONICA ROBLES

veronicarobles.com, [@vroccboston](https://twitter.com/vroccboston),
[@veronicaroblesmariachi](https://twitter.com/veronicaroblesmariachi)

Proposal: 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 (the altar, masks) that reaffirm Latin immigrant culture with children and elders. (VIDEO)

Resulting Project: Received \$10,000—the first grant in all years celebrating Día de los Muertos—to activate Central Square Park on Day of the Dead with a festival in the park "to help our community to see it as their own and claim it as part of their everyday life." (Post)

Dates/Locations:

- October 7, 14, 21 & 28: Community park festival planning with face painting training, ofrenda making, hat and hair decorations and more at the Veronica Robles Cultural Center at 282 Meridian Street, East Boston (Post)
- October 30: In Central Square Park at 216 Border Street and Meridian Street, East Boston, the full day festival with traditional altar with ofrendas, face painting, Catrina making, art activities, amplified stage emceed by Mexican poet Alejandra Ramos Gómez with:
 - Performances by: Hot Tamale Brass Band, Groversity Afro Brazilian Band, Grupo de danza Torogoz, Estrellitas Tropicales, Corazon Chileno, Fraternidad Folklorica y Cultural Caporales Universitarios de San Simón Cochabamba - Filial New England; Estrellitas VROCC, lead by Diana Melgar and Melisa Lopez, Ballet Folklorico VROCC led by Dance program director Estuardo Alvizurez and Donaxi Madrigal; VROCC music and chorus ensembles led by instructors Carlos Mario Yepes and Monica Henao assisted by Marcelo Yepes; Calpulli Coyoxochilt, Danza Mexica; Fiona Phie, artist; Flor Delgadillo, multidisciplinary artists; Ethan Vogt multimedia producer; Roberto Gomez, community activist; Nicolas Acuña, Jucamart
 - Food from: Los Compadres Taqueria, La Oaxaquena, Beantown Taqueria, Mexico City Taqueria, Kushala Sip Coffee, Mafer Pastry, Dulcinea Sweets, and from VROCC Youth Entrepreneurs: Dancing Elotes Mexican Street Corn, Pan de Muerto and Hot Chocolate

- Vendors: Colores de Mexico, Jeka Mundo, Aneska Detalles, Ikigai Ikiru Organics, Athena Soul Shop, Luna Artesanal
- Public health and Advocacy: MAPS (Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers) providing Hepatitis testing, and Boston Medical Center providing COVID19 Vaccine shots in collaboration with Lawyers for Civil Rights and Greater Boston Latino Network



Veronica Robles and Alejandra Ramos Gómez on stage with Festival crowd at Central Square Park, East Boston on October 30, 2022. Image: Veronica Robles



21+ additional creatives highlighted/ supported by Project Lead

Conservancy Support:

- Project documented as a published interview: *Souls and Soil: Día de los Muertos in the Park with Veronica Robles* on olmstednow.org
- Promoted on Instagram
- Posted October 30 on olmstednow.org events calendar
- Loaned A-frame signs, lawn signs and furniture for event use



Key Learning: By far the largest volume of activity per square foot among all Power Sharing projects, this event literally stopped traffic around the single acre green triangle it animated. Building on more than a decade of annual tradition and “pandemic practice,” both the audience and city approvals flowed smoothly to this new outdoor festival format. The altar in the park allowed for many to access dialogues about grief and resilience after so many had been lost in the prior years.



Using the Día de los Muertos outdoor altar in Central Square Park, East Boston. Image: Veronica Robles.



“El Día de los Muertos has to do a lot with the soil, with the earth, with living—living and dying. The theme is very close to nature. ...[We’re] especially hoping we can create a community altar in the park, where people can see it. If it is also like a community art installation [in the park], everybody will participate. We will have it there so people feel close to that very unique feeling of losing someone but at the same time knowing that they’re going to grow, somehow and somewhere. They’re becoming part of nature, becoming part of the essentials that we have here with us. That’s why it is very important for us to be able to do this in the park.”

—Veronica Robles

15: ANDRE STRONGBEARHEART GAINES, JR. andrestrongbearheart.com,
[@no_loose_braids](https://twitter.com/no_loose_braids)

Proposal: 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. ([VIDEO](#))

Resulting Project: Received \$20,000, along with funds from an apprenticeship grant and Linnean Solutions to partner Thomas Green and the [Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag](#) to present *Communal Waters: Highways of Intertribal Exchange: The Mishoon Project at Boston Harbor*, which gathered numerous southeast-New England tribal members in a weeklong continuous open burn to create and launch a traditional canoe in Boston public space for the first time in over 300 years. ([City of Boston VIDEO](#))

Dates/Locations:

- October 31 - November 6: at the Little Mystic Boat Ramp at 203-209 Terminal Street in Charlestown. Following the October 30 delivery of signage, firewood and a solid 2000+ pound pine tree trunk (debarked and cut to length), at sunrise on Monday October 31 the ceremonial fire was lit across the top of the laid out trunk to start the mishoon making process and the cultural revitalization project. Through November 6, 24-hour experiential learning (tending, listening, conversing and witnessing) took place through the continuous burning, watering and scraping of the hollowed-out trunk.

On November 6, after the final ash was clear from the trunk’s interior and final carvings were inlaid, project participants gathered in a circle with elders and youth from the Nipmuc and Ponkapoag tribes (as well as fellow project leads from Olmsted Now) to speak acknowledgements of the project’s milestones and meanings. Participants then cleared and packed the site to prepare for the first launch of the mishoon, which was craned onto a boat trailer and rolled down the ramp to hit water on the Little Mystic channel.

History was made with the first paddle out in the first mishoon made in post-colonial Boston, piloted by Gaines and helmed by [Tom Green](#) (Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag) with [Daishuan TailHairRedDeer Garate](#) (Nipmuc) and indigenous women leaders [NaDaizja RiverMoon Bolling](#) (Aquinnah Wampanoag) and [Mar Parilla](#) (Taíno Afroborikua) [Learn more about this project’s development and impacts in the section: “FOCUS IN”]

Notable contributions and interactions during the project included:

- Jim Newman's support through Linnean Solutions with purchase of \$3,000,000 in required event insurance, and the funded delivery of cords of firewood (oak, cherry) and portapotties to the site
- The donation of the East Boston pine tree trunk by Andreus Ridley of Winwood Sawmill
- The active (and funded) participation of intertribal mentors, matriarchs, family, apprentices and colleagues throughout the week, including: Annawon Weeden (Mashpee Wampanoag), Dylan Lach (Chappaquiddick Wampanoag), Miguel Wantering Turtle Garate (Nipmuc), Anoki Mann (Nipmuc), Tracy Loving Medicine Eyes Ramos (Nipmuc) Jenny Oliver (Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag), Kristen Wyman (Nipmuc) who brought fresh striper and fiddleheads for dinner, Will of Dorchester (Mi'Kmaq) who brought humor, and many others
- Visits by Massachusetts tribal elders including Sagamore Faries Gray and treasurer Elizabeth Solomon, Gaine's Great Aunt Marci Roberson, and

Nipmuc and Massachusetts elder Al Godfrey, who brought coffee, treats and ceremony during the week, when needed

- Photography by Scott StrongHawk Foster
- Crane to move mishoon to water from Boston Public Works, arranged with support of Amira Madison (Aquinnah Wampanoag)



"A lot of people don't realize that colonization isn't still alive and rampant just in other parts of the world. It's right here. Every time Andre and I are told "no," that we can't be in our traditional, ancestral spaces, colonization continues."

—Thomas Green

"It's really heavy, and it's more than social justice. It's imperative we're able to step back into these spaces and be who we're supposed to be here."

—Andre StrongBearHeart Gaines

- Visits from community members such as Tom McDonald, Head of Harvest on Vine Food Pantry at Charlestown Catholic Communities, Marissa Zampino of Mystic River



Staff of Boston Public Works and Boston Parks assisted to crane the 3000 pound mishoon from the burn site to a trailer to load from the boat ramp to the water. Image: Scott StrongHawk Foster

Watershed Association, Karen Buck, Friends of Malden River, and Charlestown High School teacher Cecil Carey who brought dozens of 9th-grade history students to the mishoon to discuss King Philip's War and contemporary issues as part of their Native American history unit

- On November 6, delivered the mishoon to Hale Education Center for the Massachusetts people to store it for the winter (scuttle under water) for long-term preservation and future seasonal use



20+ additional creatives highlighted/ supported by Project Lead

Other Project Leads came to help with the event

Conservancy Support:

- Project documented as a published interview: *More than a Mishoon: Andre Strongbearheart Gaines Jr. and Tom Green on Indigenous Cultural Revitalization* on olmstednow.org
- Promoted on Instagram
- Posted October 31-November 6 on olmstednow.org events calendar
- Significant advocacy for approvals with BPDA, City of Boston and Charlestown community
- Arranged press coverage from The Boston Globe and WBUR with a piece airing nationally on NPR's Here & Now, as well as city attention (VIDEO)
- Arranged Charlestown High School history class visits
- Arranged project debrief with Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA), including forum to address negative community interactions with BPDA's community liaison (ongoing)
- Arranged meeting for feedback on the site development plan to ensure mishoon making and launches could continue in the future, with BPDA, Mystic River Watershed Association and site architects Landing Studio



As Nipmuc society is a matriarchy, this moment of women from many tribes, generations and professions coming together to shape the mishoon was hugely meaningful to Gaines. Image: Scott StrongHawk Foster of ScottFosterPhotography.com



Key Learning: Gaines noted that the project's fire and smoke brought peace to some, and aggravated others as a "signal flare of decolonization." Whether a Mi'kmaq gentlemen working in the shipping container yard across Terminal Street smelled the fire and came over in appreciation, or students, or tourists from Florida, or hostile residents—all who came by left smokey. That the project literally lingered with people, the smell on their clothes long after witnessing the mishoon in process, was a key aspect of the project's power.

16: ROBERT PETERS

www.creativeground.org/profile/robert-peters#section-contact with Erin Genia eringenia.studio, [@emgenia](https://www.instagram.com/emgenia)

Proposal: 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. (VIDEO)

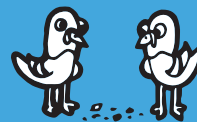
Resulting Project: Received \$20,000 to establish a new understanding of rights to public space through an intertribal indigenous lens. Discussions of site access are ongoing with members of the Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag, the Commission on Indian Affairs, city and state officials. Funds have been allocated into the creation of a new non-profit, the Boston Indigenous Public Space Initiative, with initial fiscal sponsorship from NOPI and the appointment of an interim Executive Director Tomas Rivera to steward the forthcoming work. While dialogue is ongoing, Peters and Genia have promoted the positive intersection of Indigenous and civic leadership through programming such as the drum circle on January 25, 2023 in conjunction with an exhibition of Mashpee Wampanoag Contemporary Art sponsored by Senator Susan Moran.



Director of the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs Jim Peters with members of the Red Hawk Singers and Dancers drumming in the Massachusetts State House Senate Chamber, January 25, 2023, With Robert Peters at left. Image: Al Godfrey.

Dates/Locations:

- To be confirmed: The goal is to inaugurate an intertribal indigenous space in Boston with a medicine fire on Scarboro Hill in Franklin Park, in Spring or Summer 2023



“We intend to use the ceremonial circle for a medicine fire... People will be given the opportunity to come there, be smudged, offer tobacco to the fire, say the names of the people that we’ve lost in the pandemic, to drugs, to gun violence and be able to have that peace. We’ll open it up to everyone. This is a part of our culture that we can share. There are other parts of the culture that we’re more protective over, that we wouldn’t want to involve the public in, but for the medicine fire, I think it offers a time of healing that everyone really needs right now.”

—Robert Peters



3 additional creatives highlighted/
supported by Project Lead (so far)

Conservancy Support:

- Project documented as a published interview: *"A Time of Healing" in Franklin Park with Robert Peters* on olmstednow.org
- Posted October 15 related activity by Peters on olmstednow.org events calendar
- Significant advocacy for approvals with Commission on Indian Affairs
- Support attending application meeting with NOPI for non-profit status
- Extension of support beyond 2022 bicentennial and ongoing commitment to realize project in 2023



Key Learning: To build new holistic understandings of intertribal rights to access space can seem threatening. It takes time to dismantle mistrust, especially when facts of traditional territory have been disrespected for so many generations of broken treaties. Establishing trust does not move on a timeline of a birth year of Olmsted or any other date unrelated to local indigenous histories. It evolves relationship by relationship. Maintaining a justice mindset is essential to ensure action when all parties are ready.



Painting by Robert Peters depicting Medicine Fire

Documentation of Robert Peters' November 2020 ceremonial circle on Scarboro Hill in Franklin Park. Screenshot





15 Project leads NOT selected by Committee of Neighborhoods for funding but still involved in Olmsted Now program!

This demonstrates how Olmsted Now's open welcome for partnership-driven programming encouraged investment in both collaboration (for those who needed funds) and "where there's a will there's a way" commitment (for those who did not need funds).

ADDITIONAL ENGAGEMENTS

Applicants not selected by the Committee of Neighborhoods were selected by Project Leads* to join funded projects or to connect with public audiences as Parks as Platform or Public Dialogue partners:

* Jean Appolon (worked with Anita Morson-Matra, on Baldwin in the Park PESJ #13)

Boston Harbor Now (worked with Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site on Public Dialogue #9)

Circus Up (worked with Fenway Porchfest for Parks as Platform #5)

Community Art Collaborative (worked with the Conservancy for Public Dialogue #5)

* Cornell Coley (worked with Hyde Square Task Force, Afro-Latin Cultural Activations PESJ #1)

* Eva Davenport (worked with Bridgeside Cypher and Conservancy for Parkfest, Parks as Platform #6 and Boston Parks Tour PESJ #2)

Fenway Porchfest (worked with the Conservancy for Fenway Porchfest as Parks as Platform #4)

* Isaura Oliveira (worked with Linda Wells, Yoga in Franklin Park Remixed PESJ #4, and Kera Washington, Project Misik: Neponset River Yard #7)



Eva Davenport performing with Bridgeside Cypher at the Conservancy's Parkfest on September 24, 2022 in Charlesgate Park. Image: Jen Mergel

JP Porchfest (worked with the Conservancy as Parks as Platform #5)

Katrina Goldsaito (worked with Dunamis Boston and the Conservancy for JP Porchfest at Parks as Platform #5)

* Mar Parilla/Dansa Organica (worked with Andre Strongbearheart Gaines on Communal Waters: Intertribal Exchange PESJ #15)

* Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy (worked with Anita Morson Matra, Baldwin in the Park PESJ #13)

Tareq Rantisi (worked with the Conservancy for Parks as Platform #1)

A Trike Called Funk (worked with the Conservancy for Parkfest, Parks as Platform #6)

The Trustees (worked with the Conservancy for Parkfest, Parks as Platform #6)



Jean Appolon speaks with Sheila Novak of Rose Kennedy Greenway and Anita Morson-Matra, October 22, 2022. Image: Jen Mergel

FOCUS IN: COMMUNAL WATERS

Led by Andre StrongBearHeart Gaines, Jr. and Thomas Green, the Mishoon Project at Boston Harbor known as Communal Waters: Highways of Intertribal Exchange was a collaboration with the Massachusetts Tribe and No Loose Braids. A deeper look at the project challenges and opportunities gives insight on tangible impacts and work still to be done to improve parks equity and spatial justice in Boston.

A DELAYED START:

As of July, Gaines had hoped to present this project at Pope John Paul II Park along the Neponset River, but permission was denied by the Department of Conservation and Recreation in August. By end of August with support for Jennifer Albertine of Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, Gaines regrouped with Paul McCaffrey of Boston Parks & Recreation Department, who recommended 3 new sites, including the Charlestown Terminal Street boat ramp site owned by Boston Planning & Development Agency. Gaines made a site visit in September and by the start of October, formally applied for use, but had to pursue insurance and City special events approvals.

After several phone calls, Gaines formally applied to the City of Boston on October 18, and the Special Events team fast-tracked a formal project review on October 19, where Gaines and Green secured support from several City departments, including the Mayor's office, but required an on-site meeting with the Fire Marshal in Special Hazards who could waive Boston's legal restriction on open burns within City limits. Marshal Shea was on vacation but upon his return, he met Gaines on October 26 and approved the project without requiring a 24/7 fire detail. The project started a week later than expected, October 31 rather than October 24, and was not afforded ample time for local neighborhood outreach or public promotion. Despite this, the decision was made to proceed, as the historic opportunity to realize the project for the first time could pave the way as a precedent for future opportunities.

PROJECT DETAILS SUBMITTED BY GAINES TO BOSTON CITY DEPARTMENTS:

The Mishoon burning will last from 7 - 14 days,

Launch of Mishoon and short paddle on the last day.

Dozens of Charlestown 9th Graders visit the Mishoon on November 4, 2022. Image: Jen Mergel



Mishoon burning process:

- Use a loader to lift up log to put onto logs for working
- Use loader when done to lift it up to put in the water when it's ready
- At sunrise, light the mishoon, will stay lit until the whole ceremony is done
- Won't be flames all the time, it'll actually be a bed of coals, all about keeping the log lit with coals, rather than burning up sides of logs with a big fire

The tribal participants will sit, share stories, cook food on fire.

We utilize the fire as much as possible.

During that time, there will be a lot of indigenous youth learning the process.

When it's done, we empty it out, put it in the water, paddle to a location nearby just to make sure it's usable. We have a trailer that can put the boat on once it's done to bring to wherever the Massachuset tribe wants it.

Clean up:

Will happen day after finishing process and ceremony

5 - 10 people of tribal folks there at all

times, This is not a public event, though members of the public may wander by. We'll be camping (sleeping shifts), there will be tents, but they won't be near the fire.

SITE CONDITIONS IN CHARLESTOWN:

The site was on a small patch of grass with a single tree and flagpole, between a waterfront walking path and the ramp parking lot. Metal bins for ash, water pumps and scraping tools were always on hand, as well as a rope line to identify the burn area.

Passersby were welcome to ask questions. From day 1 onward, reception to the project by neighbors at the site was mostly positive inquiry. Some interactions were less than respectful:

- On day 1, a couple's unleashed dog urinated on a tent. When asked by the project team to leash the dog, the couple replied, "He was here first." However, the next day, they came by with the dog leashed. The third day they came by and started a dialogue, apologized about the dog, and learned about the project.
- On day 2, a man demanded to see permits, pointed at the team and threatened to call the police and bring



Participants gather for a private intergenerational circle to reflect on the week's effort after site clean up and before launching the mishoon down the boat ramp at right. Members of the public sat at a respectful distance until the launch. Image: Scott StrongHawk Foster.

others by to show them the “other side of the community,” after he was being “a gentleman.” When told his behavior was condescending, he yelled, “I didn’t beat up your grandfather. Don’t give me that \$#!... You’ll have all the officials here in the morning after we act up.” (This interaction was recorded and passed on to the BPDA Community Liaison team for follow up.)



Tom McDonald of Charlestown’s Harvest on Vine Food Pantry visits on October 31, 2022, and learns from Gaines’ mentor [Annawon Weeden](#). Image: Jen Mergel

As the project’s delayed start date was October 31, Halloween was a prompt for Gaines to source a store-bought plastic mask, add a white wig in a colonial ponytail and fake blood, and install this on a wooden spike. To this, Tom Green added a sign which said:

“In memorial of all North East Woodland Indigenous who were murdered and beheaded by the English for public display.”

Gaines confirmed this was “not to create fear.” This object lesson prompted dialogue about history in the region and why Indigenous leaders had been neither safe nor welcome to set foot in Boston, let alone to create and launch a Mishoon within city limits.

The plastic metaphor for violence against an anonymous unreal figure could make passersby curious or even uncomfortable, which Gaines acknowledged was for a reason: so those who saw it might imagine how Indigenous ancestors felt to see hundreds of REAL and named Indigenous leaders’ heads along spikes along the

area’s waterfront centuries ago as a “keep out” warning, and how that brutal reality shaped the impetus for this project.

In some ways the display was a Rorschach or litmus test of people’s knowledge of their local history. Many approached Andre with books (like Susan Cooper’s *Ghost Hawk*) to discuss initial knowledge of settler and indigenous histories. Parents brought their children to talk about it. Cecil Carey, a Charlestown High School 9th grade history teacher who brought dozens of students focused discussion on it. In this way it achieved the goal of prompting constructive dialogue with dozens. It is described in *The Boston Globe* (with one negative comment about the head among 37 positive comments).

By the end of the project, the Conservancy received unsolicited support for the project in reference to the *Globe* article, like David Woods’ email on November 6 which read: “Congratulations to all involved to ‘spark’ true cultural revival, smoke signal lessons from pandemics 1620-2020.”

LISTENING TO SITE AND LEARNING FROM NATURE:

Throughout the project, the weather was relatively warm and dry for camping. There was no heavy rain or wind to delay the burn, which was completed on the 7th day.

The pine tree was originally from East Boston, where had to be cut down due to damage. It was picked by Gaines at a Winchendon mill, where he stripped the bark, planed the top and cut the length and shaped the front to then be hollowed out with hardwood.

The controlled hardwood burn on pine with water dousing is a more than 10,000-year old technology that prioritizes no wasted energy, trusting nature and fire to do the work. Fire naturally cauterizes the sap and seals the wood to be watertight, saving people from having to hand carve the hollow and seal it separately, and the coals are repurposed to heat food and nourish those tending. Gaines described the philosophy: “Work smarter, not harder.”



On November 5, the hands of many colleagues (including Gaines in white tee shirt at top) covered in soot after a week's work on the mishoon.

Image: Scott StrongHawk Foster.

Gaines and Green educated Charlestown students on how industrialization means there are no trees of this size in Charlestown any longer, and how it's "okay to not know everything and be humble. This tree will teach you about patience. It will teach you about persistence. It will teach you about pain and suffering. You know this right now with the smoke in your eyes." He invited the students to think from a different perspective, explaining that the space in front of the mishoon "was a classroom too. This is geology. This is science. This is history ... There are square classrooms but everything in nature is round: this tree is round. When we come into this earth we come into a round stomach, we come out of that round stomach onto a round earth. We are under a round sun."

As Gaines and Green launched the Mishoon, a hawk came to land on a telephone pole above the boat ramp and many took this as a sign that nature approved of the project. The ultimate approval came when the Mishoon was proved to be watertight. The technology worked again, and several paddles were successful on its first day of completion.

LASTING IMPACTS: FOR THE TRIBE & FOR THE BOSTON SITE

Again, the focus of the Olmsted Now granted projects was spatial justice and

this project (including the head) made evident the injustices that were being rectified by this creative act that involved patience, attentiveness and respect of nature.

On November 6, the mishoon was formally received by the Massachusetts Tribe to keep for many seasons of use. It was stored south of Boston. It may be used again at future opportunities like the annual ceremony of the Nipmuc Sacred Deer Island Run and Paddle down the Charles River and across Boston Harbor to where colonists interned Nipmuc ancestors on Deer Island in the dead of winter in 1675.

The project prompted intertribal exchange, not only between Nipmuc and Massachusetts people, but across many indigenous backgrounds. The event opened dialogue for Robert Peters and the Massachusetts Tribe, and Gaines has since pursued more sponsored spatial justice and cultural revitalization projects (most recently with New England Foundation for the Arts to create a wetu (dwelling) in a public park in Nipmuc territory in Worcester.



Dylan Lach leads trailer to the Little Mystic as Al Godfrey in ceremonial dress stands by and onlookers watch from above the ramp. Image: Scott StrongHawk Foster

Importantly, the project expended thinking about space use in Charlestown, with members of BPDA staff eager to see more cultural revitalization projects happen on their property, and the landscape architects of Landing Studio planning a future park at the site of the boat ramp very open to learn from Tom Green about

ways to implement designs that would not preclude future approvals at the site (for example rock gardens in areas for open burn to avoid the need for site mitigation or grass replacement in the future.) This flip in perspective of a leading firm in Boston, to design FOR indigenous use of open space, is a significant lasting impact moving forward.



Launch on November 6, 2022 at Charlestown's Little Mystic Channel of the first mishoon (traditional canoe) created in Boston city limits in over 300 years. Piloted by Daishuan Red Deer Garate (Nipmuc), NaDaizja Bolling (Aquinnah Wampanoag), Thomas Green (Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag), Mar Parilla (Taíno Afroborikua) and Andre StrongBearHeart Gaines Jr (Nipmuc).

Image: [Scott StrongHawk Foster](#)

IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Olmsted Now power sharing increased access to Boston's greenspace in these concrete ways:

Strengthening equitable engagement

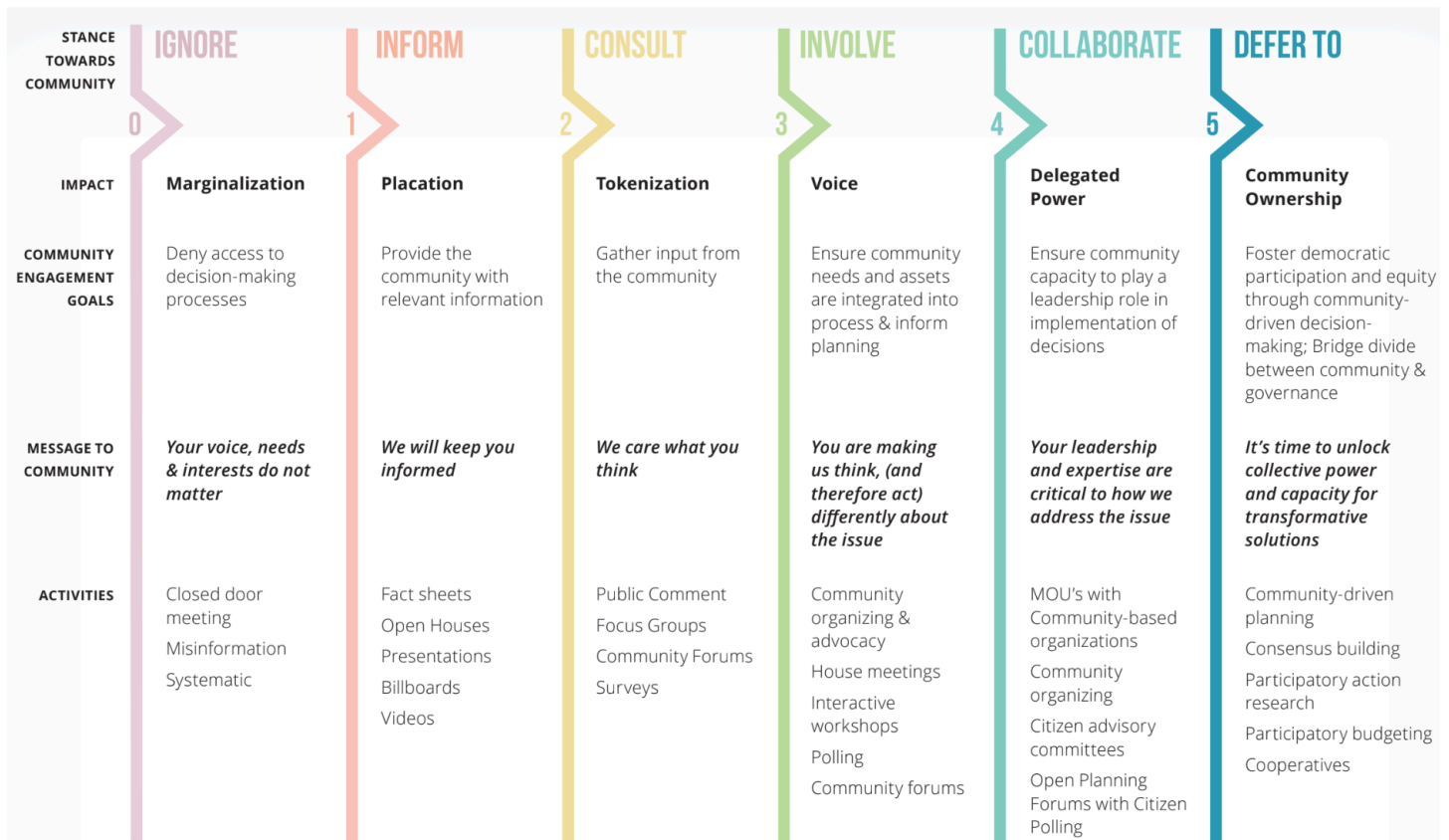
- Grace and flexibility by and for The Committee of Neighborhoods in decision-making for Bicentennial park and open space programs
 - To define the grant priorities via a horizontal participatory action process rather than a vertical or predetermined top-down process
 - To attend meetings or review proposals as available. No mandatory time requirements
 - To adjust due dates as a form of emotional support
- To make an artist-friendly application—a simple video describing project vision—to reduce barriers with complex forms for credentials, “required” proof of prior approval, or time-consuming writing (and reading)
- To adjust funding amounts as the projects called for, rather than the process dictated
- To remain available as a project resource from July through December
- To access hourly compensation for all time spent on the process, rather than a fixed amount
- Trust-based Philanthropy by funders to honor the Committee's expertise and attunement to neighborhood need; remaining at the ready to support, but without interference
- The Conservancy raised funds but did not dictate the ultimate number or location or types of projects. All decisions were deferred to the Committee
- Support was flexible, and affirmed the agency and need of participants without assuming need. When administrative support or meeting scheduling or minutes or event supplies were needed or space to meet was requested, the Conservancy stepped up and followed through when called upon
- Advocacy, documentation and follow up to track where more support may be needed, and what steps were exceptionally inclusive, including:
 - Unjust responses to permit requests for space use
 - Territorial, unwelcoming or outright racist comments or actions by those neighboring the park project sites
 - Excellent examples of inclusive signage or promotion or invitations

- Tracking narratives of transformational milestones
- Honoring the emotional as well as creative, logistical and physical labor of projects
- Outreach to other organizations like Embrace Boston and Now + There to compare notes on their permitting processes and see where injustices might relate to being a new voice at the table. Securing a commitment to exchange data (like Now + There's quantitative data on hours lost–staff time, promotional runway, opportunity costs–to the City of Boston's project permitting process) to gather a more holistic picture for potential improvements
- Conservancy's commitment to progress from Community Engagement to Community Ownership with fully deferring programming, following the model mapped by Rosa González of Facilitating Power and developed in partnership with the Movement Strategy Center (below):

Diversifying Connections

- Projects expanded what is possible in Boston Greenspace with several inaugural pilot projects, post-pandemic returns, or historic firsts in many centuries
- Encouraging cross-cohort support by Project leads, which led to many project leads attending and supporting each other's project logistically (tent delivery and set up, amplification, performance) and emotionally
- Levering existing Conservancy relationships with City or State departments to help expand department contacts and permitting
- Using Conservancy foundation relationships to connect Project Leads to other grant opportunities or offer letters of recommendation for other proposals

THE SPECTRUM OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TO OWNERSHIP



Growing opportunities for shared use, health and empowerment

- **POWER:** New relationships with the Mayor of Boston's Office (Daniel Lander, Tina Chu) to empower bolder permit requests
- **USE:** New relationships with BPDA, and landscape architects (like Landing Studio) to bring potential Indigenous use needs (like open burns) into site plans moving forward
- **HEALTH:** Expanding what physical recreation means in greenspace beyond Boston's traditional athletics through free BIPOC-led healing movement and sound modalities for all ages and abilities across the city: BIPOC-led yoga and forest bathing in Franklin Park's Schoolmaster Hill, sound bath and free sing in Franklin Park's Overlook Ruins, Afro-Haitian movement on the Rose Kennedy Greenway, Afro Brazilian Movement and Afro-Haitian movement at Pope John Paul II Park, Hip-Hop break dance at Titus Sparrow Park, Salsa in the Park at Mozart Park and so much more.

NEXT FOR 2023

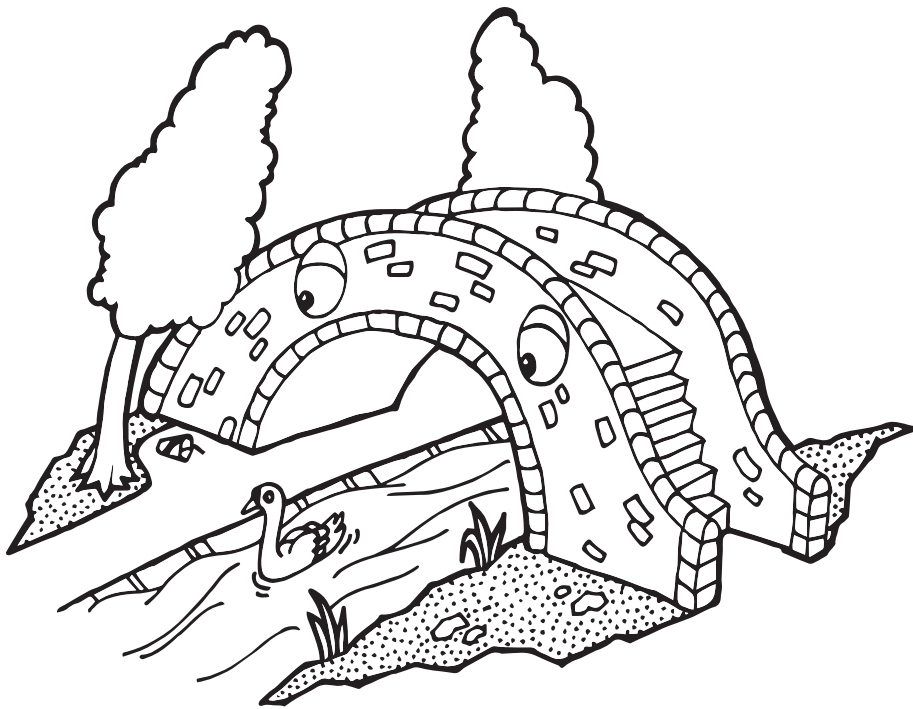
Based on learnings through 2022, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy has committed to center its 2023 public programs in Cultural Partnership and Parks Equity. This includes an increased budget for programs 5 times more than years prior to the bicentennial, and deeper cultivation of programming relationships and equity advocacy for 2023 park programs. Commitments were announced on February 1, 2023 to partners including City of Boston and Town of Brookline officials at An Emerald Evening, which honored the Committee of Neighborhoods.



Committee of Neighborhoods honored with the Olmsted Award at the Conservancy's An Emerald Evening. Abby Jamiel (for Ambar Johnson), Jay Lee, Karen Young, Paul Willis, John Linehan, Andrew Sharpe, Biplaw Rai, Joelle Fontaine and Karenlynch Bunch. Image: Daniel Irvin of [D.iRvin Photography](#)



CultureHouse set up trampolines, chalkboard, ball drops, a map and quality prompts with stickers, and voting chips for interactive data collection at Parks a Platform #3 with BAMS Fest in Franklin Park. Image: CultureHouse.



PARKS AS PLATFORM

PARKS AS PLATFORM

CONTEXT

For nearly 25 years, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy has stewarded the conservation, maintenance and programming of the Emerald Necklace park system sections designed through the 1870s-90s by Frederick Law Olmsted from Boston's Back Bay, through Brookline, toward Mattapan. While the earlier parts of the system—the Boston Common, Boston Public Garden and Commonwealth Avenue Mall—are cared for by the Friends of the Public Garden, and the Arnold Arboretum is maintained by Harvard University, the Conservancy supports, advocates for and activates over 5 miles of linked parks and parkways from Charlesgate to Franklin Park.

For Olmsted Now, the Conservancy sought to “practice” partnership-centered programming and listen to park users to understand which activations most resonated in each greenspace, given their unique designs, functions and neighbors. Rather than continue programming as a single organization, the Conservancy expanded its annual free event series Summer on the Emerald Necklace into a shared resource for cross-neighborhood

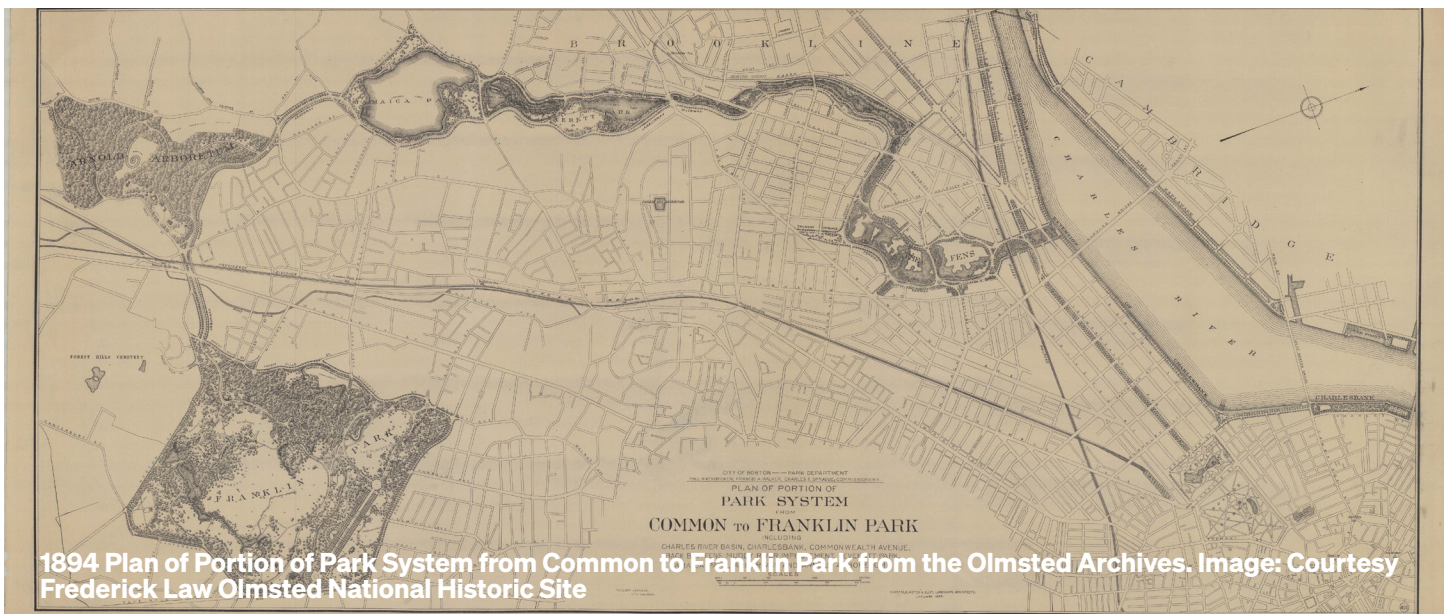
collaboration and community-generated public events from April to October 2022.

Each month, the Conservancy collaborated with a partner, focusing on a site along the Necklace to anchor programming with extra support as needed: from promotion and coordinating volunteers to securing permits and providing amenities like signage, presentation/performance/convening space, portable utilities and restrooms, food trucks and more. The Conservancy commissioned CultureHouse to assess and report on its partnership work and what park users shared at each monthly event.

The goal was to increase park access, amplify partner capacity to welcome expanded audiences and maximize the impacts of diverse public offerings using the “parks as platform.”

Here, CultureHouse summarizes the site context, the Conservancy’s project goals and CultureHouse’s assessment methodology, outlines each monthly park event and then delivers findings as seven “Park Profiles” along with an assessment of impacts and opportunities.¹¹

11. Research support on history, transit, weather and data verification was provided by Jen Mergel



EMERALD NECKLACE PARK SYSTEM

Spanning 1,100 acres is the chain of parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted called the Emerald Necklace. The unique features of each greenspace align along paths and waterways that connect people and nature across various neighborhoods of Brookline and Boston.¹²

The parks in the Emerald Necklace activated by Parks as Platform included, from north to south:

Charlesgate Park

Created in 1879 as the Beacon Street Entrance to the Back Bay Fens, this was the first section of the Necklace designed by Olmsted. Now approximately 17 acres, the design was envisioned as a vital link: between the Muddy River and the Charles River, the Fens and the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, Olmsted's new vision for greenspace and Boston's historic center. While Charlesgate's design had always "bridged" the Fens to the Charles over railroad tracks that still connect to South Station, this seamless pedestrian-friendly bridge network was cut off from the Charles River with the rise of the automobile. The construction of Storrow Drive in 1951, the widening of Storrow Drive in 1955, and the creation of the Bowker Overpass in 1966 buried the greenspace under steel and shadow.¹³ Much of the park had been neglected—including the Muddy River, which has been contaminated, until a recent revitalization effort.

Back Bay Fens

To address public health concerns from saltwater flooding at high tide and open-air sewage exposure at low tide, in 1879 Olmsted redesigned this problematic flat between the Muddy River and tidal Charles River in the Back Bay into a bowled 100-acre series of elevated pathways plantings, bridge vistas, and water gates lining the newly dredged and deeper waters he renamed "the Fens" (an Old English word for marsh), all rimmed by the parkway he named "the Fenway."¹⁴ With the damming of the Charles River in 1910, the Fens

turned into a freshwater marsh with new plantings, landfill and less water flow. More features were added in the 1920s and 1930s including ball fields, along with the Victory Gardens in 1942.¹⁵ This park is the site of the Conservancy's Shattuck Visitor Center, and current restoration work has fenced off several areas since 2020.

The Riverway

The Riverway was designed in 1881 as the "Muddy River Improvement" to increase sanitation and improve water flow leading to the Fens, made to look like it had always been a part of the landscape. The park is a narrow 34 acres of paths that follow the curve of the River, with Brookline to the northwest and Boston's Longwood neighborhood to the southeast. There are several beautiful bridges along the park, designed by the famous 19th-century architect H.H. Richardson.¹⁶

Olmsted Park

Established in 1881 next to the Riverway, and originally named Leverett Park, half of this 60-acre site is centered by Olmsted's dredged creation Leverett Pond, filled by the outflow from natural kettle ponds in the other half upstream: Ward's Pond and Willow Pond.¹⁷ The park, renamed in 1900 to honor its designer, includes Allerton Overlook, groves, paths and bridges maintained by Brookline Parks and Open Space. On the Boston side, Daisy Field and pedestrian paths are maintained by Boston Parks and Recreation, and the parkway for automobile transit is maintained by the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

12. Emerald Necklace Conservancy. (2022). Park Overview. Emeraldnecklace.org

13. Charlesgate Alliance. (n.d.). History. Charlesgatealliance.org

14. Emerald Necklace Conservancy. (2022). Back Bay Fens. Emeraldnecklace.org

15. Emerald Necklace Conservancy. (2022). Back Bay Fens. Emeraldnecklace.org

16. Emerald Necklace Conservancy. (2022). The Riverway. Emeraldnecklace.org

17. Emerald Necklace Conservancy. (2022). Olmsted Park. Emeraldnecklace.org

Jamaica Pond

Formed by an ancient glacier, Jamaica Pond is the largest natural body of water pond in the Emerald Necklace. At more than 50 feet in depth, this natural kettle pond is what feeds all water winding through the Riverway, Fens and Charlesgate, and its waters are even piped into the human-made Scarboro Pond in Franklin Park. When Jamaica Plain was less developed, the pond was used for ice production, and later, wealthy Bostonians built summer homes on its shores.¹⁸ As a link between the Fens and the Arnold Arboretum had already developed, Jamaica Pond was added as a part of the Emerald Necklace in 1892. Olmsted's vision was to preserve and highlight its beauty by framing it with greenery and pathways around its nearly 70 acres. Today, the pond loop is anchored by an active Boathouse and Pavillion, with sites like Pinebank Promontory and Parkman Memorial Park.¹⁹

Arnold Arboretum

Established in 1872 on land gifted to Harvard University, this is the first public arboretum in North America, designed by Olmsted with founding director Charles Sprague Sargent over the following decades. By 1883, Harvard agreed with the City of Boston to make the lands public, signing an unprecedented 1000-year lease to oversee the care, research and interpretation of the living collections within infrastructure the City would maintain as part of the city park system Olmsted was also designing. For 2022, Harvard celebrated both the 150th anniversary of their history with the 281 acres they steward, as well as Olmsted's bicentennial.²⁰

Franklin Park

Named after Benjamin Franklin's family, what Olmsted called the "country park" was established in 1885 as the largest in the Emerald Necklace at 527 acres.²¹ The scale was intended to remove people from the "bustle and jar" of city life, with areas designed for both active and passive use. In Olmsted's vision, social recreation could range from promenades, marches

or music on the Greeting, tennis on the Playstead or watching this from the Overlook, while immersion in nature could be enjoyed through walks in woodlands he called the "Wilderness" or climbing to gaze from Scarboro or Schoolmaster Hills to the dales below. In the last century, a golf course took over the dales, the zoo replaced the Greeting, a stadium was built over half of the Playstead, and many acres were allocated to Shattuck Hospital. But Olmsted's vision for music and gathering lives on in annual concerts and festivals at the Playstead and near the Overlook.

SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS AND ACCESSIBILITY

The Olmsted-designed Emerald Necklace parks touch 16 neighborhoods. From the north, the Back Bay and Kenmore Square abut Charlesgate. The Fens wind west through the Fenway toward Longwood Medical Area. As the Necklace turns south, Brookline sits to the west of the Riverway, Olmsted Park and Jamaica Pond, while on the east Boston's neighborhoods Mission Hill, Hyde Square and Jamaica Plain meet each park respectively. As Jamaica Pond links south to the Arnold Arboretum via the Arborway, the Necklace passes through Jamaica Hills. The Arboretum is surrounded by Jamaica Plain to the north and west, Roslindale to the South and Forest Hills to the east. It links via the Arborway to Franklin Park, which is surrounded by Forest Hills and Stony Brook to the west, Grove Hall and Roxbury to the north, Dorchester to the east and Mattapan to the south.

The populations neighboring the Emerald Necklace parks range significantly. The median age of residents in these neighborhoods is 34–36 years with the exception of Fenway-Kenmore at 22 years,

18. City of Boston. (2022). Jamaica Pond. Emeraldnecklace.org

19. Emerald Necklace Conservancy. (2022). Jamaica Pond. Emeraldnecklace.org

20. Emerald Necklace Conservancy. (2022). Arnold Arboretum. Emeraldnecklace.org

21. Emerald Necklace Conservancy. (2022). Franklin Park. Emeraldnecklace.org

as many of the nearby colleges house their students here. Not surprisingly, Fenway-Kenmore has the highest percentage of renters at 92% of residents. Further south, there is an increase in the BIPOC population—comprising 81% of the population in Roxbury and Dorchester. Roxbury and Dorchester also have the lowest median annual household incomes at \$53,117 near Franklin Park, while the adjacent Arboretum is surrounded by neighborhoods with 41% BIPOC populations and incomes averaging \$100,617. In the north similar shifts in adjacent parks occur: with the Fenway-Kenmore neighborhood around the Back Bay Fens home to a 43% BIPOC population with income averages at \$62,365 compared to Charlesgate Park, with 29% BIPOC neighbors with a median income of \$112,085 (an average of much greater income extremes between subsidized housing in Kenmore Square and residents in the Back Bay). Bordering Brookline, Olmsted Park and the Riverway host 33% BIPOC neighbors with the highest median annual household income: \$113,642.

Public transit to park edges is limited, as buses are not allowed on most of the parkways linking the parks. Exceptions are buses from Forest Hills Orange Line subway and bus station along the Arborway through or along Franklin Park, and from Ruggles Orange Line subway and bus station along one short end of the Fens. Edges of parks where buses are allowed are often high-speed multi-lane roads that are not amenable to an easy pedestrian crossing. Within walking distance to some of the parks are also stops along the Green Line (branded this color for its proximity to parts of the Emerald Necklace (the Fens, Riverway and Olmsted Park.)

Most parks can also be accessed by bike on some roads with designated bicycle lanes, though many roads without dedicated facilities can be dangerous to maneuver around. There are Bluebikes stations within a mile of each other and of each park on the Emerald Necklace. Designated lots for free parking of

automobiles near amenities are available in Olmsted Park near Allerton Overlook and Daisy Field, and in Franklin Park near the Playstead, Zoo, White Stadium, Golf Course clubhouse, and Shattuck Hospital. Otherwise, side-street parking near park edges is first come, first served and is metered near Charlesgate and the Fens.

PARK PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT

Guided by its mission, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy advocates for park improvements that could maintain, restore or increase access to their function and vitality. Current projects include:

The Muddy River Restoration

This project has been a massive, federally-funded effort to re-stabilize the flow of the river, which runs from Jamaica Pond to Charlesgate Park and was a central part of Olmsted's design. Phase I was completed in 2017 and Phase II began in 2020 and should be complete in 2023. This phase involves fenced-off areas for dredging, removal of invasive species, mitigating erosion and letting new plantings settle along the Fens and Riverway.²²

Charlesgate Park Revitalization

At Charlesgate, the construction of major roads and the overpass has cut off the original free flow of water and people from the Muddy River to the Charles, and in many ways rendered the park “invisible.” The revitalization plan will renew Olmsted's vision of a continuous green connection from the Charles River Esplanade (originally called Charlesbank) and Commonwealth Mall to the Necklace. The proposed design would add amenities including a dog park, playground, and rain gardens to clean the Muddy River. The shovel-ready project vision was developed through community charrettes. Informational tours and fundraising are currently underway.²³

22. Emerald Necklace Conservancy. (2022). Muddy River Restoration. Emeraldnecklace.org

23. Emerald Necklace Conservancy. (2022). Charlesgate Park Revitalization Project. Emeraldnecklace.org

volunteers, event photography, event supplies, activities and CultureHouse's commissioned analysis. That said, they also hoped to receive input from partners and park users on ways to improve. For Olmsted Now, the Conservancy sought to practice how to program public events in the parks differently: with partnership and equity as guiding values and asking and listening for feedback, instead of assuming what was best. **The purpose of Parks as Platform was to learn how to accomplish these goals.**

Parks as Platform generated ideas for creative uses of the parks, strategies for being more inclusive for different audiences, brought more youth back to the parks and created a safe environment for the surrounding neighborhoods to engage with the parks. Parks as Platform became a model for partnership-driven, community-informed programming that will guide the Conservancy going forward, and can be a reference for others to use across parks programs more broadly.



Visitors converse with CultureHouse at the Conservancy's Shattuck Visitor Center in the Back Bay Fens for Parks as Platform #5 with Fenway Porchfest. Image: Tyahra Angus, AfroCentered Media.

THE ROLE AND WORK OF CULTUREHOUSE

CultureHouse worked with the Conservancy to develop and implement a public space impact assessment for the Parks as Platform program. CultureHouse is an urban design nonprofit that uses tactical urbanist interventions to conduct research toward new ways of making cities livable. Rather than using traditional surveys, they collect data through

interactive and observational methods. They identified three main themes for assessment:

- Increasing access to the parks
- Expanding connections with local partners to welcome diverse audiences to the parks, and
- Maximizing the number of activities at the parks.

CultureHouse collected qualitative and quantitative data before and during 7 Parks as Platform events from April through October 2022 across the Emerald Necklace park system.

The data collection methods were designed to be interactive and affirm people's choice and agency, rather than transactional or extractive information. CultureHouse used two modes of engagement:

Interactive community engagement

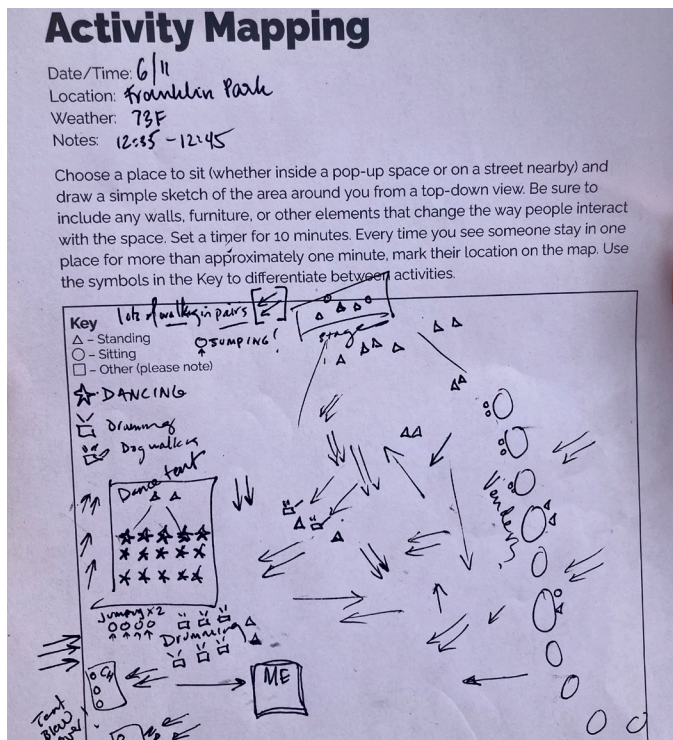
Interactive methods of data collection encouraged a broad range of park visitors to engage—across age, ability and interest. The interactive data collection tools included giant voting tubes, sticker maps, an open-response prompt board, bingo chip feedback and plenty of conversations. Some folding lounge seats and four trampolines were brought to each location to encourage visitors to let loose, relax and sit or jump and play.



CultureHouse gathers observational data in Olmsted Park's Allerton Overlook for Parks as Platform #1 with the National Park Service. Image: Tyahra Angus, Afrocentered Media.

Observational data collection

Observational data allowed CultureHouse to collect data without having to interrupt visitors' park experience to ask for self-identifications or describe what they were doing. The goal was to gather and record perceptions, not verifications, of what was happening and who was there. This was to be measured against observations made of the site before the event, and to census records of adjacent neighborhoods. Observations were subjective and made by volunteers of many backgrounds. This data acknowledges personal biases and is used only as a baseline to compare the "before" and "after" of these events, and provide a complement to the robust community feedback received.



Sample Activity Map from BAMS Fest in Franklin Park for Parks as Platform #3. Image: Jen Mergel



Folding cardboard screen designed by CultureHouse for seven sites of Parkfest, seen in Olmsted Park. Image: Mild Laohapoonrungrsee of M7 Art Studio.

EVENTS

From April to October 2022 there was one Parks as Platform event a month at a different Emerald Necklace park, with simultaneous activity at all seven parks for the larger Parkfest event in September. Each event was planned for a Saturday at a different site to amplify a different event over a different timeframe with a different partner—some of whom the Conservancy had never partnered with before. All events had activities beyond the engagement prompts from CultureHouse. These included: live music and dance performances (programmed by the Conservancy or partners), lawn games (cornhole, hula hoops, connect-four and jump ropes, provided by the Conservancy), site tours (provided by the Conservancy and/or partners), tabling stations for advocacy groups or vendors and in some cases, food trucks and picnic zones, A.R. apps, art activities, petanque play and more! Below are the dates, partners, and details on what the Conservancy and CultureHouse offered for Parks as Platform.²⁶

(1) OLMSTED PARK

Saturday, April 23, 2022, 12:30-3:00pm
Partner: Brookline Parks and Open Space

The first Parks as Platform event was held at Olmsted Park, namesake to the Bicentennial, and within walking distance to Olmsted's home office in Brookline "Fairsted," which is conserved as a Historic Site by the National Park Service. The event followed the annual Muddy River Cleanup, which focused on volunteering and sustainability. Features included:

- Lunch for volunteers and food truck offerings from The Hummus Shop
- Live music led by Tareq Rantisi
- Tours by National Park Service Rangers to Fairsted for an outdoor opera Pterins
- Free sapling giveaways for Arbor Day by Conservancy staff and volunteers
- Lawn games

26. Program details provided by Jen Mergel

What are we aiming to learn	Method	Activity
INTERACTIVE DATA COLLECTION		
Have the events been able to expand the audiences for the park?	Voting tubes	Tubes marked “yes” and “no” with the question “Have you been to this park before?” and colored balls to drop in the answer
Where are people visiting from?	Sticker map	Map with the layout of the Emerald Necklace park(s) and surrounding neighborhoods with stickers for visitors to mark where they came from, and see others’ origin points.
How do people feel about the park?	Quality Criteria	Large board with 6 criteria that make a good park, and stickers for people to mark Yes, No, or Maybe if the park: • Feels connected to community and surroundings • Is easily accessible by all abilities • Invites a wide variety of users • Feels safe • Offers a varied range of activities & functions • Leaves a lasting impression
What do people like to do at the park?	Prompt board	Large chalkboard with the question “What is your favorite thing to do at the park?” for people to write/draw a cloud of responses
How did people find out about the event?	Voting chips	The question “How did you find out about this event?” on a plinko board for people to drop in colored chips with the following options: • Social media/news article • Word of mouth • Saw it while passing by • A friend brought me

- Tabling with
 - Brookline Greenspace Alliance
 - Muddy Water Initiative
 - Speak for the Trees
 - Save Crane’s Ledge Woods
- Engagement activities and observations by CultureHouse
- Photographs commissioned by Tyahra Angus of AfroCentered Media
- The Conservancy secured permits, power, and porta-potties for the event and led promotion



Image: Tyahra Angus, AfroCentered Media

What are we aiming to learn	Method	Activity
OBSERVATIONAL DATA COLLECTION		
Anecdotal context and evidence	Field notes	Note comments by or conversations with visitors: Guiding questions: “Have you been to this park before?” • If yes, “how do you feel like today is different from other days?” • If not, “what brought you here today?” “What would make you likely to return to this park?”
Who is visiting the park?	Demographic data	Create an invisible line by selecting a point across from you in the area you are studying. Every time someone crosses the line, put a tally down for their perceived gender, race, and age.
How are people using the space?	Activity mapping	Note the time of day and weather. Looking at the area to be studied, sketch a bird’s eye map of landmarks. Then use symbols to mark what people are doing (standing, walking, playing, dancing) and where in the space.

(2) ARNOLD ARBORETUM

Sunday, May 8, 2022, 10:00am-3:00pm

Partner: Harvard’s Arboretum Team

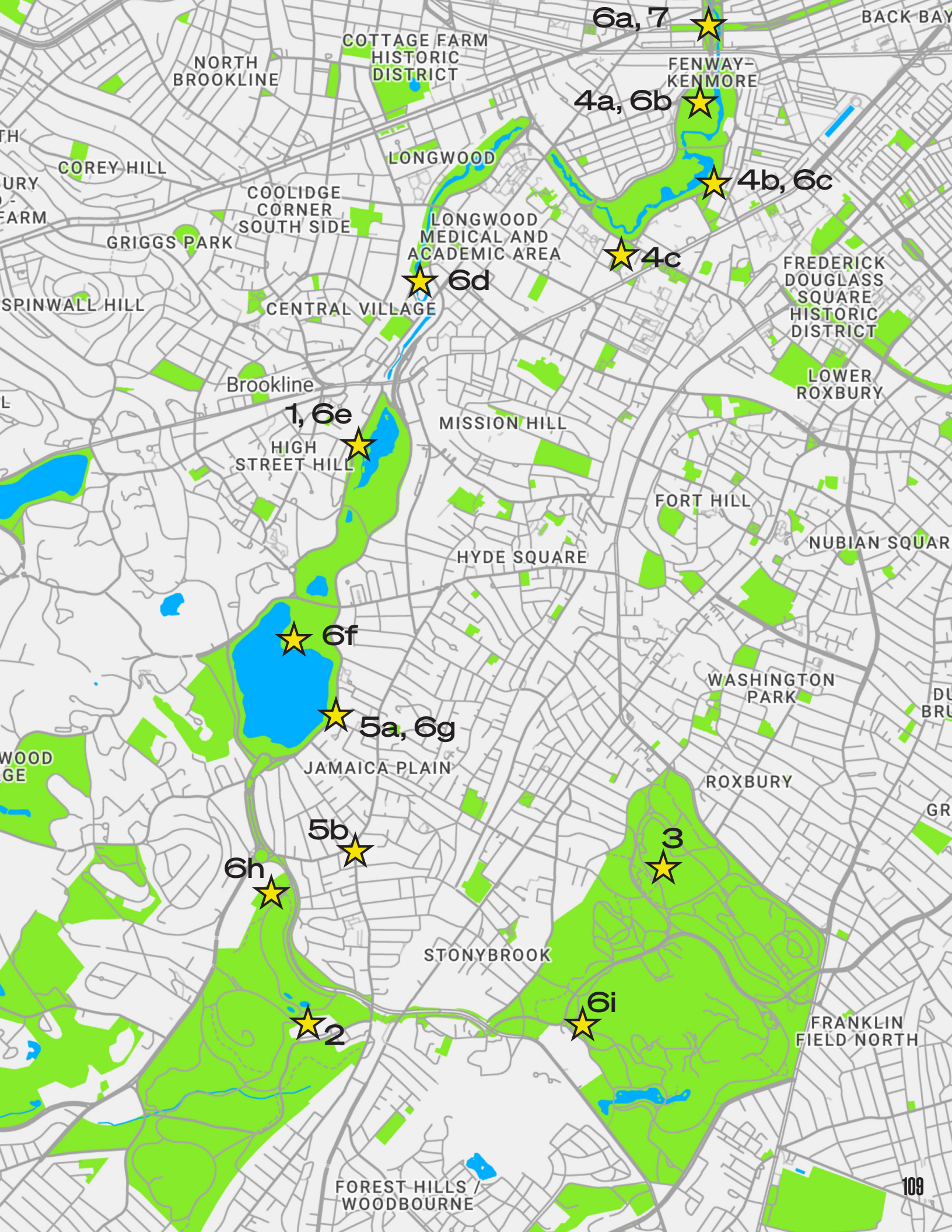
2022 marked 150 years of the Arboretum! The Arboretum celebrated events throughout the year including the post-pandemic return of a beloved local past-time since 1908, Lilac Sunday. The Arboretum offered tours of the collection of 408 lilacs and programming for children for the first time since 2020!

Though initially interested in learning from visitors through engagement data with CultureHouse, Harvard staff were not able to secure campus permission for “outside volunteer interactions” in time for the event. While CultureHouse was not able to attend and gather data, Conservancy staff and volunteers were able to table about the bicentennial and offer documentation to the Arboretum. Aside from Arboretum programs, Parks as Platform included:

- Promotion support and tabling by the Conservancy
- Photographs commissioned by Tyahra Angus of AfroCentered Media
- [No engagement activities and observations by CultureHouse]



Image: Tyahra Angus, AfroCentered Media



NORTH
BROOKLINE

COTTAGE FARM
HISTORIC
DISTRICT

6a, 7

BACK BAY

FENWAY-
KENMORE

4a, 6b

4b, 6c

4c

LONGWOOD
MEDICAL AND
ACADEMIC AREA

6d

CENTRAL VILLAGE

FREDERICK
DOUGLASS
SQUARE
HISTORIC
DISTRICT

LOWER
ROXBURY

Brookline

1, 6e

HIGH
STREET HILL

MISSION HILL

HYDE SQUARE

FORT HILL

NUBIAN SQUAR

6f

5a, 6g

JAMAICA PLAIN

WASHINGTON
PARK

ROXBURY

5b

6h

STONYBROOK

3

2

6i

FRANKLIN
FIELD NORTH

FOREST HILLS /
WOODBOURNE

(3) FRANKLIN PARK

Saturday, June 11, 2022, 12:00-8:00pm

Partner: Boston Art & Music Soul Fest



“This park is a fertile ground of cultural events that happened over decades for Black and Brown people. Through various forms of gathering, this park has been ground zero for people who come for respite, healing, and health.”

—Catherine Morris, BAMS Fest

Inaugurated in 2018, BAMS Fest returned to Franklin Park for a third year after two years of pandemic pause. Inspired to occupy this site by the history of Elma Lewis and her Playhouse in the Park, the festival celebrates Black artistry at a national level and is an opportunity for Black and Brown musicians, dancers, muralists and creative entrepreneurs to have a platform centered around their cultural and social experiences.²⁷ It is a safe space for Black and Brown communities intentionally curated from the Black and Brown lens and lived experience. During the event in 2022, BAMS Fest founder Catherine Morris wanted to learn more about the impacts of the event on the audience—to show funders and sponsors why BAMS Fest draws audiences, how they perceived the site and why the City needs more programming of this caliber and focus. This was the Conservancy’s first time collaborating with BAMS Fest and was the biggest destination event with the highest audience concentration in the Parks as Platform series.

BAMS Fest programmed the following for an estimated 10,000 people in attendance:

- 8 food trucks
- 45 vendors
- 19 live performances on two stages
- 8 murals by visual artists
- 5 dance classes

- 1000+ giveaways of fresh fruit, water Covid kits and more
- BAMS Fest secured all permits, power, porta-potties and event volunteers

To support BAMS Fest, Parks as Platform contributions included:

- Button-making by National Park Service Rangers
- History on Elma Lewis in Franklin Park by Conservancy staff and volunteers
- Engagement activities and observations by CultureHouse
- Photographs commissioned by Tyahra Angus of AfroCentered Media
- The Conservancy and BAMS Fest held pre-event conversations on challenges/opportunities for permitting, volunteers, parking, documentation and increased park access and made introductions to Franklin Park Zoo leadership



Image: Tyahra Angus, AfroCentered Media

27. Olga Khvan (2021). BAMS Fest founder Catherine Morris on Reviving Elma Lewis’ Legacy of Activating Franklin Park. Olmstednow.org

(4A, B, C) BACK BAY FENS

Saturday, July 9, 2022, 12:00-4:30pm

Partner: Fenway Porchfest



The (Fenway-Kenmore) neighborhood makes this event so important. The neighborhood has the lowest home ownership in Boston, a high student population, no fixed income housing, houses without porches, and there is no community center or main street. There are a dearth of events from the community and need for more community connection. What can we do together to create this connection and empowerment for the neighborhood? We want the community to feel like they are proud of their neighborhood and in turn their neighborhood elevates and promotes them. The goal is to engage the community and give them something that feels like it's theirs.

—Fenway Porchfest

Fenway Porchfest is an annual free music festival developed in collaboration with the Fenway Community Development Corporation, Fenway Alliance and Fenway Civic Association. Each of these organizations is deeply connected to the Fenway community through programs in affordable housing, career development, cultural education and open space advocacy. With the motto "Music Everywhere, Porches Optional" Fenway Porchfest was launched in 2018 as a way to "bridge Fenway residents with the arts," by showcasing local talent and building civic engagement through a robust volunteer program. For its first year since the pandemic, the 3rd Fenway Porchfest offered 31 "porches," with 9 along the Fens, to bring more people to their neighborhood park and show them that it's their space as well. The Conservancy had hosted a "porch" in the past.

To support Fenway Porchfest, Parks as Platform contributions included:

- A "porch" provided by the Conservancy at the Shattuck Visitor Center with free potable water, restrooms and seating

for all, and social media promotion, power, production support and tents for performing musicians:

- Mar Fayos

- Aarya Ganesan

- The Downfall

- Lawn games, park information and Back Bay Fens tours with Conservancy staff and volunteers
- Photographs commissioned by Tyahra Angus, AfroCentered Media
- Information by National Park Service Rangers about the design of the Fens with Stewards of the Future
- Engagement activities and observations by CultureHouse at three locations
 - The Conservancy's Shattuck Visitor Center (125 The Fenway)
 - At Park Drive and Boylston Street at The Fenway Victory Gardens
 - Along the Fenway Evans Way Park, near CircusUp activities



Image: Tyahra Angus, AfroCentered Media

(5A, B) JAMAICA POND

Saturday, August 20, 2022, 12-6:00pm

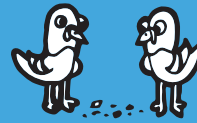
Partner: JP Porchfest/ Dunamis Boston

Dunamis is an organization that provides professional development, advocacy and exposure for artists of color in Boston. While JP Porchfest was founded in 2014 by Mindy Fried and Marie Ghitman to build community, after a Covid pause in 2020 Dunamis took over production in 2021 to extend that mission with a focus on highlighting organizations and artists who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color). 2022 was their 2nd year presenting and their first time collaborating with the Conservancy. With parks permitting and programming support provided by Parks as Platform, JP Porchfest could extend to Jamaica Pond and activate the JP Boathouse & Bandstand pavilion as they had never been able to before. With the pond site as one of their 6 “main stages” among 50 porch sites, Dunamis hoped to learn more about who their audiences are and how they can expand it.

To support JP Porchfest, Parks as Platform contributions included:

- A “main stage” permitted by the Conservancy at the JP Boathouse & Bandstand pavilion with social media promotion, power, production support and tents for performing musicians:
 - Hazel Afrodite
 - R.O.D.
 - Anju
 - KDuran Music
 - Saafyr
 - Full Color
- Support (tents, promotion) for the artists of the A.R. app and placemaking project “Reach You” by Katrina Goldsaito, Jonah Goldsaito and Beau Kenyon
- Hungry Nomads food truck, scheduled and permitted by the Conservancy
- Boston Park Rangers safety response coordinated by the Conservancy
- Bubbles, ice pops and lawn chairs by Focus Real Estate

- Lawn games and park information with Conservancy staff and volunteers
- Photographs commissioned by Tyahra Angus of AfroCentered Media
- Information, button-making and games by National Park Service Rangers with Stewards of the Future
- Engagement activities and observations by CultureHouse at two “main stage” locations
 - The JP Boathouse & Bandstand pavilion
 - Loring Greenough House (12 South Street, Jamaica Plain)



The pond can feel a little detached from the center street area and it becomes hard to program the space. The nature of this festival (JP Porchfest) is that it is in the street, it is in the public, people become a part of it without even knowing. The programming is not one dimensional and can accommodate different audiences.

—Dunamis



Image: Tyahra Angus, AfroCentered Media

(6A-I) EMERALD NECKLACE PARKFEST

Saturday, September 24, 2022, 12-6pm
**Partner: Frederick Law Olmsted National
Historic Site (Fairsted), and Verizon:
Community Engagement Team**

Emerald Necklace Parkfest celebrated Frederick Law Olmsted's 200th year with an afternoon of activities across all seven Emerald Necklace parks. It was timed to dovetail with the City of Boston's Open Streets event through Dorchester Avenue earlier that day. This was an opportunity for the conservancy to build on the learning with NPS colleagues from Fairsted and CultureHouse and from other Fest partners in the months prior, to plan with a new partner, Verizon, and to test if simultaneous programming would encourage visitors to move from park to park, neighborhood to neighborhood and find reasons to pause and stay. The Conservancy temporarily installed 60 Adirondack chairs for seating and permitted and programmed food trucks, free performances, volunteer-led games, partner tabling, free Bluebikes passes and more. Verizon heavily promoted the event to multi-dwelling units around the parks and brought volunteers to lead trivia, lawn games and more. The Conservancy commissioned CultureHouse to produce signage as well as scavenger hunts, parade decorating stations and picnic zones to encourage exploring, convening and strutting. The goal for Parkfest was to test the appetite and capacity for "parkwide" programming, like the biggest picnic or parade from park to park in Boston.

Beyond CultureHouse Engagement activities, free Bluebikes passes and accessible restrooms throughout, Parkfest offerings at each site included:

Charlesgate Park (North Field) 1:00 - 4:00 pm

- 1:00 pm and 3:00 pm Tree Care Tours by the Conservancy
- 2:00 pm Tour of Charlesgate Park by the Conservancy with Charlesgate Alliance

- Pétanque play and lessons by Charlesgate Pétanque
- R&B and Hip-hop sessions by Bridgeside Cypher with Eva Davenport and guests: Sassy D'Estany, Aditi, Karim and Kae Elayah
- Tabling by
 - Charles River Watershed Association
 - Fenway CDC
 - Esplanade Association
 - Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay
- Photography by Zeke Coleman

Back Bay Fens (Shattuck Visitor Center) 1:00 - 4:00 pm

- Kids' Activities by The Trustees Mobile Adventures team
- Lawn Games by the Emerald Necklace Conservancy
- Trivia & refreshments by Verizon
- 2:00pm Book talk by author Stanley Greenberg (Olmsted Trees) with Q & A by Kendall Reiss
- Promotion of the nearby Fenway Victory Gardens' Pollinator Garden Grand Opening
- Photography by Zeke Coleman

Riverway (Brookline Ave. and Parkway Road) 1:00 - 4:00 pm

- Lawn Games by Verizon
- Nature Immersion by the Conservancy
- Photography by Zeke Coleman

Olmsted Park (Allerton Overlook) 1:00 - 4:00 pm

- 2:00 pm performance by Triveni Classical Indian Dancers
- Music by DJ KO'd
- Lawn games by REI
- Central Park Design competition by National Parks Service Rangers
- Frosty Food Truck

- Tabling by
 - COG Design
 - Brookline Greenspace Alliance
 - Brookline Parks and Open Space
 - Student Conservation Association
- Photography by Mild
Laohapoonrungsee of M7 Art Studio

Jamaica Pond (Boathouse) 1:00 - 6:00 pm

- Cyanotype Photography with Edie Bresler
- Drag Queen Story Hour & DJ'ing
- Mural painting with the Mayor's Mural Crew
- Free 1-hour Rentals from Courageous Sailing
- Free Cotton Candy from Focus Real Estate
- Photo booth by Verizon
- Pop-up learning stations by National Parks Service Rangers
- Photography by Mild
Laohapoonrungsee of M7 Art Studio

Arnold Arboretum (Hunnewell Visitor Center) 1:00 - 4:00 pm

- The Caterpillar Lab by Arnold Arboretum
- Tours of the Arnold Arboretum
- Photography by Artemesia Luk of A.Luk Photo

Franklin Park (Shattuck Picnic Grove) 1:00 - 6:00 pm

- Shattuck Hospital Advocacy Information from Emerald Necklace Conservancy
- Music by A Trike Called Funk
- Muralist Demonstration by Acoma (Alvin Acoma Colon)
- Community Art with Canvas Studio
- Puppet Making with Mothers Out Front

- Lawn games by Verizon
- 5:00pm Youth opera: "Mr. Twister" by Mothers Out Front
- Park Parade with music by DJ KO'd
- Food Truck: Kush by Saaba
- Tabling by partners
 - Authentic Caribbean Foundation
 - USDA Forest Service
 - ACE Mentor Program
- Photography by Artemesia Luk of A.Luk Photo



Francois Noel leads dance with A Trike Called Funk at Franklin Park. Image: Artemesia Luk of A.Luk Photo



Triveni Classical Indian Dance at Olmsted Park for Parkfest. Image: Jen Mergel

(7) CHARLESGATE PARK

Saturday, October 1, 2022, 12-4:00pm

Partner: Charlesgate Alliance



“Charlesgate Park is the least used and most problematic park of the Emerald Necklace. It is a blank slate that we want to be a constant magnet for visitors. It has the potential to be the most significant park of the Necklace.”

—Charlesgate Alliance

The Charlesgate Alliance is a group of local residents and organizations that promote and work towards positive change in the Charlesgate neighborhood. Their focus on rebuilding neighborhood pride and the connection is to return 17 acres of Charlesgate Park back to its former glory since the Bowker Overpass and Storrow Drive ramps cast the park in shadow, choked the Muddy River, and cut off pedestrian access to the Charles River and Esplanade. Since its founding in 2017, the Alliance has held a strong partnership with the Conservancy, which serves as its fiscal sponsor, and coordinates all aspects of revitalization planning and design, fundraising, educational tours and tree lighting. Parks as Platform was the first major collaboration with the Alliance to draw attention to the park as a potential venue for summer events, where none had been hosted in the prior years. With music, food, art, and park tours, the Conservancy aimed to expand the park's functions, bring more audiences, and come up with models for long-term programming. The scheduled October weekend was cold and rainy, so the weather reschedule was iffy, the promotion was last minute and attendance was low.

Parks as Platform introduced to the site:

- An acoustic music circle with social media promotion, amplification, production support and tents for performing musicians:

- Jamie Eliot
- Señor Progs

- Free art activities with Canvas Studio
- Free petanque lessons and play scheduled with Charlesgate Pétanque
- Tours about site history and revitalization plans with Charlesgate Alliance
- Lawn games and park information with Conservancy staff
- Information and collage activity by National Park Service Rangers with Stewards of the Future
- Engagement activities and observations by CultureHouse
- Photographs commissioned by Zeke Coleman
- The Conservancy secured permits and porta-potties for the event and led promotion.
- Due to severe weather, Play Brigade had to cancel participation.



Señor Progs performs underneath the Bowker Overpass.
Image: Declan Battles



Parks as Platform: Enlivening the Sites

Hosted 48 volunteers (over 35 new to the Conservancy)

Hosted 22 musical acts (over 240 including partners)

Hosted 9 art activities (over 17 including partners)

Hosted 5 snacking opportunities (over 13 including partners)

Installed 60 Adirondack chairs for all ages seating

1. Olmsted Park: hosted 2 volunteers, 1 musical group, 1 food truck
2. Arnold Arboretum: 2 volunteers
3. Franklin Park: hosted 4 volunteers with BAMS Fest's many more plus their 19 musical acts, 8 muralists, 5 dance groups, 8 food trucks
4. Back Bay Fens: hosted 4 volunteers and 3 musical acts with Fenway Porchfest's many more volunteers and their over 70 musical acts
5. Jamaica Pond: hosted 6 volunteers, 6 musical acts, and 1 art installation, with JP Porchfest's many more volunteers and their over 140 musical acts
6. Parkfest across 7 park sites, hosted 30 volunteers, 10 musical acts, 6 art activities/demonstrations, 2 food trucks & cotton candy
7. Charlesgate Park (rain): hosted no volunteers and 2 musical acts, 2 art activities, free snacks

FOCUS IN: EMERALD NECKLACE PARKFEST

How did Parks As Platform advance the Bicentennial themes of Shared Use, Shared Health, and Shared Power in parks and public space? Here, CultureHouse takes a focused look at the Parkfest event in September, and compares it to the single site activations, to understand its impacts:

Emerald Necklace Parkfest was a parkwide event hosted by the Emerald Necklace Conservancy in partnership with Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, CultureHouse and Verizon. Olmsted talked about the essential role of parks to draw people in, have them come together and be seen coming together.²⁸ The parks were envisioned to be lively, diverse and well-connected to be centered around the goals of Olmsted Now of shared use, shared health and shared power. This would be achieved by providing the necessary infrastructure that facilitates a range of activities, inviting partners to bring their services and diverse networks to the parks, and creating easy, attractive wayfinding, access points, and shareable marketing strategies to increase access to parks.

SHARED USE

The activities and infrastructure in all the parks were kept consistent, making sure that everyone was able to experience the event wherever in the Necklace they were. The activities were also of different ranges so that they could be enjoyed by people of all ages. These included arts and crafts tables, lawn games, food trucks and informational vendor tables. The infrastructure that supported this was designed to be flexible with picnic blankets, folding tables, pillows and Adirondack chairs that could be moved around as people needed.

28. Annual Reports of the Brooklyn Park Commissioners, 1861-1873: Reprinted by Order of the Board, with Such Acts of the Legislature in Their Amended Form, as Relate to the Brooklyn Parks, and Their Management. (1873). United States

Along with consistent activities in all the parks, each park partnered with local organizations and creatives to host events in the parks. This included story time about the parks, music and dance performances and games. In order to connect all the parks and have people move from one to the other, CultureHouse organized a scavenger hunt with prizes (stickers) at every park!

Signage was important to create awareness and access to the park and the events at the parks. This included creating posters and flyers in representative languages and making sure that they were shared directly throughout neighborhoods. A social media campaign was created and shared with all partners. All content was easily accessible and ready to share with the community or anyone who had queries. During the event, wayfinding and informational signage were placed all over entrances, biking/walking trails and at important intersections to get people to the events.



Picnics in Arnold Arboretum for Parkfest. Image: Artemisia Luk of A.Luk Photo

SHARED HEALTH

Spending more time in green and open spaces can help improve mental and physical well-being. The parks of the Emerald Necklace are used by visitors for walking, running, biking, family picnics and as a respite from city congestion. Building healthier parks create healthier people. Parkfest combined programming and

community awareness to increase access to the parks. Activities were planned at each park to ensure that people had a reason to come to the parks and stay for a while. The events included games that encouraged people to participate in a kind of physical activity. Picnic spaces with chairs, blankets, and pillows, created a comfortable environment for visitors to relax and just be in the park. The scavenger hunt helped connect each of the parks to one another and the visitors.

SHARED POWER

Through Parkfest, the Conservancy partnered with a variety of local organizations and creatives that represented and celebrated the surrounding neighborhoods and communities. These included a Hip-Hop open mic to encourage local residents to participate, dance demonstrations with a Trike Called Funk, climate awareness with Mothers out Front, a classical dance performance by Triveni School of Dance, lawn games, camping instructions by REI, storytelling with Drag Queen Story Hour, cyanotype photography with Edie Bresler, nature education with tours of the parks and interaction with the National Parks Service and Emerald Necklace Conservancy team.



Drag Queen Story Hour at Jamaica Pond for Parkfest. Image: Mild Laohapoonrungsee of M7 Art Studio

1. OLMSTED PARK PROFILE

NEIGHBORHOOD CENSUS

33%
BIPOC

\$113,642
Median Annual Household Income

49%
Owner Occupied

19%
Persons under 18 yrs

16%
Persons above 65 yrs



EVENTS BY THE NUMBERS

	1. NPS EVENT – April 23, 2022	6e. PARKFEST – September 24, 2022
Who is visiting the park?	22% BIPOC 11% Youth 8% 60+	34% BIPOC 21% Youth 8% 60+
Where are people visiting from?	54% Neighborhood 46% Regional 79% had been to the park before	80% Neighborhood 20% Regional 81% had been to the park before
How are people using the park?	Games	Information and performances
How did people find out about the event?		63% came for the event 21% passing through 16% friend brought them
How does the park meet the following criteria?	○ Not at all ◐ Partially ● Fully	○ Not at all ◐ Partially ● Fully
Connected	○ ◐ ●	○ ◐ ●
Accessible	○ ◐ ●	○ ◐ ●
Mixed users	○ ◐ ●	○ ◐ ●
Feeling safe	○ ◐ ●	○ ◐ ●
Functions	○ ◐ ●	○ ◐ ●
Memorable	○ ◐ ●	○ ◐ ●

OBSERVATIONS

Olmsted Park is a neighborhood park that is a regular spot for local residents. Visitors use the park for their daily runs, walks, and bikes or just to stop by to get some respite from the city. Visitors tend to have a positive association with the park.



I've never lived in a city before, the parks are a respite, it's safe there are always people around

—Visitor to the park

Olmsted Park was designed as a linear, connected path of green spaces, pathways and ponds—creating pockets of interaction for visitors as they pass through. Because the park was designed (and is used) as a thoroughfare, programming that gives people a reason to stop and spend time is most successful.

Both events hosted as a part of Olmsted Now utilized the strengths of the park's design to create spaces of engagement where people could stop, play, rest and move on. Brookline Parks and Open Spaces hosted a community gathering event with music, games, and tabling by different organizations. Visitors to the park stopped by during their walks and runs to play some games or talk to the organizations at the different tents. Groups of people gathered on the grass to enjoy the sun and live music. During Parkfest, visitors were similarly drawn to dance performances and lawn games and stopped by on their way through the park. Visitors to Parkfest were more engaged due to the nature of performances requiring people to sit, watch and spend time at the park.

Both events hosted as a part of Olmsted Now utilized the strengths of the park's design to create spaces of engagement where people could stop, play, rest and move on. Brookline Parks and Open Space hosted a community gathering event with

music, games and tabling by different organizations. Visitors to the park stopped by during their walks and runs to play some games or talk to the organizations at the different tents. Groups of people gathered on the grass to enjoy the sun and live music. During Parkfest, visitors were similarly drawn to dance performances and lawn games and stopped by on their way through the park. Visitors to Parkfest were more engaged due to the nature of performances requiring people to sit, watch and spend time at the park.



Triveni Dance performs in Olmsted Park for Parkfest.
Image: Jen Mergel



By the numbers

3 percentage point increase in the number of youth engaged at Parkfest and an **8 percentage point decrease** in NPS event.

80% of visitors to Parkfest were from the surrounding neighborhood

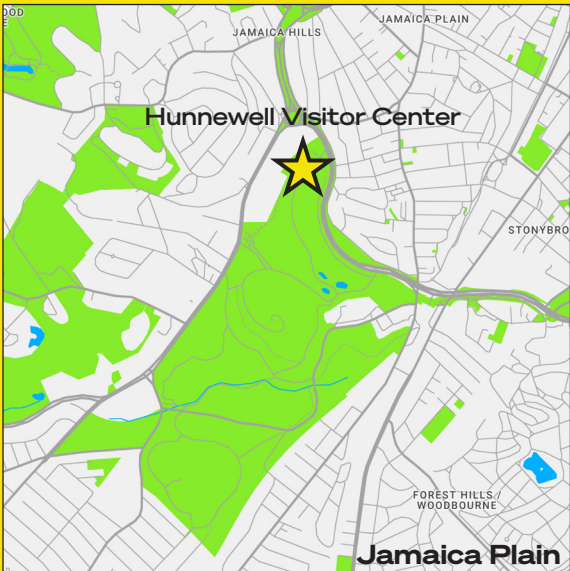
BIPOC representation was consistent with the neighborhood for Parkfest with a lower attendance at the NPS event

79% had been to the park before

2. ARNOLD ARBORETUM PARK PROFILE

NEIGHBORHOOD CENSUS

- 48% BIPOC
- \$100,617 Median Annual Household Income
- 50% Owner Occupied
- 6% Persons under 18 yrs
- 13% Persons above 65 yrs



EVENTS BY THE NUMBERS

No data was collected for the event held on May 5, 2022

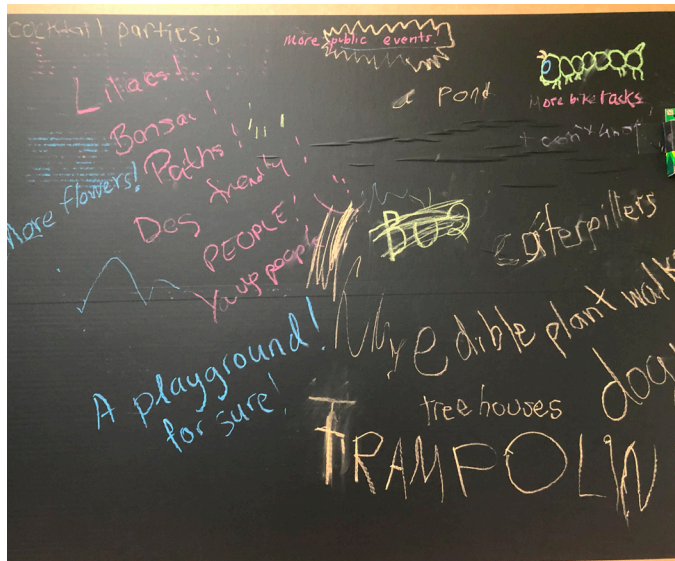
6h. PARKFEST – September 24, 2022

Who is visiting the park?	31% BIPOC
	20% Youth
	9% 60+
Where are people visiting from?	47% Neighborhood
	53% Regional
	67% had been to the park before
How did people find out about the event?	5% came for the event
	80% passing through
	10% friend brought them
How does the park meet the following criteria?	Not at allPartiallyFully
Connected	
Accessible	
Mixed users	
Feeling safe	
Functions	
Memorable	

OBSERVATIONS

The Arboretum was designed as a destination for visitors to enjoy a green oasis and learn about a diverse array of plant species. Regular activities around the park include visitors following maps to find new plants, families picnicking and even photoshoots. During Parkfest, 67% of visitors had been to the park before, suggesting the Arboretum is a memorable park that people want to return to.

Though the park has a lot to offer, visitors are looking for more diverse activities. When asked what activities they wanted to see more of at the park, visitors mentioned a playground, more interactive public events, music performances and dog-friendly spaces. Parkfest brought some of these kinds of activities to the Arboretum, with an art table for kids, dog costume decorating, lawn games, food trucks and a live interactive caterpillar educational program by the Arboretum. These activities were a fun opportunity for all ages to interact with and learn.



Park user feedback for what to do in the Arboretum.
Image: CultureHouse

As the Arboretum serves as a regional destination, there is less representation from surrounding neighborhoods in the visitorship—including a decrease in BIPOC people. Due to the primary purpose of the Arboretum for cultivating plant species, new functions would be required to attract more local residents—such as adding a bike path and making it more dog-friendly.



Decorating activities for Parkfest. Image: Mild Laohapoonrungssee of M7 Art Studio



By the numbers

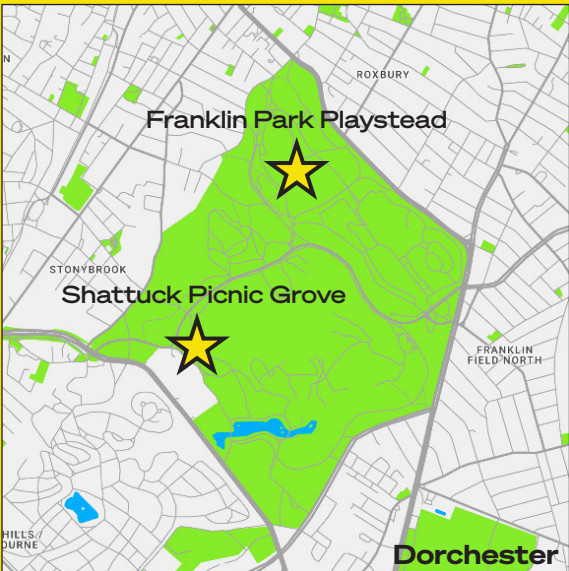
14 percentage point increase in youth engagement at Parkfest

80% of visitors were visiting the park and not there for the event

3. FRANKLIN PARK PROFILE

NEIGHBORHOOD CENSUS

- 81% BIPOC
- \$53,117 Median Annual Household Income
- 31% Owner Occupied
- 13% Persons under 18 yrs
- 12% Persons above 65 yrs



EVENTS BY THE NUMBERS

	3. BAMS FEST – June 11, 2022	6i. PARKFEST – September 24, 2022
Who is visiting the park?	80% BIPOC 19% Youth 2% 60+	34% BIPOC 18% Youth 11% 60+
Where are people visiting from?	58% Neighborhood 42% Regional 59% had been to the park before	40% had been to the park before
How are people using the park?	Music and games	Music
How did people find out about the event?	49% came for the event 14% passing through 37% friend brought them	
How does the park meet the following criteria?	Not at all Partially Fully	
Connected		
Accessible		
Mixed users		
Feeling safe		
Functions		
Memorable		

OBSERVATIONS

Franklin park is the largest park in the Emerald Necklaces and holds a lot of importance for the community that lives around it. The park has a mixture of forest, open green space, pathways, ponds and recreational space including a baseball field, a stadium, a golf course and a zoo. With the expanse of the park, it is challenging to engage the visitors simultaneously across the large open areas. Rather than smaller pass-by events, Franklin Park is best suited for focused destination events that span a large area, have lots of activities and are well-advertised.

The Boston Art & Music Soul Fest (BAMS Fest), hosted at the Playstead, drew in a large crowd with two large music stages, a dance space, vendors, live murals and food trucks spread across an open area. The wide range of activities spread across the Playstead met the scale of the park. Good advertising meant most visitors came to the park that day specifically for the event—those who hadn't were drawn in by the music and activity while walking by. By comparison, the performances during Parkfest were on a much smaller scale. These activities attracted people while they were passing by, though did not create the same sense of destination that BAMS Fest did.



I wish there were more multicultural events to build a better reputation for the park. The park can be “dangerous”, especially for older people who know stories from the past.

—A local resident who used to be part of the Franklin Park preservation group

Starting in 1966 till the late 1970s, Franklin Park was known for hosting events organized by Ema Lewis, a champion of arts and education for Boston's youth of color. She created an open-air venue in

a neglected area of the park, bringing in legends like Duke Ellington.²⁹ BAMS Fest built on that legacy through their festival and created that space for the BIPOC community of Boston. BAMS Fest created an environment that represented and celebrated BIPOC artists and creatives in the community—making the park more welcoming to BIPOC visitors. The turnout of BIPOC people at BAMS Fest matched the demographic distribution of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Both BAMS Fest and Parkfest increased participation from children by providing tactile activities centered around play and learning—including dance, music and games. Families were able to enjoy these activities with their kids.



At BAMS Fest there was a large area with a screen and set up for an immersive experiential game. However, throughout the day kids chose to play on the trampolines and talk to the National Parks Service representatives rather than play the video game. After making this observation the Emerald Necklace Conservancy included more lawn games for children and adults at future events.



By the numbers

BAMS Fest created a **representative demographic** of the surrounding neighborhood in the park

5 percentage point increase in the number of youth at the park

10 percentage point decrease in the number of 60+ visitors at BAMS Fest

49% of visitors were at the park for the event

29. Olga Khvan. (2021). BAMS Fest Founder Catherin Morris on Reviving Elma Lewis' Legacy of Activating Franklin Park. OlmstedNow.org

4. BACK BAY FENS PARK PROFILE

NEIGHBORHOOD CENSUS

43%
BIPOC

\$62,365
Median Annual Household Income

8%
Owner Occupied

3%
Persons under 18 yrs

4%
Persons above 65 yrs



EVENTS BY THE NUMBERS

4a-c. FENWAY PORCHFEST – July 9, 2022

6c. PARKFEST – September 24, 2022

Who is visiting the park?	25% BIPOC			48% BIPOC		
	10% Youth			38% Youth		
	6% 60+			7% 60+		
Where are people visiting from?	47% Neighborhood			50% Neighborhood		
	53% Regional			50% Regional		
	62% had been to the park before			50% had been to the park before		
How are people using the park?	Music			Games		
How did people find out about the event?	53% came for the event			32% came for the event		
	21% passing through			42% passing through		
	26% friend brought them			26% friend brought them		
How does the park meet the following criteria?	○ Not at all	◐ Partially	● Fully	○ Not at all	◐ Partially	● Fully
Connected	○	◐	●	○	◐	●
Accessible	○	◐	●	○	◐	●
Mixed users	○	◐	●	○	◐	●
Feeling safe	○	◐	●	○	◐	●
Functions	○	◐	●	○	◐	●
Memorable	○	◐	●	○	◐	●

OBSERVATIONS

The Back Bay Fens is surrounded by popular tourist attractions such as the Museum of Fine Arts, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, and Fenway Park—leading to many tourists from across the city, country, and globe visiting the park. With several universities including Boston University, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, and Northeastern University in the area, 92% of residents in the neighborhood are renters (mostly students).

Visitors to the Fens use the park for recreational activities, for a walk or run, and as a scenic place-through from one side of the neighborhood to the other. Though, with limited activities and temporary fencing around the park, access feels limited. The Shattuck Visitor Center, which sits along the eastern side of the Muddy River, is home to the Emerald Necklace Conservancy. The visitor center consists of offices, exhibitions, and information about the parks. Visitors stop by the center with questions about the parks and looking for maps, but the main attraction is the bathroom—an important pit stop for visitors who have spent the day walking around the area.



Visitors explore the Shattuck Visitor Center.
Image: Tyahra Angus of AfroCentered Media

Both Fenway Porchfest and Parkfest brought additional functions to the Fens. At both events, visitors were excited to listen to music performances while they

walked by. During Fenway Porchfest, which attracted people that had come specifically for the event, spectators preferred to listen from the sidewalk where there was a shaded area. Parkfest, on the other hand, attracted visitors that were already walking by and stopped to get information, play games and sit in the picnic areas. At both events, having more activities around the visitor center encouraged more people to stop by and learn about the Emerald Necklace.



Visitors engage with NPS representatives at Fenway Porchfest. Image: Tyahra Angus of AfroCentered Media

Given the visitor center is located on the eastern side of the Fenway-Kenmore area, the Porchfest organizers were unsure if people would walk across the neighborhood and attend the performances. While people did come to hear the music, Fenway Porchfest attracted more regional visitors that were whiter than the neighborhood as a whole, leading to a decrease in BIPOC representation during the event.



By the numbers

18 percentage point decrease in BIPOC visitors at Fenway Porchfest

10 fold increase in youth participation at Parkfest

51% visitors were regional visitors

5. JAMAICA POND PARK PROFILE

NEIGHBORHOOD CENSUS

45%
BIPOC

\$108,174
Median Annual Household Income

47%
Owner Occupied

6%
Persons under 18 yrs

13%
Persons above 65 yrs



EVENTS BY THE NUMBERS

5a-b. JP PORCHFEST – Aug 20, 2022

6f-g. PARKFEST – Sept 24, 2022

Who is visiting the park?	26% BIPOC			27% BIPOC		
	10% Youth			10% Youth		
	2% 60+			18% 60+		
Where are people visiting from?	57% Neighborhood			50% Neighborhood		
	43% Regional			50% Regional		
	78% had been to the park before			71% had been to the park before		
How are people using the park?	Games, music, and relaxing on the benches			Story time with JP Boathouse		
How did people find out about the event?	67% came for the event			48% came for the event		
	13% passing through			30% passing through		
	19% friends brought them			22% friends brought them		
How does the park meet the following criteria?	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒
	Not at all	Partially	Fully	Not at all	Partially	Fully
Connected	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒
Accessible	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒
Mixed users	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒
Feeling safe	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒
Functions	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒
Memorable	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒

OBSERVATIONS

Jamaica Pond, a large scenic body of water, is a destination for tourists and locals alike. Tourists tend to spend time by the pond and enjoy the boat rides, while local residents come by to use the biking and running paths. Most people visiting the park had been there before and were mostly from the surrounding area.

This year was the first time that JP Porchfest used the JP Boathouse as a performance porch. The organizers had found it hard to program the pond area in previous Porchfests and worked with the Conservancy to bring music to the boathouse. Porchfest primarily attracted visitors from the neighborhood that came specifically for the event. While Porchfest spanned across Jamaica Plain and the organizers worked to provide a platform for local BIPOC artists and organizations, the pond porch did not see a representative number of BIPOC visitors. While the neighborhood is diverse, the area directly around the Boathouse has a larger concentration of white residents.³⁰

Unlike Porchfest, fewer people came specifically for Parkfest and the event attracted people who were passing by—giving them a reason to stop and participate in events like a drag queen story hour and photography workshop.

Similar to Porchfest, BIPOC visitors at Parkfest were fewer than in neighborhood demographics.

JP Boathouse has a large concentration of benches along the main pathway, making it more accessible for older adults who need a space to sit and rest to enjoy events. While additional seating and picnic areas during Parkfest led to an increase in visitors aged 60+ during the event. Porchfest, however, saw fewer older adults—indicating the event and music did not connect with all ages.



By the numbers

20 percentage point decrease in BIPOC representation at both JP Porchfest and Parkfest

75% of visitors had been to the park before

67% of visitors came for the porchfest event

5 percentage point decrease in visitors 60+ at JP Porchfest

30. City Data. (2022). [Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts Detailed Profile](#).

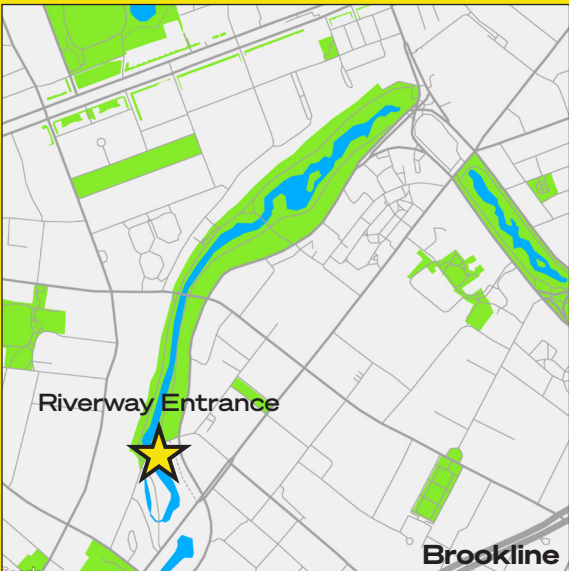


JP Porchfest. Image: Tyahra Angus of AfroCentered Media

6. RIVERWAY PARK PROFILE

NEIGHBORHOOD CENSUS

- 33% BIPOC
- \$113,642 Median Annual Household Income
- 49% Owner Occupied
- 19% Persons under 18 yrs
- 16% Persons above 65 yrs



EVENTS BY THE NUMBERS

No individual event took place at Riverway

6d. PARKFEST – September 24, 2022

Who is visiting the park?	16% BIPOC
	9% Youth
	29% 60+
Where are people visiting from?	0% Neighborhood
	100% Regional
How are people using the park?	Information
How did people find out about the event?	80% came for the event
	20% passing through
	0% friend brought them

OBSERVATIONS

Riverway was designed to blend in with the landscape of the Muddy River and connect the surrounding parks together. Today, the park continues to be used as a connection, with visitors walking, running, or biking through. Some use the park for recreation, while others use it as a scenic path away from the streets to walk to or from the Longwood T station. Additionally, Riverway's proximity to Fenway Park, museums and universities makes it a thoroughfare for regional visitors.

The park is more conducive to passive engagement—events or activities that encourage people to participate while they are walking by. During Parkfest, the parade decorating and picnic areas were not used by visitors, an indication that people do not intentionally go to Riverway to spend time. The park is used more by regional visitors than neighbors, making it better suited for activities like vendor and organization tables that invite passersby to stop for a moment, participate and move along to their destination.

During Parkfest, though there was not a lot of engagement with the interactive data activities, through observations and conversations we saw a significant increase in visitors 60+ as compared to neighborhood demographics. Older residents walking through the park had been living in the neighborhood for decades and were interested in learning more about the parks. This park is important for older adults, as it provides a calm and low-stress way to walk through the area.



By the numbers

28 percentage point increase in visitors ages 60+

50% decrease in BIPOC visitors



Kent Jackson of the Conservancy ready to lead nature immersion activity for Parkfest. Image: Jen Mergel

7. CHARLESGATE PARK PROFILE

NEIGHBORHOOD CENSUS

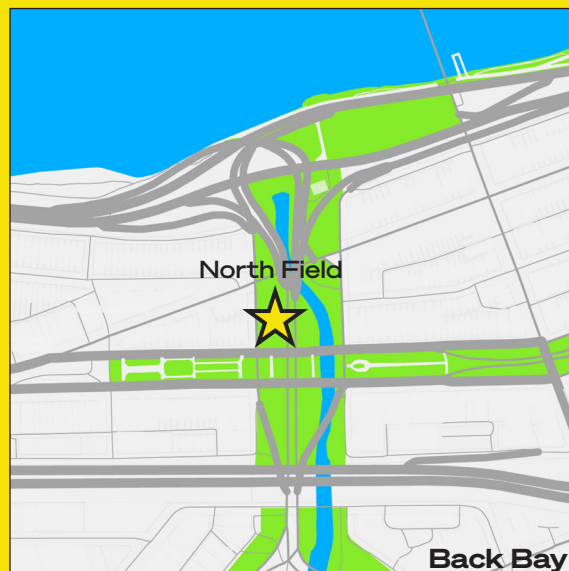
29%
BIPOC

\$112, 085
Median Annual Household Income

30%
Owner Occupied

17%
Persons under 18 yrs

15%
Persons above 65 yrs



EVENTS BY THE NUMBERS

7. CHARLESGATE ALLIANCE – October 1, 2022

6a. PARKFEST – September 24, 2022

Who is visiting the park?	26% BIPOC			46% BIPOC		
	23% Youth			4% Youth		
	8% 60+			16% 60+		
Where are people visiting from?	37% Neighborhood			68% Neighborhood		
	63% Regional			32% Regional		
	44% had been to the park before			32% had been to the park before		
How are people using the park?	Art tent			Music		
How did people find out about the event?	36% came for the event			35% came for the event		
	45% passing through			36% passing through		
	18% friend brought them			29% friend brought them		
How does the park meet the following criteria?	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒
	Not at all	Partially	Fully	Not at all	Partially	Fully
Connected	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒
Accessible	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒
Mixed users	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒
Feeling safe	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒
Functions	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒
Memorable	☐	☒	☒	☐	☒	☒

OBSERVATIONS

Due to the highway constructed through the park in the 1950s and 60s, Charlesgate Park has been more neglected as compared to other parks in the Emerald Necklace. As the park is surrounded and divided by large roads and highways, noises make it difficult to enjoy and disconnected pathways make it difficult to navigate. The park itself has a green open space and a gravel area that runs right below the highway. Most people walking by do not know that it is a part of the Emerald Necklace, or even a park at all. Unsurprisingly, most visitors to Olmsted Now events at Charlesgate Park had not been to the park before.

The greenspace in the park is not used often, as there is little seating for older adults and other visitors. The gravel area, however, is used by groups of people for recreational activities—including some local residents who use it to play petanque.



Canvas Studio leads art activity on October 1, 2022.
Image: Jen Mergel



A group of friends saw the gravel in the park and saw an opportunity to use it for petanque. It has been two years since they started playing at the park and the group continues to grow!

Adding activities to Charlesgate dramatically changed the way people used the park. Parkfest took advantage of

being also able to use the entire park, with activities in the greenspace as well as the gravel area. The hip-hop open mic during Parkfest brought a large neighborhood audience and a 17 percentage point increase in BIPOC visitors. The large event signs and audible music got passersby to stop and participate. The movable Adirondack chairs set up during the event encouraged more people to sit and enjoy the music.



Frank Guenther of Charlesgate Petanque at Parkfest.
Image: Jen Mergel

The second event at Charlesgate, just one week after Parkfest, saw much less engagement. The event had music, games and arts and craft tables. Due to the drizzly conditions, the activities were limited to under the overpass, greatly reducing the footprint of the event. As compared to Parkfest, the music was more subdued—making it more difficult to hear from the street. While the event did not bring many visitors from the neighborhood, regional visitors that were walking by stopped to see what was happening.



By the numbers

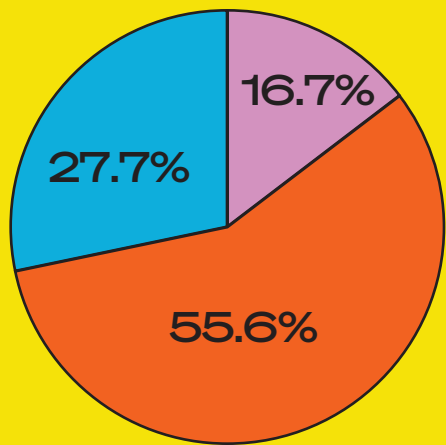
17 percentage point increase in BIPOC visitors at parkfest

63% regional attendance at event and **68% neighborhood attendance** at Parkfest

Less than 50% of visitors had been to the park before

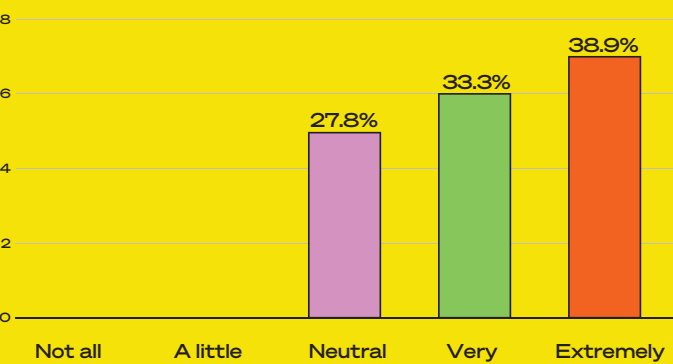
PARKS AS PLATFORM PARTNER PROFILE

Have you had similar opportunities to partner for events at other parks in Boston?

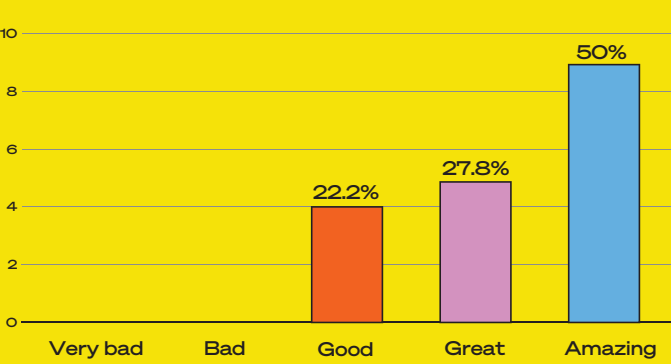


55.6% NO
27.7% YES
16.7% N/A

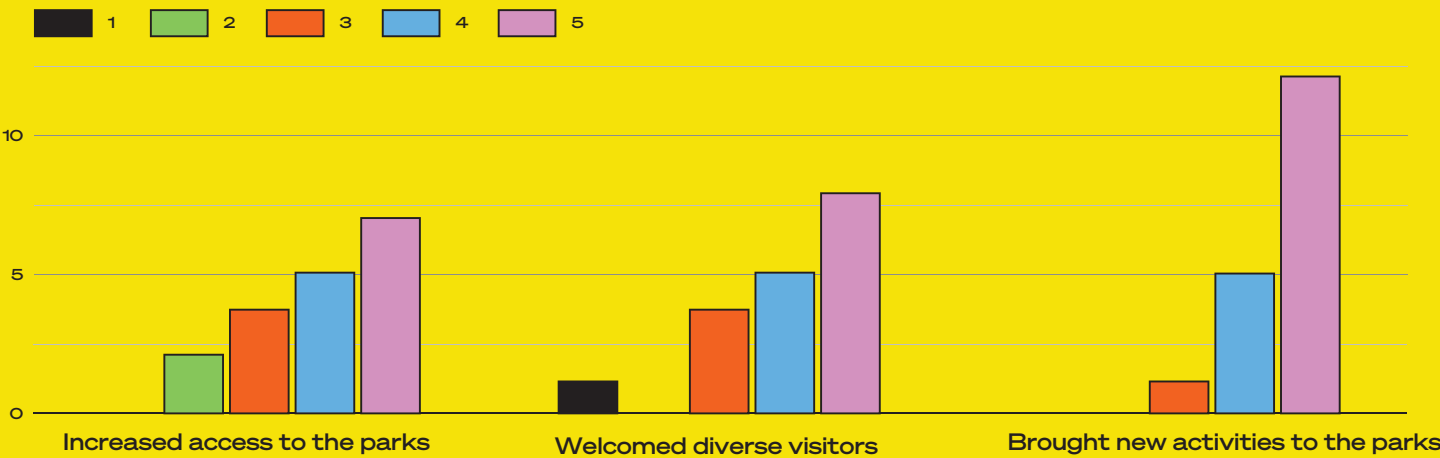
How engaged were visitors with your events?



How was your experience working with the Emerald Necklace Conservancy?



How do you feel your partnership, programming, and participation met the identified Parks as Platform goals?



OBSERVATIONS

Over the seven events of Parks as Platform, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy worked with six main partners. These were the National Park Service, the Arnold Arboretum, BAMS fest, Dunamis Boston, Fenway Porchfest and the Charlesgate Alliance. After each event, CultureHouse reached out to these partners to get feedback on how they felt their events were able to meet the goals of Parks as Platform and about their experience working with the Emerald Necklace Conservancy to make these events come to life!

Most partners felt that their events were able to meet the goals of Parks as Platform. There was an overarching conclusion that all the events brought new forms of activities and engagement to the parks. For the Arboretum, there was less impact on the increase of access and diverse visitors. The events held at the Arboretum engaged visitors that were already visiting the parks and would like to work towards hosting more activities and partnerships that align with their already planned events and offerings. Parkfest audiences were varied at different sites and we see that with the partner responses based on their experiences volunteering at the parks.



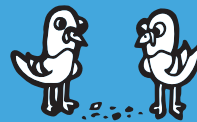
We had another program happening separately which people were highly engaged in, and we had our usual visitors who were enjoying the nice weather.

—Arnold Arboretum representative

Parks as Platform partners had a positive experience working with the Emerald Necklace Conservancy. They felt the relationship was supportive and the open lines of communication made it a valuable process. The parks, as venues, facilitated an environment where partners

were able to meet each other and create new partnerships. Similarly, artists and creatives that performed at the events were able to connect with their community. This collaboration invited partners to be a part of creatively reimagining new ways the parks could be used.

For 53% of event partners for Parks as Platform, this was an opportunity that they have not had in other parks in Boston. The partners were excited for a chance to activate a park and bring people together who might not have been there before. The events proved to be a learning and growing experience for partners. For partners who had not hosted events in the parks, they were able to understand the process of hosting and the potential of what is possible at the parks.



We loved the opportunity to activate the park, especially with those who might not otherwise discover the Back Bay Fens. Hearing feedback from visitors, everyone's experience of the park was highly positive!

— Fenway Civic/Fenway Porchfest collaborative member



Fenway Alliance director Kelly Brilliant with Grace Ramsdell and Jen Mergel of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and friends at Fenway Porchfest. Image: Tyahra Angus of AfroCentered Media.

IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

STRENGTHENING EQUITABLE ENGAGEMENT

Building BIPOC representation and visitors

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy made an intentional effort to partner with local BIPOC-representing, supporting and celebrating organizations to program Parks as Platform events. This focus resulted in more BIPOC visitors to the parks. The events provided more access, resulting in visitors to the parks that were representative of the surrounding neighborhood demographics.

BAMS Fest at Franklin Park saw the most significant engagement of BIPOC visitors—mirroring the surrounding neighborhood, the largest black and brown population around the Emerald Necklace. The event brought a variety of artists, creatives, and organizations including musicians, dancers, vendors, food trucks, and mural artists. BAMS Fest was a platform for BIPOC creatives and organizations, as well as a chance for visitors to see more people who look like them taking center stage. Similar to BAMS Fest, the hip-hop open mic held at Charlesgate brought a following that represented the local BIPOC population.

JP Porchfest did result in the same kinds of engagement from BIPOC visitors. While Dunamis works to uplift and support BIPOC creatives, the Porchfest event at the JP Boathouse did not see significant BIPOC representation. The immediate area surrounding Jamaica Pond is predominantly white, while BIPOC residents generally live more towards the eastern periphery of the neighborhood. This internal segregation of the neighborhood itself means, even with BIPOC-centered programming, white residents have much better access to the park than BIPOC residents.

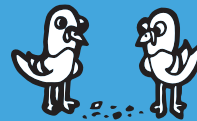
Expanding youth engagement

A goal from the start of the program was to get more youth to parks for activities other than sports. Across the parks,

there was an increase in youth visitors at the parks during Olmsted Now events (with the exception of Riverway). There was increased youth engagement during Parkfest as compared to the individual park events.

A big draw for families was that the events created a safe atmosphere where parents could keep themselves and their children occupied in the same space. Activities like dance classes at BAMS Fest in Franklin Park, dance and music performances at Parkfest in Olmsted Park, arts and crafts tables at Parkfest and lawn games kept people of all ages occupied. Events like JP Porchfest and Fenway Porchfest enticed teenagers to be in the park for events other than sports.

More activities at a park mean more people—making it a safer environment for youth to be in. Parks like Franklin Park and Charlesgate are perceived by parents to be unsafe for kids, but with safety provided by more activities and people, there was an increase in youth attendance.



Bringing my kids to the parks feels safe. I feel like they can play without worrying about gunfire and all that

—Visitor at BAMS Fest in Franklin Park

Encouraging older adult participation

Older adults were an essential group to keep engaged. It is a misconception that older adults need targeted programming to be in a public space. Older adults like the same things that all adults do—what they require is accessibility. There was increased participation of ages 60+ at Parkfest as compared to the individual Parks as Platform events. At Parkfest we made the intentional decision to include multiple types of seating in the form of picnic blankets, pillows and Adirondack chairs that could be moved by visitors as needed. These options gave more people the opportunity to sit and enjoy the activities.

OPPORTUNITIES

Programming for all ages

Create opportunities for play and rest in the parks to invite more people of all ages to engage with the parks. One way this can be accomplished is through a system of rentable picnic kits that provide visitors with seating and set-up options. Additional seating in parks will be helpful for older adults to find a place to sit and relax.

Focusing on neighborhood outreach

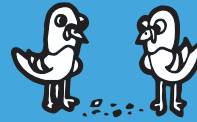
Conduct in-depth engagement with the neighborhoods surrounding the parks to understand who lives there and what they want to see at the parks. This engagement should be a continuous process practiced before, during, and after events to ensure programming stays relevant and reactive.

DIVERSIFYING CONNECTIONS

Expanding community buy-in

Throughout the events we received comments from visitors that they enjoyed the interactive ways of collecting community feedback. People want to participate in decision-making and planning about their neighborhood spaces. Creating interactive opportunities for visitors to tell us about their feelings and connection to the parks helped to create an opportunity for them to do so. Regular visitors and neighbors have strong connections to the parks and want to see more functions and access. During events, visitors would answer questions, talk to representatives about their experiences in the parks and share what they wanted to see more of.

Visitors want to have tangible experiences and takeaways when they visit a public place. When there were no events happening in the parks people would stop to look at maps, read informational signage about the parks and their surroundings, and ask questions to representatives. During events, visitors enjoyed interacting with the various organizations, collecting maps and pamphlets and having an opportunity to ask direct questions to the National Park Service and the Emerald Necklace Conservancy.



It is great to see that you are collecting data about accessibility from disabled people, I am glad that this question is being asked. This place (Jamaica Pond) does seem accessible. They have a space for fishing for people on wheelchairs

—Visitor at JP Porchfest

Creating park-based partnerships

The parks in the Emerald Necklace can be divided, based on where visitors are coming from, into regional and neighborhood parks. Regional parks include the Arnold Arboretum, Back Bay Fens and Riverway. Neighborhood parks include Olmsted Park, Franklin Park, Jamaica Pond, and Charlesgate Park. The partnerships for programming for a given park should complement the kind of visitors that are coming there.

Neighborhood parks tend to be best activated with activities that are tailored to the needs of adjacent communities. BAMS Fest saw the largest BIPOC engagement compared to other parks—closely representing the neighborhood demographics. Olmsted Park is a regular for local residents to walk, run or bike through, and partnering with local creatives like the Indian dance company and Afrobeats DJ got people to stop and participate. Partners for events at Jamaica Pond were able to bring in visitors from the immediate neighborhood by integrating peoples' existing interests.

It is not surprising that Arnold Arboretum, Back Bay Fens and Riverway are regional parks. The Fenway-Kenmore neighborhood is surrounded by universities and tourist destinations, bringing people from all over the city and country to the Fens. Partnerships like the Fenway Porchfest help bring a sense of community to the Fens and provide an added experience for tourists. The Arboretum itself is a tourist destination. Having partners there that

are able to provide more activities for visitors made the park more engaging for all. Riverway is a thoroughfare for people on a run, bike, or heading to T station. Its proximity to tourist attractions in the Fenway-Kenmore neighborhood also makes it a regional attraction. In general, regional parks attracted visitors that wanted new experiences.



At the Charlesgate events we saw a larger number of neighborhood visitors at Parkfest and a larger number of regional visitors at the individual event. For Parkfest, due to the warm and sunny weather conditions we were able to use the whole park—creating a vibrancy and attracting more neighborhood visitors. For the individual event, due to the rainy and cold conditions, activities were under the overpass and closer to the sidewalk—attracting regional visitors that were just passing by. For these reasons, we categorize Charlesgate as a neighborhood park that has the potential to attract regional visitors.

OPPORTUNITIES

Defining regional and neighborhood partnerships

Regional parks require partnerships that provide visitors with a new kind of experience that they wouldn't expect to get at the park. Events like Porchfest helped to bring a sense of community that could be shared with a larger audience.

Neighborhood parks do best with local partnerships and familiar experiences that represent and attract people from the neighborhood.

Narrowing scope

The parks comprise a large area and cannot easily be programmed simultaneously. Creating more in-depth engagement and activities at a smaller scale will have a larger direct impact on the parks and their surrounding communities.

Marketing and promotion for events

There is a need for a comprehensive promotion plan for events—including working with local and regional organizations to share information. Most importantly, meet the community where they are by promoting using existing trusted networks. Social media was not as effective in sharing information about events; most people learned of events from physical flyers, word of mouth or were brought by friends.



"The flyers were very effective, I saw them in my apartment building."

—Visitors at Fenway Porchfest at the Shattuck Visitor Center

GROWING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHARED USE, HEALTH, AND EMPOWERMENT

Activating parks as pass through or destinations

Based on the design and what kind of programming worked best, each park in the Emerald Necklace can be classified as a pass-through or destination park. Back Bay Fens, Riverway, and the Arboretum are pass-through parks and Franklin Park, Jamaica Pond, Charlesgate Park and Olmsted Park are destination parks.

A pass-through park is a park that is used as a thoroughfare for visitors. These parks require programming that gets people to stop for a short while, engage, and move on. For example, the music at Fenway Porchfest attracted passers-by to stop at the visitor center for a bit, enjoy the music, and walk to their next stop. At Fenway Porchfest, large groups of people tended not to stay long—they mostly stood on the sidewalk in the shade for a while and walked ahead. With the Riverway, the park itself is a thoroughfare, so having small activities like an information booth and vendor gave people a reason to stop for a while and walk on. Short activities that

can be experienced casually, quickly and memorably are a great match for pass-through parks. Rather than try to attract new visitors, pass-through parks are at their best when they engage with those who are already passing by

At a destination park programming is the primary driver for attracting visitors. At BAMS Fest at Franklin Park, most people were at the park specifically for the event. The scale of the Franklin makes it hard to engage someone who is just passing by—requiring a larger event to create a draw. Olmsted park is an interesting example of a regular thoroughfare for local residents that is successful as a destination park due to its proximity to nearby communities and space for larger programs. The park is able to draw visitors to spend time enjoying activities like sitting and watching the performances that took place during Parkfest. Charlesgate is a prime example of a park that needs an event to draw people in. Given the lack of existing infrastructure and function, a large event that exudes life and joy is needed to combat the challenging barriers that exist due to the highway. At Parkfest, the loud music increased interest and got people walking by to stop.

Leveraging existing park designs

For the most part, the way the parks were designed by Olmsted is the way they are being used today. Responding to a park's intended purpose and current use will help create access with less effort. Riverway, for example, was designed to be a connection and a space where you immerse in nature—and that's how it is used today. Jamaica Pond's beauty comes from its pathways and greenery. Parkfest and Porchfest encouraged more people to interact with and marvel at the pond. Franklin park was designed to be a composition of different landscapes—making it a park that requires multiple activities to draw people in as BAMS Fest did at the Playstead.

OPPORTUNITIES

Pass through and destination

Activities at pass-through parks could include information booths, vendors, lawn games, food trucks, and arts and crafts tables. Destination park activities could include music and dance performances, playgrounds, and recreational games.

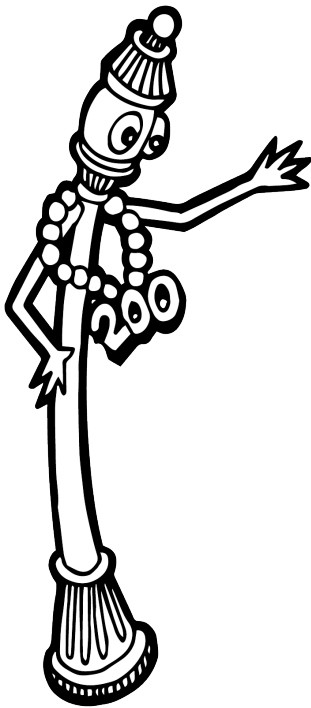
NEXT FOR 2023

With the success of 2022 collaborations for Parks as Platform events, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy has committed 2023 programming to amplify parks equity for partners offering Fests in the Emerald Necklace parks. This Necklace Fest Series will convene and support the managing partners of BAMS Fest in Franklin Park, the Dunamis Boston team presenting JP Porchfest at Jamaica Pond and the trio organizing the next Fenway Porchfest—Fenway Alliance, Fenway CDC and Fenway Community Center—in the Back Bay Fens. The groups are invited to a new cohort, coordinated by the Conservancy with monthly dialogues for transparent knowledge sharing, and dedicated funding to meet partner-specific needs to increase access.

Cohort meetings paying attention to issues of special events permitting, audience outreach and cross-promotion and artist compensation will be supplemented with special grants to support such equity and access initiatives as BIPOC-curated main stages, pilots for outdoor stage ASL interpretation and multilingual wayfinding and direct invitations to bridge gaps between parks and adjacent mainstreets that may seem geographically close but socially inaccessible. Likewise, the Conservancy seeks to build upon Parkfest. Rather than spread events across seven locations simultaneously, the 2.0 version would focus on a single location for targeted audience outreach and increased impact of investment in intentionally inclusive, neighborhood-driven park experiences. Stay tuned for the series announcements.



Gerry Wright, founder of Olmsted 2022, honors local leaders for their advocacy work, including Corey Stallings, Program Director South Street Youth Center and Carol Miranda, of Community Connections Coalition/ Arbol de Vida.
Image: Chris McIntosh of C.McIntosh Photo



RECOGNITION

FORMS OF RECOGNITION



3

CIVIC DECLARATIONS



8

MAJOR SPEAKING INVITATIONS



3

AWARDS



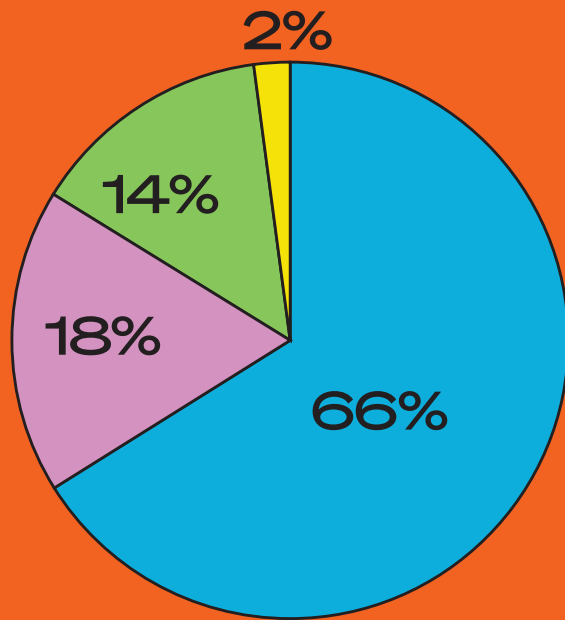
41

MEDIA PIECES (6 BEYOND BOSTON = 15%)



4

GRATITUDE-FEEDBACK-REFLECTION SESSIONS



124 FUNDERS

66% INDIVIDUAL

18% FOUNDATION/
NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION

14% CORPORATE

2% GOVERNMENT

93% WITHIN BOSTON VS 7% BEYOND

27% FUNDERS NEW TO THE CONSERVANCY



“During 2021-2022 I visited some 60 Olmsted park cities, landscapes and spoke and interacted with numerous park agencies, conservancies and friends groups across the U.S. ... **There was not a single city-wide endeavor that even approached the vision and programming reality of what Olmsted Now was able to achieve in Boston.**

“In fact, ... **separate from Olmsted: there is no city-wide parks program in the U.S. that has so deeply, powerfully, effectively reached out to as wide, deep and diverse an audience.** Particularly with regards to reaching out to all communities and populations and so acutely focused on social justice. Bravo!”

— Comment from the [Olmsted 200/Olmsted Network presentation](#) for the Olmsted Exchange by Laurence Cotton, historian and filmmaker on the PBS special *Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing America*

RECOGNITION

Knowing how Olmsted Now was received by local, regional and national audiences has been essential to understanding what resonated and mattered, as the Conservancy evaluates which aspects of Bicentennial work to lean into. Recognition has been tracked in a range of ways, from informal and intimate reflection sessions to public proclamations, awards and news coverage. Personal anecdotes and feedback are just as important as significant donations to improve and carry work in cultural partnerships and parks equity forward.

The greatest form of recognition remains the encouragement to continue to share this work, which is sustained by ongoing financial donations as well as invitations to speak publicly about key learnings and next projects.

Gathered here are examples of recognition by civic, media, conference, award and partner sources, as of February 1, 2023.



"Olmsted Now is one of the nation's most innovative examples of using the historic vision of Frederick Law Olmsted for public parks as a springboard for big ideas and bold actions. ... The Trustees celebrates the work of Olmsted Now as innovators of public discourse and engagement for the greater good of our community."

—The Trustees, *Special Places Magazine*.
Winter 2022-23 (Vol 30. No.4)

PUBLIC PROCLAMATIONS/GREETINGS

To locally mark the 200th anniversary of Olmsted's birth on April 26, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy secured special declarations from elected leaders. These greetings and proclamations were publicly

shared at an Olmsted birthday event annually organized for decades by Gerry Wright of Friends of Jamaica Pond, and expanded for 2022 through a collaboration between Wright's organization Olmsted 2022, with the Friends of Fairsted and the Conservancy at Jamaica Pond Boathouse and Pavilion. On the event's rain date, April 27, in front of scores of attendees, Olmsted 2022 recognized awardees Kent Jackson, Patrice Kish, Carol Miranda and Cory Stallings for their parks access and advocacy work, Diane Edgecomb and Margot Chamberlain performed, refreshments were shared, and speeches included the following texts from local officials:

FROM THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS' GOVERNOR CHARLES D. BAKER AND LT. GOVERNOR KARYN E. POLITO:

"Dear Friends:

On behalf of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito and I would like to welcome you to the bicentennial celebration of the birth of Frederick Law Olmsted.

The bicentennial of Frederick Law Olmsted is a national celebration led by the National Association for Olmsted Parks, as well as a local multi-organizational celebration spearheaded by the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

Widely recognized as the founder of the landscape architecture profession in the United States, Frederick Law Olmsted believed in the healing power of natural scenery and the role that landscape design could play in improving the well-being of all residents. Following this belief, Olmsted made undeniably impactful contributions to the creation and development of urban parks and park systems across the country.

The contributions of Frederick Law Olmsted are particularly significant to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Two of his most important architectural projects were in Massachusetts, the Emerald Necklace Park System and the Arnold Arboretum. Beyond these two projects, Olmsted also played a major role in the creation of many reservations and parkways that are now under the stewardship of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito and I are proud to support such a meaningful event.”

[Signed: Charles D. Baker]

FROM MELVIN KLECKNER AND THE SELECT BOARD OF THE TOWN OF BROOKLINE:

PROCLAMATION

Whereas: The Town of Brookline was chosen by America’s great placemaker and first landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) at the culmination of his career for his family home and professional office known as Fairsted at 99 Warren Street; AND

Whereas: Fairsted operated in Brookline under Olmsted, his sons and successors from 1883 until it was acquired in 1979

and designated and operated by the National Park Service as Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site; AND

Whereas: Olmsted directly shaped nationally significant landscapes, from the U.S. Capitol Grounds to Niagara Falls and Central Park, but also the distinctive curvilinear landscapes that distinguish the Town’s urban character, including: the verdant thoroughways of Beacon and Boylston Streets and Chestnut Hill Avenue, landscapes of sites such as First Parish Church, and many neighborhood plans, and the public greenspace of the Emerald Necklace Riverway, Leverett Pond Park (now Olmsted Park) and Jamaica Pond; AND

Whereas: 2022 marks 200 years since the birth of Frederick Law Olmsted and is being observed locally by Olmsted Now: Greater Boston’s Olmsted Bicentennial to affirm Olmsted’s impact on civic life and public health, to advance his ideals for democratic access to nature in urban space to heal and connect us, and to engage residents in learning to intentionally build resilient and inclusive places together; NOW

Therefore: The Select Board of the Town of Brookline, Massachusetts does hereby proclaim Olmsted’s 200th birthday, April 26, 2022 to be:



Gerry Wright shared hats with Olmsted Birthday crowds at Jamaica Pond Boathouse and Pavilion on April 27, 2022. Image: Chris McIntosh of C.McIntosh Photo



PROCLAMATION FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED DAY

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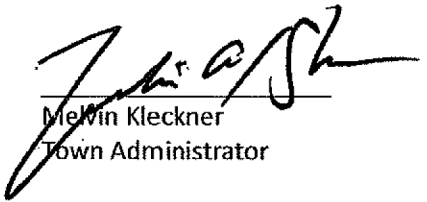
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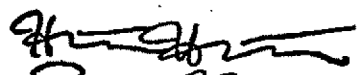
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Therefore: The Select Board of the Town of Brookline, Massachusetts does hereby proclaim Olmsted's 200th birthday, April 26, 2022 to be:

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED DAY
in the Town of Brookline


Melvin Kleckner
Town Administrator




John R. Van Riper


Brookline Select Board

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED DAY in the Town of Brookline

[Signed: Melvin Kleckner, Town Administrator and five members of Brookline Select Board]



Olmsted 2022 leaders Sarah Freeman, JoAnn Robinson and Gerry Wright with Conservancy President Karen Mauney-Brodek and NPS Superintendent Jason Newman on April 27, 2022. Image: Chris McIntosh of C.McIntosh Photo

FROM THE CITY OF BOSTON MAYOR MICHELLE WU:

PROCLAMATION

Whereas: The City of Boston has been home for well over half a century to Gerry Wright, a citizen steward of the timeless values of Boston's great 19th-century park-maker Frederick Law Olmsted, through his past six decades of advocacy for the environmental and community health of City neighbors most in need; AND

Whereas: Gerry Wright has demonstrated his dedication to healing and protecting both Boston's parks and people, through volunteerism, history-keeping, and direct care work; AND

Whereas: Gerry Wright continues to inspire generations of advocates for parks and people, through his steadfast commitment to, in his words, "issues of conservation, public health and social justice for which Olmsted was a most persevering, principled pioneer;" AND

Whereas: Gerry Wright has accepted the 2008 Robert F. Kennedy Embracing the Legacy Award, and was named

Father of Community Based Caring in Massachusetts by president of the State Senate; AND

Whereas: Gerry Wright founded organizations in areas of human services, such as the D.A.R.E Program, in land stewardship, such as Friends of Jamaica Pond, and in community commemoration, such as Olmsted 2022; NOW

Therefore: I, Michelle Wu, Mayor of the City of Boston, do hereby proclaim April 26, 2022 to be:

Gerry Wright Day

In the City of Boston.

[SIGNED Michelle Wu]

AWARDS

Received February 2022: Silver Award for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and Best Local Community Engagement to OlmstedNow.org from The Anthem Awards

Received November 2022: Charles Elliot Conservationist of the Year Award from the Trustees of the Reservations

Announced January 2023: Emerald Necklace Conservancy's biennial Olmsted Award presented at Emerald Evening to the Olmsted Now Committee of Neighborhoods



Jason Newman, Brianne Cassetta, Stephen Gray, Karen Mauney-Brodek, Anita Morson-Matra, Jen Mergel, Ben Taylor and Philip Barash before Charles Elliot Conservationist of the Year Award is presented by the Trustees of Reservations to Olmsted Now. Image: ©Krista Photography. Courtesy The Trustees.

NOTABLE SPEAKING PRESENTATIONS

March 31, 2022: Olmsteds: Landscapes and Legacies Symposium (Boston)

“Mitigating Mid-Century Mayhem: Restoration of Lost Emerald Necklace Parkland” and “Olmsted Now: Greater Boston’s Olmsted Bicentennial Focuses on His Justice Legacy”

April 25, 2022: Garden Club of America Boston Committee Spring Program (Boston) “Come Together and Be Seen”: Learning through Olmsted’s Bicentennial How Parks Can Connect and Heal Us Now.”

June 20, 2022: Greater and Greener Conference (Philadelphia) “Olmsted Parks: Can They Still Help Us Heal?”



Karen Mauney-Brodek presenting at Olmsteds: Landscapes and Legacies Symposium at Boston Society of Architects on March 31, 2022. Image: Jen Mergel

October 13, 2022: Roxbury Latin School Hall Program (Boston) at Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.’s alma mater

November 3, 2022: Trustees of Reservations Annual Meeting (Boston)

December 8, 2022: LiveableStreets Alliance 12th Annual Street Talks (Boston) “Rethinking Transit Through Olmsted Now: How an Overpass, Boatramp or Greenway Can Move You to Expect MORE of Boston”

January 20, 2023: National Association for Olmsted Parks & Olmsted 200 (online) “What was Olmsted Now? How were Impacts Measured? Which lessons can guide us?”

MEDIA COVERAGE

11/26/2022: Mishoon project ignites for the first time in 300 years | The Huntington News

11/18/2022: On Belonging: In Conversation with Ngoc-Tran Vu | Boston Art Review

11/18/2022: Radical Welcome: A Roundtable on Grantmaking as Care-Centered Work | Boston Art Review

11/15/2022: Local Indigenous tribes gather to build community and learn an ancient skill | WBUR News

11/03/2022: Indigenous tribes hold Boston’s first mishoon burning in more than 300 years | The Boston Globe

11/02/2022: Historic Canoe ‘Burning’ Underway Near Boston Harbor | Patch

10/14/2022: Jamaica Plain Celebrates Parkfest | Jamaica Plain Gazette

10/06/2022: 5 things to do this weekend, including a Life Magazine exhibit and an Indigenous Peoples Day film screening | WBUR News

10/02/2022: New garden opens at Emerald Necklace Parkfest | The Huntington News

09/30/2022: Crowds enjoy Boston’s Emerald Necklace in honor of Olmsted | Olmsted 200

09/30/2022: Photos: Lots of Fun at First Emerald Necklace Parkfest | Jamaica Plain News

09/22/2022: Free outdoor exhibition to showcase Southeast Asian stories of home, displacement | Dorchester Reporter

09/22/2022: 5 things to do this weekend, including the Boston Film Festival and the Emily Dickinson Museum’s poetry festival | WBUR News

09/19/2022: WBUR Presents: The Makers | WBUR News

09/19/2022: First Emerald Necklace Parkfest Spanning Parks on Sept. 24 | Jamaica Plain News

09/14/2022: A long-fought-for festival comes to Pope John Paul II Park | The Bay State Banner

09/08/2022: For Olmsted’s 200th birthday, a renewed effort to make parks in city welcoming to everyone | Dorchester Reporter

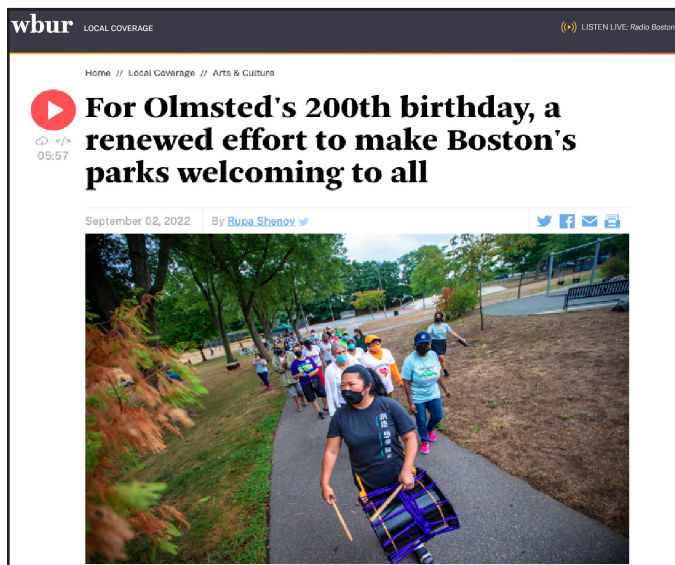
09/08/2022: Emerald Necklace Parkfest Set for Sept. 24 | The Boston Sun

09/08/2022: Parkfest is coming to the Emerald Necklace in Boston | Time Out Boston

09/07/2022: Olmsted Equity Grants open up Boston parks to all | The Bay State Banner

09/06/2022: Self-Emancipated: Ifé Franklin in Conversation with Chenoa Baker | Boston Art Review

09/02/2022: For Olmsted's 200th birthday, a renewed effort to make Boston's parks welcoming to all | WBUR



09/01/2022: 'Never Too Much, Always Enough' Temporary Art Installation Marks Frederick Law Olmsted Bicentennial | Boston.gov

08/23/2022: The New Public Art Projects That Are Keeping Us Outdoors | Boston Art Review

07/05/2022: Reimagining Boston's Charlesgate Park | WCVB 5 Chronicle

07/05/2022: Finding beauty in Olmsted projects, large and small | WCVB 5 Chronicle

07/05/2022: Visiting Olmsted's studio in Brookline, Mass., and exploring the largest park in Boston's Emerald Necklace | WCVB 5 Chronicle

07/05/2022: Celebrating the visionary behind Boston's Emerald Necklace | WCVB 5 Chronicle

06/22/2022: Jen Mergel on Frederick Law Olmsted's indelible legacy at Boston Design Week 2022 | StirWorld.com

06/11/2022: At 200, Frederick Law Olmsted continues to shape public space | The Boston Globe

05/16/2022: Neighbors celebrate Frederick Law Olmsted's 200th birthday | Jamaica Plain Gazette



05/12/2022: Parks and recreation: Olmsted's bicentennial renews appreciation for his public spaces in Boston and beyond | GBH Open Studio with Jared Bowen

05/11/2022: Apply Now for Olmsted Now Parks Equity and Spatial Justice Grants | Jamaica Plain News

05/04/2022: Grants Aim to Fund Inclusive New Programs in Olmsted Parks | The Fenway News

04/29/2022: The Future of Public Parks | The New Yorker

04/27/2022: Frederick Law Olmsted – der Pionier der Stadtparks | Deutschlandfunk Kultur

04/27/2022: Olmsted's 200th Birthday Remembered With Moss Installation At Jamaica Pond | WONDERLAND

04/26/2022: Let's Toast Frederick Law Olmsted, the Man Behind the Emerald Necklace | BostonMagazine.com

04/26/2022: In Photos: A walk through Frederick Law Olmsted's Enduring Gift: America's Public Parks | The New York Times

04/07/2022: Olmsted Now events bring communities together | Mission Hill Gazette

04/04/2022: Olmsted Now Kickoff Events for 2022 Bicentennial | Jamaica Plain Gazette

Describe in 20-30 words a favorite moment from Olmsted Now!
Tell us where, when, who, what & why!

**Describe a
favorite
moment
here!**

Working with the City of Boston on the Art installation Spruce pole chairs. - Sophia Bwj

I would say the birthday celebration and the many and diverse partnerships that we have been engaged in as a result of the bicentennial - jill

BAMSFest at Franklin Park. Great music, great dancing, and lots of buttons made. -Isabel

i enjoyed BAMS Fest. I took the children, it was our first time attending- Kay

Dancing and practicing Yoga with on School Master Hill -LINDA

Beginning @ Curley House with everyone's hopes, dreams & aspirations. End in Franklin Park @ in Sept watching our 2.5 grandson dance & jump on the trampoline Jeff

Being on Copps Hill with Black folx

Oct 2: For the Wilderness Project, Dzidzor Azaglo led a group singing "I am free" in Franklin Park's Overlook Ruins (channeling Elma Lewis!) - Jen M.

Glistening waters. Glorious canopies. Sun-drenched spaces. Secure, simple solitudes. So enriching and restorative in every way. -Barbara M (Wards Pond!)

In April, Anita leading teens in the Conservancy Youth Leadership Program in the Back Bay Fens to talk about ideas for audience-centered healing public events Jen M

April 23 - the date of the Muddy River Cleanup and the first Parks as Platform event! Parks full of people volunteering and cleaning, but also playing and having fun!

What are you most thankful for about Olmsted Now?

Describe something you're thankful for here!

Enjoying the extraordinary differences that can bring us together in this safe and beautiful landscape. -Barbara

All of our partners input and constant support of each other. - Sophia

Thankful to get out of the house and have met so many of our partners off screens, in our parks. -Isabel

Loving seeing the diversity and seeing young and older folks come together in unity. -Kay

Communities of people. Joining together. Taking risks. Exploring possibilities. Listening and learning from each other. -Barbara

Funding for grassroots projects. YES!

To be part of a process that took Neighborhood voices into consideration. Showing up & lending to a process grounded in justice and equity. Thinking about impacts -Anita

Meeting BPloC creatives leading outdoor events

Assistance with permitting process and access to outdoor space

I'm moved by the collectivism and humanity that Olmsted fosters. It's the work I do around the world and glad to know how well people are enjoying being in community JaNay!

Glad to be here as an outsider who is getting a sneak peek of the work you all are doing. It's part of the long game and it's moving in the right direction. JaNay

Meeting really inspiring artists whose vision can keep transforming park space in Boston. -Jen M

Committed of Neighborhoods felt like being held. -Anita

Jamboard slides with participant comments from the online gratitude session that was Public Dialogue #10 (October 19, 2022). Screenshots.

All of the communications planning in 2021 and the media outreach, coordination and collated coverage in 2022 were made possible thanks to PR consultant Edwina Klünder and to the Conservancy's Marketing & Communications Manager Declan Battles.

REFLECTIONS AND GRATITUDE

Beyond attention from politicians, awarding institutions and press, the Olmsted Now team sought direct feedback on bicentennial Partnerships and Power Sharing, alongside the surveys by CultureHouse for Parks as Platform. Feedback was solicited through both online and in-person reflection sessions. The goal was to gather perspectives on what resonated, could be improved and/or should continue beyond 2022.

PARTNERSHIP FEEDBACK

Two forums for all partners and the public were hosted by NPS rangers

October 19, 2022: Public Dialogue #10 was an online feedback session with an onscreen "jamboard" activity where all participants could type on "sticky notes" to respond to prompts such as:

- Were there any new things you learned from Olmsted Now?
- What idea or relationship will you take forward from Olmsted Now?
- Share an image and caption of what Olmsted Now meant to you

November 5, 2022: This in-person partner appreciation event and open house at Fairsted invited answers to questions such as:

- What was a favorite Olmsted Now experience or memory?
- What should continue in 2023?
- What were you most proud of?



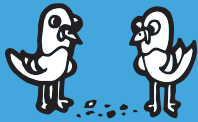
Conservancy Board and Advisors learn about Olmsted Now Impacts, January 12, 2023. Screenshot

POWER SHARING FEEDBACK

Two talkbacks for the Committee of Neighborhoods were guided by Joelle Fontaine of Design Studio for Social Intervention, with the second session including Parks Equity & Spatial Justice Project Leads.

July 7, 2022: The Committee met online after 16 projects were selected to consider the following questions:

- Did we meet our goals?
- What did we do well or what could we have done better?
- How was the process for you?
- Would you like to continue this work?



“This was a rich experience. The group was diverse and intentional. I appreciate the Conservancy upholding equity, and that the process was not forced, it remained authentic.” — Nakia Hill

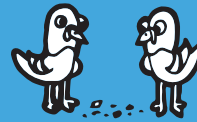
“I appreciated the time, the longevity over time to feel things out, to both do intense work and get to know people. This is what participatory action grant-making is all about. ... But we were missing native voices in this group. That needs to change.” — Karen Susan Young

“I was unique to have the opportunity to both encourage each other AND push each other.” — Anita Morson-Matra

“Let’s focus on advocacy WITH the state, like Massachusetts Cultural Council and WITH the City departments to offer specific resources to support events.” — Andrew Sharpe

“The commitment being fluid (especailly with a new baby!) allowed me to contribute and learn alot. I liked that this was flexible and everyone could contribute in their own way, at their own pace.” — Biplaw Rai

- If we keep going, what to do the same, or differently?
- What is one word that you feel reflects this year’s experience?



What word reflects this year’s experience?

Joelle: transformative

Eli: supported

Dzidzor: reimaging

Biplaw: beginning

Linda: collaborative/systemic care

Jeena: connection

Crystal: rhyzomic

Nakia: unfinished

Paul: shift

Tran: revealing

Robert: understanding

Karen Y: unveiled

Kera: allyship

Jen: learning

Karen MB: gratitude

Conor: enlightening

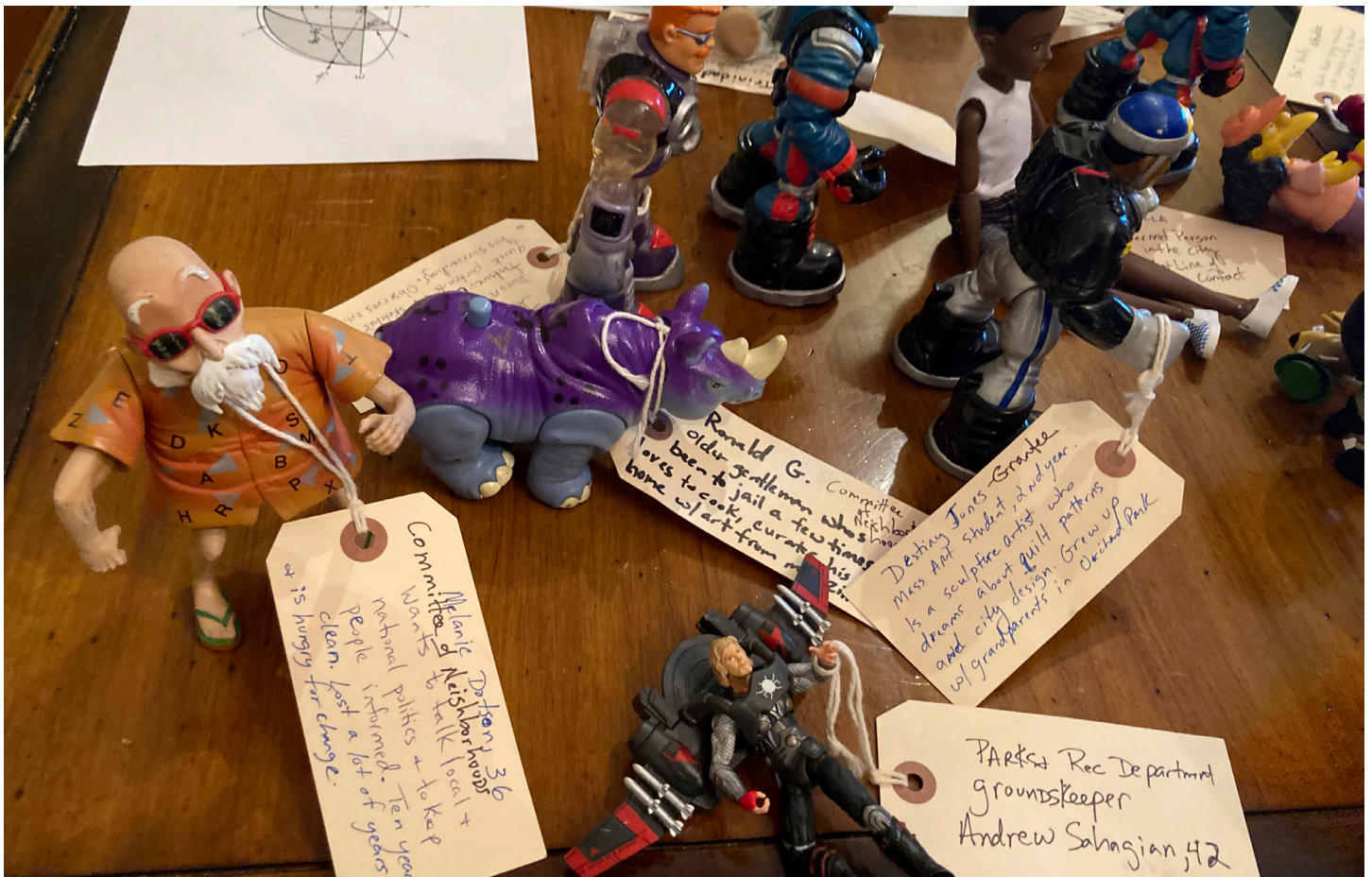
Lia: growth

Andrew: love

December 6, 2022: After the Parks Equity & Spatial Justice projects were completed for the year, the Committee and Project Leads met over a dinner hosted by Design Studio for Social Intervention’s Design Gym team at the Conservancy’s Curley House location. The session included a slide show of projects, cathartic activities like button-making from event flyers and action figure role-plays on the approval and production process, facilitated group discussion and the opportunity for individual video interviews to consider:

- What does park equity mean to you now?

In balance with the qualitative and quantitative assessments gathered by CultureHouse on Parks as Platform for single day events, these direct and authentic reflections honed in on what deeply resonated in Partnership and Power Sharing for ongoing relationships. They were the essential and respectful forum to measure what mattered most: the visionary people who created this year’s most profound experiences.



Above: Design Studio for Social Intervention Design Gym action figures to facilitate cathartic reflection on power dynamics in project approval and production. Below: Linda Wells speaks in a group discussion of the Olmsted Now Committee of Neighborhoods and Parks Equity & Spatial Justice Project Leads on December 6, 2022 at the Conservancy's location at Curley House. Images: Jen Mergel

SUPPORTERS

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy assumed the role of fiscal sponsor and fundraiser for Olmsted Now. As such, the Conservancy learned a great deal from those donors who recognized the value of the bicentennial's ambitious and unique goals to try something new. What Olmsted Now did differently was to model both "trust-based philanthropy" and "community generated programming" at the same time. This meant donors were supporting the spirit and values of a process rather than a certain outcome, and collective participation over a singular vision. Funders were creating the fertile ground upon which programming could equitably grow through participatory action, but the exact seeds and blooms were unknown. This took faith.

The Conservancy did have some prior experience securing support for programming grants. In 2018, just 3 months before the Conservancy launched its 20th Anniversary exhibition Fog x FLO: Fujiko Nakaya on the Emerald Necklace, the team secured \$75,000 to fund a call for program proposals inviting local artists to animate the project sites. The result was more than 200 newsworthy park experiences and "fog performances." That said, many decades of prior "fog performances" were a certain precedent, and criteria for deference to "Olmsted or Nakaya's vision" was set by arts program professionals. The Conservancy's stated goal for the programs was "to put together an inclusive and accessible program that affirms the parks as a community connector for a range of art forms, geographic neighborhoods, cultural communities, traditions and abilities."³¹ No request for self-identification was made of applicants. Of 41 projects selected, 5 were led by individuals who self-identify as Black or LatinX, and of these, 2 interrogated language and physical access issues and abilities.

31. Press Release (2018) "Emerald Necklace Conservancy Expands 20th Anniversary Celebration by Funding Inspiring Projects by Local Artists." Emeraldnecklace.org

Olmsted Now was led by the same development and curatorial team for the Conservancy, but the timeframe, scope and vision was more expansive and, importantly, guided by Olmsted's unrealized ideals for public space and centered with an urgent equity focus. So the call to action for funders was to commit to a just purpose, a healing process, an empowering platform.

Inspired by Olmsted's quote about parks' potential, the Conservancy's Board pioneered the "Come Together" Fund for Olmsted Now. The case for support was to "foster a diverse, inclusive and community-generated Bicentennial" and the call to action was to trust in and learn from "the core equity work of Olmsted Now: programming by the Committee of Neighborhoods. These engaged and respected community representatives are bringing their relationships and insights on Franklin Park's neighborhoods to solicit, select and allocate 'Come Together' funds to programs that will be most positive for their neighbors. Committee members are compensated for their expertise in networking and decision-making for the benefit of the bicentennial. We are excited to learn from the Committee and this new model of equity-driven outcomes and trust-based philanthropy and look forward to sharing our progress with you."

100% of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy Board, led by Olmsted Now "Champions" (see Acknowledgements), contributed to the bicentennial, not only financially, but also with time, outreach and fortitude before and during 2022. This leadership inspired several others to contribute to and believe in a new process toward equitable, trust-based, values driven participation. All partners, community members and funders were welcome to give toward this effort "from each according to ability, to each according to need."

Many heeded the call. In terms of funding, Olmsted Now would not have been possible without these individuals or organizations. The new work inspired new relationships: 27% donors were new to the Conservancy.

Charter Contracting Company
CHT Foundation
Ellie Cornish Chu and Brian Chu
Patricia Clancy
Abby and Peter Coffin
Alison Cohen
Colleges of the Fenway
Brooke C. and John R. Cook
Courageous Sailing
Culture Pop
Curative Reading
Paul and Christine Cusick
Susan Helms Daley and Sean Daley
Davis Family Charitable Foundation
Russell DeMartino
Catherine Donaher and Robert Hollister
Kitty and Michael Dukakis
Brittany Esty and Kara Weiss
Faithful Flowers
Lynn Flaherty
Charlotte Fleetwood
Focus Real Estate
Franklin Park Zoo | Zoo New England
Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic
Site
Sarah Freeman
Friends of Fairsted
Friends of Post Office Square
Friends of the Muddy River
Leslie Gerhardt
Joan and Alfred Goldberg
Julie Hume Gordon and Philip Gordon
Nicholas and Marjorie Greville

Martin Hall and Sarita Uribe
Ashley and Jamie Harmon
Harvard Medical School
Lisa and Mark Hastings
Highland Partners Charitable Fund
Nancy Howell
Heidi W. Hughey
JJ Restaurant Group Punch Bowl
Juliette Johnson
Tom Jones
William and Phyllis Kantor
Nan Porter and Matthew J. Kiefer
Edwina Klünder
Robert Kretschmar
Lois R. Kunian and Stephen Kunian
Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture
Elizabeth Lacy
Theodore C. Landsmark
Sofia Lingos-Papaliadis and George
Papaliadis
Longwood Collective
The Caroline Loughlin Fund
Amanda Majewski
Maple Hurst Builders
Carole E. Mathieson and John Iappini
Karen Mauney-Brodek
Elizabeth McNerney
Joseph Mergel
Pamela Messenger
Barbara Millen
Mission Hill Fenway Neighborhood Trust,
Inc.
Daniel Moon

Lee Moreau and Ana Miljacki
 Dane and Alice Morgan
 Mary Joyce Morris
 Suzanne Mrozak
 New Venture Fund / National Collaborative
 for Health Equity
 New England Foundation for the Arts
 Noanett Garden Club
 Robert O'Donnell
 Susan Povak
 Reed Hilderbrand Associates, Inc.
 REI
 Margaret Renou
 Stephen Ringlee
 JoAnn Robinson
 Timothy Rowell
 Roxbury Tenants of Harvard Association
 Jessica and Sam Rubenstein
 Antoinette Russell and Louis Bailey
 Samuels & Associates
 Gregory Sarno
 Sasaki Foundation
 Seyfarth Shaw LLP
 William Shaevel
 Marilyn Smith and Charles Freifeld
 Sarah Spizzuoco
 Katherine Chapman Stenberg
 Kate and Ben Taylor
 David Taylor
 The Lawrence & Lillian Solomon
 Foundation
 The Richard K. Lubin Family Foundation
 The Roxbury Latin School



Above: At Parkfest in Franklin Park on September 24, 2022, Jen Mergel with Olmsted Now “Champions” Ben Taylor and Sarah Freeman and below, Conservancy staff Nika Trufanova and Jun Seung Lee with Board member Governor Michael Dukakis and Kitty Dukakis. Images: Jen Mergel



Janet Tiampo and David Parker
 Trillium Brewing Company
 Linda E. Turner
 U.S. Forest Service Eastern Region
 Kate Velasquez-Heller
 Verizon
 Vineyard Fund
 Elizabeth A. Vizza
 Wellesley College
 Kyle Williams
 Kate and Carroll M. Williamson
 Willow Tree Fund



At Parkfest on September 24, 2022, Jerome James of Mayor's Mural Crew guides Jamaica Pond visitors, who add to a collective vision of their park. Image: Mild Laohapoonrungsee, M7 Art Studio.



KEY LEARNINGS

KEY LEARNINGS

As the bicentennial was a once-every-200-years event, its momentary nature meant Olmsted Now could be an opportunity to try new things, take risks and “practice” new forms of partnership, power sharing and park events to learn from and build upon.

The goal of this report has been to archive process and outcomes that might become a useful community reference, and a practical guide for the Emerald Necklace Conservancy as it assesses strategic next steps as an organization.

LESSONS FOR THE CONSERVANCY

Through the years toward this effort, the following takeaways stand out:

February 2020: DON'T GO IT ALONE. If the planning team does NOT reflect the demographics of where you will program: STOP. Ask who's missing?

2021: DON'T ASSUME A JUST CAUSE WILL BE AN EASY EFFORT. It can be hard to build confidence and funding for something new. It's hard to describe something you've never done before or an outcome you are not deciding.

January 2022: TRUST COMES NOT FROM FUNDS, BUT FROM CARE. Real allyship is honoring the agency and the structural challenges facing partners. Don't assume what support they need. Offer and let them decide what to request.

September 2022: DON'T TRY TO BE EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE. Focus energy, attention, resources to a SPECIFIC partner and place—and attendance and appreciation can follow.

Always: HONOR MOTHER NATURE.

IMPACTS FOR THE CONSERVANCY

PARTNERSHIPS:

- Dozens of new partnerships have strengthened the Conservancy's network
- Staff have set a criteria and rubric to establish and assess which partnerships need cultivation, are budding, robust, need tending or no longer need renewal
- This partnership mindset covers all mission areas beyond programming, or education, field work, volunteer cultivation, external relations, advocacy and more
- Concrete ongoing benefits to organizational capacity include:
 - With National Park Service Fairsted colleagues: Olmsted Summer Sundays programming, future plans for mapping projects and more
 - With Wellesley College: An ongoing paid internship partnership

POWER SHARING:

- The questions of who leads park decision-making, and if this is reflective of the neighborhoods parks serve, now guide the Conservancy in governance recruitment and orientation, as well as board and staff training
- Concrete governance outcomes of Olmsted Now include more diverse leadership:
 - 2 new members of the Board of Directors directly involved in the Committee of Neighborhoods, who are now on the Conservancy's 2023 Strategic Planning Committee
 - 2 new Park Advisors directly engaged in Olmsted Now Committee of Neighborhoods and Parks as Platform who remain invested in improvements to park event permitting and equitable allocation of program resources

PARKS AS PLATFORM:

Public programs will now be centered in equity and cultural partnerships with a neighborhood focus and an approach that asks first and listens.

NEXT STEPS FOR THE CONSERVANCY

With 2023 as a year for renewed Strategic Planning, the Conservancy will explore its potential leadership role in Parks Equity. Specific questions to consider:

- If and how to sustainably build on a role as backbone organization that supports other organizations with resources and allyship in connecting neighborhoods with the greatest equity need to the greenspace programming they seek? If the Emerald Necklace park system is the “spine” of the City, can the Emerald Necklace Conservancy grow in a role to provide backbone support?
- What can it mean to “Lead from Behind.” How can the Conservancy’s nimble non-profit role and longstanding relationship with civic partners be leveraged to support systemic policy change toward equity outcomes? Can this be through a sister-park series?
- How can the Conservancy build on its DNA as a convener to reframe how convening, decision-seeking and policy-making are done for Greater Boston Greenspace?



Young participant shares poem with Mica Rose and audience of Taiko and the Parks on September 3, 2022. Image: Lee Daniel Tran

LESSONS FOR ALL CITYWIDE ORGANIZERS OF ANNIVERSARY PROGRAMMING:

Hopefully, Olmsted Now’s successes and failings can serve as a reference for all organizers that seek to build equity-driven partnerships toward lasting impacts to greenspace access and belonging. It has been humbling to be approached for advice by organizations already in the planning for 400th anniversaries and more. These general takeaways may be of service:

IF the figure or event honored is a **VISIONARY**, a historic anniversary **CAN be a platform to address present-day issues and future solutions.**

IF partnerships are **GENEROUS**, placekeeping or placemaking **CAN inspire new understandings of site significance, access and use.**

IF “equity” is truly a goal, **power in decision-making CAN be shared and ceded, which CAN inspire more generous sharing.**

IF risk-taking, learning and practicing (with the possibility of failure) are **SHARED GOALS** from the outset, **GROWTH can and WILL follow! Don’t be afraid to ask for informed help—and TRY.**

Consider how you can:

- **Think local:** Neighborhood-centered, scan who is missing
- **Listen:** Engage and ask, never assume; solicit better ideas, stronger solutions
- **Lead from Behind:** Humility and grace build trust, coalition and strength



Emerald Necklace Conservancy team with friends at Parks as Platform, April 23, 2022. Image: Tyahra Angus of AfroCentered Media

PARKS AS PLATFORM

Jamaica Pond Bandstand Lineup

Saturday, August 20

Hazel Afrodite
12:00-12:30pm

R.O.D.
12:30-1:00pm

Anju
1:15-1:30pm

KDuran Music
2:00-3:00pm

Saafyr
4:00-4:30pm

Full Color
5:00-6:00pm

SWIPE TO LEARN MORE
ABOUT THE ARTISTS!



OLMSTED
NOW



GREATER BOSTON'S
OLMSTED BICENTENNIAL

OLMSTED SUMMER WITH A VISITING PARK RANGER

For Frederick Law Olmsted's Bicentennial in 2022, park rangers from Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in Brookline are partnering with the Emerald Necklace Conservancy on a new interpretive program.

Stop by the Shattuck Visitor Center from 10AM to 4PM each Sunday this summer to meet a park ranger and learn about Olmsted's "most important work" the Emerald Necklace park system.

OLMSTED NOW PARKS EQUITY & SPATIAL JUSTICE GRANT SPOTLIGHT: IFÉ FRANKLIN



On September 25 from 1-3:30pm, Ifé Franklin will lead a procession at the Copps Hill Burying Ground in the North End to honor gravesites and bring justice to the ancestral spirits of Boston's enslaved African Americans. Visit OlmstedNow.Org to read the rest of our interview with Ifé Franklin.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST FOR ABOUT OLMS

"LOVING SEEING
SEEING YOUNG A

"THANKFUL TO GET
HAVE MET SO MANY
SO

**SUMMER SUNDAYS
ING**



**MOST THANKFUL
STED NOW?**

**ING THE DIVERSITY AND
ND OLDER FOLKS COME
TOGETHER IN UNITY”
-KAY**

**OUT OF THE HOUSE AND
/ OF OUR PARTNERS OFF
GREENS, IN OUR PARKS”
-ISABEL**

**WHAT 3-5 WORDS CAPTURE THE
ESSENCE OF YOUR PROGRAM?**



**"Public
land in
people's
hands."**

On August 21 from 11am-6pm, the Boston Liberation Center will host its one-year anniversary celebration and reflection event. Visit OlmstedNow.Org to read the rest of our interview with Rachel Domond.

Back Cover: Parks as Platform partnership with Dunamis Boston: JP Porchfest extends to Boston's Jamaica Pond Boathouse with people enjoying live music, lawn games, AR art, food, and information about Olmsted's design of the site on August 20, 2022. Image: Tyahra Angus, [AfroCentered Media](https://AfroCenteredMedia.com). Endpapers: selection of Instagram posts from @olmstednow



“During 2021-2022 I visited some 60 Olmsted park cities, landscapes and spoke and interacted with numerous park agencies, conservancies and friends groups across the U.S. ... There was not a single city-wide endeavor that even approached the vision and programming reality of what Olmsted Now was able to achieve in Boston.”

— Laurence Cotton, filmmaker of the PBS special *Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing America*.

**OLMSTED
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**Emerald Necklace
CONSERVANCY**

**GREATER BOSTON'S
OLMSTED BICENTENNIAL**