



2023 City Council Candidate Questionnaire Councilor Sharon Durkan, District 8

1. What Boston Park or open space do you visit most often? Why?

Given that I live in Beacon Hill, I visit Boston Common, Public Garden, and Commonwealth Avenue Mall most often. I love all of District 8's parks and openspace, and it's impossible to choose a favorite, but I likely spend the most time walking from Beacon Hill to Back Bay through the Public Garden. The footbridge of the Public Garden is in my logo because when I was walking through the Public Garden in 2015. I was newly arrived in Boston, and I had just taken a role on then-City Councilor Michelle Wu's reelection, and moved here 3 days after getting the job and moved to Beacon Hill. I remember walking across the footbridge of the Public Garden and realizing I chose the right place to live, and I haven't looked back since. Throughout my campaign, I grew to love the time I spend in the Back Bay Fens, and Rambler Park. These greenspaces and the communities they create, are essential for cultural vibrancy.

2. Do you have a connection to a community garden or gardens? Which one(s)?

Yes, as the Representative for the Fenway Victory Gardens, I've been able to walk through personal gardens and I'm excited to partner with them as their City Councilor. There are various community gardens in the district, and excited to find ways to partner!

3. What role do parks and open space have in your goals for climate adaptation and mitigation?

Open space and protective greenery is a key part of Boston's future climate resiliency. I look forward to working with Boston Parks and Recreation and Boston Environment Department prepare for the changing climate and create ample green space for every constituent on D8. I filed my first hearing order with Councilor Liz Breadon and Gabriela Coletta around stormwater and flooding, and I look forward to working with the Director of Green Infrastructure, Kate England, Parks Commissioner Ryan Woods, and Chief Mariama White Hammond on making sure Boston is working towards a cohesive vision for the environment.

Our public parks and open spaces are a treasured part of District 8—and they make our neighborhoods more resilient by buffering increasingly severe storms and absorbing stormwater run-off. We must ensure District 8's open spaces continue to serve both the people and the environment.

4. How will you increase access to parks and open space in our residential neighborhoods?

This is a huge priority of mine! Boston has made impressive strides bringing equitable parks within reach of almost every resident. One project I'm an avid supporter of is the Charles Gate Revitalization project, I am excited to partner with the Emerald Necklace Conservatory, Charlesgate Alliance, Esplanade Association, DCR, and MassDOT to ensure its successful completion over the expected 10-year timeline. This project will connect Newbury Street to

Kenmore Square with a footbridge over the Muddy River, connecting District 8 to the river in an important new way. This will be the only location in Boston where you can walk between the City and the esplanade without the use of a pedestrian bridge. I was excited to be at the opening of the Carlton Street Footbridge, while not in Boston (Brookline), it's the perfect example of what elected officials with vision can do realize a vision for expanded open space. As a District City councilor, I'm excited to advocate for expanded Parks resources through mitigation and other measures, in partnership with community.

5. What are your equity goals for the City of Boston? How can Parks and Open Spaces advance those goals?

Equity should be at the center of all our work within the Parks system, from equitable access to green spaces in your area, to programs to expand access to greenspace through necessary transportation and infrastructure improvements. We know that access to greenspace has an impact on mental health and wellness, a topic I am really dedicated to in partnership with many organizations who have been leading the way to advocate for our most vulnerable populations.

6. The current Boston Parks Dept operating budget is approximately 0.75% of the city operating budget. Would you commit to raising it to 1%? If not, why not?

Yes, I will advocate for raising the Boston Parks Department operating budget. I will also be supportive, as I have been before, through seeing opportunities for philanthropy. As a host of the Mayor's Rose Garden Party supporting Park Arts, I know how helpful additional funds would be utilized to allow the Parks Department to do more great work and programming. I will work with the Parks Commissioner to advocate for an additional 1%, but would do in partnership to make sure they have access to the resources they need.

7. On a per capita basis Boston spends between $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ of what Seattle and San Francisco spend on parks. How can Boston increase the park budget while not negatively impacting other vital city services?

In Boston, we know that the Parks Department does more than just maintenance of our Parks. I will advocate for additional resources and work with groups who provide additional funding to our Parks through other resources, to make sure all philanthropy is prioritized to the right resources. I think there will be additional opportunities through mitigation to advocate for our Parks as well.

8. What do you think are some of the most challenging current questions about competing demands for parkland and other open space? How would you approach challenging decisions about parkland and open space use?

Our public parks and open spaces are a treasured part of District 8. They make our neighborhoods more resilient by buffering increasingly severe storms and absorbing stormwater run-off. We must ensure District 8's open spaces continue to serve both the people and the environment! Standing up for our parks in Development conversations, through advocacy for mitigation funds, and creating opportunities for our Parks to be utilized for community benefit.

I'm excited that my District and constituents are as dedicated to our Parks as I am! Excited to continue to partner in community to make sure our communities have access to Parks, and are preserving one of the most precious resources.

Please return to: bostonparkadvocates@gmail.com by Thursday, September 21

We look forward to having you at our Parks & Open Space Candidate Meet and Greet on Thursday, September 28, 2023 from 5:30- 7:00 pm at Blackstone Square