



2023 City Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

I'm lucky enough to live in Dorchester, which has some truly great parks, and if I have to say just one it's got to be Hemenway Park, which is where I most frequently walk my dogs. But I also often go to Pope John Paul II Park and Dorchester Park, often for the same reasons.

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

Again, I'm lucky in that I have a terrific community garden right on my street, the Lydon Community Garden on Monsignor Patrick J. Lydon Way in Dorchester, where I'm a Trustee.

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

I believe it's so important that we see the interconnectivity between our open/green spaces and the overall health and quality of life in our neighborhoods. When we save a tree in Hyde Park or Roslindale, it's about much more than that one tree; it has a ripple effect that people feel in Fort Point and East Boston. So I think it's very important that we protect what we already have, and that we center parks and open space high on our agenda moving forward.

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

The city charter grants councilors budgetary powers to advocate for our priorities, and increasing access across all city services is one of my chief priorities. Our parks need not just better access, but many of them need more lighting, trash barrels, portapotties. Understanding that those are connected to maintenance needs, that may require increased staffing.

Importantly, as we add access, we need to center equity across all of our neighborhoods, to close historical imbalances across the system. If we do this purposefully and strategically, we can make Boston a city where it's wonderful to be outdoors 12 months a year, the way other cold-weather cities have.

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

In addition to the improvements I described above, I think we need to pay special attention to neighborhoods where the parks that are supposed to provide healthy recreation and relaxation instead offer only unsafe environments. For example, Clifford Park, where we've seen spillover from nearby dangerous behavior render the park unsafe for a kids' football program. We need to ensure that every park *in every neighborhood* is a place of refuge, not of peril.

At the same time, I think we need to focus on gender equity as well. Too often, both as a single mother who raised her kids in the city and now as a city councilor, I've heard complaints from parents and kids themselves that girls' sports do not have access to the same quality of playing fields and facilities as the boys' teams. I think that, in today's day and age, more than 50 years after the enactment of Title IX, that it's outrageous that our young women should not have equal access to the same facilities. That's something I plan to work on in my second term.

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, absolutely. We need to be giving the Parks Department – along with our other vital city agencies and departments – the tools they need to ensure that every neighborhood in Boston has full access to the city's resources. Parks are one of those – more than an amenity, I'd argue, but a necessity to our health – both physical and mental – and our quality of life. Very often, those tools mean sufficient funding.

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?

When you take a wholistic view of our municipal budget's cost effectiveness, investing in our parks pays clear dividends – through the mental health benefits I referenced above, through programming opportunities, through the benefits of the activities that are hosted in those parks. When you consider the interconnectivity of the positive effects that parks have – how the benefits ripple outwards through our schools, our senior communities, our civic identity – it's clear that *not* investing more in our parks is a pennywise/pound foolish approach.

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?

Very similar to our affordable housing crisis, I think we need to be open-minded and creative – open to new ideas – when it comes to not just capitalizing on our existing green spaces, but by expanding them both in number and scope. Every neighborhood, for example, should have access to a versatile array of multi-use park – so we're not pitting the interests of pickleball players against basketball players, or creating the type of gender inequity I referenced above. We should be doing more with *more* parks, not more with fewer. In addition, whether it's rooftop gardens or “pocket parks,” such as those that already exist in some neighborhoods, we should become more enterprising in where we try to build parks or expand open space.

In doing so, I think it's important that we consider the inequities already inherent in the system. Historically, some of our neighborhoods and populations – meaning some of our neighbors – have been underserved, and we should be considering how to redress and repair those injustices as we go about the business of improving the whole city.

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