

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OLMSTED NOW ANNOUNCES KICK-OFF EVENTS FOR 2022 BICENTENNIAL

Coalition events promote equity and community connection in parks

BOSTON, MA March 24, 2022 — The **bicentennial of the birth of Frederick Law Olmsted** will be marked by Greater Boston with [Olmsted Now](#), a collaboration to amplify the vibrancy and inclusivity of shared use, shared health and shared power in parks and public space. Initiated by [Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site \(Fairsted\)](#) and the [Emerald Necklace Conservancy](#) with more than [100 organizations](#) within a 60-mile radius of the city, Olmsted Now explores these legacy values of America's great placemaker and designer of the Emerald Necklace park system with a season of public events from April through October 2022.

Olmsted Now aims to strengthen equity and community connection through a framework that centers decision-making for bicentennial programs with a [Committee of Neighborhoods](#), Boston leaders trusted for their commitment to under-heard voices and under-served open spaces, especially those valued by their neighbors who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). The initiative also fosters co-learning through monthly [public dialogues](#) to dive deeper into issues related to the themes of shared use, shared health and shared power in parks and public space. And the bicentennial is an opportunity to pilot cross-neighborhood collaboration to create in-park programming through the monthly series [Parks as Platform](#) in the Emerald Necklace parks.

Committee of Neighborhoods

To orient bicentennial planning, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy commissioned [Stephen Gray](#), Associate Professor at Harvard, and his firm [Grayscale Collaborative](#) to conduct an [equity analysis and action plan](#). This foundation has guided Olmsted Now organizers to do more than “include” communities that have historically been structurally excluded from park decision-making in Greater Boston. The bicentennial has become the opportunity to recognize and affirm the power within neighborhoods to imagine new ways to experience and activate public space, and to re-center programming decisions where they need to be: in the community.

To achieve this, the [Committee of Neighborhoods](#) was formed. Comprised of intergenerational leaders working around Franklin Park's Roxbury, Grove Hall, Mattapan and Dorchester neighborhoods, the Committee includes voices from youth and seniors, artists and educators, non-profit directors, as well as community and small business organizers. [Design Studio for Social Intervention](#) (DS4SI), Boston's experts in spatial justice and public-making, facilitates Committee members' training in public-making and spatial justice, effective requests for programming proposals, criteria for grant selection, grantee cohort-building, event promotion, audience cultivation and authentic community feedback—all through a cultural equity lens. Importantly, DS4SI has guided the Committee of Neighborhoods to refine criteria to distribute \$200,000 in funding toward bicentennial programs. The group has committed to intentionally call for and support unsung creatives, and organizations to animate high profile high-trafficked park spaces, while also inviting well-known artistic voices to activate lesser-known neighborhood green spaces—so both site and artistry draw new visibility to people and places that might renew Boston, when given the resources strategically. A Request for

Proposals will be announced at the April 20 Public Dialogue on [Shared Power](#) which explores how we can turn ideas of “parks equity” into action.

The \$200,000 in programming funds is being raised by the “Come Together” Fund of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy Board of Directors and the larger Olmsted Now coalition and entrusted to the Committee of Neighborhoods. Olmsted Now welcomes direct donations [here](#).

To kick off the bicentennial, the Olmsted Now partners are excited to announce the following:

Parks as Platform

Starting this April, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy will transform its annual *Summer on the Emerald Necklace* series into a shared resource that amplifies partner programs at sites along the Emerald Necklace. Each month through October, the Conservancy will collaborate with a site partner to anchor programming with extra support including securing permits and providing amenities such as signage, performance utilities, food trucks, portable restrooms, volunteer coordination and more. [Parks as Platform](#) intends to support neighborhood leaders by easing access and logistics for planning in-park events, and promotes expanded, cross-neighborhood audiences to maximize program impact. The monthly dates and locations of partner collaborations (with rain dates) include:

- April 23 (24): Olmsted Park, with Brookline’s Parks and Open Space Division
- May 8: Arnold Arboretum, with Harvard staff to support Lilac Sunday
- June 11 (12): Franklin Park, with Boston Arts & Music Soul Festival
- July 9 (10): Back Bay Fens, with Fenway Porchfest
- August 20 (21): Jamaica Pond, with JP Porchfest & Dunamis Boston
- September 24 (25): Necklace-wide event in all parks of the Emerald Necklace
- October 1 (2): Charlesgate Park, with Charlesgate Alliance

Partner Projects

Programs offered by Olmsted Now partners will include a full range of diverse in-park, in-person, virtual and individual experiences. Listed below are events now through June. Partners will continue to update the Olmsted Now [online events calendar](#) with future opportunities.

- March 18 to December 28: [More or Less in Common](#) is an exhibition exploring the geographic relationship between environmental management and historic patterns of injustice; on view at Norman B. Leventhal Map and Education Center at the Boston Public Library.
- March 26: [Lungs of the City: Olmsted’s Parks in Music](#) world premiere concert of new chamber works by Juventas New Music Ensemble at the Multicultural Arts Center in Cambridge. Each work was inspired by an Olmsted design.
- March 30 to April 2: Symposium [Olmsteds: Landscapes and Legacies](#) hosted by Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in partnership with the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training. Keynotes will be delivered by Edward Eigen of Harvard’s Graduate School of Design and Reverend Mariama White-Hammond, Boston’s Chief of Environment, Energy, and Open Space.
- April 1: World premiere of the outdoor augmented reality exhibition [Seeing the Invisible](#) opens at the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, one of 12 botanical gardens participating in this exhibition across seven countries.
- April 2 to May 28: [Rights Along the Shore](#), a collaborative exhibition which examines the long-term effects of racially segregated swimming sites within the Northern and Southern US, at the Boston Center for the Arts.
- April 12: Colleges of the Fenway Center for Sustainability and Environment holds its annual [Muddy River Symposium](#) at Simmons University.
- April 23: Annual Earth Day Charles River Cleanup includes dozens of work sites, including the Emerald Necklace Conservancy’s [Muddy River Cleanup](#) with six in the Emerald Necklace.

- April 23: A Libretto reading of the new modern opera Pterins by [Guerilla Opera](#) at Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site (Fairsted) in Brookline.
- April 26: Olmsted turns 200! [Community Birthday Celebration](#) with a Sunset Toast, Treats and Proclamations at Jamaica Pond.
- April 29: Learn and tour Olmsted's Charlesgate Park: The Green Link to Boston's Future as part of [Boston Design Week](#).
- May 8: [Lilac Sunday](#) in Arnold Arboretum.
- May 14: Franklin Park Coalition's Annual [Kite & Bike Festival](#).
- June 5: [Caribbean American Heritage Month Park Day](#) at Franklin Park.
- June 11: Boston Art & Music Soul Festival ([BAMS Fest](#)) at Franklin Park.

Public Dialogues

Each third Wednesday of the month since January, Olmsted Now hosts a free online public dialogue exploring bicentennial themes: shared use, shared health, and shared power in parks and public space. Each session tackles a "big question" about park experience through the guiding perspectives of community voices. [Dialogue#1](#) focused on Shared Power to interrogate "Who gets to belong in Boston?" [Dialogue #2](#) considered Shared Use to ask "Can I do this in this park?" [Dialogue #3](#) navigated Shared Health with the question "How can greenspaces nourish us-AND combat food injustice?" Registration for upcoming dialogues is open to all at the following links:

- #4 April 20 – [Shared Power \(featuring the Committee of Neighborhoods\)](#)
- #5 May 18 – [Shared Health](#)
- #6 June 15 – [Shared Power](#)
- #7 July 22 – [Shared Health](#)
- #8 August 17 – [Shared Use](#)
- #9 September 21 – [Shared Use](#)

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About Olmsted Now

Visionary American landscape architect, journalist, social critic and public administrator Frederick Law Olmsted (April 26, 1822 - August 28, 1903) turns 200 in 2022. Many ideas that drove Olmsted's 19th-century work remain urgent, including fostering civic dialogue, building healthy environments and championing community access to greenspace. Olmsted Now, Greater Boston's Olmsted Bicentennial formed as a coalition-led platform to connect neighborhoods and organizations in making parks and public space more vibrant, verdant and welcoming for all. Olmsted Now is a forum to share, discuss and act on Olmsted's enduring legacy, and to advance contemporary ideas of shared use, shared health and shared power in parks with the "fierce urgency of now," in the words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. To inspire local programming from April through October 2022, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site (Fairsted) co-organized monthly meetings for a growing multidisciplinary coalition to connect and learn from each other, and to coordinate Greater Boston's planning with the national effort *Olmsted 200*. Olmsted Now is an opportunity to collectively grapple with what parks and public places will mean for years to come, and to affirm and advance Olmsted's impact on civic life and public health, engage residents in learning about shared stewardship and intentionally build more resilient and inclusive places together.

Olmsted Now is made possible by Emerald Necklace Conservancy and Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site (Fairsted), with generous support from Katie and Paul Bittenwieser, Kate and Ben Taylor, Four Lucky Dogs, Brooke and Jeff Cook, Marjorie and Nicholas Greville, Hastings Family Foundation, Sarah Freeman, Lois R. Kunian, The Lawrence & Lillian Solomon Foundation and the "Come Together" Fund of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy Board.

www.olmstednow.org

About Emerald Necklace Conservancy

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy is a community-supported non-profit founded in 1998 to steward and champion the Emerald Necklace, Boston's largest park system of seven distinct parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted to connect over a dozen neighborhoods with 1,100 acres of meadows, woodlands, waterways, paths and parkways. Working with civic and neighborhood partners, the Conservancy strengthens parks, people and policy by advocating for the Emerald Necklace and advancing access, maintenance and restoration, park stewardship and education through volunteer and youth programs and inclusive public programming. The parks serve as a healing respite from the city, a valuable commuting connector and a community convener for more than one million residents and tourists each year, and have taken on a special significance as a safe and socially distanced destination for recreation and reconnection since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

www.emeraldnecklace.org

About Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site (Fairsted)

Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site preserves the home, office, surrounding landscape and abundant archival collections associated with Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted firm. Frederick Law Olmsted is widely recognized as the founder of the profession of landscape architecture in America. From this location, Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted firm designed over 6,000 projects across North America, from expansive public parks to intimate private gardens. Located in Brookline, Massachusetts, the National Historic Site offers unique opportunities for visitors to learn about and be inspired by the life and work of Frederick Law Olmsted and his sons and successors, and the central role they played in defining landscape architecture, city planning and scenic preservation in the United States.

www.nps.gov/frla

Acknowledgment

For millennia before and in the centuries since Olmsted designed a park system for a rapidly industrializing city and metropolitan area, the lands and waters of and around Greater Boston have served as a site of exchange among communities including the Massachusett, Pawtucket, Wampanoag and Nipmuc peoples. Olmsted Now acknowledges these as their unceded ancestral territories. This acknowledgement is a starting point toward right relations with Indigenous neighbors and their understandings of land stewardship.

<https://www.boston.gov/news/city-council-offers-land-acknowledgement>

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