



**Friends of
Grand Rapids
Parks**

**2024 Second Ward City Commissioner Candidate
Q&A with Milinda Ysasi
Friends of Grand Rapids Parks**

Q: What is your favorite park?

MILINDA YSASI (MY): My favorite park is Huff Park. I have spent many afternoons with my niece Luna. I remember taking her there one time, and she was so excited to go on a "safari." Walking in the park feels like an adventure, and you are often greeted by different birds and deer. I also love my prints from a few years back that Friends did, and we have the Huff Park illustration in our living room.

Q: With Mayor Bliss' term ending, how will you support our new mayor in continuing to support the goal of 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)

MY: Grand Rapids is poised for significant growth in my next term. We should be looking at ways to further measure the impact on our tree canopy with developments that come before our brownfield authority and city commission. We measure variables like microlocal business spend and should consider including the impact on the tree canopy as well. This work will also be measured as we proceed with our master plan implementation and climate action and adaptability plan. With so many different investments and priorities, having a system of measurement is what will support reaching our goal.

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

MY: I am excited about reimagining spaces to include new developments and green space. One that stands out is the Lyon Square Park project. I hope visitors to Grand Rapids will experience this park and be interested in venturing out to other neighborhoods to experience other green spaces. As a member of our brownfield authority we continue to hear about projects that are integrating parks into their design, much like Factory Yards. I think we have a great opportunity to match investments from our corridor authorities to create more events in parks and green spaces in our boundaries to drive economic growth. Our neighbors have continued to ask us to find ways to have more sustainable maintenance in our parks, we can support this work through



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(CONT.) continued investment in electric equipment.

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

MY: I appreciate the work that Friends staff has done to make it accessible and fun to support our urban forest canopy. This past year, my coworkers and I worked in the Alger Heights neighborhood to plant a number of trees. We brought our families to take part in this activity, and it was a great experience for all of us. During the pandemic, my husband and I joined the Latino Outdoors group to connect to others and take part in trail rides. This was key to our mental well-being during a very stressful time.

Learn more about the candidate:

MILINDA YSASI: [LinkedIn](#)