



## **Campaign for Parks 2021 Mayoral Candidate Questionnaire**

### **Candidate: MA State Representative Jon Santiago**

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

*I make sure to stop by as many parks in my district as often as possible. I routinely work with the Friends of Blackstone Franklin Squares to do park clean ups and will frequently walk through Chester Park. I also run along the Southwest Corridor Park and Esplanade.*

#### **2. Do you have a connection to a community garden? Which one?**

*I live one block away from the Lenox-Camden community garden and always see folks inside gardening. Community gardens are very special here in the South End and I am proud of the incredible garden infrastructure our neighborhood has created and been able to maintain. During my runs I'll often stop in with the folks gardening along the Southwest Corridor Park to discuss the homelessness issues the SWCP has been experiencing.*

#### **3. What park-related goals would your administration set to support your vision of a healthy, resilient, and beautiful City?**

*I will preserve and expand our valuable green space. Green public spaces provide outdoor space for recreation, access to clean air and they promote healthier more connected communities. I will expand and better maintain our city's parks, trails and green spaces. I am determined to make sure that all communities have equal access to green space.*

*I will focus on eliminating heat islands and expanding tree canopy. As mayor, I will order an evaluation of existing 'heat islands' throughout the City and a full census of existing trees. Using this data, I will ameliorate heat islands throughout the city by working with community leaders to create comprehensive plans to increase green space. I will also implement an arbor augmentation program to protect trees and*

*invest in expansion of tree planting across the city, prioritizing our most underserved neighborhoods.*

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

*We need to take a look at innovative and creative ways to get more green space and provide access to more folks. That means looking at projects like the Bowker Overpass reconstruction and the I-90 Interchange project as opportunities to unlock previously inaccessible spaces. But it also means looking at our current vacant lots and finding ways to create green space in every possible corner of the city. Lastly, we need to get innovative in our partnerships with developers to advocate for them to include publicly accessible and privately maintained green space throughout Boston.*

**5. Equity has important implications for every aspect of city life. How would you define equity with respect to the city's parks and greenspaces?**

*I have dedicated my life to addressing equity. It's why I joined the Peace Corps, why I work as an Emergency Room Physician at Boston Medical Center, and why I ran for office in the first place. COVID has demonstrated just how important our green spaces and publicly accessible parkland is and I'm running for mayor to address green space inequity. That starts with getting a full picture of the disparity, which is why I will order a census of heat islands throughout the city and use the data to plan for new green spaces. Additionally, I believe that the city can use urban renewal tools to create green space and as mayor, I am exploring how to best use that tool to address green space inequity.*

**6. The current Boston Parks Dept operating budget is 0.75% of the city operating budget. Would you commit to raising it to 1%? On a per capita basis Boston spends between 1/3 and 1/2 of what Seattle and San Francisco spend on parks. How can Boston increase the pie so that a substantial increase in the park budget will not come at the expense of other vital city services?**

Yes.

*I believe in funding our Parks Department and making sure it has the resources it needs to keep our parks maintained and active. But that also means keeping them clean, which is something I have been working diligently on in my neighborhoods. Not only do I support increasing funding for our parks, I believe we need to be bringing in more agencies as partners in maintaining them, including the Boston Public Health Commission and Sanitation Departments. That requires funding and*

*as mayor, I believe in bringing in more funding directly to our parks. I will explore innovative public private partnerships, public financing mechanisms, and PILOT reform to increase the share of funding that we can put toward our parks.*