

# **BOSTON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

## **City Council Committee on Ways and Means Hearing on Dockets #0822-0830**

May 20, 2025



# STAFF

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## BRIAN SWETT

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*Chief Climate Officer and  
Interim Commissioner*

## DARLENE BUFFORD

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*Director of Human  
Resources & Payroll*

## NATHAN HINCHLIFFE

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*Director of  
Maintenance*

## STEPHEN BICKERTON

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*Deputy Commissioner  
of Administration and  
Finance*

## TRACI LEE

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*Director of Finance  
and Procurement*

## CATHY BAKER-ECLIPSE

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*Director of Design and  
Construction*



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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- Fully staffed the Design and Construction Division. On track to fully staff Franklin Park Natural Areas Crew.
- Awarded grants by the City's Community Preservation Committee, the State's PARC Grant program and LWCF Grant program to support ongoing capital improvement projects and open space acquisition work.
- Broke ground on the waterfront resiliency project at Ryan Playground in Charlestown.
- Park renovations were completed at Titus Sparrow Park, O'Day Playground, McGann Playground, Peters Park Ballfield, Granary Burying Ground, Westerly Burying Ground, and Crawford Street Playground.
- Permanently protected Sherrin Woods Addition and Egleston Square Peace Garden through acquisition
- Hosted over 140 events and programs citywide from Hike Boston, to Movie Nights, to Tito Puente Concert Series, to Holiday Tree Lightings, engaging over 35,000 residents (FYTD).



# BY THE NUMBERS

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- **5201** Permits issued (up **24.9%** over FY24)
- **413** burials performed (**19.4%** increase over FY24)
- **86** contracts awarded (**23%** increase over FY24)
- Park Rangers offered **68** interpretive programs, interacting with thousands of residents
- Onboarded **45** FTE's and **113** seasonal workers
- **102,000** rounds of golf played at Franklin Park and George Wright - over **51,000** at each course
- Horticulture staff planted over **30,000** spring flowering bulbs for citywide beautification
- Awarded grants to four vendors through the Sunflower and Beautification Grant Program, supporting efforts to enhance the visual appeal of public spaces while also contributing to environmental sustainability.





# BY THE NUMBERS - RECREATION

- Hosted **4,853** youth at 5 free sports center sites in Roxbury, Mattapan, East Boston and Dorchester and employed **157** youth.
- Hosted **425** individual Mayor's Cup games and matches giving youngsters the opportunity to meet their peers from across the city and compete for the title of "Boston's Best" in softball, baseball, street hockey, ice hockey, flag football, Soccer, tennis and cross country throughout the season.
- With the growing popularity of Archery, Recreation served over **2,823** youth and teens citywide and expanded to include **353** adults and seniors.
- Free winter, summer, and fall fitness classes kept more than **5,434** Bostonians moving during **560** hours of virtual and in-person classes.
- Offered citywide recreational clinics and league games that brought communities together serving over **2,650** individual youth and adults.



# BY THE NUMBERS - TREES

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- Planted **1,910** new street trees in 2024
  - On track to plant **1,200** street trees in spring 2025
- Completed the pruning of **5,373** trees in 2024
  - This is over a **100%** increase compared to our past avg. of **2,500** trees/year
- We will inject **1,165** mature ash trees in spring 2025 to continue to protect against Emerald Ash Borer
- Responded to and closed **10,253** urban forestry 311 requests in 2024
  - Including **1,789** Tree Emergencies, 99% of which were closed within 24 hr. SLA period
  - The hiring of new arborists and field personnel has helped to significantly reduce the wait time for many basic tree maintenance requests





# BY THE NUMBERS - ANIMAL CARE AND CONTROL

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- Issued **11,485** licenses for pets (11% increase over 2024)
- Issued **20** Kennel Licenses
- Responded to **7,635** calls and issued **1,565** citations
- Hosted **6** low cost rabies clinics for cats and dogs
- Administered **589** free or low cost rabies vaccines
- Provided care for **844** cats and dogs; **41** small pets; and **1** steer
- Adopted **75** pets
- Joined Massachusetts Animal Shelter Coalition



# DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION: Completed Projects

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## O'Day Playground, South End

- *Renovation of the park that includes the features important to the vibrant community it serves*

## Crawford Street Play Area, Roxbury

- *Complete renovation of new play area with splash pad, field improvements, and pedestrian lighting*

## Titus Sparrow Park, South End

- *Improved the play area, courts, and gathering spaces in this heavily used park*

## Clarendon Street Play Area, Back Bay

- *Renovated the beloved oldest play area in the City while preserving the mature flowering trees*

## Chittick Schoolyard, Mattapan

- *Renovate an existing schoolyard into a publicly accessible play area for the community*

## Harambee Park Cricket Fields, Dorchester

- *Complete construction of 2 cricket fields with lighting and other amenities*





# DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION: Construction In Progress

## Copley Square Park, Back Bay

- Updates to the fountain, lawn area, a raised seating area to protect existing trees, refurbished memorials and art, and plaza space
- Anticipated opening **December 2025**

## Ryan Playground

- Create a climate resilient park with fields, play area, splash pad, and street hockley court,
- Additional funding from the **Charlestown Community Impact Fund**

## Clifford Playground, Roxbury

- Build a state of the art multi-sport facility, expand Basketball and Tennis courts, add splash pad for cooling, introduce a dog park
- Additional funding from Federal **Land & Water Conservation Fund**

## Walsh Playground, Dorchester

- Parkwide improvements including new play area and splash pad, basketball and tennis courts, field and entrances
- Additional funding from Commonwealth **Parkland Acquisition and Renovations for Communities**



# DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION: Priority Projects for FY26

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## Street Tree Planting

- Continue street tree planting program citywide
- Advances key strategy in the **Urban Forest Plan** to Strategically and Equitably Expand the Tree Canopy

## Moakley Park Phase 1, South Boston

- Continue design work to construct Phase 1 of a berm barrier to protect critical infrastructure and 1000s of families inland of Moakley Park

## Shadow Study Impacts on Parkland

- Together with the Planning Department, continue a comprehensive study on the impacts of light and shadow on a portion of Boston's Emerald Necklace.





## DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION: Getting Ready for Construction in FY26

# Ringer Playground, Allston

- Pathway and entry improvements, adding a dog park, and improvements to athletic field
- Additional funding from the Commonwealth **Parkland Acquisition and Renovations for Communities** and **Harvard Allston Public Realm Flexible Fund**

# Billings Field, West Roxbury

- Parkwide improvements to the ballfields, lighting, drainage, courts, play area. Add a street hockey court and walking loop with benches and shade

## McKinney Playground, Brighton

- Develop bid documents for field improvements, pathways, and lighting
- Additional funding from **Boston College Neighborhood Improvement Fund** and **Harvard Allston Public Realm Flexible Fund**

# Mary Ellen Welch Greenway, East Boston

- Create a blue-green trail system for multimodal uses that improves climate resiliency through increased stormwater capacity and flood mitigation
- Additional funding from Federal **Land & Water Conservation Fund**



# DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION: Continued Design Work

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## Town Field/Doherty-Gibson Playground, Dorchester

- Develop a comprehensive plan that will guide future park development

## Franklin Park Overlook Ruins Design

- Implement a key recommendation from **Franklin Park Action Plan** to amplify magnet destinations
- Together with the Franklin Park Coalition, further the design for the restoration of the Overlook Ruins as the future home of the Elma Lewis Playhouse.



## Franklin Park Circuit Drive Safety Improvements

- Implement a key recommendation from **Franklin Park Action Plan** to Make Connections and Clarify Movement
- Study how to slow traffic in Franklin Park and allow park goers to move across and through the park safely
- Incorporate drainage improvements to reduce stormwater flooding impacts to functioning of Circuit Drive

## Christopher Columbus Park, North End

- Begin design to address climate vulnerability and improve park features like play area, splash pad, and walkways





# DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION: New FY26 Projects

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## Poplar Gate Path at the Arnold Arboretum, Jamaica Plain/Roslindale

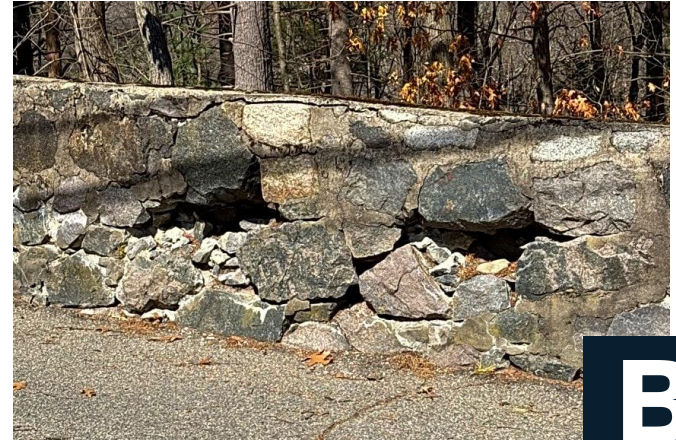
- Pathway and drainage improvements to complement the new gateway at South Street and Flora Way

## Christopher Lee Playground Play Area, South Boston

- Renovate small play structure at well used park

## Retaining Wall Repairs, Citywide

- Perform state of good repair improvements to retaining walls in parks



# GOALS

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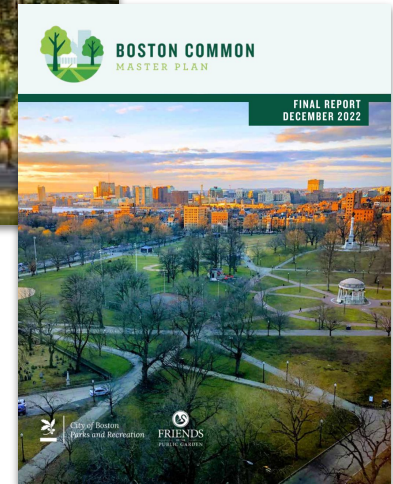
- *Leverage City assets to create a climate resilient waterfront.* Continue construction at **Ryan Playground** in Charlestown and advance the design and permitting of park improvements including a berm at **Moakley Park**.
- *Improve neighborhood parks like **Ronan Playground** in Dorchester and **Fidelis Way Park** in Brighton to provide high quality recreational opportunities across the City. Continue to bring high quality arts and recreation programs to neighborhoods.*
- *Source outside funding opportunities from grants, vending, partnerships, and other revenue to add value to capital and operating funding projects and programs.*
- *Collaborate with other City Departments to help deliver their goals, like Equitable Procurement Subcontracting Opportunities and Vendor Diversity.*
- *Continue to deliver clean, green, and safe open spaces*



# GOALS

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- Deliver the first capital project identified in the **Franklin Park Action Plan**. Construction on the **Franklin Park Shattuck Tennis Court Expansion** is expected to begin Summer 2025, and available for use Spring 2026.
- Several design projects originating from the **Franklin Park Action Plan** are continuing. Design work will continue in FY26 for the **Franklin Park Overlook Design**, as the feasibility study concludes Spring 2025. The **Circuit Drive Safety and Drainage Improvements** will continue community engagement and design in FY26, with an eye towards implementing low cost, high impact improvements as quickly as possible. The search for the **Executive Director** for Franklin Park will re-commence with the hiring of the Parks Commissioner.
- Projects originating from the **Boston Common Master Plan** are underway, including expanding **restroom facilities** at the Visitor Information Center, Improvements to **Tadpole Playground**, **Shaw Accessibility Ramp**, **Mayor's Walk**, and **Parkman Bandstand** will begin design efforts in FY26.





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