



March 12, 2021

Re: FY2022 Parks and Recreation Budget

Dear Mayor Walsh:

We have been grateful for your leadership as we face the important recovery that lies ahead for Boston's residents and our communities. The COVID 19 crisis has highlighted the critical importance of our parks and open spaces as a shared resource for communities and families in need of places to recreate, gather safely outside, and find solace in nature. These spaces provide invaluable ecological functions including cooling urban heat islands, filtering air and water, recharging groundwater and redirecting stormwater, and improving public health outcomes.

Thanks to government agencies and officials working in partnership with community advocates, all Boston residents are now within a 10-minute walk of a park or open space. However, to achieve true equity in parks and open space, Boston must invest in frontline communities that need dedicated resources to ensure that these myriad benefits reach those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

About Boston Park Advocates

The Boston Park Advocates is a city-wide network of over 125 parks and open space organizations. We work to connect park stewards by sharing information and resources, facilitating partnerships, and creating a united voice for greenspace investments and maintenance. We write today to request your prioritization of key funding areas and ongoing support for the Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD) in the City's Fiscal Year 2022 budget.

The Need

Despite successful efforts under your leadership to increase investments in parks and open space during your tenure, BPRD's budget is still less than 1% of the City's total budget, which is insufficient to support the ongoing work of enhancing and maintaining these greenspaces. In order to have a vibrant and resilient parks system for all, we urge you to increase the BPRD's budget to be 1% of the City's budget. Community Preservation Act funds should not be considered a replacement for adequately funding BPRD.

Budget Requests

There are critical areas that need investment to meet these goals, and we request that in FY 2022, your budget include the following allocations.

Recreational funding: We support the BPRD request for a one-time allocation of funding to sustain important activities for children and families across Boston's parks. This funding will ensure that BPRD can continue to develop safe ways for Bostonians to enjoy our common natural resources.

- Background: BPRD has pivoted during the pandemic to provide innovative programming to engage children, families, elders and singles in safe activities in parks. One example of their innovative programming is the February “StoryWalk” series in five Boston playgrounds for children and caregivers to explore literacy while enjoying fresh air. Vendor fees were waived during the pandemic which leaves BPRD without resources to cover costs of free or low cost recreational programs.

Animal Care and Control: Given the shift of Animal Control from ISD to BPRD and the need for this unit to have adequate capacity for its work, we ask that Animal Care & Control be afforded a permanent line item in the BPRD budget.

- Background: Historically the funding for the Animal Control Division was generated through its fee system for pet registration and vaccination; pandemic-related impacts have reduced this funding by 30%. At the same time pet ownership has skyrocketed during the pandemic, and animals have tremendous, often negative impact on parks. Animal Control provides important resources for pet owners as well as public education on their responsibilities to the community.

Funding for dedicated Parks and Recreation Department General Counsel: We ask that the BPRD be assigned a dedicated General Counsel similar to other departments.

- Background: Parks improvement projects are often delayed due to outstanding legal approvals. With the additions of the Animal Care division to the BPRD and the growing number of Community Preservation Act open space projects, those delays have increased.

We also ask that critical items supported in last year’s budget be continued in FY’22:

Funding for a second shift for parks: A second shift to cover 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. maintenance Wednesday through Sunday, operating out of Franklin Park, will ensure that parks stay safe, clean, and usable for all residents and visitors.

- Background: The growing use and pressures on parkland means that providing clean, safe, and accessible parks requires increased staffing. Currently, park maintenance teams work from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Yet, parks are used week-long and at all hours, particularly during the weekends.

Urban Wilds: This program needs the continued support of an additional staff member.

- Background: The Urban Wilds program consists of one staff person managing the entire network of 143 parcels of urban wilds across the city. Continued support of an additional staff member would improve stewardship of these important ecological resources, which are threatened by invasive species encroachment and illegal dumping, and help bolster the city’s equitable support of its open spaces.

Parcel Priority Plan: We ask that this plan, started in 2017 to identify open space parcels for consideration as permanently protected open space, be advanced to completion.

Urban Forest Master Plan and arboriculture capacity: We support the continued investment in the development of the Urban Forest Master Plan and the BPRD request for an additional arborist for its Tree Care program.

- Background: A robust forestry plan promises expanded tree canopy accompanied by many ecological, physical and psychological benefits for Boston residents, particularly in under-canopied neighborhoods such as East Boston, Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan which are also urban heat islands. However, these investments must be sustained and protected by skilled arborists.

The city's urban forest deserves both the development of the plan and the capacity within its department to execute it.

Thank you again for your leadership and your support for Boston residents and their parks. We look forward to working alongside you and others to improve, maintain, and sustain Boston's greenspaces.

Sincerely,

Boston Park Advocates Bostonparkadvocates.org
bostonparkadvocates@gmail.com

cc: Budget Director Justin Sterritt
Chief of Environment, Energy & Open Space Christopher Cook
Boston Parks & Recreation Department Commissioner Ryan Woods
Boston City Councilors: Kim Janey, Annissa Essaibi-George, Michael Flaherty, Julia Mejia, Michelle Wu, Lydia Edwards, Ed Flynn, Frank Baker, Andrea Campbell, Ricardo Arroyo, Matt O'Malley, Kenzie Bok, Liz Breadon

Sign-Ons

ORGANIZATIONS

All Dorchester Sports and Leadership	Friends of Savin Hill Park
Arborway Coalition	Friends of Symphony Park
Boston FLAG Flag Football	Friends of the Boston Schoolyards (FOTBS)
Boston Harbor Now	Friends of the Golden Stairs Terrace-Albert Junior
Charlesgate Alliance	Lombardi Garden
Clean Up Boston	Friends of the Mary Ellen Welch Greenway
COGdesign	Friends of the Muddy River
Conservation Law Foundation	Friends of the Public Garden
David Bartsch Landscape Architecture LLC	Garden Club of the Back Bay
Eastie Farm	Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council
Emerald Necklace Conservancy	Keep Hyde Park Beautiful
Esplanade Association	Mandela Residents Cooperative Association, Inc
F.L.A.G FLAG Football	Mary Ellen Welch Greenway East Boston Greenway
Fairmount Greenway	Morville House
Fenway Alliance	Mt. Bowdoin Betterment Association (MBBA)
Fenway Civic Association	Mt. Hope Canterbury Neighborhood Association
Fenway Garden Society, Inc.	Muddy Water Initiative
Four Corners Main Streets	Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay
Franklin Park Coalition	New England United for Justice
Franklin Park Tennis Association	Pate Landscape Architecture Inc.
Friends of Belle Isle Marsh	Responsible Urbanites For Fido - RUFF Boston
Friends of Chandler Pond	North End
Friends of Christopher Columbus Park	Roslindale Green & Clean
Friends of Cuttillo Park, Inc.	Southwest Boston CDC
Friends of Geneva Cliffs	Speak for the Trees, Boston
Friends of Hayes Park	The Friends of Coppens Square
Friends of Peters Park	The Garden Club of the Back Bay
Friends of Ramler Park	The Harborkeepers

The Trustees - Boston Region
 The United Neighborhood Association
 Thriving Places Collaborative

Tree Eastie
 West of Washington Coalition
 Zoo New England

INDIVIDUALS (alpha by last name)

First Name	Last Name	Neighborhood
Domenic	Accetta	Fields Corner, Dorchester
Randall	Albright	Back Bay
Jonathan	Allen	Jamaica Plain
Josh	Altidor	Hyde park
Alexander	Alvanos	Jamaica Plain
Ann	Babbitt	North End/Waterfront
Gay	Bailey	South End
Judith & Brook	Baker	Codman Square, Dorchester
Declan	Battles	East Boston
Lisa	Beatman	Roslindale
Marcos	Beleche	Roxbury
Susan	Benveniste	North End
Laura	Benvenuto	North End
Elizabeth	Bertolozzi	South End
Ethan	Binns	North End
Niki	Blaker	North End
Evan	Brinkman	Dorchester
Samantha	Brock	North End
Jeanne	Burlingame	Beacon Hill
Tina	Busa	North End
Ania	Camargo	Beacon Hill
Tracey	Cannistraro	
Mary	Carbonara	Lower Mills, Dorchester
Marta	Carney	Dorchester
Vanessa	Centofanti	North End
Mary	Cerulli	South End
Stephen	Chase	Fenway
Fiona	Coker	Dorchester
Claire	Corcoran	South End
Diane	Cylik	Hyde Park
Karen	D'Amato	Jamaica Plain

Steve	Datish	Dorchester
Ann	DeLuca	North End
Meghan	Denenberg	North End/Waterfront
Iris	Du Pont	Four Corners, Dorchester
Diane Carter	Duggan	Roslindale
Linda	Esposito	South End
Barbara	Faires	South End
Rev. Kelly	Fassett	Dorchester
Patrick	Filipi	Clam Point, Dorchester
Christopher	Fincham	Wharf District
Caroline	Foscato	South End
Sarah	Freeman	Jamaica Plain
Jennifer	Girvin	South End
Lee	Glenn	Parkside
Lauren	Goldberg	Allston
Rachel	Goodwin	Dorchester
Brittany	Gravelly	Jamaica Plain
Mary	Gregory	Seaport
Marjorie	Greville	Beacon Hill
Kelsey	Griggs DeCarolis	
MaryGaye	Grizwin	North End/West End/Causeway St Hub
Sue	Guptill	Hyde Park
Andrew	Haile	Dorchester
Clayton	Harper	Jamaica Plain
Timothy	Hegan	Kenmore Square
Kirsten	Hoffman	North End
Erica	Holm	Jamaica Plain
Angel	Howell	Roxbury
Ellen	Hume	North End
John	Iappini	Downtown
Kay	Ives	South End
Thomas	Jacobson	
H. Parker	James	Charlesgate
Yvette	Jarreau	South End
Jennifer	Jones	Jamaica Plain
Pamela	Jorgensen	Fenway

Kristin	Kalani	North End
Katie	Kelly	North End
Elizabeth	Kelly	Waterfront
Mark	Kiefer	Beacon Hill
Mary	Kinsella Scannell	Dorchester
David	Kubiak	North End
Sara	Kudra	Four Corners
Jeannine	Laing	Dorchester/Roxbury
Theresa	Latson	Dorchester
Jennifer	Leonard	Mission Hill
Heidi	Lindert	Hyde Park
Marissa	Lorenzo	North End
Nadine	Marcellus	Mattapan
Brian	Marsh	Beacon Hill
Bill	Masterson	East Boston
Kathleen	Masterson	East Boston
Kay	Mathew	Roxbury
Erica	Mattison	Jamaica Plain
Charlie	McCabe	
Jack	McCarthy	North End
Annie	McCue	South End
Andrew	McDonald	North End
Jeff	McGuire	JP
Alison	McRae	Jamaica Plain
David	Meshoulam	Boston
Suzanne	Missert	Hyde Park
Kristen	Mobilia	Fenway
Virginia	Morales	North End
David	Moss	North End
Janean	Muhammad	Hyde Park
Sara	Muspratt	West Roxbury
Beth	Nagy	Dorchester
Emma	Neilander	North End
Jane	O'Reilly	East Boston
Terese	OConnell	North End/Waterfront
Patrick	OConnell	Northend/Waterfront
Myleisy	Oliveras	West Roxbury

Carolyn	Osteen	Beacon Hill
Ann	Pellagrini	Fields Corner, Dorchester
Tyler	Perry	North End
Margaret	Pokorny	Back Bay
Anya	Potter	North End
Susan	Povak	Brighton
Mike	Prokosch	Dorchester
Kelley	Ready	Dorchester
Robyn	Reed	North End
Caroline	Reeves	Back Bay/Fenway
Joan	Resnikoff	South End
Carl	Richter	South End
Eileen	Ridge	Dorchester
Caroline	Rotch	South End
Sierra	Rothberg	Dorchester
Patricia	Sabbey	North End
Gina	Schaak	North End
Stefanie	Scheffer	Back Bay
Mike	Schiano	North End
Natasha	Seaman	Jamaica Plain
Molly	Sherden	Beacon Hill
Seth	Singer	North End
Beverly	Sky	South End and Fenway
Cynthia	Smith	Downtown Crossing
Janet	Smith	Hyde Park
Rhett	Sosebee	North End
Andrea	Southworth	North End
Kenneth	Talbot	Dorchester
Jason	Tarzia	Dorchester
Patricia	Thiboutot	North End/Waterfront
Kannan	Thiruvengadam	East Boston
Jane	Thorbeck	South End
Bonnie	Thryselius	Fenway
Vidya	Tikku	City of Boston
Margaret	Toro	Dorchester
Alfred	Van Ranst	Beacon Hill

Christopher	Wells	North End
Benjamin	Wetherill	West Roxbury
Michelle	White	Franklin Park
Olive	Woodward	Codman Square
Sarah	Woolverton	South End
Brent	Zeigler	Dorchester
Zara	Zsido	