



**Friends of
Grand Rapids
Parks**

**2024 Mayoral Candidates Q&A with Senita Lenear and David LaGrand
Friends of Grand Rapids Parks**

Q: What is your favorite park?

SENITA LENEAR (SL): It is hard to pick one park, so I have to give my top three. I love Riverside Park because it has been home to my Creston Polar Bears reunions. Ah-Nab-Awen Park because I have been able to attend so many memorable events there. MLK Park was only one block away when I was growing up. My children have played sports there, and in my final years on commission, I was able to be part of the effort to expand the renovation of the Lodge.

DAVID LAGRAN (DL): My favorite park is Pleasant Park because it is closest to my home. While I was on the City Commission, I was also instrumental in brokering the deal that made Pleasant Park part of a land and property swap that got Grand Rapids ownership of 1120 Monroe and the empty lot in exchange for a vacant building we received from the county for free.

Q: How will you continue the legacy of Mayor Bliss' commitment to creating a 40% urban forest canopy? (So far, this commitment has resulted in thousands of trees planted, benefiting physical and mental health and creating cooler streets, cleaner air, and better stormwater management throughout the City, especially in historically redlined districts and downtown)

SL: We should look at our urban forest canopy goal the same way we have approached other goals and/or inequity in our city. While on commission I focused on creation of a 3rd ward equity fund to correct the lack of city and private investment in the ward. I would approach the canopy goal by making specific plans and timelines based on ward as well as looking at different zoned districts since further zoning changes will be reviewed and possibly changed. We should also measure the loss of the canopy via development projects in the city. I am a planner in my day job and I know the importance of breaking down larger goals into more management actions year over year.

DL: Mayor Bliss has promised that she will continue to work with me to ensure that her long-standing priorities continue to succeed. Parks, as we all know, are near and dear to her heart and also mine.

Q: What is your vision for city parks, trees, and natural surface trails regarding resident health, sustainability, and economic growth in Grand Rapids?

SL: I think it is important to make sure our investments, plan, and engagement connect. I



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(CONT.) envision a city that understands that our business districts and parks are connected and that we should invest with a both/and philosophy vs. either/or. While on commission, I championed work to reduce violence across our city; our parks have an important role in ensuring safe spaces for all neighbors.

DL: Parks are perhaps the most important placemaking resource a city has. They are key components of community health, wellness, productivity, and community building.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add about parks, trees, and trails in Grand Rapids?

SL: I was at an event on Sunday that reminded me that we must take at least 10 minutes for ourselves each day. That sentiment has stuck with me, and I encourage everyone reading to take at least 10 minutes for themselves each day and consider taking that time in one of our beautiful parks.

DL: I hope to challenge the county to fund county parks in the City of Grand Rapids. Our county dollars should not only be spent on parks outside of the city limits. I also helped to build connectivity for multimodal transit options, so our citizens can enjoy parks outside of the city.

Learn more about candidates & follow their campaigns:

SENITA LEANEAR: [Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [WoodTV Interview](#)

DAVID LAGRAND: [Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)