



# New General Management Plan to be Developed for Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

## DEAR FRIENDS,

This October will mark thirty years since Congress established Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site (Olmsted NHS). The National Park Service (NPS) is honored to be the steward of this place, where America's foremost landscape architect, his notable sons John Charles and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., and their renowned firm designed thousands of parks, suburban neighborhoods, campuses, and private estates, many persisting today and all documented in the site's rich archival collections.

We are pleased to send you this newsletter about the strategic planning effort being undertaken at Olmsted NHS. The site has made enormous progress in thirty years, but "Fairsted," as Olmsted named it, now faces new challenges. Recently the NPS received funding to revise and update the park's 1983 general management plan. Your perspectives and input are critical to the creation of a renewed vision for the site and an enlightened plan for the next chapter in its future.

A planning team of park managers, NPS planning staff, and consultants are preparing studies and gathering data. Starting with our primary mandate—to preserve the historic site and its archives—the plan will address topics such as traffic and parking; the needs of visitors, students and researchers; and how best to serve known audiences and reach new ones.

Please join us at an **OPEN HOUSE** on **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13** for a behind-the-scenes tour of Fairsted (currently undergoing construction), and at a **PUBLIC MEETING** on **WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23** to discuss the general management plan. We look forward to hearing your ideas, and to working with you on this important new plan.

*Superintendent Myra F. Harrison*



## OPEN HOUSE

at Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

**SUNDAY • SEPTEMBER 13, 2009 • 1–4 PM**

Frederick Law Olmsted NHS • 99 Warren Street, Brookline, MA

Learn about Olmsted NHS at a special open house ten days before the public meeting. Tour the historic site and meet park service experts who will answer your questions about the construction project underway (the site remains closed to the general public), the historic buildings, landscape and archives, the newly-renovated barn, and the "Good Neighbors" education program in development.

## PUBLIC MEETING

Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site:  
Envisioning the Future: A Community Dialogue

**WEDNESDAY • SEPTEMBER 23, 2009**

Registration & Reception • 6:30 PM / Meeting • 7:00–9:00 PM  
William H. Lincoln School • 19 Kennard Road, Brookline, MA

Help plan the future for Olmsted NHS. After a brief introductory session, we'll break into small groups to generate ideas for the plan. This will be an interesting and interactive evening and we look forward to seeing you there!



# NPS seeks Public Input on Planning Issues for Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site

PHOTO BY JOEL VEAK. COURTESY OF NPS, OLMSTED NHS.



OLMSTED NHS HAS MADE GREAT progress in thirty years. The NPS has cataloged and conserved all the archives and made them accessible, restored the historic landscape, rehabilitated the historic buildings, opened the site to visitors and provided

interpretation and education programs both on and off-site.

The park desires to update its 1983 General Management Plan (GMP) because it has achieved the benchmarks that it set, and significant new issues have arisen that need

analysis, discussion and decision. For example: after conservation and proper storage, the Olmsted archives could no longer fit within the historic plans vault at Fairsted. The solution was to split the collection, with a portion housed now in NPS space in Springfield, MA. This hampers an efficient operation. Should we continue to absorb this inconvenience or seek another alternative? Another example: our generous neighbors donated to the park over five acres of conservation land on Green Hill, preserving forever the historic view of the adjacent Gardner property. How should we manage this land into the future, and what resources do we need to do so properly? For instance, should it remain a modern viewshed, or should its Olmsted-era appearance be researched and restored?

These are among the issues to be addressed in the GMP. We are confident that the planning process will allow us to address them successfully, aided by the thoughtful contributions of our publics.

## Planning Issues for the Public to Consider

*From a large list of issues, here are a few questions to stimulate your thinking in advance of the public meeting. How would you address these? What other ideas should be considered?*

### HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD

F.L. 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?

What are the best ways to allow more people to enjoy the site without adding traffic? How might we encourage use of alternative transportation?

### VISITOR EXPERIENCE

We serve a professional audience with deep knowledge of the Olmsteds' work and visitors just beginning to explore the subject. How can we best meet the needs of both?

What programs or events would be fun or interesting for you to attend, either at Olmsted NHS or other places designed by them?

Some have suggested a satellite visitor contact station along the Emerald Necklace with shuttle service to the site. Do you like or dislike this concept, and why?

### EDUCATION

We receive inquiries from educators serving students from young children to senior citizens. What are your thoughts about how we might best serve different learners?

### AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

The country's demographics are rapidly changing. How can we make this site, and the Olmsteds' work in general, relevant and interesting to ethnically diverse urban audiences?

### HISTORIC ARCHIVES

We have focused on conserving the original, hard copy Olmsted archives. How important is it to make them available online or via electronic formats?

How can we best ensure wide access to the Olmsted archives while preserving them safely for future generations?

### OPERATING THE SITE

We'd love to have more people enjoy the site, but want to protect it from wear-and-tear. What are your ideas for how to manage this?

Shared staff for three national historic sites (Kennedy, Longfellow and Olmsted) is headquartered at Fairsted. How can we best balance the needs for administrative space with the importance of providing access to visitors?

Given Frederick Law Olmsted's national impact, should our site attempt to take on a national leadership role regarding his legacy? If so, what form should it take?

### PARTNERSHIPS

Based on our legislated mission "to preserve and interpret for the benefit, inspiration, and education of present and future generations the home and office of Frederick Law Olmsted," are there partnerships you think we should explore or deepen with other organizations, either locally or nationally?

# Fairsted and the Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted

“It is under similar conditions to these that we find in nature that class of scenery... which is termed pastoral. It consists of combinations of trees, standing singly or in groups, and casting their shadows over broad stretches of turf... and the predominant associations are in the highest degree tranquilizing and grateful...”

—Frederick Law Olmsted, *Report on design for Prospect Park, 1866*



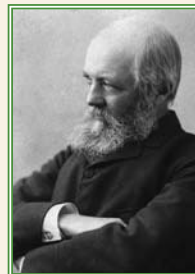
*Prospect Park, Brooklyn, NY (Olmsted Archives/Olmsted NHS)*

FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED NHS, at 99 Warren Street, Brookline, MA, preserves and interprets the home and office of pioneer landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and his successor firms.

Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) is widely recognized as the founder of the American landscape architecture design profession and the nation's foremost park-maker. The site, which he named “Fairsted,” with its 19th-century house and rustic barn, early 20th-century office wing, and designed landscape, retains the picturesque character that drew Olmsted to Brookline in 1883. Today Olmsted NHS serves as both an historic site allowing visitors to experience the physical environment of the Olmsted period and learn about the Olmsteds’ work, and also as an actively used archival center for students and researchers studying the extensive design documents and business records produced by the firm.

Some of Frederick Law Olmsted's early designs are very well known, such as New York's Central Park and the grounds of the U.S. Capitol. His move to the Boston area

was prompted in large part by a major commission to design the Boston/Brookline park system, known as the “Emerald Necklace.” After relocation to Fairsted, Olmsted was able to expand his business and start a system of apprenticeships that produced some of the most famous landscape architects of the next generation and also proved the foundation for the academic study of landscape design. Joined first by his son John Charles (1852-1920) and later by Frederick, Jr. (1870-1957), and their partners and associates, ultimately the firm



*Frederick Law Olmsted*

undertook over 6,000 projects. Individual parks and park systems, state capitol grounds, school and college campuses, residential suburbs, arboreta, and private estates became testimony to the influence of the Olmsted landscape design tenets.

To a remarkable extent, the Olmsteds' design and conservation principles shaped the evolving physical environment of America, and their active participation in the formation of the major institutions taking root in their day, such as the National Park Service and the American Society of Landscape Architects, extended the reach of their ideas.

Today the Olmsted Archives contain over one million records documenting their design work, including 140,000 drawings and plans. The collection reflects the history of landscape architecture and environmental design in the United States. Also included in the collection are financial and administrative records and reports, lithographs, planting lists, photographic prints and negatives, and design models dating from the 1860s to 1980.

Congress created Frederick Law Olmsted NHS in 1979. The site, which is jointly managed with John Fitzgerald Kennedy NHS in Brookline and Longfellow NHS in Cambridge, also serves as the administrative headquarters for the three historic sites. Olmsted NHS, which has been undergoing rehabilitation, is expected to re-open to the public in 2010.

“We want a ground [park] to which people may easily go after their day's work is done, and where they may stroll for an hour, seeing, hearing, and feeling nothing of the bustle and jar of the streets, where they shall, in effect, find the city put far away from them...”

—Frederick Law Olmsted, *Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns, 1870*





*Perspective sketch of shelter for the Joseph P. Kennedy estate (Hyannisport, MA) August 1930, Olmsted Archives/Olmsted NHS*

## Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site General Management Plan Process

Organizing the Planning Process and Initial Research	2008
Public Outreach and Public Meeting	Fall 2009
Draft Plan Available to Public	2010
Public Meeting to Comment on Draft Plan	2010

IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND THE SEPTEMBER 13 OPEN HOUSE OR SEPTEMBER 23 PUBLIC MEETING, you can send your ideas to us at Frederick Law Olmsted NHS, 99 Warren Street, Brookline, MA 02445, Attn: Superintendent, or via the park website at [www.nps.gov/frla](http://www.nps.gov/frla). For additional information please call 617-566-1689 x 216.

This newsletter is a publication of the National Park Service, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, (c)2009.



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