



GROWING STRONG

2024 Annual Report



Emerald Necklace
CONSERVANCY



Dear Friends,

The Emerald Necklace means so much to so many, and it is our mission to ensure these parks continue to be the vibrant, welcoming places our communities depend on. Whether we are picking up tons of trash, raising funds for greenspace improvements, engaging Boston's youngest park lovers, advocating at City Hall, planning new bike paths, or delivering life-sustaining water to newly planted trees—every action reflects one simple truth: the parks deserve the very best, and so do the people who rely on them.

This Annual Report is filled with stories of the dedicated individuals who restore, maintain, and care for these historic parks every day—parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted more than a century ago. But it also highlights the most essential stewards of all: you. You helped clean and rejuvenate the parks from Dorchester and Roxbury to Back Bay and Fenway. You stood up for these precious green acres and affirmed how vital they are to the communities that surround and cherish them. We truly cannot thank you enough for your unwavering support. Because of you, the Emerald Necklace continues to thrive—and together, we continue to grow stronger.

The Emerald Necklace has long been a natural refuge and a connective thread between our

neighborhoods. Its history is deep, and its capacity for renewal is endless. The towering trees you see today were once tender saplings at the dawn of Olmsted's vision. As they grew, they witnessed profound change around them: a city rising higher, communities evolving, and generations of families discovering the parks—growing up under their branches. Now, those trees stand strong, anchored by deep roots. And every year, new saplings are planted beside them, ensuring that this legacy continues and that our shared canopy becomes ever stronger.

As you read the pages ahead, we invite you to see how the Emerald Necklace is growing—and how, through your commitment and care, we are growing together.

Karen Mauney-Brodek
President



Ben Taylor
Board Chair





THE SHATTUCK VISITOR CENTER GETS A MAKEOVER



Since 2011, the historic Shattuck Visitor Center in the Back Bay Fens has served as one of the Emerald Necklace's only public visitor centers. Managed by the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, the center offers free park maps, visitor resources, a public restroom, informational displays, and more. It is housed in an original Olmsted-era structure—the Stony Brook Gatehouse, which once served to control the waterflow of the underground Stony Brook into the Muddy River before falling into disuse in the 20th century.

For many years, it was the operations center for the Emerald Necklace Conservancy staff, and our education and volunteer programs still operate there alongside visitor services. In 2024, for the first time since the

Conservancy celebrated its 20th anniversary, the Visitor Center got a new look!

After years of planning, fresh, updated exhibits were installed, exploring the ongoing revitalization of Charlesgate Park, the Indigenous history of the parks, and the work of the Conservancy, in addition to evergreen information about the parks' creation by Frederick Law Olmsted and its evolution in the following decades

The Visitor Center, located at 125 The Fenway, remains open year-round for all to learn about these historic spaces and the work that goes into stewarding them. Stop by and explore them yourself!

Shattuck Visitor Center
125 The Fenway
Boston MA 02115

Mon-Fri 9:30AM - 5:00PM
(Year-Round)

Sat-Sun 10:00AM - 4:00PM
(May-October)

Stop by for visitor information, park maps, a water fountain, a public restroom, and more!

4,454
Visitors in FY 2024



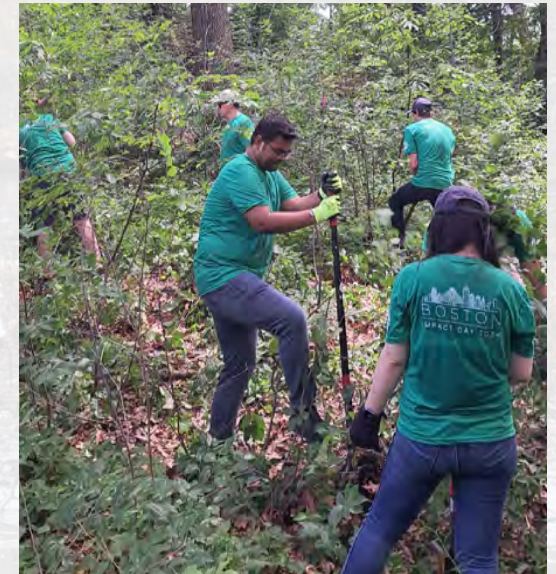
From the forested trails of Franklin Park to the banks of the Muddy River in Charlesgate, many hands are at work all the time to keep the Emerald Necklace looking its best. Each year, we are amazed by the thousands of volunteers who care for these cherished parks, and 2024 was no exception.

Like most urban parks today, the Necklace faces many challenges: litter, pollution, invasive plant species and limited resources for maintenance. That's why the Conservancy proudly activates volunteers in all seven parks from spring to fall each year. Kicking off our yearly maintenance is the annual Muddy River Cleanup, falling on Saturday, April 20, 2024, where over 280 volunteers descended on the

parks and removed over 3,700 pounds of trash and invasives—a new record!

We worked together to keep the momentum going all summer long, with a final tally of 1,288 volunteers, who picked up garbage, cleared acres of land overtaken by invasive plants, looked after the ever-fragrant Kelleher Rose Garden, and planted Arbor Day trees in Olmsted Park.

We truly can't thank these park heroes enough for the countless hours they dedicated to restoring and maintaining the Emerald Necklace, so please join us in showing gratitude to each and every one of our amazing Conservancy volunteers.



1,288
Volunteers



LEARNING BLOOMS IN THE NECKLACE

It is critical to the long-term health of the Emerald Necklace, and to our entire shared ecosystem, that people of all ages be introduced to the wonders of nature. Emerald Necklace architect Frederick Law Olmsted believed free, accessible open spaces for all people were the very underpinning of American democracy, and our Education team carries on that legacy today by inviting newcomers of all ages to experience something new in the parks.

Whether it is introducing Boston Public School third and fourth-graders to natural sciences through free *Canopy Classroom* field trips, providing career-building skills and green jobs training to high schoolers through our summer *Green Team* program, or hosting free nature

connection events, like plant walks, for adults and families, the Conservancy's education team is always at work. Year-round, they create meaningful, hands-on experiences that connect people young and old to the parks that belong to them.

The Conservancy is dedicated to supporting the next generation of greenspace champions and environmental leaders. We are proud to have engaged a record 1,019 students through our *Canopy Classroom* program in FY2024, as well as the eleven students in our 2024 *Green Team* cohort. As these talented young minds grow and make an impact on the world around them, we are grateful that the Emerald Necklace was here to teach them, and all the generations that follow.



1,019
"Canopy Classroom"
Students Engaged



*Top: Liff Spirit Awardees Byron Rushing & Frieda Garcia
Above: 2024 Party in the Park Co-Chairs*

“Open space—conserving it, designing it well—is a radical act in this country... when you do this work, and when you support this work, whether you like it or not, you are being radical.”



“HATS OFF TO THE PARKS!”

Those were the words of former Massachusetts Representative Byron Rushing, who, along with community activist Frieda Garcia, was the recipient of the Liff Spirit Award at 2024’s Party in the Park. For the Conservancy’s largest annual fundraiser, hundreds gathered at the Franklin Park Playstead to celebrate the Emerald Necklace and their influence on community connection and empowerment. The event was a monumental occasion, celebrating the 20th Party in the Park, and marking more than two decades since the passing of beloved Boston Parks Commissioner and founding Conservancy board member Justine Mee Liff.

The very next morning—just hours after our community came together to celebrate and support these treasured greenspaces—volunteer crews arrived at

Jamaica Pond’s Pinebank Field to carry forward the work of renewal. Undeterred by rain, they planted several new trees in the park, the same trees that lined the party tent the day before. In rain or shine, the generosity of our friends, neighbors, and fellow parks champions at Party in the Park goes to work right away.

Stewarding this urban oasis year-round is no small feat, and the Emerald Necklace could not exist without passionate advocacy. It is because of people who care about parks—people like Byron Rushing, Frieda Garcia, Justine Mee Liff, and you—that the Necklace will thrive for years to come.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM FREE SUMMER FESTS & PUBLIC EVENTS

In an exceptionally sunny year, the Emerald Necklace parks were busier than ever. From the hills of Franklin Park to the winding paths of the Fenway Victory Gardens, thousands of park users experienced the Emerald Necklace in so many ways.

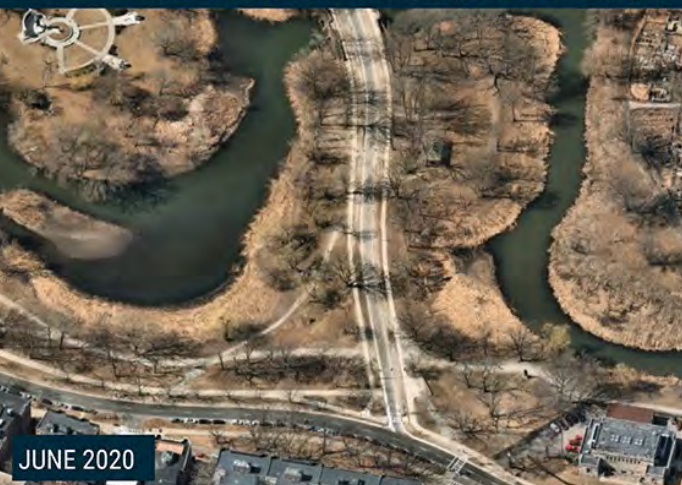
For the first time since moving into the historic James Michael Curley House in 2020, we hosted a neighborhood Open House! We were thrilled to welcome neighbors into the historic “House with the Shamrock Shutters” to learn about the Conservancy’s work. We look forward to hosting this event annually and sharing both the legacy of the Necklace and our latest efforts to steward the parks.

In the summer, we were excited to bring free yoga classes to Jamaica

Pond. In addition, we piloted a brand-new guided walking tour in partnership with the Jamaica Plain Historical Society, exploring the rich history of Olmsted Park and Pinebank Promontory. We also partnered with beloved community festivals throughout the Necklace—such as JP Porchfest, Fenway Porchfest, BAMS Fest, Brookline Community Parkfest and Brookline’s Juneteenth festivities. We are grateful to Verizon for making our participation in these 2024 summer festivals possible.

We also appreciate our own events and community partnership staff, who expertly led a jam-packed slate of summer events. We are honored by our privilege of inviting parkgoers, friends and neighbors to see what makes the Necklace so special.





JUNE 2020



APRIL 2023



CUTTING THE RIBBON

ON THE MUDDY RIVER RESTORATION PROJECT

For over a decade, the Conservancy worked closely with the City of Boston, the US Army Corps of Engineers and community advocates to undertake the Muddy River Restoration Project, an expansive effort to restore the Emerald Necklace's central waterway's original water management and flood control functionalities.

The rescue of the Muddy was the catalyst for the Conservancy's founding in 1997, when a costly flood illustrated the need for action. Through the 20th century, extensive lengths of the river were buried underground in narrow culverts. Elsewhere along the Muddy, years of neglect had allowed it to become clogged by sediment and invasive plants, creating flooding chokepoints that spilled into the surrounding

neighborhoods. The Conservancy has spent the last two decades leading the charge on restoration: from the daylighting at Justine Mee Liff Park during Phase One of the project, to dredging sediment and eradicating invasive Phragmites during Phase Two.

In November 2023, project partners gathered at the Agassiz Road Duck House for a ribbon-cutting ceremony celebrating the completion of this decades-long effort. Representatives from the Army Corps were joined by the Conservancy, City of Boston officials, elected representatives and other project champions who contributed to this tremendous achievement. As the Muddy River's natural flow is restored, we look forward to its continued stewardship alongside our public partners.

\$90M
Total cost of the
Muddy River
Restoration Project

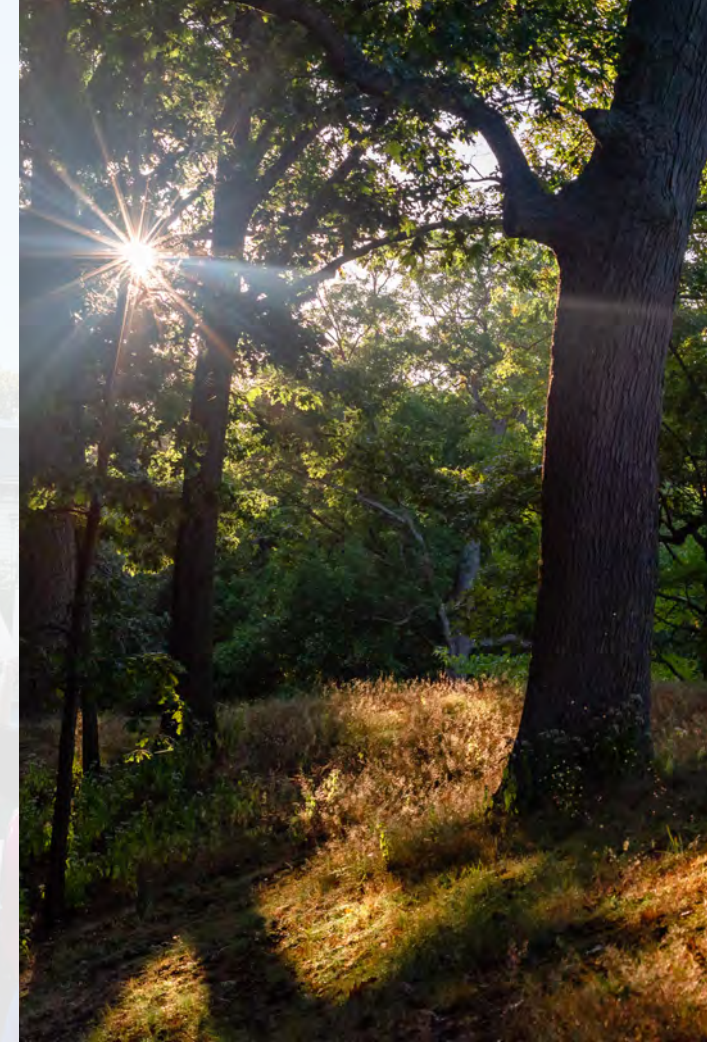


ADVOCATING FOR PUBLIC LANDS

As stewards of the Emerald Necklace—1,100 acres of parkland connecting more than a dozen neighborhoods—the Conservancy has long championed the protection of public space. At the heart of this work is a simple principle: development should benefit communities, and not come at the cost of vital greenspace. Whether standing with neighborhood leaders who question park proposals that would limit public access, or pressing for stronger environmental safeguards, advocacy has been core of our mission since 1997. This year, we advanced efforts on two major fronts:

Protecting Parks from New Shadows

Boston has no laws preventing new development from casting damaging shadows over public parks. These shadows harm plant life, degrade pathways, and worsen winter safety conditions. In response, the Conservancy continues to lead efforts—alongside community members and environmental allies—to push for common-sense sunshine protections, not just for parks like the Riverway and the Back Bay Fens, but all of Boston's public parks. We are advocating for legislation that ensures our shared greenspaces remain healthy and accessible in the face of increasing urban development. We are working closely with our public partners to accomplish this essential goal.



Boston has no laws protecting sunlight access for public parks.

Plans to redevelop White Stadium into a private professional entertainment complex in the heart of Franklin Park have raised significant community concerns. These concerns include the removal of over 100 mature trees, restricted access for student-athletes and the public during peak months of the year, increased traffic without viable transit solutions, and the environmental impact of a large commercial facility—complete with jumbotrons and beer gardens—within a historic park.

For over 25 years, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy has advocated for public lands that serve all people. We remain committed to amplifying community voices and preserving the parks that are essential to our city's health, resilience, and equity. As we look to the future, we invite all Bostonians to join us—just as Olmsted intended—in protecting these treasured landscapes for generations to come.





COMPLETING OUR FIRST-EVER TREE CARE CYCLE

The Emerald Necklace's urban tree canopy is perhaps our parks' greatest treasure. Trees clean our air by capturing carbon and producing fresh oxygen, they cool our streets by reducing surface temperatures with a lush canopy, and they provide habitats for thousands of wildlife species that contribute to our shared ecosystem. In 2024, the Conservancy is proud to have completed our first-ever Necklace-wide tree pruning cycle. As part of this essential work, we collaborated with our public partners to inspect, prune, plant and water more than 10,000 trees across the Emerald Necklace over the last seven years. We gratefully acknowledge the many generous donors whose support has made this work possible.

To celebrate this milestone, on April 26, 2024—the 202nd birthday of Frederick Law Olmsted, coinciding with Arbor Day—the Conservancy gathered with volunteers and elected officials in Olmsted Park to plant ten young trees cared for by Conservancy field operations staff.

Where do we go from here? We start it all over! Caring for our urban canopy is constant work: maintaining this vast green network is something we are only too grateful to do. The Conservancy has since launched its next pruning cycle, to ensure the Necklace's trees across Boston, Brookline and Commonwealth-owned land are always cared for.





PRUNING



PLANTING



WATERING



PARK CARE



The true strength of the Emerald Necklace lies in the communities that surround it: a vibrant, diverse tapestry of neighbors from across over a dozen neighborhoods who bring the parks to life year-round with art, music, play, and a deep sense of togetherness. The Conservancy is grateful to be able to give back to these communities and to partner with local leaders and advocates to positively impact public parks in Boston and Brookline. Here are just a few of the ways we did that throughout the past year:

- In October 2023, we were proud to partner with Aquinnah Wampanoag artist and marine scientist Elizabeth James-Perry and the Franklin Park Zoo on a living art installation supporting local pollinators and celebrating Native identity in Greater Boston. "Blue Shark Garden," a 14-foot planting of native grasses and locally sourced white Atlantic quahog shells, is a project that grows and evolves with the passing seasons, and serves as an intersection between northeastern Indigenous coastal heritage, horticulture and creative expression.



- When winter arrived, the Conservancy partnered with Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) and several local businesses for our 2023 Winter Clothing Drive. This annual tradition invites our communities to support neighbors in need by donating new or gently used winter gear, helping families stay warm and enjoy the outdoors during the colder months. Nearly 1,000 coats, hats, scarves, gloves were brought in by the end of the drive!

Neighborhoods connected by the Emerald Necklace:

Dorchester
Mattapan
Roxbury
Roslindeale
Mission Hill
Longwood

Jamaica Plain
Brookline Village
Grove Hall
Fenway
Back Bay
Charlesgate

...and more!

- For decades, beloved activities in Franklin Park depended on diesel-powered generators for electrical power. Over the past several years, the Conservancy has worked to install a game-changing power supply in the Franklin Park Playstead. Now, events and activities such as the Elma Lewis Playhouse in the Park performances, the BAA half-marathon, and track meets can all use this power connection, eliminating pollution and noise throughout Franklin Park!

This installation—a collaborative effort between the Conservancy, Franklin Park Coalition, the Boston Landmarks Commission and Boston Parks and Recreation—with generous donations of time and labor by Eversource—is now on site and ready to support countless programs in Franklin Park without reliance on fossil fuels. We are proud to help bring this amenity to the Park and its tens of thousands of users.

- Finally, we capped off our fiscal year with one of our team's most beloved annual traditions: the Park Partners Picnic. Members of the Conservancy's Board of Park Advisors, alongside Conservancy staff, served

lunch to nearly 100 maintenance workers, arborists, support staff, and officials working in Boston and Brookline parks departments and the Commonwealth's Department of Conservation and Recreation. The parks simply couldn't thrive without the year-round dedication of these incredible individuals. It was a joy to welcome guests at the James Michael Curley House, connect with our partners and express our deep appreciation for those who care for all 1,100 acres of the Emerald Necklace.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

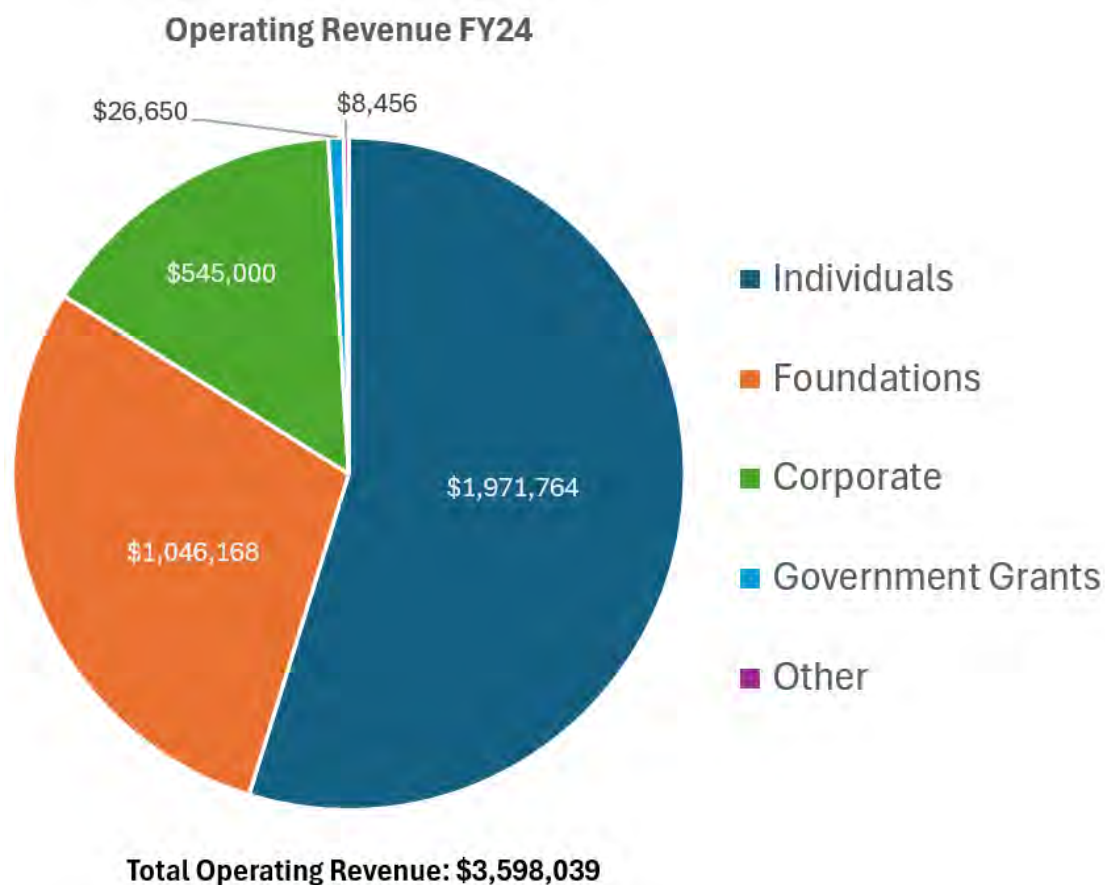
FY 2024

Nearly
1,600
Gifts in FY2024

During FY2024, nearly 1,600 gifts were received from individuals, foundations, corporations, organizations and government entities. From first-time donors who discovered their passion for parks, to longtime supporters who saw the need to increase their support and ensure a greener future for all, we are thankful to everybody who has worked to ensure the Emerald Necklace stays growing strong for years to come.

Operating Revenue

Foundations:	\$1,046,168
Corporate:	\$545,000
Government grants:	\$26,650
Individuals:	\$1,971,764
Other Gifts & Income:	\$8,456
Total Operating Revenue:	\$3,598,039





BRITECH
CANOPY

WELCOME
to
PARKFEST



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Franklin Park Zoo /
Zoo New England
Friends of the Boston Park
Rangers Mounted Unit
Friends of Jamaica Pond
Friends of Leverett Pond
Friends of the Muddy River
Isabella Stewart Gardner
Museum
Jamaica Hills Association
Jamaica Pond Association
Longwood Collective
Muddy Water Initiative
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

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Cynthia Stewart
Rich Stroshane
Nancy Stutzman
Betsy Tarlin

Staff

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Erin Baker
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Declan Battles
Pete Conlin
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Elena Duncan
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Karen Mauney-Brodek
Anita Morson-Matra
Sharon Rice
Jamie Santuccio
Jack Schleifer
Veronika Trufanova
Caroline Waples

Term Staff

Keira Donahoe
Natalie Harkins
Abigail Urbin

From 10/01/23 - 09/30/24



Emerald Necklace Conservancy

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