

BOSTON GLOBE LETTERS

Earthshaking: Supportive housing plan at Shattuck raises concerns

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Tonya Hamilton (center) and Tamyka Sanford skated in Franklin Park near the Lemuel Shattuck

Stunning large-scale proposal would be a reckless experiment in a beloved space

The Franklin Park Coalition is stunned by the recent proposal to house hundreds of people with substance use disorder in Franklin Park ([“Housing plan near hospital offers lifeline for needy: Some Franklin Park neighbors question scope,”](#) Page A1, June 22). As far as we know, a facility on this scale is unprecedented. An enormous and untested type of treatment center in our beloved and heavily used public park would amount to a reckless experiment, and its impact would be permanent.

The state placed 60 “low-threshold” beds on the Shattuck campus in 2021. Since then, drug detritus and drug use have increased outside the Shattuck borders with little or no intervention from the city or state. Instead, park neighbors regularly pick up paraphernalia, call 311 to report issues, and call 911 when they witness

overdoses in the park. This experience does not inspire confidence for a radical expansion.

The one submission the state received bears no resemblance to its request for proposal's call for 75 to 100 units of supportive housing, which was based on principles in the [Shattuck Campus Vision Plan](#) agreed to in a community process in which our coalition participated. Now we are looking at housing and beds for more than 800 people, plus a significant expansion of existing outpatient services. The outdoor drug market that is a humanitarian crisis at Mass. and Cass would be vastly expanded here, while being hidden by the park woodlands — a disaster for substance users and current park users alike.

The Shattuck campus was billed as part of a statewide plan to address the housing and opioid crisis occurring throughout the Commonwealth. Yet no statewide plan has emerged. Franklin Park cannot be the only answer to a statewide crisis. The park's neighbors, particularly the communities of color in Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester, who rely on the park for health and outdoor enjoyment, as well as those suffering from the ongoing housing and drug crises deserve much better.

Rickie Thompson
President

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Franklin Park Coalition

The coalition is a largely [Black-led grass-roots organization](#) with more than 6,000 subscribers to its newsletter and has stewarded and advocated for Franklin Park since the 1970s.