



December 30, 2024

Mayor Torrance Harvey  
Newburgh, NY

Via Email

Dear Mayor Harvey:

In this holiday season, I want to thank you again for welcoming the Olmsted Network and friends— from near and far —to your amazing city. Our full day of talks, music, Downing Park guided tours and the concluding Hudson River dinner cruise gave us an appreciation of all Newburgh has to offer its citizens and visitors. Nature and history abound, and it was amazing to experience so many of America's 19<sup>th</sup> century iconic landscapes and buildings after only knowing them from books and photographs.

Of course, among these jewels, one stands out as exceptional when it comes to our country's landscape history. That is the amazing design commission for Downing Park. Named to commemorate America's pre-eminent first-generation horticulturalist and landscape gardener, Andrew Jackson Downing — Newburgh's native son — Downing Park is now recognized as one of the last unique parks designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux and their sons, John Charles Olmsted and Downing Vaux.

Of course, Olmsted and Vaux are known as the legendary partners that created not only Central Park in New York City but other historic landmarks across the country, including Prospect Park, Buffalo's parks and parkways and Niagara Falls. Both John Charles and Downing Vaux were founders of the American Society of Landscape Architects, a national organization that is celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

Much to our surprise, despite its national significance, Downing Park has yet to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NHR), *the* list of our country's most important historic properties. This honorific designation, which requires nothing of the city, provides leaders with the opportunity for matching funds to accomplish preservation work that could enhance the public's understanding and appreciation of your great city. It would also help convey the national significance of this park.

**Board of Trustees**

Philip Schultz, Chair  
*Fox Point, WI*

Douglas Luetjen, Vice-Chair  
*Seattle, WA*

Stephanie Crockatt, Secretary  
*Sarasota, FL*

William Bell, Treasurer  
*New York, NY*

Mark Buscaino  
*Washington, DC*

Steven Livengood  
*Washington, DC*

Spencer Tunnell  
*Atlanta, GA*

Bronwyn Nichols-Lodato  
*Chicago, IL*

Mary Caraccioli  
*New York, NY*

Ray Chambers  
*Seattle, WA*

Wyman Winston  
*Cudahy, WI*

Anne "Dede" Neal Petri  
President and CEO

Victoria Vanhuss  
Director Communications & Outreach

Leslie Jacobs  
Office Manager

Madelaine Momot  
Olmsted Online Content Manager

We are well aware of the budgetary impact of a proposed NHR nomination for Downing Park. We want you to know that the Olmsted Network would be willing to help underwrite funding of the nomination process.

At a recent working session, you announced that there would be public meetings about the proposed African American Memorial in the park. Because the addition of this project may impact the ability to obtain historic designation, we are especially interested in a community conversation about the plans – the size, and most especially, the proposed parking lot. Please let us know when and where these meetings will occur so that we can participate in a constructive conversation.

As you know, we have also reached out to the leaders of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area seeking the addition of Downing Park to the National Heritage Area. This addition would advance tourism and visitation, economic development and community amenities while underscoring the historic importance of your park and great city.

All of us from around the country came away from the conference with a new and renewed enthusiasm for Newburgh and all that it has to offer.

We appreciate your recognition of the Olmsted Network and welcome the opportunity to serve as a resource.

Sincerely,



Anne Neal Petri  
President and CEO

Cc: City Council of Newburgh  
City Manager Todd Venning