



Public Meeting

Approximately 30 people joined park staff at the William H. Lincoln School, 19 Kennard Road, Brookline, MA on September 23, 2009 between 6:30 and 9:00 PM for a community dialogue regarding the general management planning process. Superintendent Myra Harrison welcomed the public and provided background on Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site and its need for a long-range plan. NPS Planner Jim O'Connell explained the process for developing a General Management Plan for the park as well as the compliance process for the Environmental Assessment.

The public was invited to visit five stations for discussion around issues related to Visitor Experience & Education, Park Operations & Historic Neighborhood, Archives, Partnership/Audience Development, and the National Role of Olmsted NHS. Each station had several questions posted for the public's consideration. Comments and questions presented by the public were recorded on flip charts, or on comment cards that were available throughout the meeting rooms and are transcribed here verbatim.



NPS Photo by Joel Veak

-Public Comments-

Visitor Experience and Education Station

1. When you plan a trip, where do you turn for information? How can the park make trip-planning information easy to access?

- Internet
- Park Brochure – contact park for brochure.
- Publicize in Down East Magazine, travel magazines, AAA magazine, Boston Magazine, Improper Bostonian, local media.
- Free travel listings/publications or brochure.
- Other historic house listings
- NPS guide
- Travel guides – Fodor’s, Frommer’s (printed) -index first.
- Key Internet search words – Frederick Law Olmsted parks link.
- Better signage and more of it – official NPS signage.
- Town-site collaboration for travel information.
- Telephone contact – phone book – ask for name of site; cross-references.
- Good phone experience
 - ✓ Person
 - ✓ Knowledgeable
 - ✓ Enthusiastic
 - ✓ Available
- Link to similar-minded sites – ENC, BGSA, HNE, NT, National Association of Olmsted Parks, Town of Brookline Conservation Commission, Brookline High School, Boston Parks & Recreation, Friends of Fairsted, Google Ads.

2. We are eager to share the site with more people, but lack of parking and signage is an obstacle and we don’t want to be a nuisance to neighbors. What are your recommendations?

- Offsite visitor center is a great idea. It would reach a lot more people and have educational value. It would take some of the load off Fairsted.
- Bike racks
- Shuttle from other associated sites, i.e. Larz Anderson Park.
- Parking arrangement with Lincoln School on weekends.
- Adams NHP-model trolley
- Enhance the experience of the Brookline Hills station walk to the site; recreate Brookline Hills station.
- Shuttle between National Park sites.
- Shuttle from Emerald Necklace site doesn’t grab me.

- Shuttle should expand to include other area sites or other ways to give an off-site experience then encourage visitation to the park.
- Traffic Cambridge to Brookline is very bad and would make a shuttle tough.
- Pick-up shuttle phone at Brookline T stop.
- Make Emerald Necklace a “Green Trail” like the Freedom Trail.
- Walk – not shuttle, which smacks of Duck Tour.

3. The park is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the Brookline Hills T station. The roadways consist of curves, steep grades, limited sidewalks, and narrow shoulders. How might we promote and improve safe pedestrian and bicycle access to the site?

- Better and small attractive signs to interpret local sites and more in direction of Fairsted.
- Signage for getting there and not getting lost.
- Boston African-American National Historic Site-Black History Trail model ... half dozen sites to cultivate the walking piece.
- Green routes plan – 20 years; as streets get rebuilt, plan for bikes; park should be aware of plan.

4. How can the park provide the public with access to all of the nationally significant stories and historical contexts associated with Fairsted? What kinds of exhibits, experiences, and materials do you recommend? Can this be accomplished at Fairsted? If not, what do you suggest?

- Lending library
- Revisit barn for exhibit space.
- Harvard School of Design is a logical partner.
- Offsite facility
- Reference visitors’ towns to ORGO kiosk – quickly locate Olmsted-designed landscape in their own town in the U.S.
- Computer access to stories, NPS, Harvard – use computer technology.
- Compelling videos
- Kiosk content – website interact (train stations)
- Olmsted brochures at H.H. Richardson sites.

5. If you could design a “Fairsted” experience for a friend who knows nothing about the work of the Olmsteds, what would it include and why?

- Blueprint process (make a consumable one).
- Before and after shots – within Fairsted.
- It’s the site itself that carries the day; people are agog at the site; don’t have to go inside.
- Ditto! Then go inside.

- Park Ranger
- Park Ranger is the ideal.
- Grounds guide

6. How can we make the Fairsted experience accessible to people with limited mobility while preserving the site's historic character and defining features?

- For handicapped access, there is a portable ramp for the South Lawn and in the interior of the house.
- Video is wonderful.
- Video on Internet.
- Virtual tours
- How effective are websites, iPods, etc. in conveying the visitor experience? What is the value and legitimacy of the virtual experience versus visiting the actual site?

7. How can we make this park and the Olmsted's work in general relevant and interesting to ethnically diverse urban audiences?

8. There are hundreds of Olmsted-designed parks in communities nationwide. What role, if any, should Fairsted play in encouraging and supporting curriculum-based teaching and learning in these communities?

- Co-op specific teachers, then expand.
- Prospect Park in middle of urban neighborhood – get a friends groups to expand and take the program on the road.
- Start with local communities.

9. How can the park use the Internet to attract and serve the public? What would a robust virtual experience look like and what links would increase visitation?

- How many hits are there to the park website?

10. From your perspective, what are optimum days/hours of operation. Please explain.

- 10-5, Friday, Saturday, Sunday
- Allow visitors to come when they come – fewer hours, but more days.
- Can you coordinate hours with other two sites? Offer alternatives?
- Saturday/ Sunday hours build local constituency – they will come on weekends.
- Make by appointment an option.
- Make grounds guide available when site is closed, and advertise it.

Partnership/Audience Development

1. **The country's demographics are rapidly changing. How can we make this site and the Olmsted's work in general relevant and interesting to a shifting population?**
2. **What programming and partnerships might enable us to better reach underserved audiences, including ethnically-divers urban audiences, youth, and those who are physically challenged?**
3. **What partnerships would enhance our ability to reach audiences unable to visit Fairsted?**
4. **What partnerships are critical for us to remain relevant locally, regionally, and nationally in the 21st century?**
5. **What partnerships would be useful for us to explore leading up to the NPS 100th anniversary in 2016?**
6. **What partnerships could enhance our ability to offer off-site programming, whether in large indoor venues that we lack or outside in Olmsted landscapes?**
 - Opportunity for civic engagement through Olmsted (a visionary).
 - What is community? Environment?
 - Seek new partnerships, i.e. City Year.
 - Should partner with Americorps for park cleanups.
 - Start with Olmsted ideals, re. education, volunteerism. How did he promote his ideas? Opportunity for recreation in urban areas.
 - People love Olmsted even if they don't know Olmsted.
 - Parks for People!
 - Olmsted's work is relevant to the audience the NPS is trying to reach – create an awareness of what people don't know.
 - Predominantly, currently NPS partners with Brookline schools. This makes sense, but NPS should expand the idea of connecting people with their Olmsted park.
 - Boston park system is 1,000 acres of Olmsted parkland.
 - Is there an opportunity to do web-based teacher training to help teachers connect their own students to their local Olmsted park?
 - When kids realize Olmsted was a renegade, kids will ask how can I affect change in my own community-civic engagement?
 - How do we bring the Olmsted tradition into the 21 century and to a 21st-century audience?
 - Web has to be central to any educational experience. It has to be meaningful, easy to navigate, reaching all age groups and all technology levels.
 - Create experience to achieve depth of learning – enhance visual aesthetic experience.

- Create rich experience – coordinated effort; connect Olmsted site to other sites (Boston Common, Arnold Arboretum).
- What can NPS be doing to help make connections to other sites/places?
- Is NPS at capacity with existing staff and programs?
- NPS should think beyond physical plant of Fairsted, since it is such a small site. Need to get the public into Olmsted landscapes.
- Olmsted NHS offers approximately 8 tours of Boston-area Olmsted landscapes each year.
- Offsite programming idea! – network of informational interpretive panels throughout all Olmsted sites. Will need to deal with jurisdictional issues.
- Pilot/ model projects with Olmsted parks of Boston and other Olmsted sites across the country (including Buffalo Olmsted parks):
 - Docent training
 - Curriculum development
 - Growth initiatives
 - Get people excited about the experience – educate them about Olmsted.
 - Site (NPS) personnel reaching out into neighborhoods – create program and take it to the people!
 - Look for national models for partnerships & employ them here.
 - NPS staff should get out to locations they are not currently reaching, i.e. Jamaica Pond boathouse.
 - NPS Centennial in 2016 will be an occasion to celebrate parks.
 - Olmsted NHS should advocate for completing the Emerald Necklace “missing link,” the greensward connecting Franklin Park along Columbia Road to Marine Bay.

Park Operations and Historic Neighborhood

1. Currently the historic structures serve four sets of users: visitors, school groups, researchers, and staff. How we best balance the varying needs of these groups while continuing to maintain and preserve the historic structures (and setting)?

2. The park made a large investment in restoring the Fairsted landscape. How can we best insure its long-term preservation and utilize this valuable resource to its full potential?

3. In 2001, Olmsted NHS acquired an additional 5.35 acres adjacent to its southern boundary. The NPS will eventually prepare a cultural landscape report and management plan for this new land when funding becomes available. From your point of view, what do you envision for this land?

4. We are eager to share Olmsted NHS and its stories with more people, but lack of parking is a concern and we don't want to be a nuisance to neighbors. Some have suggested an off-site visitor contact station in the Emerald Necklace with shuttle

service to Fairsted. What are your thoughts on this? What other recommendations do you have for increasing public access without troubling the neighbors?

5. Olmsted NHS is located $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the Brookline Hills T station. The roadways leading to the park consist of numerous curves, steep grades, and narrow or no shoulders. What are your suggestions for promoting and improving safe pedestrian and bicycle access to the site?

6. How do you think we should best handle bus and shuttle drop-off and pick-up?

7. Frederick Law Olmsted was deeply attracted to the scenic qualities of Green Hill. How can we balance the modern evolving needs of the neighborhood with the desire to preserve its historic character and setting?

8. A variety of sites related to the Olmsted story are in the vicinity. How might we help visitors experience them without inconveniencing the neighbors?

9. What are your thoughts for making known Olmsted-designed landscapes in Boston, Brookline, and beyond?

10. What would make this site a better member of the community?

- Adequate staffing needed
- Partnerships with educational institutions
- Will there be planning for lectures at night?
- Is there a limit to the number of school groups you can handle at one time?
- Brookline High 21st Century funding – focused funding; tap into it; there is money for education; A wonderful resource?
- Clarify the location of the 5.3 acres of conservation land. Was it restored?
- How is technology being used for people to experience the landscape without being there on-site? Video, plasma screens to limit number of people on-site.
- Weeded Virginia creeper at home – saw it at Fairsted and was shocked. Can you use weed boundaries?
- The park should spend money to maintain and preserve the site's landscape and should make sure that there is not too much foot traffic that could damage it.
- Build transportation into the story. The interpretation/experience begins with the transportation, eg. monorail at Disney.
- Park a horse and buggy at the train station – you'll get interest.
- Emerald Necklace shuttle tour – some sites have a cost, but Olmsted could be free. Would promote visitation.
- Map of Emerald Necklace is needed. (A newly-produced one is available.)
- Many local people are not aware of the Emerald Necklace. Put photos in busses, etc.
- Use web or interactive media to allow people to experience many Olmsted landscapes.
- Now is the time for park rejuvenation.
- How can you maneuver a bus in the area of the site?

- How about bicycle taxis? It's green.
- The T is so accessible. Build it into your plan. Your visitors will respect a walk to the site.
- Renovation of pump house at the reservoir – put some signage there. It will raise awareness of the site.
- Have lighted signs: "Olmsted Open Today!"
- Point out Old Burying Ground along the way.
- Link with "Walk Boston" – encourage people to walk and make it easy for them.
- Reach out to the neighbors; let them know what a resource it is; let them know their input is welcome. (You are doing a lot of that already). There is a lot of talent in the neighborhood – affluence and influence.
- Target individuals in the neighborhood for your outreach. It will spread.
- Are the zoning regulations in the neighborhood regarding tear-downs and development of housing units?
- If someone wanted to tear down an historic structure, would the Preservation Commission intervene?
- Would like specific scheduled events to attract visitors. NPS-planned events winding through the neighborhood.
- Some people want just a bit of information (not the total story) – put it at T-stop or in Brookline Village T-stop or Longwood. You reach more people than would come to the site.
- What are some of the Olmsted-related sites in the area?
- It's important to get this information out to the public. Would like a display on the Muddy River. Use visuals – walk up and read it.
- Signage is really difficult.
- Offsite visitor center is an idea.
- We need more dollars, full-time personnel to take care of site properly.
- A "virtual" visit has merit.
- Garden clubs – link to them.
- Demographics are different. Younger audiences like "virtual." Older audiences like on-site visits, programs, lectures with others.
- It's such a small site – open it up with virtual experiences.
- Use the barn. The neighborhood is curious and wants to be educated.
- Reach young working people.
- Use music. Have a concert.
- Do more aggressive outreach. Link with others' events.
- The park has to figure out how to reach a larger collection of Olmsted-interested groups.
- Reach out to groups/individuals who may not know about Olmsted and the Olmsted form (vision, philosophy, design principles).
- Blog (use of new technology).
- Work with others to expand programming, preserve local records, educate public officials, spread Olmsted philosophy, principles, and accessibility.
- Fairsted represents 100 years of the Olmsted firm. The name of the site should be changed to "Olmsted National Historic Site" from "Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site."
- I love the Visitor Center downtown along the Freedom Trail. Copy their video documentation.

- Redesign the Brookline T station to include Olmsted interpretation.
- Work with MBTA to have Route 60 Bus, which operates along Route 9, serve Fairsted.

National Role

1. Linked as it is to 6,000 landscapes around the country, should the park be reaching out to these places? If so,

- a. Should the site assume leadership in creating programming ideas for the Olmsted spaces? If so, how might this be done? Does the web offer possibilities?**
 - b. Should the site promulgate its educational programming to other places, such as with its Good Neighbors program? If so, how might this be accomplished?**
 - c. Should the site encourage preservation of local records relating to Olmsted landscapes. If so, how might this be done?**
 - d. Should the site collect information on the current condition of Olmsted landscapes nationwide? If so, should it become, for example, the repository for master plans, cultural landscape reports, etc. for these places?**
- Fairsted already has a national role. Yes, times three.
 - Programming ideas with other Olmsted spaces – collaborative with local groups, possibly via National Association of Olmsted Parks (NAOP).
 - Park could be a convener.
 - Blog would be interactive and could grab interest and start a conversation.
 - Look at Olmsted-designed landscapes across the nation. They change over time. Climate change is having an impact.
 - What is appropriate today in Olmsted-designed landscapes? Transportation etc.
 - A partnership between nature and people.
 - Important for people to understand that most landscapes were created and all of them need care.
 - The park should play a role in helping expand programming in other Olmsted designed landscapes.
 - Create materials in a variety of languages.
 - Important to work collaboratively with park managers to introduce the significance of Olmsted-designed landscapes to all people from a variety of backgrounds.
 - Connection to colleges, universities, and secondary schools that are Olmsted-designed.
 - Connection/collaboration with managers of Olmsted-designed landscapes. Provide assistance with Olmsted design principles/philosophy represented in that landscape.
 - Promulgate Olmsted & Olmsted Firm design philosophy – what spaces are about, what they are used for – basic philosophy and purpose could be more prominent on the web.

- Design solutions sensitive to wheelchair users and people with varying economic and ethnic backgrounds – demonstrate design principles.
- Common purpose – local, national, and global.
- The park should be a resource for conveying Olmsted design ideals and principles. Should work with others to spread the word about these principles.
- Landscape accessibility
- Provide access to help people find out about local/community landscapes.
- Make the site active – meaning that there is work to do today, lots to be done with Olmsted landscapes today.
- Olmsted’s vision.
- Olmsted is the source for environmental and green work.
- Olmsted NHS as a spark for engaging people for landscape stewardship locally and globally.
- Network of stakeholders to connect park managers.

2. Is there a set of activities appropriate for the park to be engaged in that would involve education of political and legislative leaders around the country to the value of Olmsted landscapes? If so, what might such activities be?

- Provide master list (NAOP and Friends of Fairsted do this).
- Encourage local community and groups to talk with local officials.
- Get local officials to the site (Markey).
- Information dissemination

3. Are there national organizations with which the park should be partnering? If so,

a. Which ones?

b. To accomplish what?

- These groups can reignite, educate, stimulate, inspire, invigorate, and raise money:
 - ✓ ASLA
 - ✓ NAOP
 - ✓ ADA
 - ✓ Society of American Forestry
 - ✓ Forestry Guild
 - ✓ EPA
 - ✓ NPS – NPS legislation was drafted at Fairsted.
 - ✓ NEA
 - ✓ National Trust for Historic Preservation
 - ✓ National health organizations
 - ✓ National Institute of Mental Health

4. Is there a special national role for Olmsted NHS deriving from the critical roles played by the Olmsteds in the formation of the National Park Service and of the park idea itself?

- All national parks should know that the enabling legislation was drafted at Fairsted.
- Site's messages need to go beyond those that visit Fairsted.
- Better research about who is interacting with Fairsted resources, i.e. ORGO.
- Olmsted is the advocate!
- In an effort to get people to Olmsted parks as community gathering places, reach out to neighborhood community groups.
- Linking Franklin Park, Castle Island, and Marine Park was part of Olmsted's vision. Columbia Road is an extension of the Emerald Necklace. A potential new partner is Dorchester High School.
- Are there "turf issues" to consider? How do you break them down and join them together?
- Volunteers are missing – they have passion and skills to offer!
- There's fertile ground with the Emerald Necklace Conservancy.
- Get out to Jamaica Pond! Include community outreach.

5. Who is Olmsted NHS missing or not working with?

- YMCA
- Boys/Girls Clubs
- Dotwell (Dorchester)
- Child & Family Services
- Not only shifting population, but also shifting landscape. Need to bring people back to parks.
- Need Internet movement.
- Concept: Bring back parks as gathering space.
- Olmsted connected with all kinds of people – essence of Olmsted; relevant; find the hook
- Tie into green movement.

Archives

1. We have focused on conserving the original, hard copy Olmsted archives. How important is making them available on-line or via electronic formats?

2. How can we best ensure wide access to the Olmsted archives and preserve them safely for the next generation? How would you define wide access?

3. After conservation and proper storage, the archives can no longer fit within the historic vault at Fairsted. The solution was to split the collection, with a portion

housed in NPS space in Springfield, MA. Should we continue to absorb this inconvenience or seek another alternative?

4. Currently research appointments are limited to two days every few months. Should we expand our services to allow long-term research use of the collection?

5. Currently, onsite researchers are the main focus of the curatorial division's efforts. Are there other programmatic additions (lecture series; publications from the archives; changing curated exhibits onsite, offsite and website) that would bring added value to the visitor experience?

6. Storage space limitations are a factor to consider with any new acquisitions. Currently our scope of collections allows for Olmsted project related and Olmsted family related materials that can be directly associated with the Olmsted Firm and Fairsted. Are there other materials that should be considered for acquisition by the site?

- It is important for FRLA to accommodate varying levels of research and types of researchers.
- Having original drawings in front of you is a thrilling experience and can be a lifetime memory.
- Continued digitizing of drawings is essential, but the originals must still be accessible.
- Digitized images are widely used in my (science) profession and would fully serve my needs as an amateur researcher.
- Olmsted archivists have focused on digitizing the originals that are most often used. For example, 80 to 90 percent of the Emerald Necklace is done.
- Boston Parks & Recreation Department has digitized 4,000 of its plans and is willing to share files with Olmsted NHS.
- Digitizing captures almost everything about the drawing, but can miss subtleties that provide insight into the mind and design process of the landscape architect. Digitized images may not capture erasures, faint notes on the back, etc.
- Digitized drawings are useful for first-cut research.
 - ✓ They can help a researcher to establish which original drawings to request.
 - ✓ They serve many people without burdening NPS staff or causing wear and tear on the originals.
 - ✓ They reduce the “traffic jams” of requests.
- Current generation assumes that if information doesn't exist online, then it doesn't exist at all.
- Digitization includes some difficult issues, including the relation to copyright laws.
- If all, or some of, the drawings were digitized, is there a way for Eastern National to serve a distributor role that would make copies more easily and widely available? In

short, could a private, nonprofit partner perform this function more effectively than a federal agency? The goal would be to have each partner do what each does best.

- Figure out how to lower the cost of copies so they can be affordable to more people.
- NPS must maintain its current standard of care for originals. Do not allow increased interest and use to damage the resource.
- Fairsted need staff to handle and make secure plans being shown to researchers. Researchers might be able to review photos and written records on their own.
- Recognize the widespread, multiplier effect and impact of research that leads to improved maintenance, restoration and interpretation of Olmsted landscapes. Small numbers of researchers may look insignificant on visitation summaries (relative to other National Park sites), but those few researchers distribute information that can later influence restoration and maintenance of Olmsted landscapes, benefitting thousands, or millions, of people.
- The partnership between NAOP (National Association of Olmsted Parks) and NPS allows each partner to do what it does best: NAOP can advocate; NPS can judge veracity and maintain the integrity of the collection and its interpretation.
- What is the legislative mandate?
 - ✓ Is off-site storage an allowable policy?
 - ✓ Is storage in Springfield an administrative convenience?
- I feel that having one-third of the collection in Springfield is unacceptable.
- Do current administrative functions at Fairsted displace archives? Could the administrative space at Fairsted be used for the archives?
- Do not rehab Fairsted for more archives.
- Archival storage: plan for system implemented below barn. Building raised, supported, renovated, and archives set below grade. Improved climate, safety, footprint, fire, access control.
- Could Olmsted NHS store some archives at Historic New England site?
- How could administrative functions be located off-site to make room for archives?
- Can map cases be accommodated on site?
- Would the building be structurally able to handle the weight?
- Could climate control be maintained to curatorial standards?
- If so, is it appropriate to spend funds on functions that displace archives?
- What's the appropriate housing for the archives?
- Working with archival materials can be a time-consuming, even intimidating, process.
- Some people sense that archives "aren't welcoming."
- What is the "thrust" at Olmsted?
 - ✓ What are the relative priorities for archives, visitors and landscape?
 - ✓ How are allocations made of space and staff?
 - ✓ How does the park reach out off-site?
- The GMP must make it clear that priorities are expressed in budgets.

- The park should include research fellows in an “institute” to work with staff, educators, general public, historians, planners to inspire and “raise intellectual capital.”
- Could archives use volunteers?
- If there is a focus on conserving the archives, making electronic copies available ensures that research in future may take place while preserving the originals. This may also widen access.



NPS Photo by Joel Veak

Comment Cards

- Bicycle – link of site to local Olmsted projects
 - Suggested bicycle routes available at the website
 - Bicycle access would help mitigate access & parking constraints
 - Partnership with bicycle groups or rental companies
 - Bike maps available at bike shops & National Park Service visitor’s bureau at Park Street
- Possibly consider creating virtual tour of Olmsted site, Emerald Necklace and other Olmsted parks to expand availability of the resources to those in urban neighborhoods, classrooms and other areas on a national basis.
- Educational outreach to neighboring grade schools especially Lincoln School that is within ½ mile of site, perhaps a grade school level program explaining landscape design

& Olmsted parks that circulated amongst the various grade schools in Brookline. Ps.....I have a daughter in the 4th grade at Lincoln.

- HEADLINE= Boston Globe, 9/22/2015
Walking trail to Olmsted site dedicated, new pictures and signs enhance the visitor experience.
- HEADLINE = Boston Globe, 9/22/2035
Secretary of Interior cuts ribbon at Olmsted NHS – Rebuilt Richardsonian station at Brookline Hills to be offsite visitors center
- Use internet for information, marketing & virtual access. Use links to increase visibility.
- Create an Olmsted walking tour of Brookline (Brookline Hills)
- Off-site visitor center with opportunity to explore historic setting.
- Partner with Police task force: gang & violence prevention units
- Need to find a way to quantify all those affected by the site though they never come to Brookline.
- An interactive blog to start a conversation on educational events at Olmsted sites and what Fairsted’s role should be in educating the public on Olmsted’s legacy.
- As an advocacy center for the preservation and continuation of Olmsted’s greenspace visions, e.g. the construction of his planned greensward along Columbia Road which was to link Franklin Park to Marine Park/Castle Island in South Boston as the completion of the Emerald Necklace.
- Cultivate your relationship with your nearest public school – Lincoln, especially pilot 3rd grade curriculum with specific teachers – good model to establish close community relationship with local school – Shirley – Eustis House, lots of formal & informal trade-offs.



NPS Photo by Joel Veak