

**CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY – LANDSCAPES \* OLMSTED COVER SHEET**

Please submit completed form to: Architectural Survey Coordinator  
State Historic Preservation Office, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development  
450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 5, Hartford, CT 06103

<b>PROPERTY NAME</b> (Current/Historic) Keney Park / Keney Park		
<b>COUNTY</b> Hartford	<b>TOWN/CITY</b> Hartford	<b>VILLAGE</b>
<b>JOB NUMBER</b> <b>Primary:</b> 00803 <b>Related Job Numbers:</b> 00801, 00802, 00804, 00805, 00806, 00807, 00808, 00809, 00810, 00811		
<b>Landscape Type</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park, Parkway, Recreation Area. Scenic Reservation <input type="checkbox"/> City/Regional Plan, Improvement Project <input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision, Suburban Community <input type="checkbox"/> College/School Campus <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds of Residential Institution <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds of Public Building <input type="checkbox"/> Private Estate / Homestead <input type="checkbox"/> Cemetery / Burial Lot / Memorial / Monument <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds of Commercial / Industrial Building <input type="checkbox"/> Country Club / Resort, Hotel, Club <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds of Church <input type="checkbox"/> Arboretum, Garden <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibition, Fair <input type="checkbox"/> Miscellaneous		
<b>DATE OF ORIGINAL PROJECT:</b> 1895-1901; 1920; 1941-1942 <b>SUBSEQUENT PROJECTS:</b>		

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**DESIGNER(S) (primary)**

- Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr.
- John Charles Olmsted
- Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.
- Other firm member(s): Charles Eliot, Percival Gallagher, Arthur A. Shurtleff (Shurcliff)
- Other notes:

Other Designers (prior to or following Olmsted project):

**Repositories consulted with source materials**

- Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Olmsted Archives (online albums)
- Library of Congress
- Olmsted Online (OlmstedOnline.org)
- National Archives and Record Administration
- Connecticut State Library
- Hartford History Center
- Other:

**Observations regarding features characteristic of Olmsted firm design**

Surviving features resulting from the Olmsted firm's design work include: The overall boundaries of the park; Primary entrance at Woodland Street at Greenfield Street; Entrance from Ridgefield Street; Great West Open meadow; Bermed and planted perimeter of the park where necessary to screen out adjacent development; Internal circulation system with pedestrian and vehicular routes separated; Recognition and protection of the native woodland and understory plants at Ten Mile Wood; Ten Mile Wood park entrance at Main Street and Tower Avenue.

At 693 acres, Keney Park is the largest park in Hartford and the largest park accomplished by the Olmsted firm in the state. It has all the distinguishing characteristics of berms at the park's perimeter with associated screen plantings of trees and shrubs to block views into and out of the park from the encroaching city, great meadows, and separation of vehicular and pedestrian circulation paths. There is no great body of water, but the size and breadth of the meadows is a substitute. The quality of the native vegetation was recognized by Charles Eliot and here, more than other places, the firm worked to plant and encourage the protection and promotion of the native flora.

Department of Economic and  
Community Development

State Historic Preservation Office



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The Olmsted Brothers firm served as the Landscape Architects of record for many of Hartford's parks between the late nineteenth and mid twentieth centuries. As Keney Park was being developed they were also working at other sites around the city with the hope of creating a system of parks and parkways as they had done in other cities, such as Buffalo and Louisville.

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I D E N T I F I C A T I O N	<b>PROPERTY NAME</b> (Current/Historic) Keney Park / Keney Park (Job #00803)													
	<b>COUNTY</b> Hartford	<b>TOWN/CITY</b> Hartford	<b>VILLAGE</b>											
	<b>STREET AND NUMBER (and/or location)</b> 337 Vine Street													
	<b>OWNER(S)</b> <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUNICIPAL <input type="checkbox"/> STATE <input type="checkbox"/> FEDERAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRIBAL <input type="checkbox"/> EASEMENT City of Hartford Parks and Recreation													
	<b>LAT/LONG COORDINATES</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Center Point <input type="checkbox"/> Polygon 41.797675, -72.684498													
	<b>PARCEL INFORMATION</b> <b>Acres:</b> 693 <b>PID(s):</b> <b>MBLU(s):</b> 603004001, 603003003, 603004001													
	<b>USE (Present)</b> City park		<b>(Historic)</b> City park											
	<b>SURVEY TYPE</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Reconnaissance-Level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intensive-Level													
	D E S C R I P T I O N	<b>LANDSCAPE TYPE</b> (Check all that apply) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Designed <input type="checkbox"/> Vernacular <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural/Ethnographic <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Linear <input type="checkbox"/> System/Multi-Site <input type="checkbox"/> Residential <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional <input type="checkbox"/> Maritime <input type="checkbox"/> Green <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park- Active Recreation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park-Passive Recreation or Commemorative <input type="checkbox"/> Other – specify:												
		<b>DATE OR PERIOD</b> (Include source of date) 1895-1901; 1920; 1941-1942 (Olmsted Research Guide Online)												
<b>DESIGNERS</b> (Entities that created, designed, constructed, or shaped the landscape) Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., John Charles Olmsted, Charles Eliot, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Percival Gallagher, A. A. Shurtleff (Shurcliff)														
<b>DESIGN SCOPE</b> (For designed landscapes, explain what work was commissioned) Layout and development of Hartford’s largest park with the intent to preserve the extant woodland and landscape. In addition to Olmsted, Sr, greatest number (5) of Olmsted firm members involved														
<b>LOCATION OF DRAWINGS/IMAGES/SOURCE MATERIAL</b> Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, Library of Congress – Olmsted Associates Resources														
<b>VISUAL ASSESSMENT SUMMARY</b> (Check boxes for the qualities that are key features of this landscape. If attaching descriptive narrative, consider these categories.)  <table border="0"> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Layout &amp; Spatial Relationships</b></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Water Features</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Circulation</b></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Drainage</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Topography</b></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Buildings/Structures/Objects</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Plantings/Vegetation</b></td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Recreational Space</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Views &amp; Vistas</b></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other:</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Boundaries</b></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Design Style:</b></td> </tr> </table>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Layout &amp; Spatial Relationships</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Water Features</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Circulation</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Drainage</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Topography</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Buildings/Structures/Objects</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Plantings/Vegetation</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Recreational Space</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Views &amp; Vistas</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Boundaries</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Design Style:</b>
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<b>C O N D I T I O N</b>	<b>EXISTING CONDITION</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recognizable <input type="checkbox"/> Not Extant/Not Recognizable Changes: Improved active recreation: Cricket fields and stands, ballfields, basketball courts,, improved/enlarged Pond House, closing/loss of park roads		
	<b>POTENTIAL THREATS</b> <input type="checkbox"/> None Known <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure Improvements <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Onsite Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adjacent Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Vandalism <input type="checkbox"/> Overuse <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deferred Maintenance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Invasive Vegetation <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental – specify: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other – specify: _____		
<b>E N V I R O N M E N T</b>	<b>SETTING</b> (One sentence description) North of the city, the large property included many natural areas including the Ten Mile Wood.		
	<b>VEGETATION</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maintained Open Land <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natural Open Land <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Woodland/Forest <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wetland <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specimen Plants <input type="checkbox"/> Other – specify: _____		
	<b>SLOPE</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Level/Nearly Level <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moderate Slope <input type="checkbox"/> Steep Slope                      Elevation (ASML): 17-169'		
	<b>CONNECTICUT PHYSIOGRAPHIC PROVINCE (Eco-Region)</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Northwest Highlands <input type="checkbox"/> Western Uplands <input type="checkbox"/> Western Coastal Slope <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Central Valley <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Coastal Slope <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Uplands		
	Soil Description: Varied soil types, with Ninigret fine sandy loam, Agawam fine sandy loam, and Windsor loamy sand most prominent; generally well drained.		
<b>H I S T O R Y</b>	<b>SUMMARY</b> (Provide a brief overview in this space. More detailed narrative can be attached.) <i>See Continuation Sheet</i>		
	<b>NATIONAL REGISTER RECOMMENDATION</b> <b>Entered by:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Recommended Eligible (Criterion <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D) <input type="checkbox"/> Not Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Not Evaluated Explanation: Upper Albany HD listing devotes one paragraph to Keney Park-separate nomination needed NR Listed: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District-Contributing <input type="checkbox"/> District-Non-Contributing <input type="checkbox"/> Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient Documentation		
<b>R E P O R T E R B Y</b>	<b>NAME</b> Lucy Lawliss	<b>ORGANIZATION</b> Red Bridge Group	<b>DATE</b> December 2021
	<b>ADDRESS</b> 2100 Green Street, San Francisco, California 94123		
	<b>PHOTOGRAPHER</b> Lucy Lawliss	<b>DATE</b> September 17, 2021	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Permission to use photographs (public domain)
	<b>SURVEY METHOD</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site Visit/In-Person Walkover <input type="checkbox"/> Drive-through/Windshield <input type="checkbox"/> Digital Review Only		

**ATTACHMENTS (Include the following items in the PDF)**

- Location Map    Site Map    Photographs with captions    Historic Images (if applicable)  
 Narrative Description of Property    Historical Narrative of Property    References

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY (Visual Assessment Summary)**

**Layout & Spatial Relationships:** Keney Park is Hartford's largest park (693 acres) and with pre-existing city streets that run mostly east/west across the park, it exists in three sections, largely describing their vegetation: The West Open (East and West Meadow), Bushland, and 10 Mile Woods, an area known to F. L. Olmsted Sr. as a child in Hartford.

**Circulation:** The park is a dual system of park roads and paths. Many of the roads in the 10 Mile Woods section have been blocked to vehicles and are footpaths through the woods.

**Topography:** The rolling topography was heavily shaped in the Olmsted design for the park, except for the 10 Mile Woods section which was recognized for having valuable native woodlands and understory plants.

**Plantings/Vegetation:** Under Charles Eliot's direction, the use of native plants was strongly encouraged if anything was to be added because of the existing quality of the native vegetation in the 10 Mile Woods. A wide berm was shaped and planted with trees and shrubs to block the view of the encroaching city.

**Views & Vistas** Views and vistas in Keney Park are internally created experiences across meadows and along interior circulation roads and paths. Vegetation was planted to give depth to large spaces and to direct and shape views.

**Buildings/Structures/Objects:** Other than the three entrance gates, there are very few historic structures in the park except for the brick house at the Main Street entrance to 10 Mile Woods where there is a brick house, currently being used by the Keney Park Sustainability Project.

**Recreational Space:** Although discouraged in the original scheme, active recreation has been added to the park including ball fields, basketball courts, cricket fields with grandstands and a golf course (the course is on land that was added to the park).

**HISTORICAL NARRATIVE**

As Hartford grew into a bustling urban city in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Frederick Law Olmsted called for creation of parks as early as 1870. It was not until the close of the century that this vision started to become a reality, largely through the efforts of Rev. Francis Goodwin who spurred what became known as the "Rain of Parks." Goodwin's greatest success came from Henry Keney's donation of land and money for a 600-plus acre park that would bear his name.<sup>1</sup>

Upon Keney's death in 1894, a trust was established with directions from Keney's will to acquire additional land for the park before conveying it to city ownership. In 1895, Frederick Law Olmsted was consulted to recommend land purchases, beginning a connection that led to the firm's design of the park.<sup>2</sup> A newspaper article in 1913 recounted "the preliminary survey of the land, done through four feet of snow, was the last bit of work done by the senior partner of that firm."<sup>3</sup>

Charles Eliot, John Charles Olmsted, Olmsted Jr., and Percival Gallagher designed the park as part of the Hartford Park System. By March of 1896, plans were well underway. A letter from Goodwin to the firm included a sketch which he explained showed revisions to "your plan for Keney Park."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "A History of Keney Park," Todd Jones, Hartford History Center, Hartford Public Library, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "Many Take Walk in Keney Park," *Hartford Courant*, Hartford Connecticut, December 14, 1913. Although, this could not have been the case, because Sr. retired from the firm by 1897 and died in 1903.

<sup>4</sup> Project Correspondence, Library of Congress.

**CONTINUATION SHEET Keney Park (#00803) / 337 Vine Street, Hartford**

In September of 1897, John Charles Olmsted wrote an extensive description of the park, noting that it was to have four principal divisions, defined by vegetation and landscape.<sup>5</sup> The four sections were divided by the two streets which then crossed the park: Tower Avenue and Vine Street. The West Open section (167 acres) featured the Woodland Street entrance and pond. It was separated by the next section, known as Bushland (68 acres), by Vine Street. Tower Avenue then divided Bushland from the next two interconnected sections: Ten Mile Woods (181 acres) and East Open (105 acres), where the Windsor Street entrance was located.<sup>6</sup>

In January of 1898, the Olmsted firm provided an estimation of cost for labor and materials for road and walkway construction, creating a pond, landscaping, and plants. This was followed in February with a report which discussed making Keney Park part of Hartford's park system. The report stated as a "general principle" each park "should embrace features which would not only be interesting but should be as different as possible from those contained in other parks in the city."<sup>7</sup>

Park Superintendent George Parker would later observe about Keney Park's uniqueness: "It is the most man-made park in the city, costing nearly double to construct than all the other parks of Hartford. . . There is hardly a foot of ground that has not been graded."<sup>8</sup>

Creation of the park's "natural" setting required movement of more than a half a million yards of earth and the planting of many native trees and shrubs. Thirty-foot-high hills were created, while sixteen-foot-high hills were flattened, nine miles of red sandstone roads and fences were built around almost the entire perimeter of the park.

In 1900, problems created by having both automobiles and horses in the park led the park's trustees to ban automobiles. They explained "(there) are many inexperienced drivers who cannot control a terrified horse. The drives are narrow and very circuitous, and for a nervous horse to come suddenly upon a horseless carriage is a danger to which those who drive in the park ought not to be subjected." The regulation remained until 1912 when limited automobile access was allowed.<sup>9</sup>

The trustees continued to make additions and changes to the park including building a gateway to the Woodland Street Entrance featuring four granite pavilions (1902); a cast iron fence and bronze plaques recognizing Henry Keney's gift of the park at the Woodland Street entrance (1905); and a sheepfold with a barn and capacity for 200 sheep (1907).<sup>10</sup>

The park would become a popular place for Hartford residents in the coming decades. In 1913, the *Hartford Courant* reported on a "walk talk" given by Superintendent Parker to 50 participants. Parker relayed the story of Keney's gift of funds for the purchase of land and an endowment. The article noted: "Keney Park does not cost the city of Hartford a cent for maintenance . . . The work, however, is done under the supervision of the park department and to all intents and purposes, the park is part of the system of breathing places which have made Hartford famous."<sup>11</sup>

In 1924, the park was turned over to the city of Hartford in a public ceremony celebrating the life and gift of Henry Keney.

**REFERENCES**

Todd Jones. A History of Keney Park (unpublished report). Hartford History Center, 2011.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> "A History of Keney Park," Todd Jones, Hartford History Center, Hartford Public Library, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Project Correspondence, Library of Congress

<sup>8</sup> "A History of Keney Park," Todd Jones, Hartford History Center, Hartford Public Library, 2011.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

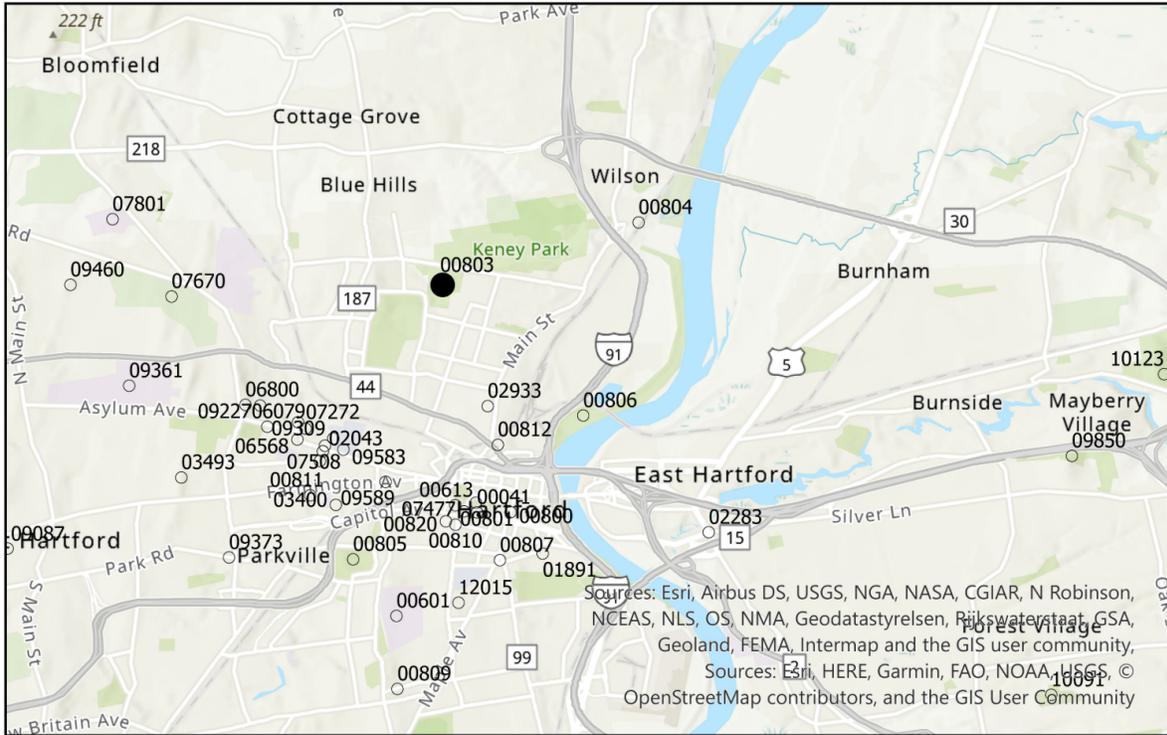
<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> "Many Take Walk in Keney Park," *Hartford Courant*, Hartford Connecticut, December 14, 1913.

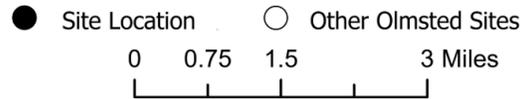
**CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY – LANDSCAPES \* OLMSTED PROJECT**

CONTINUATION SHEET Keney Park (#00803) / 337 Vine Street, Hartford

**GRAPHICS**

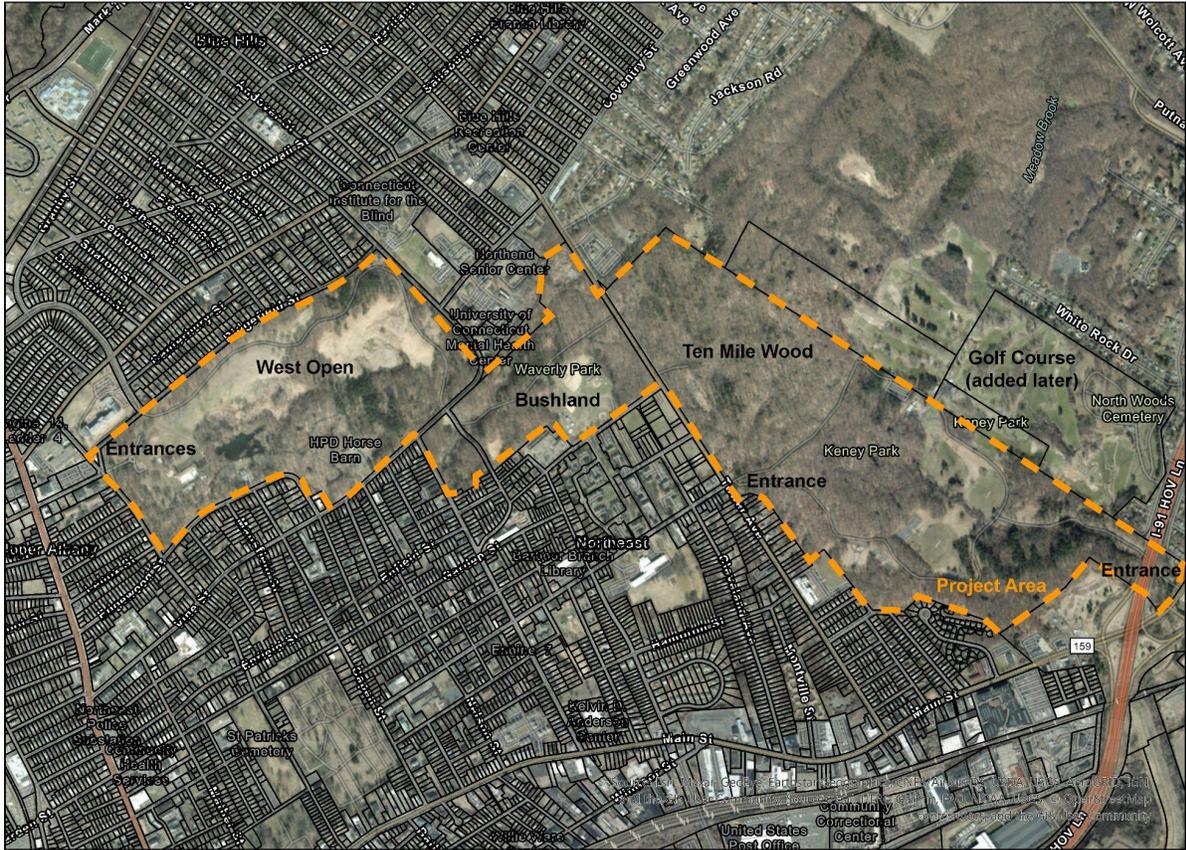


JOB: 00803 LOCATION: Hartford

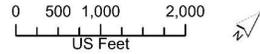


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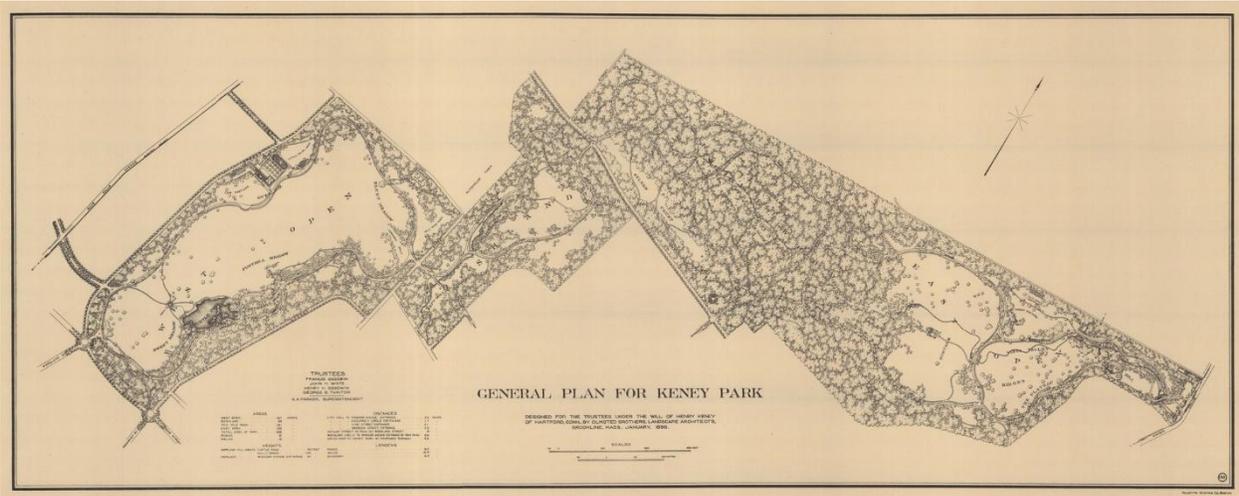


JOB: 00803 LOCATION: Hartford PROJECT: Keney Park



**CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY – LANDSCAPES \* OLMSTED PROJECT**

**CONTINUATION SHEET Keney Park (#00803) / 337 Vine Street, Hartford**



General Plan for Keney Park, 1898, Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects. (Source: courtesy Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site)



JOB: 00803 LOCATION: Hartford PROJECT: Keney Park

Contemporary aerial photograph overlaid with historic plan for Keney Park. (Source: Kevan Klosterwill)

CONTINUATION SHEET Keney Park (#00803) / 337 Vine Street, Hartford



Looking north into park at Greenfield Street entrance with Keney memorial gate. (All photographs taken by authors in 2021 unless otherwise noted)



Detail of Henry Keney plaque.



View looking northeast across the West Meadow.



View from Vine Street west into Ebony Horsewomen venue.



View looking west to Turtle Pond with Pond House on the right.



Stone monuments at the Barbour Entrance off Tower Avenue with access to Ten Mile Woods.



Characteristic vegetation off trails in the Ten Mile Woods – note the fern floor that Charles Eliot remarked on his park report.



Keney Park Cricket Field #2 at the north end of the West Meadow area of the park. Entrance of Vine Street at Love Lane.



Keney Park Golf clubhouse in the 10 Mile Woods section of the park – golf course itself on land that was added to the park.



View looking southeast at Ten Mile Woods entrance to the park at Main Street (also the entrance to the Keney Park Sustainability Project).



Culvert crossing and characteristic vegetation edge along park drive at the Ten Mile Woods section of the park.