

GRCx Inspiration, Empathy and Education: How Cultural Entities are Helping People Think About Climate in New Ways

GRCx is an interactive program series from the Boston Green Ribbon Commission designed to accelerate the implementation of the City's Climate Action Plan by providing high-quality, useful content on climate resilience and carbon mitigation to the Boston community.

GRCx

GREEN RIBBON COMMISSION
Climate Action
Exchange

UNCOMMON PLACES UNITED FOR A COMMON CAUSE



ACTION
PACT
BOSTON



Introductions

Karen Mauney-Brodek
President
Emerald Necklace
Conservancy



Brenda Tindal
Executive Director
Harvard Museums of
Science & Culture



Garrett Nelson
President & Head
Curator
Norman B. Leventhal
Map Center



A group of four children are gathered around a large, thick tree trunk in a park. One child in a pink hoodie is touching the tree, while others are hugging them. The background shows a grassy area and trees with autumn foliage.

Green Space, Shared Use and Community

*Karen Mauney-Brodek,
Emerald Necklace
Conservancy*

A Teaching of Time in Nature

“When you spend time in nature in one place on many different occasions, you begin to build awareness of, connection to and compassion for the other things in that space. The more you go, you now begin to see the sacredness in those things that you did not see at the outset...”

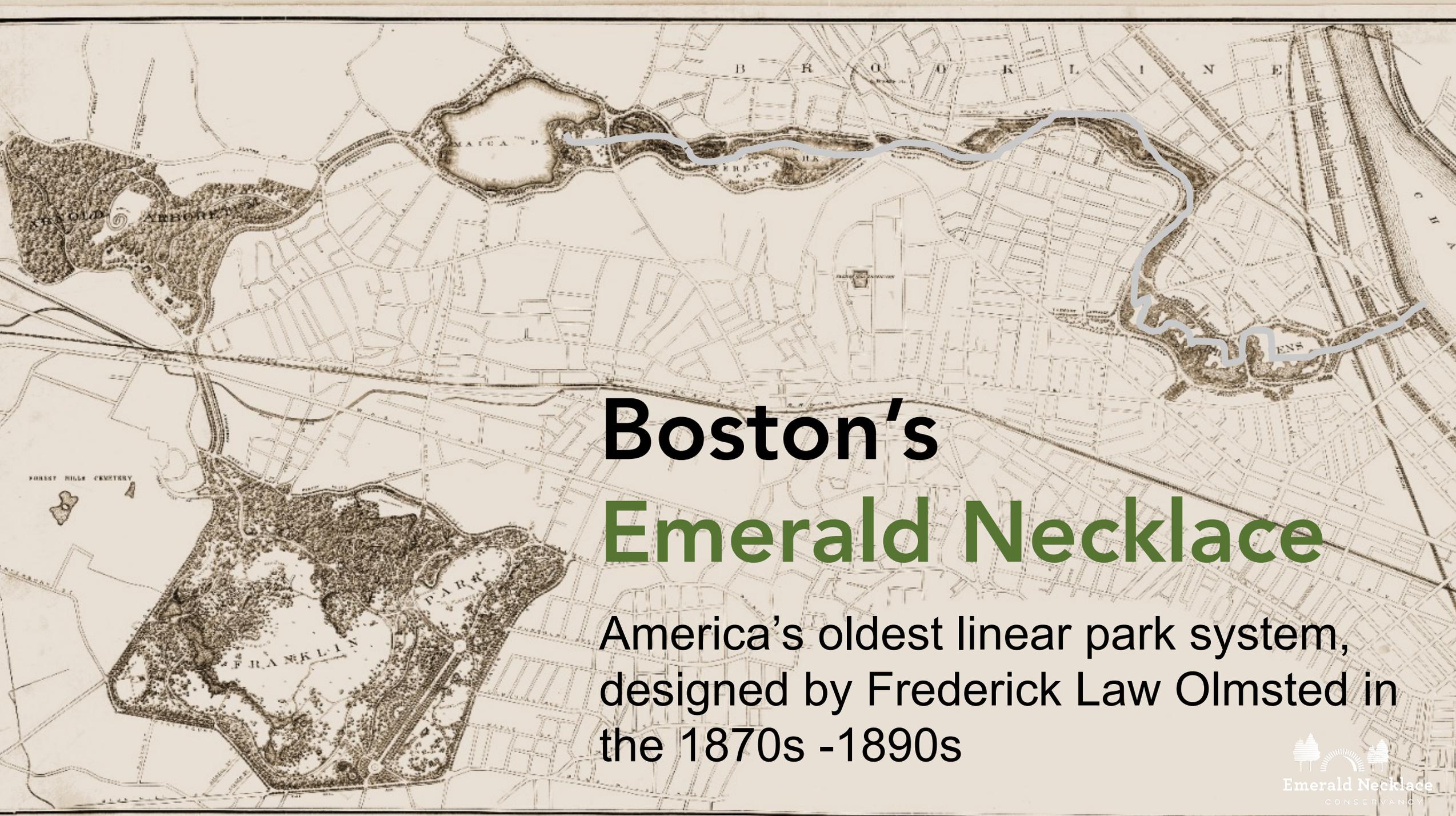




“...Slowly, but ultimately, like many streams feeding a mighty river, you begin to realize that sacredness is not confined to those things at your special spot, but that it extends beyond to everything else in the universe.”

**-Kent Jackson, Director of
Education, Emerald Necklace
Conservancy**





Boston's Emerald Necklace

America's oldest linear park system,
designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in
the 1870s -1890s

A Stinky Problem...



“Board of Health Map, Showing the Sources of Some of the Offensive Odors perceived in Boston, 1878.”



Design for the Back Bay Fens

...And A Green Solution.





Emerald Necklace Conservancy

- Visit our Shattuck Visitor Center at 125 The Fenway
- Explore the parks with our Mobile Tour Guide at www.emeraldnecklace.tours

The Emerald Necklace: America's First Example of Green Infrastructure



Green Infrastructure: Using earth, stone and plants to absorb and treat stormwater/sewage, emulating the natural water cycle instead of relying on artificial means

Flooding of the Muddy River in 1996 led to the Conservancy's founding



Dredging and restoration of riverbanks to enhance water management capacity in the Emerald Necklace – helping to mitigate the effects of future flooding events

Charlesgate Park Revitalization



A critical greenspace linchpin, connecting Charles River Esplanade, Commonwealth Avenue Mall and the Emerald Necklace

Complete revitalization will:

- improve access and connectivity
- provide environmental benefits
- Improve transportation, safety and quality of life in the neighborhood





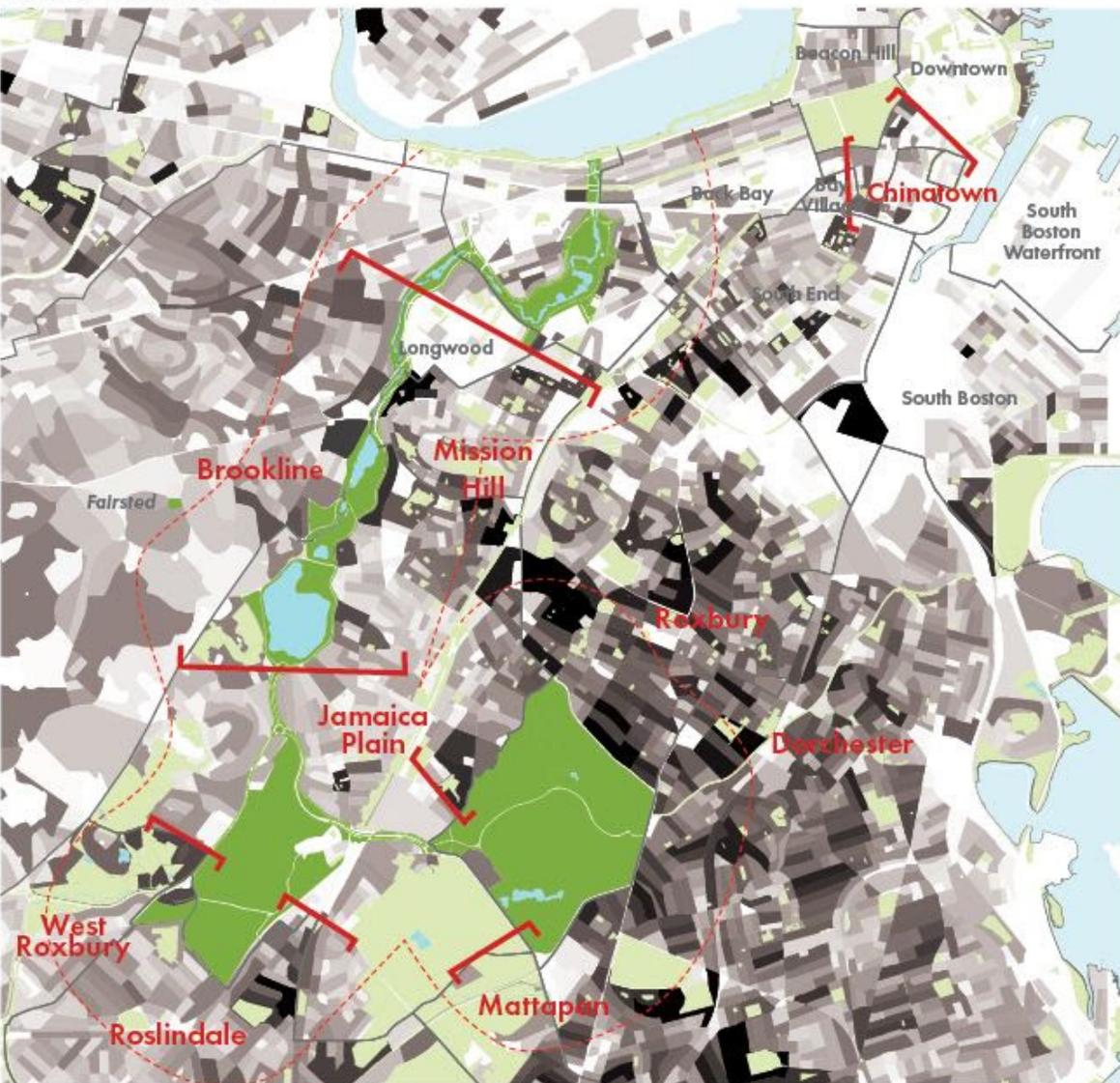
**“NOW, MORE THAN EVER,
OUR PARKS MUST BE
UNDERSTOOD AS ESSENTIAL
PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE.”**

“Not unlike essential workers, their contributions during a pandemic should be celebrated, protected, and ultimately leveraged to support public health.”

— [“Parks are essential—especially during the coronavirus pandemic”](#) The Boston Globe (May 6, 2020)

BLACK, INDIGENOUS, PEOPLE OF COLOR + CHILDREN + ELDERLY

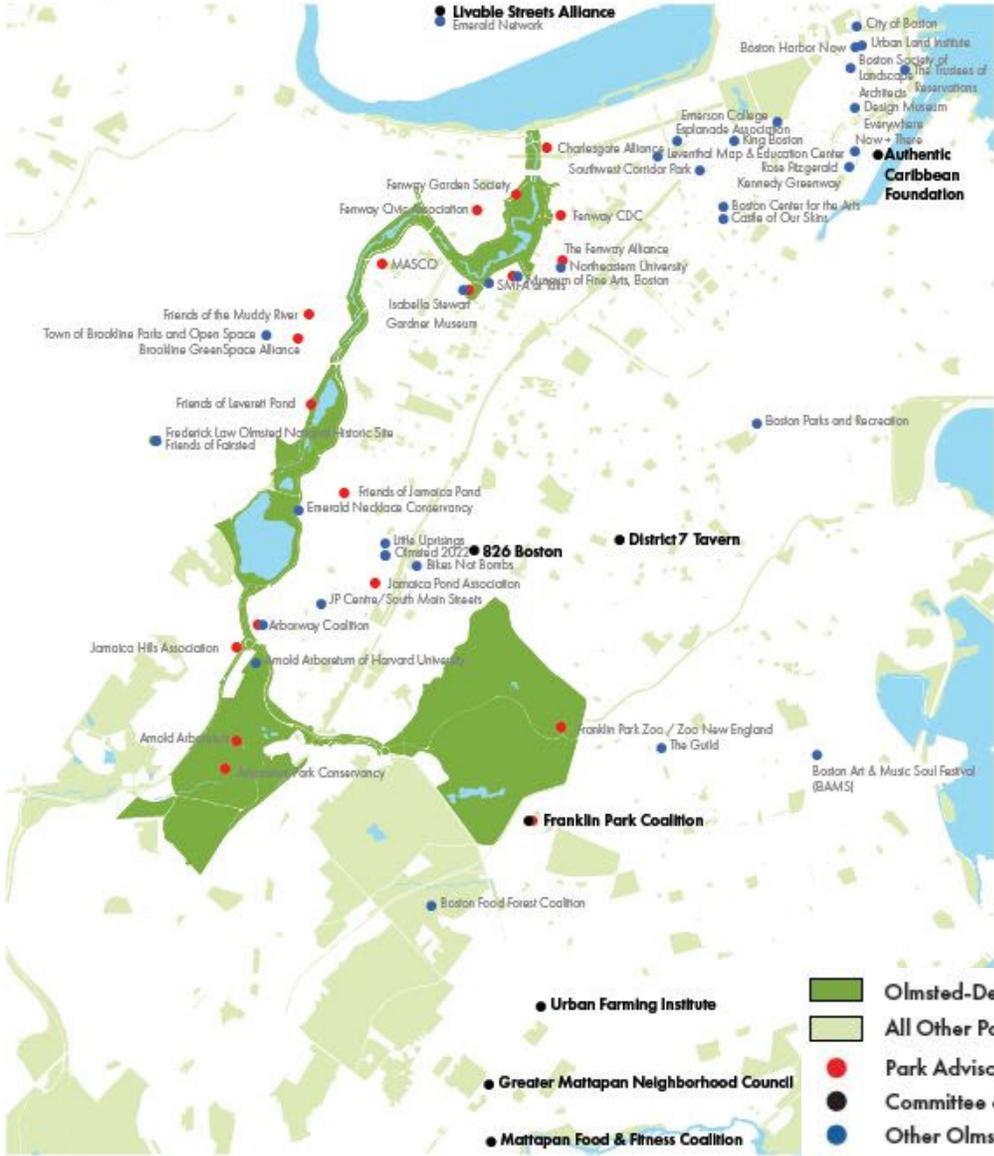
Children <18, Elderly >65



- 1/2 mile Park Walkshed
- High-need populations
- Olmsted-Designed Emerald Necklace Parks
- All Other Parks

GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD OF OLMSTED NOW COALITION PARTNERS

As of August 2021



- Olmsted-Designed Emerald Necklace Parks
- All Other Parks
- Park Advisor
- Committee of Neighborhoods Member
- Other Olmsted Now Coalition Partner

Olmsted Now: Greater Boston's Olmsted Bicentennial

- April 26, 2022 marks the 200th birthday of Frederick Law Olmsted
- Coalition-based platform launched to expand shared use, shared health and shared power in parks and public spaces.

**COME
TOGETHER
AND BE SEEN**



Olmsted Now: Greater Boston's Olmsted Bicentennial



Urban Ecology
Environmental Justice



Public Health
Health Equity



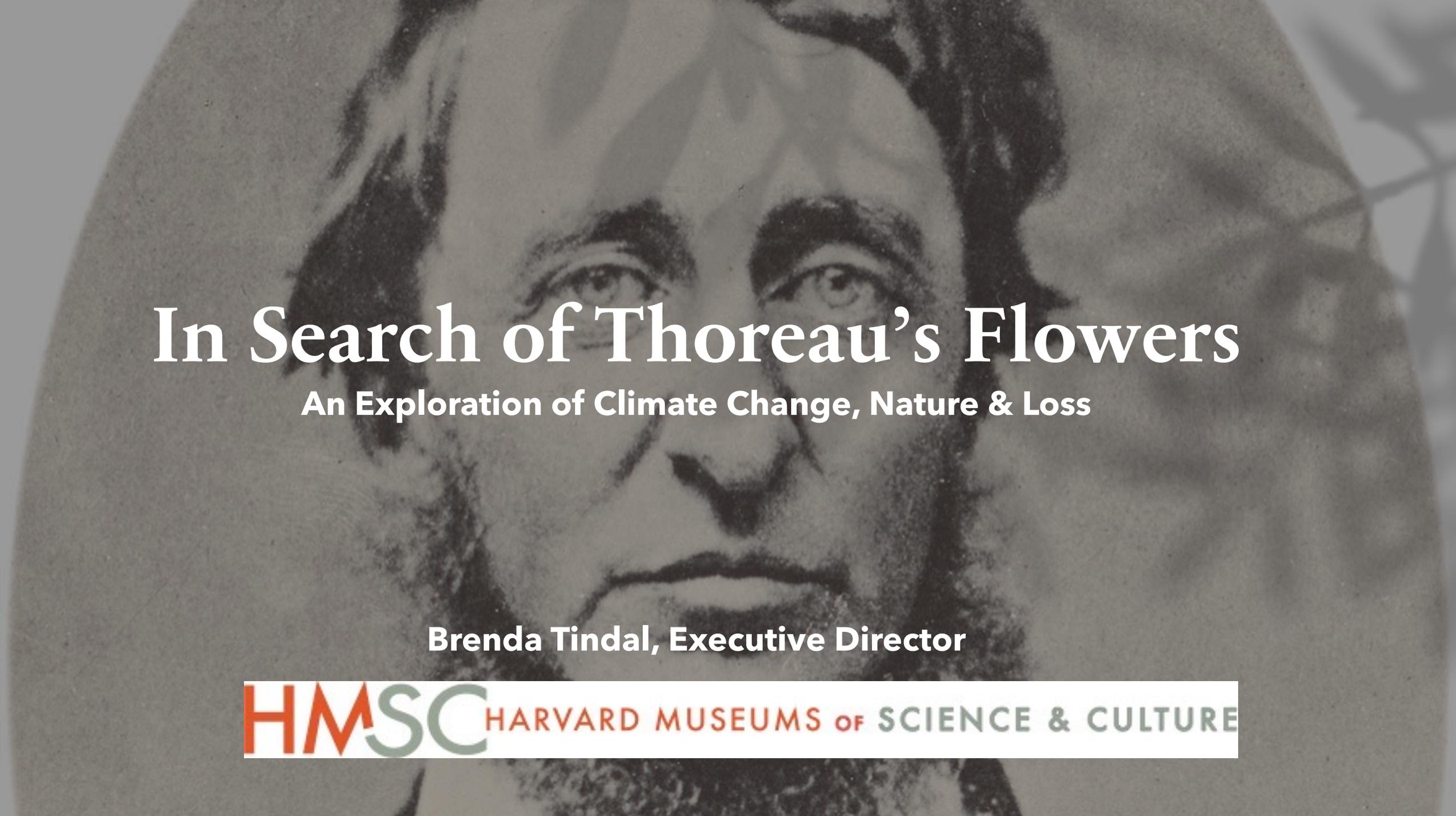
Democratic Exchange
Racial Justice

How do Olmsted's legacy values connect to **contemporary society**?

How can Greater Boston's Olmsted Bicentennial work be a **practice field and learning strategy** for equity and inclusion?



Fog x FLO: Fujiko Nakaya on
the Emerald Necklace (2018)
Photo: Melissa Ostrow



In Search of Thoreau's Flowers

An Exploration of Climate Change, Nature & Loss

Brenda Tindal, Executive Director

HMSC HARVARD MUSEUMS OF SCIENCE & CULTURE

Mission

- To foster curiosity and a spirit of discovery in visitors of all ages, enhancing public understanding of and appreciation for the natural world, science, and human cultures.

HMSC & Climate Change

- Located at the Harvard Museum of Natural History
- *The Climate Change* exhibit draws on the latest scientific information about our warming climate, the global and local consequences, and how to reduce the fossil fuel emissions that cause it and prepare for its effects.
- Collaboration with the Harvard University Center for the Environment and informed by Harvard-led research



In Search of Thoreau's Flowers:

An Exploration of Climate Change, Nature & Loss

An interdisciplinary exhibition and community engagement initiative that will integrate scientific inquiry and immersive visual arts to:

- Engage diverse and intergenerational audiences
- Deepen the public's science literacy
- Build awareness of the impact of climate change on the natural world



In Search of Thoreau's Flowers

The Exhibition

- Centers on the historical and contemporary data related to phenological responses to climate
- Uses the observations, plant specimens, and records collected by Henry David Thoreau—19th century naturalist and philosopher—have been preserved and housed at the Harvard University Herbarium
- Draws upon an extensive corpus of botanical data from multiple repositories throughout the eastern U.S.
- Collectively these records document the profound impact of climate change on individual and entire plant communities, including trends related to spring flowering and leaf-out times—across two centuries



In Search of Thoreau's Flowers

A Multi-pronged & Interdisciplinary Approach

- **Dialectic between past and present** through records, specimens, and data that spans from the 19th to 21st centuries
- **Collaborate** with Harvard faculty members, including evolutionary biologist, Charles Davis, who has been in the vanguard of efforts to investigate and understand phenological response to climate change and led the effort to digitize Harvard's herbarium collections
- **Arts integration:** Work with visual artists who have been commissioned to use digitized images of plant specimens to create an immersive art experience that tracks the loss of species over time

In Search of Thoreau's Flowers

Community Engagement Initiative

To expand the reach of this project, HMSC will:

- **Partner** with school districts and public libraries in Cambridge, Somerville, Chelsea, and Boston with a goal to activate citizen science programs for K-12 students
- **Companion virtual experience** with interactive content and public access to digital herbarium specimens
- Develop a **suite of public programs** and on and offsite **guided visitor experiences** for diverse and intergenerational audiences to explore the exhibit and the topic of climate change and its impact on the local ecosystem

Thank You! Coming Up:

Date TBA – GRCx Climate Change Past, Present, and Future: How Different Perspectives on Time Affect our Responses to Climate Change

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