
Open Space Plan 2015-2021

**Section 9
Seven-Year
Action Plan**

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GOAL 1: Be good stewards of the exceptional open space system that the City of Boston has inherited.

	Objective	Action	Responsibility	Timeline for Completion
1.1	Revitalize and renovate parks according to facility life-cycles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Utilize the 2013 Park Asset Study data to develop a 5 year Capital Improvement Plan for the City of Boston park system. b. Increase access to public amenities and install features as appropriate that improve the quality of life in parks. c. Develop and publish design standards to ensure that best practices are in place for all park renovation projects. d. Complete a quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the success of park renovations. e. Invest in long term infrastructure improvements. 	To be determined	To be determined
1.2	Manage the unique challenges and opportunities with historic parks and sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Update management, maintenance, and interpretive plans for historic resources to protect their value to city residents and visitors. b. Provide interpretive signage, virtual tours and other opportunities to increase access to sensitive areas. c. Consider the feasibility of completing the Emerald Necklace as it was originally designed. d. e. 	To be determined	To be determined
1.3	Maintain Boston's parks at the highest level feasible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop best practices and standard operating procedures for maintenance to enrich the recreational experience of patrons. b. Create a plan and budget for maintenance and operations to better meet the expected level of service in the park system. c. Expand park maintenance and hours of operations as feasible to better meet the expected level of service in the park system. d. Invest in the City's infrastructure of staff, equipment, fleet and facilities (such as the greenhouses) in order to do the best job possible. e. Continue to support constituent engagement tools such as Park Line and Citizens Connect, and expand functionality where possible. 	To be determined	To be determined
1.4	Increase the perception and experience of safety in parks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase the capacity of the Park Rangers, and strengthen partnerships between the Park Rangers, the Boston police, community leaders and service providers to provide proactive, visible and dedicated law enforcement throughout the park system. b. Design parks to increase perception of safety, reduce vandalism and increase visibility. c. Update the Park Rules and Regulations. Improve public safety in all parks by promoting positive park uses. d. Improve park signage. e. Enforce dog laws in all parks. 	To be determined	To be determined
1.5	Permit use of the parks in an efficient, effective and accessible manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create an online permitting process that is efficient, effective and accessible. b. Schedule "open field time" that allows casual, unscheduled time at park facilities, as well as scheduled times. c. Work with the BRA to ensure that universities provide adequate athletic fields within their Institutional Master Plans. d. Engage with Boston Public Schools and charter schools to ensure an equitable distribution of playing fields. e. Develop a vending policy for commercial use of parks. 	To be determined	To be determined
1.6	Build partnerships to enhance Boston's parks system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop Park Partners programs to expand partnerships with non-profit "Friends" groups. b. Create a "how-to" book to guide the development of Friends groups. c. Develop public / private partnerships to assist in the maintenance and management of parks. d. Seek partnerships with adjacent communities, and federal, state and city agencies that have jurisdiction of shared resources. 	To be determined	To be determined
1.7	Develop and maintain sustainable funding sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Encourage legislation such as the Community Preservation Act to fund open space, as called for in the Mayor's Transition Report. b. Increase the budget of the Parks Department through the city budget and external funding, as called for in the Transition Report. c. Create a reasonable and predictable formula for community contributions for open space, through the Article 80 process, looking to other communities nationwide that have implemented such programs. d. Develop a funding plan for philanthropic gifts, government and foundation grants, and private/public partnerships in order to sustain the Park Arts programs, tree lightings, concerts and other events. e. Assess opportunities to increase income received from vendors, events, and commercial users of parks. 	To be determined	To be determined

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1.8	Engage with constituents about park matters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop and implement a comprehensive outreach plan for the park system that includes mapping, welcome packages to new residents, signage, video and virtual tours, online information and social media, and mobile phone apps. b. Contribute to the development of a shared, interactive, searchable event and programming calendar that incorporates information about activities occurring in all public open spaces regardless of ownership and management. c. Institute department wide initiatives to maximize customer service. d. Offer community feedback forums to address park issues outside of the capital project community meeting cycle. 	To be determined	To be determined
1.9	Provide programming that encourages healthy and active lifestyles, environmental appreciation and stewardship, and builds a sense of community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Incorporate the Recreational Division back into the Parks and Recreation Department. b. Create a plan for programming that includes goals, target audiences, needs served, resources needed, and funding sources. c. Institute a campaign to spend time outdoors and move for health. d. Consider staffing in parks at peak times. e. Partner with the Boston Public Health Commission to promote the positive health impacts of access to open spaces, and to determine ways to increase public health programming in the parks. 	To be determined	To be determined
1.10	Implement policies and best practices about the natural, historical, cultural and recreational resources of Boston's park system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review and offer suggestions for revision of the ordinance on dog recreation spaces to address the demand for dog facilities b. Review and affirm the policy of bicycle usage in the park system. c. d. e. 	To be determined	To be determined

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GOAL 2: Plan for a future open space system that is recognized as the best in the country.

	Objective	Action	Responsibility	Timeline for Completion
2.1	Expand and improve open space access for all existing and projected residents, in a manner that can be sustained by the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase the quantity and proximity of parks in high need and underserved areas as identified in the Park Equity Assessment of the Open Space Plan, as feasible. Include areas that are projected to be underserved in the coming years due to development. b. Use the Needs Assessment developed through this plan to evaluate how recreational facilities are distributed across the park system. c. Plan to augment the areas where there are deficiencies in recreational facilities, as feasible. d. Utilize the ADA Self-Assessment of City of Boston parks to identify areas that require retrofits and improvements to increase park accessibility. Address deficiencies through the City's Capital Improvement Program. e. 	To be determined	To be determined
2.2	Support city-wide and regional projects to enhance the public realm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure that open space impacts and opportunities are considered in every planning and development decision in the city. b. Partner with compatible initiatives such as Complete Streets, Green Links, Safe Routes to Parks, Boston Bikes, Grow Boston Green, Citizen Pruner, the Boston Schoolyard Initiative, etc. c. Engage with adjacent municipalities on the protection of shared resources, particularly waterfronts, greenways and large landscapes. d. Support Smart Growth initiatives that balance density and development with the provision of open space. e. 	To be determined	To be determined
2.3	Actively engage and build relationships with Boston's diverse population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish and implement new approaches to outreach and relationship building. b. Communicate effectively about the Parks Department's services and programming to all users. c. Continue to build organizational capacity for public engagement. d. 	To be determined	To be determined
2.4	Acquire new property to expand the parks system in a financially sustainable manner that balances the need for recreation with the capacity to maintain additional facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Evaluate and update the current Park Acquisition Policy, develop a strategy for identifying key open space acquisitions, and a plan for taking action on those acquisitions. b. Seek opportunities for open space to be permanently protected in perpetuity through the Article 80 process. c. Encourage the use of conservation restrictions in order to protect urban wilds in perpetuity. d. Develop partnerships with private entities to support the maintenance of open space. e. f. 	To be determined	To be determined
2.5	Work within the regulatory framework to balance development and density in the city, with the provision of open space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Partner with the BRA to create open space criteria for the Article 80 project review process that is rooted in this Open Space Plan. b. Work with the BRA to negotiate Planned Development Areas (PDAs) that ensure the provision of permanently protected open space as appropriate. c. Engage with the BRA to ensure that adequate athletic fields and open spaces are provided within Institutional Master Plans (IMPS). d. Collaborate with the Inspectional Services Division to improve effectiveness and efficiencies for the Parks Department review within the ISD permit process. e. Work with the Zoning staff to evaluate projects going before the Zoning Board of Appeals that may have impacts on open space. 	To be determined	To be determined

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GOAL 3: Be a national leader in enhancing the urban natural environment and improving the quality of life in the city.

	Objective	Action	Responsibility	Timeline for Completion
3.1	Implement and evaluate sustainable strategies for park design and maintenance to ensure that parks are prepared for climate change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop park performance measures; evaluate park improvements to determine if they are performing as intended. b. Apply the City's climate impact assessment tools to parks – evaluate shade / heat; risk / resilience; energy consumption and waste production. Use this assessment to inform design, construction and maintenance decisions. Establish goals for making improvements per the practices suggested in Section 4 of this Open Space Plan. c. Improve access to the City's recycling system in public spaces. d. Implement smart energy use wherever feasible in designing new park improvements. e. Consider opportunities to create open space in coastal areas and flood zones that can also serve as protective infrastructure as the climate changes. 	To be determined	To be determined
3.2	Improve the ecological function of our natural resource areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Maximize ecological functioning, conservation value and recreational flexibility by developing priorities for acquisition where significant protected open space is already clustered and connected, such as adjacent to the Emerald Necklace, or in linear form such as along river and harbor shorelines, and greenway paths and trails. b. Consider opportunities to acquire Urban Wilds, forest lands and other properties that preserve natural diversity and protect rare and endangered species. c. Improve the quality of ecosystems in the city by understanding existing functionality and establishing benchmarks related to climate preparedness, habitat and biodiversity, and human access. d. Engage with adjacent municipalities on climate change, invasive species, pest control and other issues that cross boundaries. e. Institute programs to address invasive species throughout the park system. 	To be determined	To be determined
3.3	Develop best practices for green infrastructure within the parks system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support the development of green infrastructure throughout the city through public realm improvements. Develop and adopt a city-wide maintenance program for green infrastructure projects that addresses the shared costs and benefits of these improvements. b. Partner with Boston Water and Sewer to create new park spaces that can manage that agency's storm water needs and also provide open space amenities to the public. c. Develop a plan for management of the City's public shade trees. Update legislation and ordinances as necessary. d. Increase the capacity and funding to grow and plant trees in order to increase the tree canopy. e. Maximize the diversity of urban trees where feasible; focus on site specific tree selection and species that can tolerate impacts of climate change. f. Train other agencies in protocols for working around public shade trees. 	To be determined	To be determined
3.4	Promote creativity, arts and culture in the parks, as key elements of vibrant urban environments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Partner with the Boston Arts Commission to create a vision and plan for the incorporation of public art in city parks, which identifies locations, process, resources and roles. b. Ensure every neighborhood has a park with the necessary infrastructure to support community events and performances. Identify and correct deficiencies through Capital Improvements. c. Consider the feasibility of establishing a "fairground" type amenity to serve large scale events in the City, and relieve the pressure on the parks system. d. e. 	To be determined	To be determined