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**Open Space Plan 2008-2012**

**Section 1**

**Executive Summary**

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## Executive Summary

### Section 1: Executive Summary

Boston is an historic, highly developed, and mature city blessed with a vibrant park system of enormous breadth that includes the venerable Boston Common, the highly elaborated Public Garden, modern state-of-the-art sports facilities, playgrounds, urban wilds, community gardens, burying grounds and pastoral cemeteries, and walking and bicycling paths. A significant part of the character of Boston as seen by both Bostonians and outsiders is its image as a “green city.” Lewis Mumford, the famous urban development critic, noted early in the 20th century that Boston’s integration of the built environment with green space made it a model American city<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, a substantial part of our physical character and image is based on the significant complement of parks and play areas that grace our downtowns and neighborhoods. These parks and recreation areas provide scenic beauty, opportunities to exercise, play, and relax for health’s sake, and relief from the built environment.

The remarkable presence of this open space is due in large measure to the foresight of citizens in earlier times. Boston was fortunate to have city leaders who purchased open space for public use or received important donations of land, and to have eminent residents such as Joseph Lee, the father of the American playground movement. The city was also fortunate to benefit from the genius of Frederick Law Olmsted, landscape architect of Boston’s Emerald Necklace and from a strong community of planners, engineers, and landscape architects trained in local academic institutions.

This vibrant legacy of open space in Boston obliges us to a mission of wise stewardship represented by the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Parks and Recreation Department, a line department serving the Mayor. Many valued parks and recreation areas require cyclical redesign and renovation due to normal wear-and-tear, weathering, deterioration, and overuse. Through this plan, the Department remains as committed as ever to maintaining these assets through its capital and operating and maintenance programs. It also continues to seek greater levels of community involvement and partnership in the stewardship of these assets.

The need is also addressed in this plan for a dynamic, better integrated open space system with improved linkages, more

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spaces to meet new or unmet needs, and protection of the natural resource and environmental base of the open space system. The plan calls for further expansion through the Department's acquisition program, through co-development of open space when the private or institutional sectors expand, and through a network of greenways, trails, and bikeways to better access the existing and new spaces, as well as to enjoy linear-oriented forms of recreation such as walking, hiking, and bicycling.

The city itself is dynamic, with economic, physical, and population growth occurring continuously. Our residents are getting younger and more diverse.

This plan calls for attending to the emerging and existing needs of our population and for guiding growth to assist in the development of an improved open space system while reducing the effects development may have on our environment.

The plan also looks at how open space management can be improved to assure the achievement of "substantive" goals. Improved coordination and greater fiscal stability are two key means to help restore the existing system and expand it while protecting the environment.

The Open Space Plan 2007-2011 examines Boston's history, demographics, development patterns, natural resources, and unique environments. Community input and comment was sought, and continues to be a part of the Parks Department's capital development program. This information collectively supports the analysis of existing open space lands and facilities and the assessment of future needs. The goals and objectives set forth in this Open Space Plan are therefore the result of many meetings, outreach via surveys and comments, and extensive discussion, research, and analysis. The Action Plan, presented in a separate chapter at the end of this document, and in more detail throughout other sections of the Plan, particularly the Analysis of Needs section (Section 7), supports a program to implement these goals and objectives.

The Parks Department and the other city departments are committed to achieve our community's vision for open space, without regard to ownership. This Open Space Plan will help us realize that commitment and that vision. The plan is an outgrowth of that healthy balance between the built and natural environments and between work and play that is a defining feature of Boston's

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character. As the plan is fulfilled, Boston's reputation as a green and growing city will remain strong.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Donald L. Miller, Lewis Mumford: A Life (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1989), pp. 86-87.