June 1, 2007

Linda Maio, City Council Member
City of Berkeley
2180 Milvia Street
Berkeley, California 94704

Dear Councilwoman Maio:

On behalf of the National Association for Olmsted Parks (NAOP), I am writing in support of the rehabilitation plan for historic Piedmont Way in Berkeley, CA. Specifically, NAOP supports the request from City Councilmember Gordon Wozniak to include $75,000 in the city budget to hire a landscape architect to develop contract documents for the rehabilitation plan.

NAOP’s mission is to advance the principles and vision of Frederick Law Olmsted, America’s first landscape architect, and to advocate for his legacy of irreplaceable parks and landscapes that define communities and enrich people’s lives. NAOP is one of the leading national organizations devoted to the preservation and rehabilitation of historic parks, and achieves its mission through advocacy, research, communication and by strengthening the network among historic park stewards. Piedmont Way was designed in 1865 by Olmsted. Though extraordinarily prolific in many areas of landscape design, he is best known for his public parks such as Central and Prospect Parks in New York City, and the Emerald Necklace in Boston. He is credited with the introduction of grand and beautiful green spaces in urban centers, places where city dwellers could escape the pressures of urban density and reconnect with nature, and the introduction of landscaped parkways in suburban residential areas. In fact, Piedmont Way was part of his Berkeley Campus Plan and the concept he uses here became a pattern he developed further at two important historic suburbs: Riverside in Chicago, Illinois and Druid Hills in Atlanta, Georgia.

NAOP has worked with Friends of Piedmont Way since 2003. We encourage the City of Berkeley to take action to restore, protect and preserve its priceless Olmsted treasure, a feature unique to the surrounding neighborhood, the community and the City of Berkeley as a whole. Furthermore, studies have shown that the maintenance and preservation of parks – both historic and non-historic – has a direct correlation to the economic vitality of a city, so this should be added incentive to offer the best possible quality of life to current and potential residents.

Please do not hesitate to contact NAOP if you need additional information or have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Catherine Nagel
Executive Director