

# Mitigating Mid-Century Mayhem: Restoration of Lost Emerald Necklace Parkland

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Figure 1. Areas focused on in this paper

## Land Acknowledgement

Boston's Emerald Necklace park system, which the Emerald Necklace Conservancy stewards, sits within the ancestral and unceded territory of the Massachusetts people. For millennia before, and in the centuries since Frederick Law Olmsted designed this park system for a rapidly industrializing city, these lands and waters have served as a site of exchange for communities including the Massachusetts, Wampanoag and Nipmuc peoples.

## Executive Summary

More than a designer of parks, Frederick Law Olmsted's pioneering landscape architecture work reflected his philosophies of community connection, public health and conservation. His parks, he believed, acted as the "lungs of the city," where people could escape the bustle of metropolitan life and be healed spiritually and physically through connection to the natural world. They were designed as places for community empowerment, where people could "come together," as he said, "and be seen coming together."<sup>1</sup> His work on the Emerald Necklace also served as the nation's first example of green infrastructure, fulfilling environmental needs such as flood control and water management for a growing post-Industrial Boston.

Since Olmsted's revolutionary work in the 1800s, the City of Boston has seen its priorities grow and change. As Boston's population grew and automobiles became increasingly common, highways and

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<sup>1</sup> 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: (n.p.).

[https://www.google.com/books/edition/Annual\\_Reports\\_of\\_the\\_Brooklyn\\_Park\\_Comm/dstDAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0](https://www.google.com/books/edition/Annual_Reports_of_the_Brooklyn_Park_Comm/dstDAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0).

overpasses left some of Olmsted's historical parks and waterways severely neglected - cut off from the rest of the Emerald Necklace and, most importantly, the communities served. Parkland has been displaced by public buildings like hospitals, schools, and other facilities. Many of these elements were built in the 1950s and 1960s and have reached the end of their useful lives. Critical questions regarding how and where public facilities, if rebuilt, should respond to current needs and consider opportunities to restore parkland. These issues are complex and exist within a competing landscape of public needs and urgent priorities.

In this paper, the authors outline a complex dialogue and effort to restore 13 acres of former Franklin Park after the Commonwealth of Massachusetts announced the planned demolition of the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital. There has been a stark lack of community engagement in critical foundational decisions regarding this reuse of public land and proposed redevelopment. The Emerald Necklace Conservancy and over 20 neighborhood and advocacy groups have worked with various parties, including faculty and graduate students at Northeastern University to develop feasible nearby alternatives to the Commonwealth's proposal that address the needs of the surrounding communities and encourage dialogue about the value of restoring 13 acres of parkland to environmental justice communities. The group was able to identify potential improvements to Franklin Park and influence the redevelopment of the Arborway Yard, an 18-acre site under the control of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This work is necessary to inform a dialogue about both properties which comprise or influence a significant section of the Emerald Necklace. This advocacy and engagement work is ongoing and maintains hope that the future development of these areas can reconnect the Necklace and benefit the health and livelihoods of surrounding communities in a way that maximizes parkland, open space, green transportation and social service provision. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to not only restore lost parkland but improve the experience of the communities surrounding Franklin Park and the Emerald Necklace as a whole.

Furthermore, the authors will expand on the following past and present efforts to mitigate mid-century infrastructure developments along the Emerald Necklace:

- The restoration and daylighting of the Muddy River after the flood of 1996
- The removal of the Casey Overpass & transformation of the Casey Arborway into a vibrant boulevard
- Infrastructure improvements in and around Charlesgate Park, which provide opportunities to integrate green space and human-scale features in a highly compromised section of the Emerald Necklace

### **Introduction: The Storm of 1996 and the Birth of the Emerald Necklace Conservancy**

The Emerald Necklace is a naturalistic linear park system designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, America's first landscape architect, in the late 1800s. Built to manage stormwater and the surrounding watershed, the Necklace can be considered Boston's first green infrastructure project. Today, the system consists of 1,100 acres of meadows, woodlands, trails, ponds, and the meandering Muddy River. The Necklace "begins" at the Boston Common and continues along protected parkways until it "ends" with its final gem, Franklin Park. Olmsted envisioned public parks as a place where anyone, regardless of their socioeconomic status, could come to relax or recreate.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Empire City: New York Through the Centuries. United Kingdom: Columbia University Press, 2002.

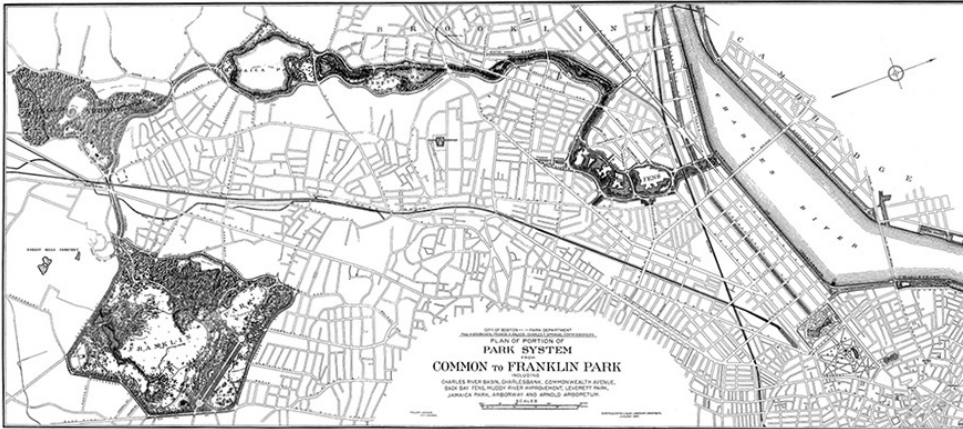


Figure 2. Olmsted's plan for the Emerald Necklace, 1894. Courtesy of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

In the mid-1900s, the priorities of American cities began to change. The trend at the time was to accommodate and make space for expanding private motor vehicle traffic and suburban commuter patterns; the additions of public facilities for hospitals, schools, highways, and prisons were not typically on land newly acquired by public agencies, likely due to cost, underappreciation of the parkland, and lack of regard for the communities they served. Instead, existing “free” public parkland was often used for these new uses.

This repurposing of parkland has occurred in key parts of the Emerald Necklace. At Charlesgate Park, where the Muddy River flows into the Charles River, mid-century infrastructure investments in highways took precedent over parkland. Today, the park is partially covered by the Bowker highway overpass and bisected by Storrow Drive. The park is not typically seen by many in the community as an actual park, much less a safe or enjoyable place to recreate or gather. During this period of rapid urbanization, parts of the Muddy River were squeezed into underground culverts and conduits. This practice is incredibly detrimental to the health of the river and the ecosystems that depend on it. According to a 2020 report by the Charles River Watershed Association and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Muddy River is the most polluted tributary to the Charles River, directly affecting the local watershed.<sup>3</sup>

The risk inherent in the culverting of waterways to meet other mid-century transportation design need is demonstrated by the culverting of a section of the Muddy River in Back Bay Fens. The parkland above the new culvert was paved over to provide a parking lot for a Sears Roebuck distribution center.<sup>4</sup> This major change to the functioning of the river's designed flood storage and management did not end well.

<sup>3</sup> Charles River Report Card. Charles River Watershed Association. <https://www.crwa.org/report-card.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Nanos, Janelle. *It was a parking lot. Now it's a park, and the 'center of gravity' in reimagined Fenway neighborhood.* The Boston Globe. July 14, 2019. [https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2019/07/14/was-parking-lot-now-park-and-center-gravity-reimagined-fenway-neighborhood/IT0j91XtQouQeHytt4RvGN/story.html?p1=HP\\_Feed\\_ContentQuery](https://www.bostonglobe.com/business/2019/07/14/was-parking-lot-now-park-and-center-gravity-reimagined-fenway-neighborhood/IT0j91XtQouQeHytt4RvGN/story.html?p1=HP_Feed_ContentQuery).

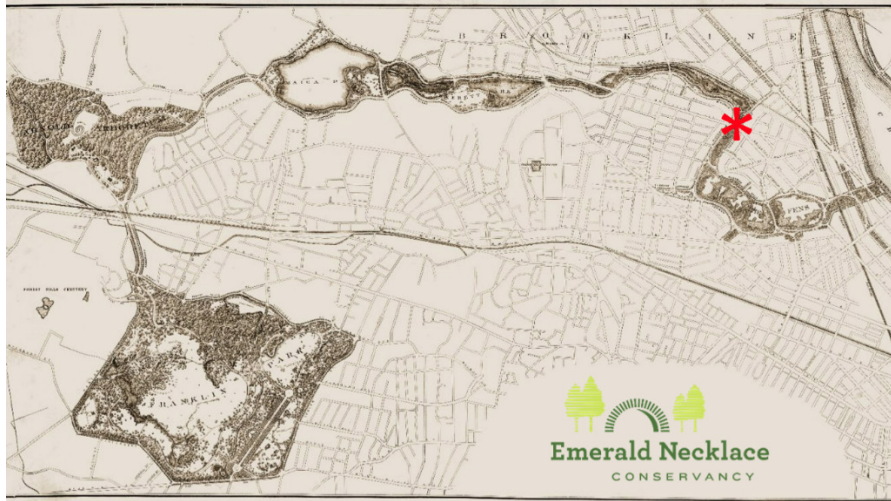


Figure 2. The location of the section of the Muddy River once covered by a Sears parking lot.

In 1996, Mother Nature reasserted herself. A substantial rainstorm caused the Muddy River, and the ponds it flows through, to overflow at the section of river that had been covered by the Sears parking lot. The Fenway, one of many historic parkways designed by Olmsted as part of the Emerald Necklace, was completely inundated, in addition to nearby buildings including the basement of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, several high-traffic roadways, and subway lines across Greater Boston. Nearby subway stops were submerged in the floodwaters, causing major service interruptions across the entire Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) system.<sup>5,6</sup> The damage to MBTA property alone cost over \$70 million to repair.<sup>7</sup>

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy (the Conservancy) was incorporated as a result of the catastrophic flooding of the Muddy River. The Conservancy is uniquely comprised of a Board of Directors and a Board of Park Advisors that represent over 20 organizations and institutions along the length of the Necklace. To this day, the Conservancy's mission is to restore and improve the Emerald Necklace **for all**. This is done through the advocacy for expansion of park access for all users, funding and providing educational programming and community outreach, restoring and maintaining the park's natural ecosystems, and our robust public-private partnerships with the City of Boston, Town of Brookline, and Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Department of Conservation and Recreation. By collaborating with a range of community stakeholders, the Conservancy can listen to a wide range of local concerns that inform our advocacy work.

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<sup>5</sup> *The Green Line Flood of 1996*. NE Transit. November 1996.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20070219063712/http://members.aol.com/netransit8/flood/flood.html>.

<sup>6</sup> *Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum*. Fema.gov. <https://www.fema.gov/case-study/isabella-stewart-gardner-museum>.

<sup>7</sup> *Fenway Portal Flood Protection Project*. Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. <https://www.mbta.com/projects/fenway-portal-flood-protection-project>.

## The Casey Arborway Overpass



Figure 3. The former location of the Casey Arborway Overpass in Jamaica Plain.

The Emerald Necklace is comprised of several parks and *parkways* which connect them. Olmsted envisioned parkways as a continuation of the parks, allowing for uninterrupted access to green space along the Necklace. The Casey Arborway is the section of the Necklace that runs from Jamaica Pond to Franklin Park.

In 1955, during the proliferation of infrastructure investments devoted to car-centric society, the Casey Overpass was built. It was built to pass over the Forest Hills MBTA station and an elevated train line that ceased to exist less than 25 years after the overpass was constructed<sup>8</sup>. Until 2015, when the overpass was deemed “structurally deficient,”<sup>9</sup> the structure hovered ominously over Jamaica Plain, creating an inhospitable environment and severing park connections.

The overpass was replaced with an at-grade boulevard that welcomes motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and other users of multi-modal transit, rather than forcing them to walk under the dark, noisy structure that was once there. The Arborway now includes brightly marked crosswalks, bike lanes, and hundreds of newly planted trees. It is no longer a space just for cars; the community is once again welcome to enjoy Olmsted’s Arborway.

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<sup>8</sup> Belcher, Jonathan. Changes to Transit Service in the MBTA district 1964-2022.

<http://roster.transithistory.org/MBTARouteHistory.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Casey Arborway. McMahon and Associates. <https://www.mcmahonassociates.com/project-highlights/Casey-Arborway>.

## Charlesgate Park: Where the Necklace Meets the Charles



Figure 4. The location of Charlesgate Park along the Emerald Necklace.

When Frederick Law Olmsted created the Emerald Necklace, he included three “gems” that preexisted his work – the Boston Common, the Public Garden, and the Commonwealth Avenue Mall. However, the start of the Olmsted-designed Necklace is at the Back Bay Fens, which has historically included what is today known as Charlesgate Park.<sup>10</sup> As noted earlier, many American cities shifted towards automobile-oriented development in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Infrastructure that was primarily used to accommodate private motor vehicle traffic was prioritized by public agencies. At Charlesgate, this led to highway overpasses and bridges being built above and through the park.



Google Maps satellite image of Charlesgate Park in 2022.

Today, Charlesgate is completely different after the midcentury changes. The park, which used to be a series of open waterways and verdant, welcoming green spaces, now lacks recreational amenities, sight lines, and connections to the previously connected green spaces. Without any recreational features for park activities to bring positive activity, drug use and antisocial behavior is prevalent.<sup>11, 12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Haglund, Karl. *Inventing The Charles River* (Cambridge, MA: Charles River Conservancy and MIT Press, 2003), page 402.

<sup>11</sup> *History*. Charlesgate Alliance. <https://charlesgatealliance.org/history/>.

<sup>12</sup> Bennet, Lauren. *More issues of trash and needles in Charlesgate Park*. The Boston Sun. March 5, 2020. <https://thebostonsun.com/2020/03/05/more-issues-of-trash-and-needles-in-charlesgate-park/>.

In 2017, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and Charlesgate Alliance, a newly formed parks advocacy group that was initiated by local residents, commissioned local architectural firm Landing Studio to lead a process to develop short and longer-term improvements to the park.<sup>13</sup>

While this community-led effort was underway, MassDOT, the state transportation agency, determined that two of the bridges above Charlesgate, dating from the mid-century period, need replacement. The new plans for Charlesgate Park are being developed in concert with community ideas and needs articulated in the community process that is ongoing. The timing of all these efforts is poised to align with the major investments currently planned by state and federal programs. Public agencies are seizing the opportunity to invest in crumbling mid-century infrastructure that required replacement and doing right by the community by considering adding more resilient and sustainable elements like better pedestrian amenities, bicycle facilities and green infrastructure for watershed management. In 2020, Landing Studio was given the Holcim Award for Sustainable Construction for their designs for Charlesgate Park.<sup>14</sup> The latest renderings can be seen on the Conservancy's website at [emeraldnecklace.org/restoration/charlesgate](https://emeraldnecklace.org/restoration/charlesgate).

In the case of Charlesgate, public agencies Massachusetts Department of Recreation and Conservation (DCR) and MassDOT have an opportunity with these two major infrastructure replacements to make important improvements to revitalize and reintroduce Olmsted's design and key connections between the Charles River Esplanade, Charlesgate and the Back Bay Fens that have been broken for over 70 years.

## Historical Context of Franklin Park and the Current Shattuck Hospital Site

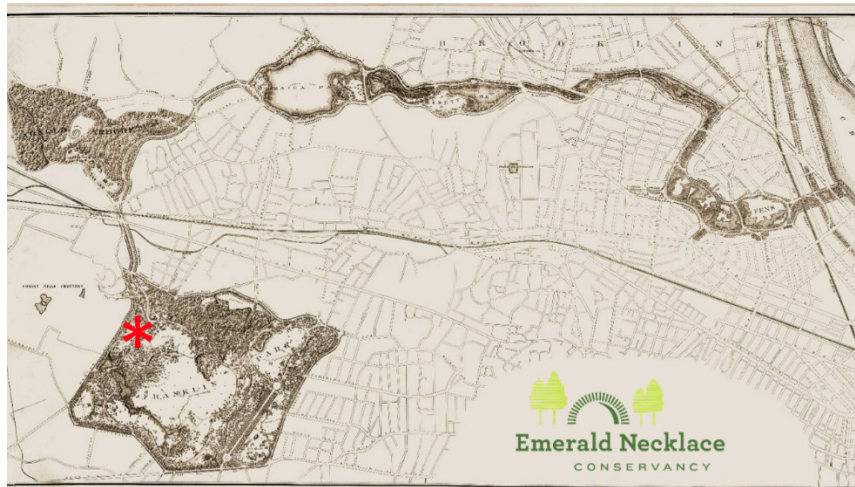


Figure 5. The location of Shattuck Hospital within Franklin Park.

Franklin Park, a 527-acre gem of the Emerald Necklace, was designed in 1895 by Frederick Law Olmsted, and is a key open space for neighboring communities, providing a gathering space for events, as well as a welcome respite from city life. In current years, Franklin Park has been used for the annual Juneteenth celebration, numerous cultural festivals, major and local sporting events, and summer concert series. The park is utilized by dozens of community groups for recreational activity and has become the home of numerous events that unite surrounding communities. Needless to say, the area has become integral for residents of Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, Roxbury, Dorchester and beyond.

<sup>13</sup> *History*. Charlesgate Alliance. <https://charlesgatealliance.org/history/>.

<sup>14</sup> *Emerald Gateway in Massachusetts*. Holcim Foundation. November 13, 2020. <https://www.holcimfoundation.org/projects/emerald-gateway>.

However, much of the parkland is no longer free and open to the general public, with over 200 acres altered, including the addition of the Franklin Park Zoo, the William J. Devine Golf Course, the Shattuck Hospital, and other facilities. As can be seen in the figure below, these uses are primarily sited on the Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury sides of the park, and limit accessible entry to free and open space for those communities. These uses make up over 40 percent of Franklin Park, restricting open space availability and access in these high-needs environmental justice communities.

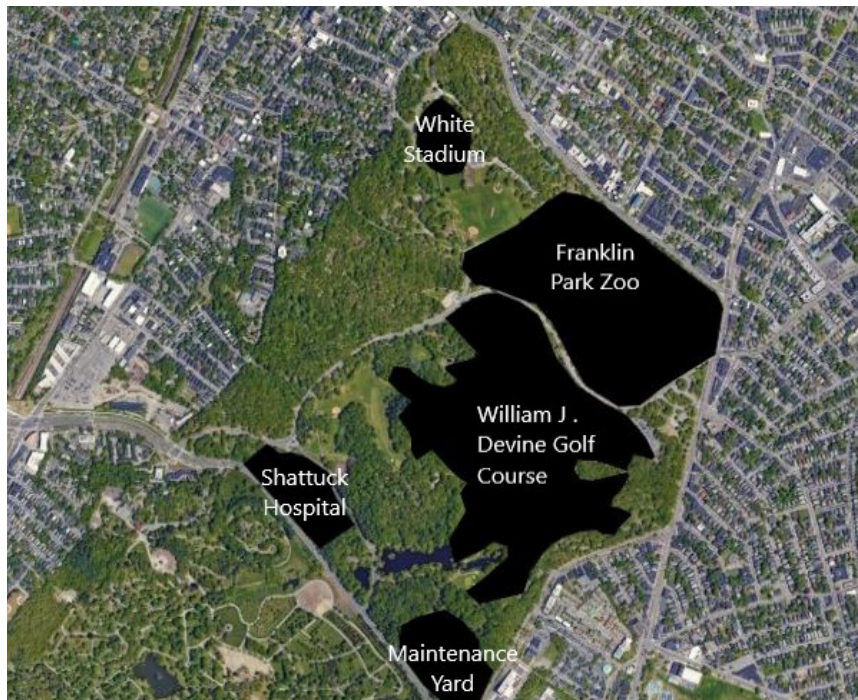


Figure 6. Land use map of Franklin Park.

While the park is currently fragmented for numerous uses, this has not always been the case. Heathfield, a 13-acre meadow on the southwest edge of Franklin Park, has specifically seen dramatic land-use changes in the past few decades.<sup>15</sup> Originally designed as a large meadow with shade trees, the parkland was transferred from the City of Boston to the Commonwealth for the purpose of building a hospital in 1949.<sup>16</sup> The Lemuel Shattuck Hospital was then built on the site and has since been providing services for the community, including the Lemuel Shattuck Hospital Corrections Unit, which treats inmates from throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.<sup>17</sup>

The building has now reached the end of its useful life and is slated for demolition by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS). This announcement was a surprise to many. There was no public dialogue about what should replace the hospital or if the site should be used for parkland. Instead, the Commonwealth proposed a plan to relocate most of the services currently

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<sup>15</sup> Elisa, Landsmark, and Mauney-Brodek. *After Shattuck is demolished, restore green space to Franklin Park*. The Boston Globe. May 24, 2021. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/05/24/opinion/after-shattuck-is-demolished-restore-green-space-franklin-park/>.

<sup>16</sup> *Planned Demolition of Franklin Park: An Opportunity to Restore Franklin Park*. Emerald Necklace Conservancy. <https://www.emeraldnecklace.org/restoration/advocacy/shattuck-hospital-franklin-park/>.

<sup>17</sup> *Lemuel Shattuck Hospital Correctional Unit*. Mass.gov. <https://www.mass.gov/locations/lemuel-shattuck-hospital-correctional-unit>.



housed at the Shattuck site to another part of Boston. They plan to lease the land to a future entity for housing for the formerly homeless and other services that will not be provided at the new facility.

### ***Working to Develop a Better Plan and to Meet the Community's Need for Services and Open Space***

The Conservancy supports the creation of housing for formerly unhoused individuals, recovery facilities and other support services. Based on a variety of factors, the current Shattuck Hospital property is not the most beneficial location for these services, and the Conservancy and other community groups requested a feasibility study or alternative analysis that was never provided. The Conservancy works to advocate for not only the Emerald Necklace parks, but the communities they serve. There is a clear need for services to support mental health, substance abuse, and housing insecurity.

### ***The Proposed Shattuck Project Plan Lacks Required Services and Does Not Align with Best Practices***

At the Shattuck site, EOHHS plans to build 75-100 units of housing for the formerly unhoused but does not include any provisions for critical wrap around supportive services.<sup>18</sup> Based on feedback collected at an April 13, 2021, public hearing by the Bureau of Public Health Hospitals, community members have raised numerous concerns regarding the Commonwealth's proposal. They can best be summarized under 3 main points:

- 1. The Commonwealth's plan for the Shattuck site does not align with current best practices for supportive services for the formerly unhoused and other people in need.**

The services proposed to stay at the Shattuck Hospital site would be isolated from amenities such as public transit, schools, grocery stores, and other institutions that are necessary for socioeconomic sustainability and a sense of community. The site is additionally adjacent to high-speed roads, often without sidewalks or bike lanes. Its closest neighbor is the Forest Hills Cemetery. These factors could prevent marginalized community members, many of whom struggle with mental health and other challenges, from reintegrating into society in a healthful way. Additionally, despite several nearby vacant properties owned by the Commonwealth, EOHSS has not performed an Alternative Analysis nor a Feasibility Analysis as part of their planning process.

The Commonwealth's plan does not consider the Franklin Park Action Plan or the recent \$28 million commitment the City of Boston has made to Franklin Park.<sup>19</sup> The Franklin Park Action Plan is planning for the future closure of Circuit Drive and proposes restrictions on vehicular access to this area. This planned closure would further limit access to the Shattuck Hospital site, thus further isolating the people who rely on its services.

- 2. The Commonwealth's proposal is not timely, guaranteed, or well thought-out.**

The Commonwealth's proposal suggests these new services might be developed in 2024 or later, after a Request for Proposals is issued, a response is selected, and a proposed design has been completed. In other words, this project is years away from completion.

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<sup>18</sup> *Vision Plan: Redevelopment of the Shattuck Campus at Morton Street*. Mass.gov. February 2020. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/vision-plan-redevelopment-of-the-shattuck-campus-at-morton-street/download>.

<sup>19</sup> *Franklin Park Master Plan Announced by Mayor Walsh*. Boston.gov. May 7, 2020. <https://www.boston.gov/news/franklin-park-master-plan-announced-mayor-walsh#:~:text=With%20sale%20of%20Winthrop%20Square,associated%20with%20increasing%20urban%20density>.

The current proposal requests a minimum of 75-100 units for the formerly unhoused and does not require the much-needed wraparound supportive services, such as addiction treatment, mental healthcare facilities, and legal services, which are critical to the population the housing is meant to serve.

Finally, the current proposal will offer a 99-year lease of publicly owned land to a private landowner to build housing and services at their cost. The lessee will be effectively required to develop additional buildings and facilities to generate revenue for the services. Land use patterns and multi-million-dollar investments, once established, are hard to change. This 10-year redevelopment could be effectively permanent. Boston is a rapidly growing city with thousands of new housing units recently built and currently in development, with an existing need for public open space. The area surrounding the Shattuck site is one of Boston's largest environmental justice communities, for which nearby parkland is integral.

**3. The Commonwealth has failed to conduct adequate outreach to the surrounding communities about their proposal.**

Throughout the planning process, there has been very little, if any, outreach to the communities of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan regarding the demolition and relocation of the Shattuck services. While the EOHHS did nominally create a Community Advisory Board, as of November 2021, there was extremely limited representation of Dorchester and Mattapan community groups, despite the fact that the site fell into a Mattapan zoning district. In addition, there were few documented communications with housing programs, churches, social groups, or neighborhood associations within the Black and Latinx communities. This was made apparent at the April 2021 public hearing, where the majority of participants who gave public comments were from Jamaica Plain and very few were from Mattapan, Dorchester, or other neighborhoods surrounding Franklin Park. The Ellicotdale, the portion of Franklin Park adjacent to Shattuck Hospital, is critical parkland for the residents of Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester. As the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted, access to parks is essential to public health.<sup>20</sup> The environmental justice communities surrounding Franklin Park take solace in the Ellicotdale as a rare urban open space, offering shade from heat islands and free opportunities for outdoor recreation.

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<sup>20</sup> Ingraham. *Pandemic underscores how public parks shape public health*. The Washington Post. July 31, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/07/31/public-parks-health-coronavirus/>.

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

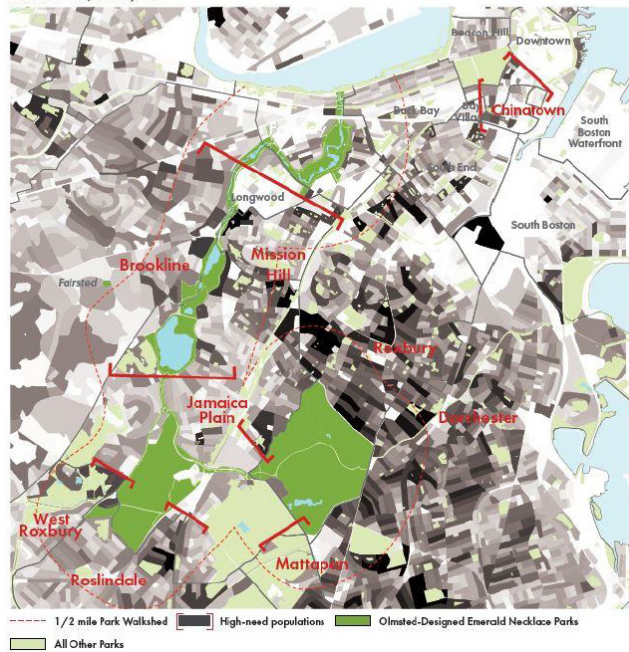


Figure 7. The distribution of “high-need populations” in and around the Emerald Necklace.

### ***Emerald Necklace Conservancy Involvement***

Because of the defects in the plan and the process for the proposed redevelopment of the Shattuck site, and because the Commonwealth did not investigate alternative locations for the proposed services, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy collaborated with Northeastern University on four studies to develop more ways to address the space and service needs and restore parkland. The studies evaluated alternative sites for services, focusing on nearby, underdeveloped properties also owned by the Commonwealth.

From their research, a preferable holistic alternative was identified: the 18-acre area referred to as Arborway Yard, currently underutilized, and partly used today by the MBTA for out-of-service bus storage and maintenance. This large and nearby site offers a unique opportunity to provide affordable housing and community services (as proposed in a past Memorandum of Understanding between the City and the MBTA), space for the MBTA’s growing electric bus fleet, housing for the formerly homeless, and recovery services adjacent to prime public transportation while restoring lost open space for the high-needs areas surrounding Franklin Park.

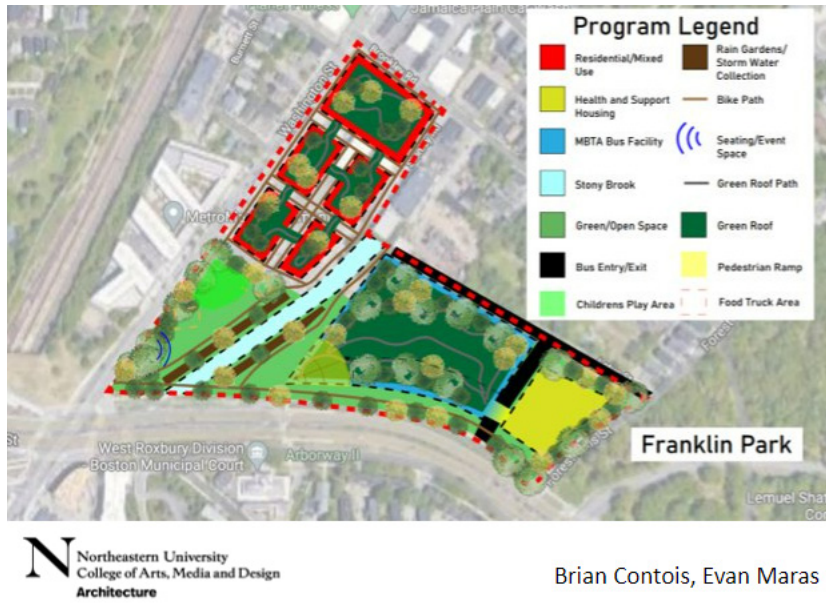


Figure 8. One of four example concept designs for the redevelopment for the Arborway Yard. Many of the buildings shown have “green roofs” to address heat islands and flooding risks in the area.

### ***The Opportunity provided by Arborway Yard: A Win-Win-Win Situation***

A broad coalition of community members, neighborhood associations, social groups, and other organizations in partnership with Emerald Necklace Conservancy have collaborated to develop for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the City of Boston a unique opportunity to do thoughtful land use planning by combining and leveraging needs and opportunities. The public agencies can supply much-needed housing and health and supportive services in a superior location, while also restoring 13 acres of parkland to high-needs, environmental justice communities surrounding Franklin Park. Developing these services and other facilities at the Arborway Yard would provide:

- **Housing and community needs**, including eight acres for mixed-use services, affordable housing, and recreational green space for neighboring high-needs communities
- **Transportation needs**, including space for the MBTA’s electric bus facility, including an electric bus fleet and electric transportation (currently in planning and design stages)
- **Health needs**, including mental health and supportive rehabilitation services; 75-100 units of housing for the formerly unhoused
- **Access needs**, including locating supportive services adjacent to prime public transportation

Additionally, as noted previously by the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, the Arborway Yard design and development timeline aligns with that of the Shattuck Hospital redevelopment. This proposal would require the coordination of two state agencies and other public bodies for land use that is beneficial to the community, allowing for the provision and return of up to 13 acres of Franklin Park.

### ***The Time is Now: Funding Focused on Resilient Green Transportation Infrastructure Investments like the Arborway Yard Opportunity***

Today, Boston is experiencing a watershed historic moment for local, regional, and national public investment in climate resilient supportive transportation, development, and community infrastructure. For example, the MBTA has recently received over \$1 billion in new federal funding between the last two coronavirus relief bills for its capital needs and in total will spend a record \$2

billion in 2021 alone.<sup>21</sup> It is anticipated that the MBTA and others will receive record support as the federal government continues its investment in critical infrastructure, prioritizing projects that focus on climate resiliency and transit orientated development and investments. This type of investment is exactly what is supported by the Northeastern University studies and aligns precisely with the MBTA's plans for the Arborway Yard. By acting on this timely opportunity for federal funding, development or redevelopment of portions of the Arborway Yard site could, in fact, be faster than developing the Shattuck Hospital site for the needed uses and services proposed.

### ***Doing the Right Project at the Arborway Yard has Broad Support***

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy, along with a growing coalition of over 20 local organizations, hundreds of community members, and both former Governor Weld and Governor Dukakis, believe that the Arborway Yard site is a superior option for these services.<sup>22</sup> This alternative location offers superior access to treatment facilities, job opportunities, schools, and grocery and retail services, and will allow high-needs individuals to integrate into a community, all while restoring significant open space to environmental justice communities.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

The communities that surround and utilize the Emerald Necklace are faced with unprecedented challenges; in addition to rapid development and population growth, the residents of Greater Boston are struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic, the dismantling of historically racist and classist societal institutions, a changing climate, and, most recently, the threat of a third world war. In this societal moment, decision-makers must make sustainability a top priority.

After the disastrous flooding of the Muddy River, the community pulled together to restore the Sears Roebuck parking lot to an inviting green space enveloping a healthy section of the Muddy River. What was once an eyesore due to short-sighted mid-century investments is now reconnected to the Emerald Necklace, providing neighbors with a space to recreate and enjoy amid the bustle of the city. We are working in a similar vein to repair Charlesgate Park and bring it back to its former glory. Franklin Park and the communities that utilize it deserve no less.

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy will continue to proactively engage with the Commonwealth, the City of Boston, elected officials, and communities the Emerald Necklace serves to realize a solution that helps to restore Franklin Park's preeminence as Boston's most important park for the Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan and Dorchester neighborhoods. The proposal to relocate these services at the Arborway Yard could serve as a national model for transit-oriented development, with housing and services for the formerly homeless populations, affordable housing and development, and our climate future with a state-of-the-art electric bus facility. Simply put, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We are tackling the delapidated investments of the last wave of federal investment. This time around, we can restore and rebuild these sections of the Necklace in a resilient manner, using the language and lessons of Olmsted. Perhaps the most central of them all with regard to transportation, health services, and parkland – all agencies and stakeholders must work together to achieve the most sustainable, community-centered outcomes. Together, the Commonwealth, with the support of our City and community members, can do great things *again*.

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<sup>21</sup> Vaccaro. *About \$1 billion coming to Mass. for MBTA, other transit agencies*. The Boston Globe. April 3, 2020. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/04/03/metro/nearly-1-billion-coming-mass-mbta-other-transit-agencies/>

<sup>22</sup> Wedge, Dave. *The Battle for Franklin Park*. Boston Magazine. <https://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/franklin-park-shattuck-hospital/>.