



April 23, 2025

Doug Cain  
WisDOT Project Manager  
(262) 548-5603

Sent via email to [douglas.cain@dot.wi.gov](mailto:douglas.cain@dot.wi.gov)

**Restore surplus Washington Park land as parkland**

Dear Mr. Cain,

The Olmsted Network is writing to express concern over the proposed conceptual options for the surplus lands surrounding Washington Park in Milwaukee, WI. It has come to our attention that several of the most recent development concepts include the construction of housing on the surplus Washington Park land.

As the first and only national organization dedicated to preserving and protecting the parks, places and principles of Frederick Law Olmsted and the Olmsted firm, we have followed the WIS 175 project closely and would like to respectfully remind all stakeholders that the use of this land is governed by a binding legal and moral commitment.

The January 1, 1937, [Warranty Deed](#) for Washington Park clearly stipulates that this land “shall be used forever solely and exclusively as a public park.” This deed restriction is not a mere formality—it is a declaration of public intent and a lasting promise to the citizens of Milwaukee County.

Olmsted, the father of American landscape architecture, believed parks should be democratic spaces—green refuges accessible to all, fostering health and well-being. Much like Central Park in New York City, Olmsted’s Washington Park in Milwaukee stands as a testament to this philosophy. It is part of a greater legacy that has shaped not only Wisconsin’s landscape but the very idea of public space in the United States.

To allow development that infringes upon this purpose would not only violate the 1937 deed restriction but also erode the historical and cultural integrity of one of Milwaukee's most cherished public spaces.

The Olmsted Network urges you to honor the terms of the original deed and the spirit of Olmsted's enduring vision by ensuring that any surplus land generated during the reconstruction process is restored and reintegrated into Washington Park for continued use by the public.

The preservation of parkland is not simply a legal necessity—it is a civic duty.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Cunningham', with a stylized, cursive script.

Caroline Cunningham  
Interim President,  
Olmsted Network