

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor

City of Boston

Edward J. Collins, Jr.
Collector-Treasurer &
Chief Financial Officer



Robert J. Fleming
Executive Secretary

Cummings Estate Utilization Program

Pertinent Facts

Cummings Estate Property

<u>Woburn</u>		Zoning	R-1
<u>Total Acreage</u>	58.5 Acres		
<u>Assessed Value</u>	2002	\$4.6 million	
	1996	\$3.2 million	

Single Family Residence

<u>Burlington</u>		Zoning	R-0
<u>Total Acreage</u>	159.9 Acres		
<u>Assessed Value</u>	2002	\$25.1 million	
	1997	\$17.2 million	

Single Family Residence

<u>Total Land Area</u>	218.4 acres
<u>Total Assessed Value</u>	\$29.7 million ¹

¹ 45% increase since 1996 valuations.

Treasury-Trust, Room M-5
One City Hall Plaza, Boston, MA 02201
617-635-3414
Fax 617-635-3393

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***Housing Markets
Median Sales Single Family***

	<u>1996</u>	<u>2001</u>
<u>Woburn</u>	\$150,000	\$265,000
<u>Burlington</u>	\$165,000	\$310,000

Woburn

- Population: 35,950
- Elected Officials
 - Mayor: Robert Dever
 - State Senator: Robert Havern
 - State Representative: Carol Donovan

Burlington

- Population: 23,300
- Elected Officials
 - Selectperson (Chair): Juliet Perdechizzi
 - State Senator: Robert Havern
 - State Representative: Charles Murphy
 - Town Administrator: Robert Mercier

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 25, 2001
RE: Mary P.C. Cummings Trust: Proceeds Utilization Plan

- DRAFT -

BACKGROUND The City of Boston, acting as trustee under the bequest of Mary P.C. Cummings, holds title to approximately 180 acres of land in four parcels (the largest of which is 170 acres) along the Woburn/Burlington border in the proximity of Rte. 3A and Rte. 128. These lands were bequested to the City of Boston in the 1920's for the expressed purpose of "*establishing public pleasure grounds for the benefit of the poor of Boston*". The estate which consists of woodlands, small hills and marshland, surrounds the Burlington campus of Northeastern University. The site has been utilized in the past by the City of Boston for a School Department sponsored farming program and a Community Centers sponsored outdoor challenge program for the disabled and non-disabled children. Both of these programs received substantial funding support from the Cummings Trust. Currently, the Town of Burlington's Recreation Department and the Woburn/Burlington Branch YMCA have been allowed site access during the summer months for outdoor programs.

OVERSIGHT As a public charitable trust, the bequest is under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General Office's Division of Public Charities. Thus, any revision to Ms. Cummings original intent would have to be approved by that agency and the Probate Court.

ISSUE How can the proceeds from the leasing or sale of the Cummings' Trust property be utilized to fulfill the intent of Ms. Cummings' bequest in the best possible manner under today's circumstances?

ACTION PLAN In addition to exploring the opportunities for the site's ultimate use, the City should concurrently develop an action plan for the utilization of the proceeds from the leasing or sale of the property.

VALUATION

The value of the property is highly dependent upon its ultimate approved use. For the purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that either a direct sale or long-term lease would net for the Trust approximately \$7.5 to \$10.0 million at present value. The estate's "*highest and best use*" as residential or industrial is estimated at approximately \$20 to \$25 million (Meredith & Grew '99).

PROGRAMMING IDEAS

The following ideas have been developed in order to both facilitate the discussion regarding the Cummings' Trust's ultimate use while providing a framework for the type of programs that are applicable under the guidelines of Ms. Cummings' bequest. The "*Cummings Great Spaces*" and "*Cummings Gardens*" programs are two such programs.

SUMMARY of POSSIBLE UTILIZATION OPTIONS

- A. *Great Spaces Program*: Allows for the creation of 10 or more "great spaces" in various Boston neighborhoods patterned to be similar to the Paul Revere Prado in the North End or Adams Park in Roslindale.
- B. *Cummings Public Gardens at Boston's Parks*: Allows for the creation of up to three "public gardens" within various large parks in Boston (ie) Playstead section of Franklin Park.

These options would be in full compliance with Ms. Cummings' bequest since they could be designed and programmed for various community events and activities (ParkArts, concerts, etc.) that would meet the "*public pleasure grounds*" test and could be located in such a way as to provide a significant benefit to all of Boston's residents, but in particular, those families in need of more direct services.

PROGRAM DETAILS

A. "*Great Spaces Program*"

The City of Boston is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse cities in the United States. Yet, it is also one of the most transient. Population statistics indicate that less than 50% of Boston's current population has resided in the City for more than five years and of the remaining longer-term residents, an additional 25% have moved within the City at least once during the same period. This often creates a distinct feeling of separation between the newer residents and their brethren.

In the old world cities of Europe, every neighborhood has a version of the White Fund's North End Prado, a "*great space*" for local residents and visitors to meet and discuss the events of the day. These locales have become the center of Europe's cultural life. Special ethnic and community events, local ceremonies and activities are held in the areas to promote a

sense of neighborhood pride and belonging. They also provide new comers the opportunity to meet their neighbors in an open and supportive environment. The creation and/or restoration of outdoor public spaces in Brighton's Oak Square, Roslindale's Adams Park and Charlestown's Hayes Square by the City's Edward Ingersoll Browne Fund over the last ten years have clearly demonstrated the viability of this concept. These sites, like the Prado, are approximately 10 – 15,000 square feet in size and include high grade material (brick/granite), public art and passive green spaces. These once "*forgotten*" public sites are now "*great spaces*" for community festivals, concerts, parades and evening weddings.

The "*Great Spaces of Boston*" program is an ideal methodology for enhancing the neighborhoods of Boston's cultural life and community spirit. This program could be readily incorporated within the Mayor's "*Main Streets*" initiative in a manner which would create unique cultural gateways in many of Boston's distinctive communities. Between \$500,000 and \$750,000 could be designated for up to twelve sites. The City's Browne Fund and/or the private Henderson Foundation could provide supplemental funds for additional enhancements including artwork, fountains, water features etc. Concurrently, a portion of the Trust's proceeds could be set aside to provide for the specialized maintenance and repair of the sites. Possible locations for such "*Great Spaces*" include Phillips Square in Chinatown, Maverick or Central Squares in East Boston, the Dudley Square Civic Plaza in Roxbury and the Town Commons in Dorchester to name a few. The Boston "400" planning initiative highlighted the need for such spaces in its recent report while the Turnpike Air Rights Vision also identified locations for a series of new neighborhood parks in the Fenway and Bay Village which could also benefit from this initiative.

B. "*Cummings Public Gardens Program*"

The City of Boston is most fortunate to have been provided with visionaries like Frederick Law Olmstead, who, in the 19th century, saw the importance of providing high quality multi-use green spaces for the benefit of Boston's citizens. Today, at the dawn of the 21st century, Mayor Menino has ushered in a new greenspace revolution through a multi-faceted vision which has helped establish a series of creative greenspace initiatives including the Boston Schoolyard Initiative, the Boston Boulevards Initiative and the East Boston Greenway Program which are changing the image of Boston's neighborhoods. These initiatives have been complemented by the largest addition of new parkland to Boston's inventory in the last 100 years through such projects as the new 80 acre Millennium Park in West Roxbury and the new 67 acre Nature Center and Wildlife Sanctuary in Mattapan. These initiatives have today helped

further solidify the importance of quality greenspaces in the lives of Boston's residents. Yet, within many of the City's largest greenspaces, there is a distinct lack of the type of passive reflective greenspaces that are a necessary complement to the high quality active programs the City sponsors at these sites on a daily basis.

The Menino Administration's commitment of over \$50 million for infrastructure and capital improvements within the City's large Olmstead parks have helped correct many of the deficiencies in these parks resulting from the short-sighted policies of the past. Yet, there remains a need to do more.

The Cummings Public Gardens Program proposes to return two of the lost passive greenspaces of Olmstead's vision to their former glory while concurrently creating a new "public garden" to honor one of Boston's most humble and noteworthy public servants of the 20th century.

The Cummings Public Gardens Program would create three high quality passive greenspace gardens in three of Boston's largest parks. The Playstead at Franklin Park, Ward's Pond in Olmstead Park and a parcel within Moakley Park would be returned to their past glory and redesigned for an enhanced future. These areas were once highly prized and utilized public spaces, but today, they are seldom used and often forgotten.

The "*Cummings Public Gardens Program*" would provide \$2.5 million for each of these locales to create a series of site specific and unique multi-faceted public spaces within the confines of the large active recreational parks they reside within. The Playstead area within Franklin Park would be rebuilt, its historic park views restored and a new outdoor performance area would be added for the public to enjoy; Ward's Pond within Olmstead Park would see its historic stairs and entranceways rebuilt, the long lost public promenade around the Pond would be restored and new planting would return this site to its former prominence; and at Moakley Park, a true public garden, open to the seniors and families of the two abutting BHA Developments he helped protect and looking out to the Boston Harbor Islands and the National Park he helped create would not only restore this Park's former elegance but would forever provide a fitting place to honor a fine Boston gentleman's memory. Long-term specialized maintenance and infrastructure improvements for these gardens would be provided by a specialized reserve fund.

These are just two of the many ideas that can be developed for the utilization of the funds from Ms. Cummings generous bequest.

I hope you find these ideas helpful in your deliberations.