

“It is worth contemplating what John Olmsted and Charles Eliot might think if they were to see Keney Park in its present condition. More than a century has passed since they first laid eyes on Keney Park, and many of the original trails and park roads remain in the location they were first set down. Yet, much has changed. The forest is older, and some common species are gone while others have recently returned. Passenger pigeons, undoubtedly once regular visitors to the Park, are now extinct, and most grassland species of birds and butterflies have been extirpated. White-tailed deer were scarce in the state after the Civil War to the 1960s, but are now abundant in the park. Other species have prospered in recent years and are observed regularly in the Park, including wild turkey and black bear. Indeed, the Park supports regionally important populations of migrant songbirds, especially wood thrush and red-eyed vireo.

It is likely that Olmsted and Eliot would quickly recognize many changes in animal and plant distribution in the Park. But how would they feel about the quality of experience provided to each human visitor?

The City remains committed to the vision set forth by Olmsted and Eliot, that Keney Park contain no artificial landscapes, such as manicured lawns or formal gardens, and “to preserve and to encourage wildness of vegetation, planting only native trees and shrubs...” Going forward, Keney Park will figure prominently in any assessment of the attractiveness of Hartford as a place live and work, not just to visit. It is hard to imagine a more verdant and sylvan setting for Hartford residents to thrive.”