



For Immediate Release

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Conservancy, Citizen Plaintiffs Respond to Mass. Supreme Judicial Court Decision in Franklin Park White Stadium Case

Court Rules that New Professional For-Profit Stadium Parcel Is Not Covered by State's Constitutional Public Land Protections

BOSTON — The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) today released its [decision](#) in the legal challenge to the proposed new professional sports and entertainment complex in Franklin Park, at the site of the demolished White Stadium public high school sports facility.

Emerald Necklace Conservancy President Karen Mauney-Brodek issued the following statement in response to the decision:

We're disappointed by this outcome, which means that a new professional for-profit sports stadium and entertainment complex in Franklin Park will not be subject to the high level of scrutiny, formal review of alternatives, and required approvals that our state's constitutional public recreation land protection laws require.

We do not think the current proposal is the right one for the park or the communities that surround it. We agree with many community leaders, including the Boston Globe and Boston Herald editorial boards as well as the Boston Branch of the NAACP, that a less expensive, fully-public stadium should be seriously considered. There is still time to transition to a smaller but fully public project that would be better for Boston's students, the public and local residents. Such a project would be much more affordable, would not displace previous users of the playing field like the BPS football program, would not negatively impact existing park users and neighbors, and from a maintenance perspective, would be significantly more sustainable long-term.

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy will continue to partner with the City, other public partners, and the community as a whole to support Franklin Park and the entire Emerald Necklace.

We're grateful to the Supreme Judicial Court for taking up this important case, and to the dozens of local environmental justice organizations, statewide conservation leaders, and national parks supporters who supported our case with amicus briefs. Those supporters include The

Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, Kestrel Land Trust, Greater Worcester Land Trust, former Massachusetts Secretary of Environmental Affairs James Hoyte, former president of the Conservation Law Foundation Doug Foy, former president of the Appalachian Mountain Club Andy Falender, Mass Land Trust Coalition president Buzz Constable, the Boston Branch of the NAACP, Alternatives for Community & Environment, Inc. (ACE), the Boston Bengals Pop Warner Football and Cheer Program, the Boston Jobs Coalition, Inc. (Blueprint for Justice in Community), Boston Mutual Aid, the Boston Residents Group, the Roxbury Neighborhood Council, Inc., the Trees as a Public Good Network, The Olmsted Network, Friends of Olmsted-Beil House, Friends of the Parks (Chicago), the Olmsted Linear Park Alliance (Atlanta), the Olmsted Parks Conservancy (Louisville), Series Editor of the Frederick Law Olmsted Papers Dr. Charles E. Beveridge, UMass Amherst professor of landscape architecture Dr. Ethan Carr, Library of American Landscape ("LALH") President Dr. Keith Morgan, Clean Water Action Massachusetts Senior Advisor Elizabeth Saunders, former President of the Prospect Park Alliance and New York City Park Administrator Tupper West Thomas, and Brookline GreenSpace Alliance cofounder Hugh Mattison.

We're deeply appreciative of the 38 local neighborhood organizations and more than 1,000 residents who together became the Franklin Park Defenders. And we're especially grateful for the 20 community leaders who joined the Conservancy in this effort as citizen plaintiffs in 2024.

We pursued this case because of the critical importance of our state's public parkland protections, established by the voters in 1972. These protections are foundational for the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, which was founded in 1997 during the effort to restore acres of public parkland lost when part of the Back Bay Fens was paved and converted into a private parking lot. These protections are vital and fundamental for the protection of park and recreation land across Massachusetts and for the health of the environmental justice communities like Roxbury, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain and Mattapan that surround Franklin Park.

Individual plaintiffs in the case also responded to the verdict:

*"This proposal for Franklin Park is the biggest change to public land in Boston and the Emerald Necklace in at least half a century, and it hasn't received the true and fair public process, including a detailed traffic study or real consideration of alternatives such as a fully public stadium renovation, that the park and our communities deserve. While our lawsuit was not successful in the courts, it drew vital attention to the many unresolved issues with placing a new, oversized professional private sports stadium and entertainment complex in the middle of Franklin Park. From the rising cost of the project and its displacement of BPS football teams, to planned game-day resident parking restrictions and restrictions on park access, the community's reasonable questions have still not been adequately answered. The communities around Franklin Park want a renovated White Stadium that doesn't displace the BPS football program, pave over acres of public parkland, and subject neighborhoods to the traffic and other negative impacts of an oversized professional sports complex." - **Pamela Jones, Mattapan resident and plaintiff***

"Since the filing of our initial lawsuit by 20 citizen advocates and the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, the Franklin Park Defender movement has grown to include more than 1,000 residents, community leaders, and other concerned citizens, as well as 38 neighborhood

associations and other organizations representing Boston residents. We're united around our vision of a truly public White Stadium, not a giveaway to private investors. And we continue to believe that building a private professional soccer stadium and entertainment complex for a group of wealthy investors is not the right plan for Franklin Park, for the communities that surround it, or for Boston's kids." - **Renee Stacey Welch, Jamaica Plain resident and plaintiff**

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About the Emerald Necklace Conservancy

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy is a private non-profit stewardship organization founded in 1997 to help maintain, restore and protect the parks of the Emerald Necklace designed by Frederick Law Olmsted for all to explore, use and enjoy. Since its founding, the Conservancy's donors in Boston and beyond have provided over \$30 million in direct park improvements and physical forestry and tree care support, operated a year-round public visitor center and free visitor services at the Shattuck Visitor Center in the Back Bay Fens, offered educational programming for thousands of Boston public school children, conducted numerous park cleanups and restoration efforts with the support of thousands of volunteers every year, and leveraged over \$150 Million in increased investment in the Emerald Necklace parks, which comprise roughly half of all of Boston's public parkland.

As the one organization that connects and supports the park system as a whole, our mission brings together groups and coalitions across multiple public agencies and communities for support and advocacy, programs and physical planning, and design and implementation support for desired improvements. In recent years, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy has worked to help community members envision and design major capital projects like the now-under-construction Charlesgate Park Revitalization Project, developed options in partnership with the Urban Land Institute for the redesign of the MBTA's Arborway Yard, partnered with Northeastern University and community members to study and develop options for the Shattuck property in Franklin Park, commissioned the free system-wide public art program in multiple parks entitled "Fog x FLO: Fujiko Nakaya on the Emerald Necklace," and contributed to the effort for the development of systematic guidelines for the protection of sunlight in public parks in Boston.

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy works every day to support the needs of the parks and the diverse users of the 1,100-acre Emerald Necklace, partnering with a group of public agencies including the city of Boston, the town of Brookline, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.