

Section 7.2.1:

ALLSTON-BRIGHTON

For an explanation of the organization, content and maps in this section, please see the Introduction to Section 7.2: Community Open Space and Recreation (page 160).

Background

Like many Boston neighborhoods, the Allston-Brighton area was established in the colonial era (1635) with land grants. A sparsely settled agricultural pattern prevailed until the filling in of the Back Bay and Kenmore Square areas in the late 1800s, by which time the Brighton stockyards had become the foremost cattle market in the region. Another important agricultural development in Brighton was the growth of horticulture: commercial gardens and extensive greenhouses covered many of the hills of Brighton. The Massachusetts Horticultural Society was founded in Brighton in 1829 and the area became well known for the many flowers and other decorative plants, fruit trees, and vegetables developed by Brighton growers. The grounds of Saint John's Seminary are the remains of an old estate orchard.

Proximity to the Charles River and the Boston & Albany Railroad encouraged construction of stockyards, slaughterhouses, and meatpacking operations in both Allston and the northern and eastern sections of Brighton. As the nation expanded westward and refrigerated railroad cars were introduced, regional stockyards, like those in Brighton, declined in importance. These cattle-related businesses were replaced over time by other industrial plants, commercial warehouses, and homes.

In the late 1800s, the extension of streetcar lines—especially along the Commonwealth Avenue corridor—encouraged high quality residential development in Brighton, much of which remains today.

After World War II, the Massachusetts Turnpike Extension further divided this neighborhood. Wider than the existing railroad tracks, the Pike added more noise and air pollution as it severed pedestrian links on either side. Proximity to expanding universities on all sides resulted in a considerable influx of students, coupled with younger families and immigrants from many lands. These changing population patterns in turn spurred conversion of large-scale apartments and 19th century single family homes to smaller rental units and condominiums.

Open Space Access & Equity

Allston-Brighton's ratio of protected open space per 1,000 residents is 4.83 acres which is lower than the city average of 7.59 acres per 1,000. City of Boston facilities include many neighborhood parks with play and sports facilities, an 18th century historic cemetery, a 19th century landscaped cemetery, a community garden, and passive areas such as Chandler Pond and the wooded part of Ringer Park. Parklands of historic and regional significance include the DCR's Chestnut Hill Reservoir and Charles River Reservation. Commonwealth Avenue is notable as an historic boulevard and an important link in the open space system (Allston-Brighton Map 4).

The largest demographic group in this neighborhood is young adults—college age or just beyond. Children make up a small portion of the overall population (only 13.3%) which is the

second smallest portion of children for any city neighborhood (behind Back Bay/Beacon Hill). This community shares borders with Newton, Brookline, Cambridge, and Watertown; it also has a small border with the Boston community of Fenway/Longwood.

About one-third of the community's open space (a quantity not included in the acres per 1,000 ratio above) falls into the category of unprotected campus open space owned primarily by Boston College, Harvard University, and Boston University (Allston-Brighton Map 6). These institutional lands provide a sense of spaciousness as well as visual amenity to neighborhood residents and visitors. Retaining and protecting community access to open space owned by hospitals, schools, and religious organizations in Allston and Brighton, often taken for granted, is an important issue, especially as new uses are found and planned for some of these institutional sites. Understanding and documenting the ecological value of these lands provide can also inform the discussion about their importance and need for protection.

Allston-Brighton is gaining population (7.7% growth between 2000 and 2010) and the greatest population density in the neighborhood is along Commonwealth Avenue. The park Need Score, which also takes into account environmental justice criteria and age variables, reinforces the park needs along this corridor (Allston-Brighton Maps 1, 2 and 3).

Park distribution in the neighborhood differs in Allston than in Brighton. Brighton's parks are typically about ½ mile apart which serves the neighborhood well and allows for a reasonable distribution of facilities. Allston has fewer parks and they are more spread out. As this part of the community redevelops and converts industrial uses to commercial, office, residential and institutional uses, the lack of park facilities will be increasingly felt. Prioritizing the creation of meaningful, usable, open space as Allston continues to densify is essential.

The DCR's Charles River Reservation is a very significant regional and neighborhood recreational resource—used by picnickers, canoeists, kayakers, boaters, runners, walkers, bicyclists, and community gardeners. Neighborhood access to the Reservation however is difficult at most points due to the barriers created by the Massachusetts Turnpike and Soldiers Field Road. Efforts are underway by Harvard University, DCR and the City of Boston to improve and add pedestrian crossings to the river.

Throughout the Allston-Brighton neighborhood, the established parks consistently have very poor street frontage and visibility. This condition is present at Hooker-Sorrento, Ringer Playground, Overlook Park, Portsmouth Playground and Ray Mellone Park. This lack of visibility can invite misuse and reduces access to these important public spaces. This condition should be studied as each of these spaces is renovated and as adjacent parcels are redeveloped so that improvements to access and visibility can be prioritized. Opportunities to add parkland to these properties to improve their public street frontage should be sought.

There are only three parks in the Allston-Brighton community with tennis courts. The need for additional courts should be assessed, with input from residents. Allston-Brighton is predominantly a young adult neighborhood and open space uses and programming should be responsive to the needs of this demographic. This includes a need for fields and courts for sports league play, passive spaces for relaxing, and spaces that

encourage active/fitness uses (trails, connected path systems, exercise equipment). The neighborhood's open space facilities should be evaluated through this lens at the onset of all future capital planning or improvement work (Allston-Brighton Map 8).

As previously noted, parks are reasonably well distributed in much of this neighborhood, with the greatest gaps in park access occurring along the Mass Pike corridor. The existing demographics of these areas do not yet indicate that they are high need areas for parks. However, forthcoming redevelopment will change these demographics and accentuate open space deficiencies if not addressed simultaneously with development (Allston-Brighton Maps 10 and 11). These redevelopment projects will not likely be able to address the open space needs along the Commonwealth Avenue corridor which will require its own focus and strategies for improvement.

Future Development

The BRA anticipates that the Guest Street industrial area between North Beacon Street and the Massachusetts Turnpike, will be a focus of real estate development in the next 20 years. Their 2013 Guest Street Area Planning Study is a yardstick by which they propose to guide development, both public and private, to establish a creative live/work/play district. The study recommends early implementation of open spaces to create a sense of place for this area. A north-south boulevard is proposed that will lead to a pedestrian bridge to cross over the Turnpike to access the North Allston neighborhood.

The Allston I-90 Interchange Improvement Project being led by MassDOT, opens up possibilities for major redevelopment of the highway interchange and former CSX Yards alongside transportation improvements. Open space connections, particularly to and along the Charles River, must be a central component to these plans. A strategy for long term protection of these future open spaces should be developed and an open space planning process to ensure a mix of recreational facilities and uses should be employed.

West of the current Harvard campus in Allston, there is an area called the Holton Street Corridor, between the Massachusetts Turnpike and Soldiers Field Road, which has received attention through a planning initiative by the BRA. A mixed use redevelopment with commercial, ground floor retail, and residential is proposed for this area, including one or more parks, along with strengthened pedestrian connections to the Charles River Reservation via either Telford Street or Everett Street, or both.

The Charlesview multi-family housing development has moved west to the Holton Street Corridor area, but the grove of trees it left behind will be protected, with public access allowed, as a focal point of the Barry's Corner area. The Barry's Corner area will also have plazas with public access as a component to insure pedestrian activation and flow at this important intersection. The new roadway between the Barry's Corner residential project and Smith Field will improve public access to this park.

Like other institutions with facilities in Boston, Harvard University has an Institutional Master Plan (IMP). This IMP proposes a connected series of open spaces from Mellone Park northeastward to the Charles River and the eastern end of Western Avenue. This greenway will be intersected by existing and proposed streets in a new grid. Other open spaces that will be more campus-centric will also be created in the IMP area. These potential open spaces will offer environmental benefits, but their creation on institutional lands does not ensure their long-term protection or their recreational benefits for non-student populations.

Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile

ALLSTON-BRIGHTON

Population	
2010 Census	74,997
2000 Census	69,648
Population Growth/Decline, 2000–2010	7.7%

Population Density		Persons per Acre
2010 Census		26.4
2000 Census		24.5
Density Change, 2000–2010		1.9

Age	Persons	Percent of Population
0 to 9	3,431	5%
10 to 19	6,552	9%
20 to 34	44,344	59%
35 to 54	10,697	14%
55 to 64	3,975	5%
65 and over	5,998	8%

Teens, City to Community Comparison	Total Population	Total Children 12-17	% of Boston's Children 12-17	Children 12-17 as % of Neighborhood Population
Boston	617,594	33,920	100.0%	5.5%
Allston-Brighton	74,997	1,544	4.6%	2.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census, BRA Research Division Analysis

Race/Ethnicity/Latino Status	Persons	Percent of Population
White alone	49,569	66%
Hispanic or Latino	7,440	10%
Black or African American alone	3,431	5%
Asian alone	11,533	15%
Other	3,014	4%

Median Household Income

\$44,947

Source: US Census Bureau, 2008–2012 American Community Survey, BRA Research Division Analysis

Percent of Households by Number of Vehicles Available	
No vehicles	38%
1 vehicle	39%
2 vehicles	16%
3 or more vehicles	7%

Source: American Community Survey 2006–2010; BRA Research Division Analysis

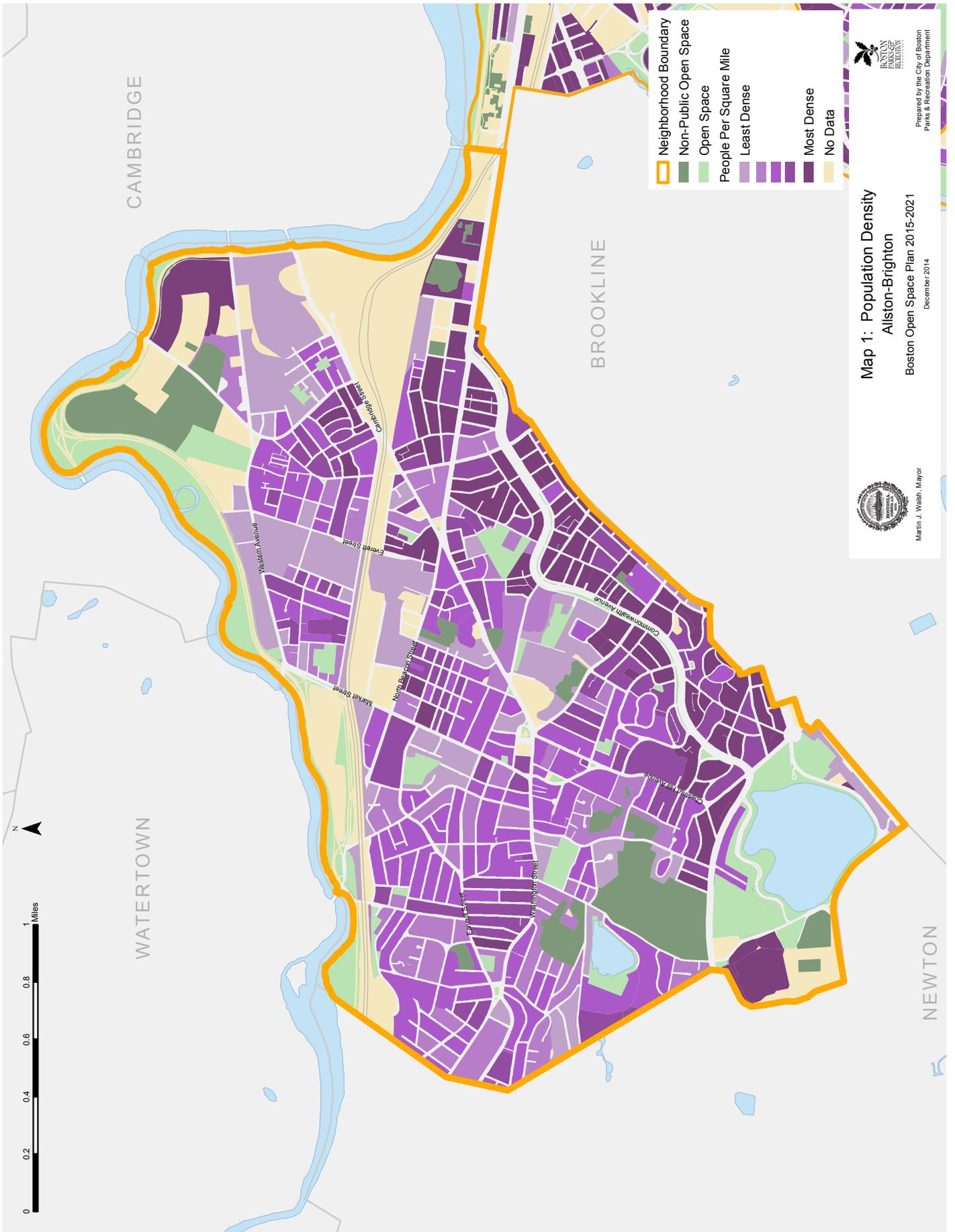
Population* with Disability	Persons	Percent of Population
Boston	72,390	11.6%
Allston-Brighton	5,923	9.1%

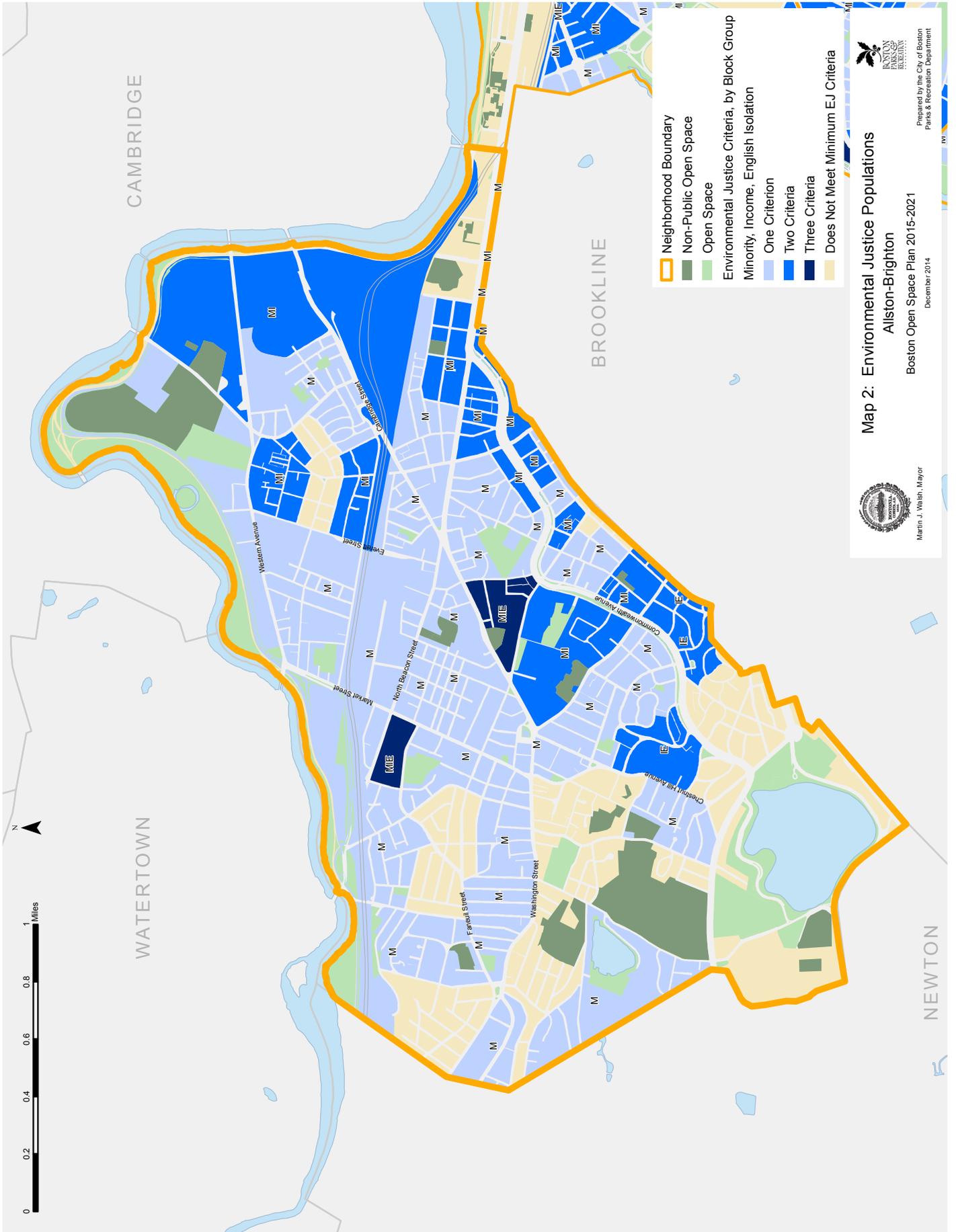
*Civilian Noninstitutionalized

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009–2013 American Community Survey, BRA Research Division Analysis

N.B.: "0%" means "less than 1%"

All Tables 2010 U.S. Decennial Census, unless otherwise noted





Map 2: Environmental Justice Populations
Allston-Brighton

Boston Open Space Plan 2015-2021

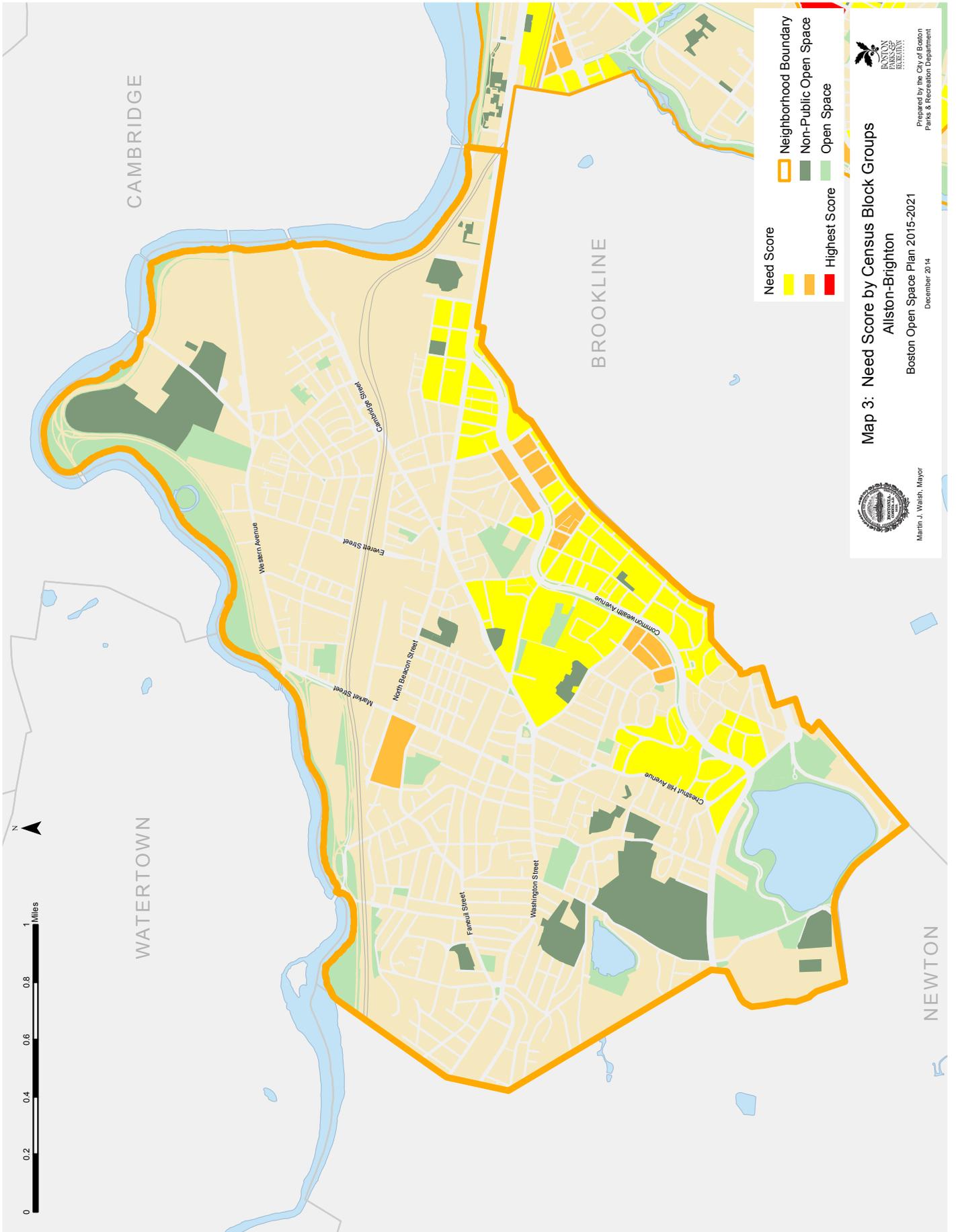
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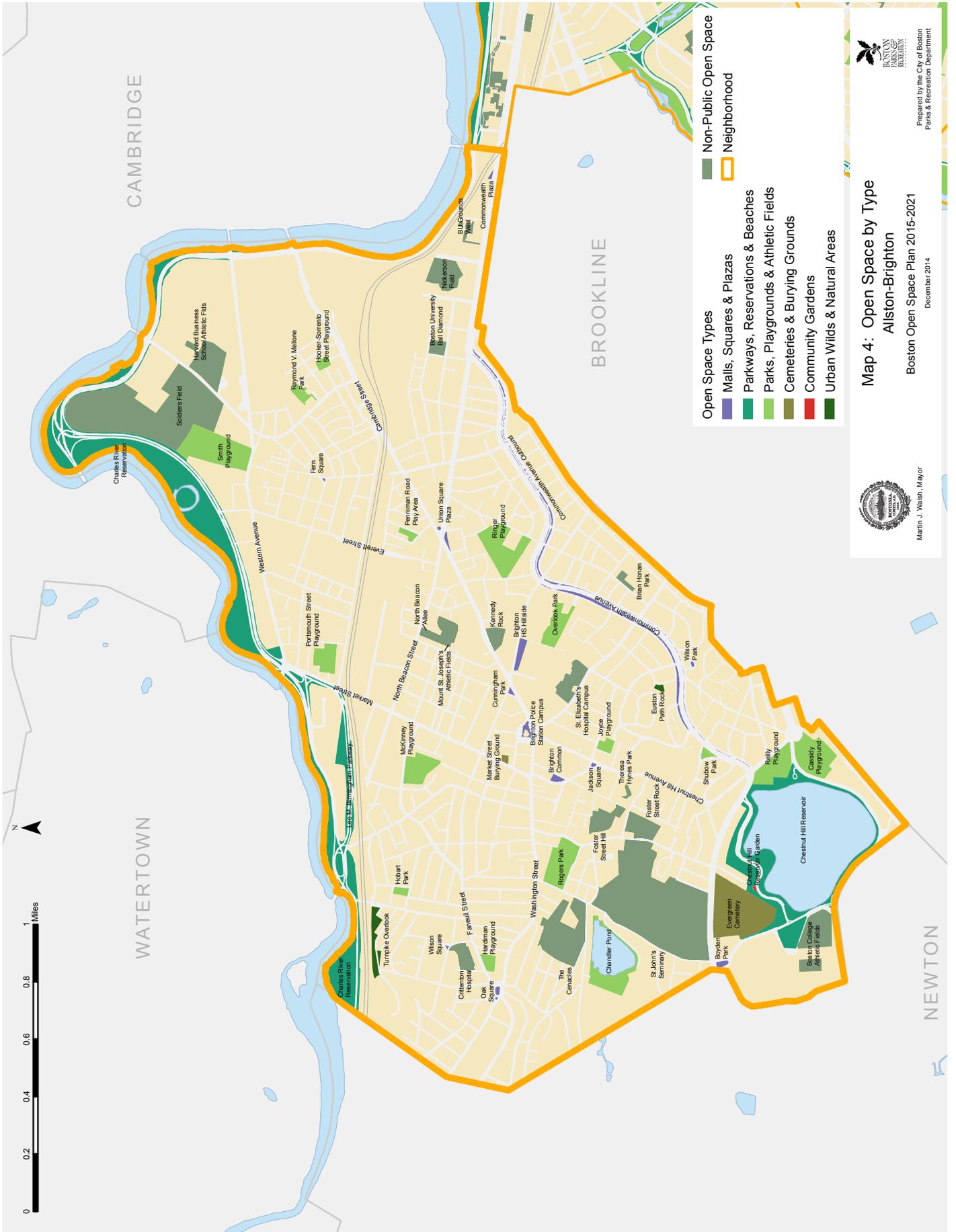


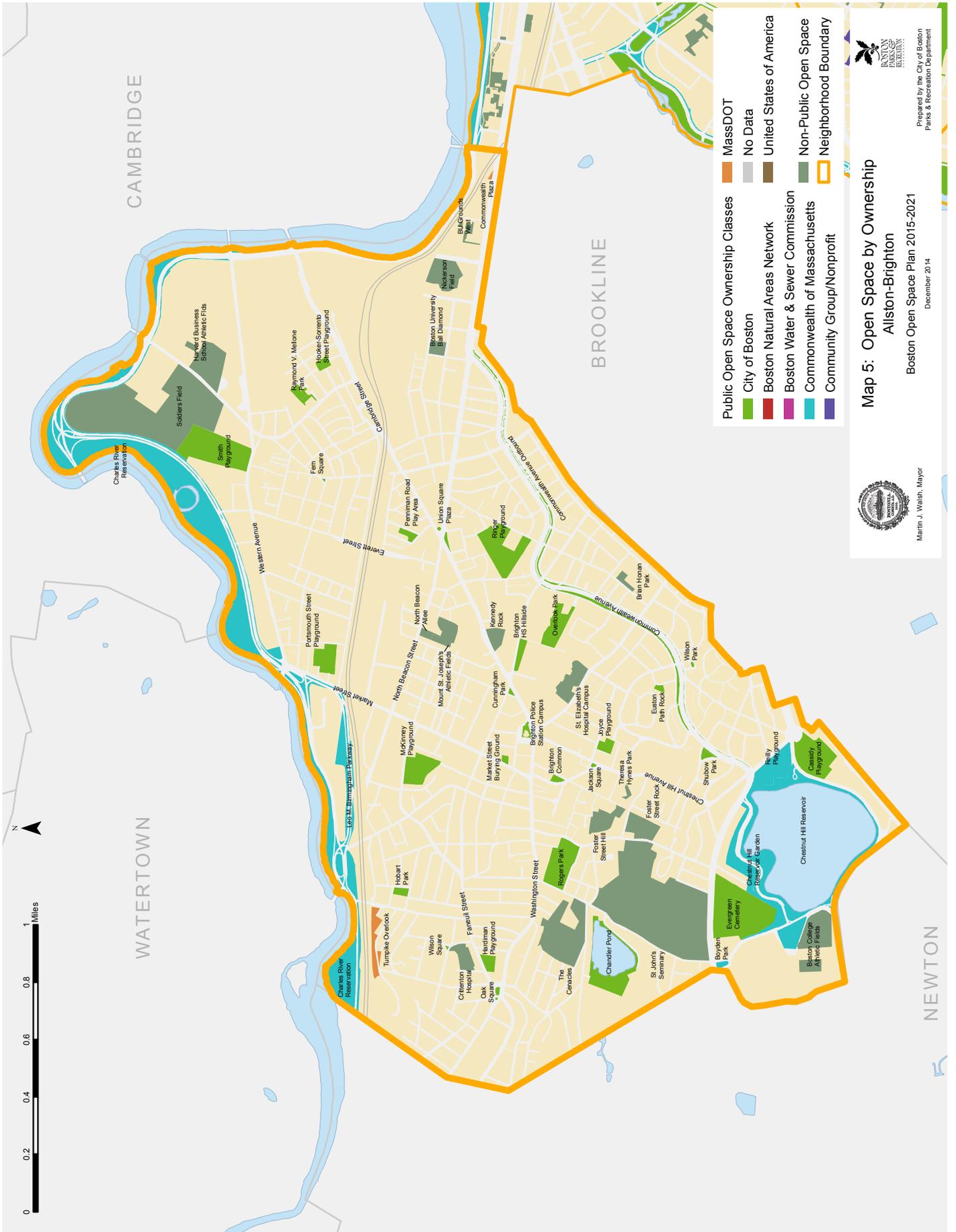
Martin J. Walsh, Mayor



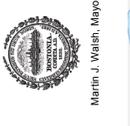
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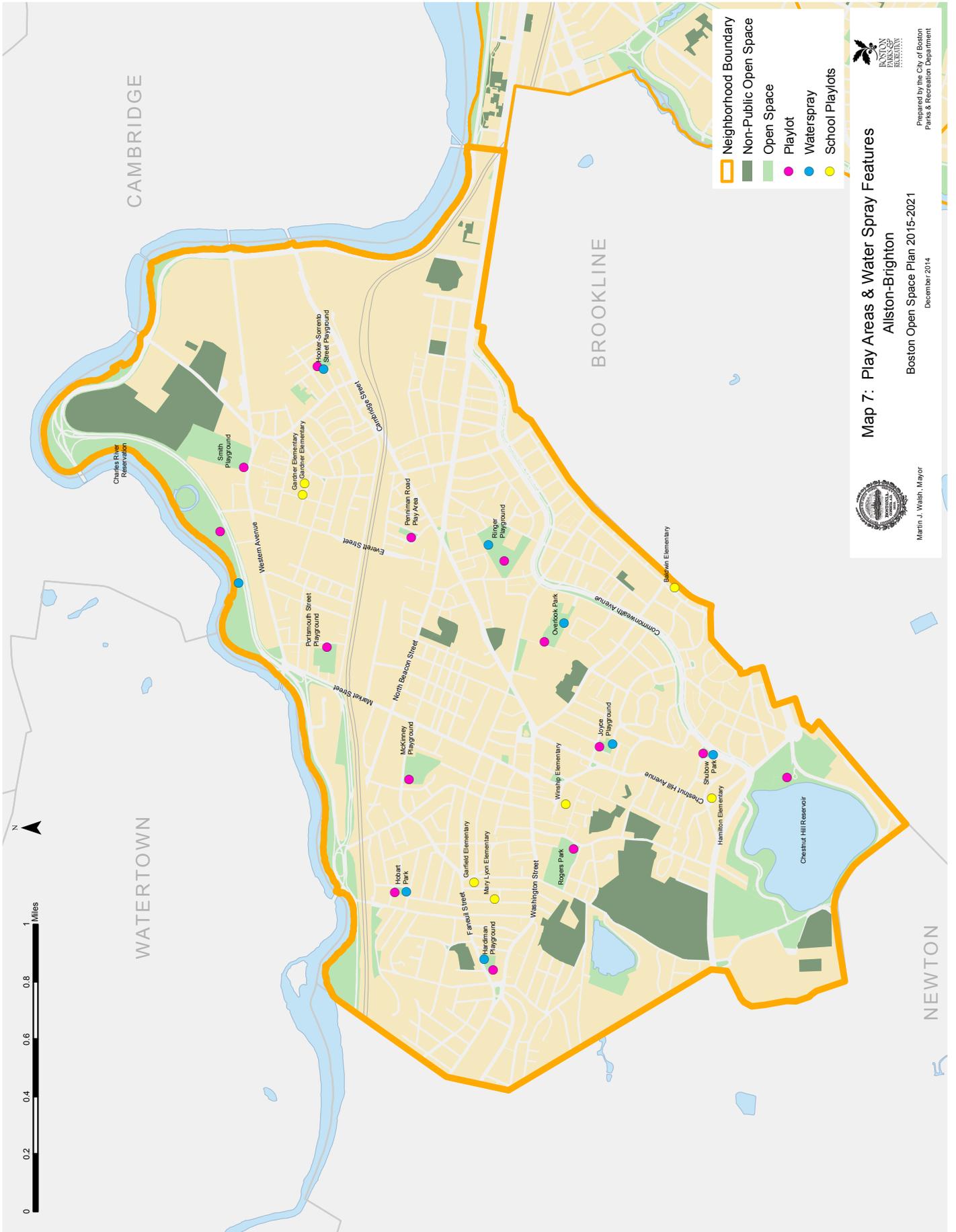


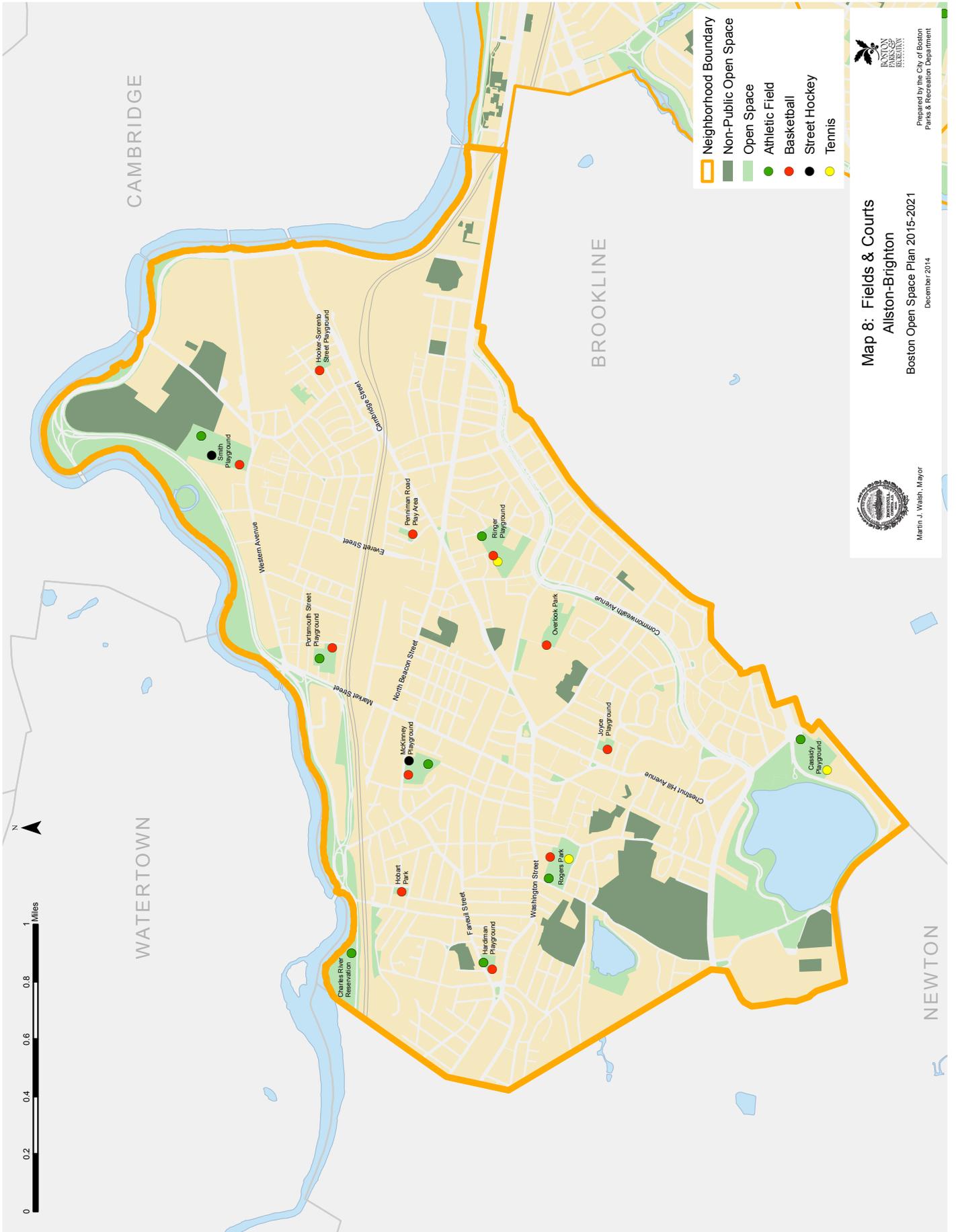


Map 5: Open Space by Ownership
Allston-Brighton
 Boston Open Space Plan 2015-2021
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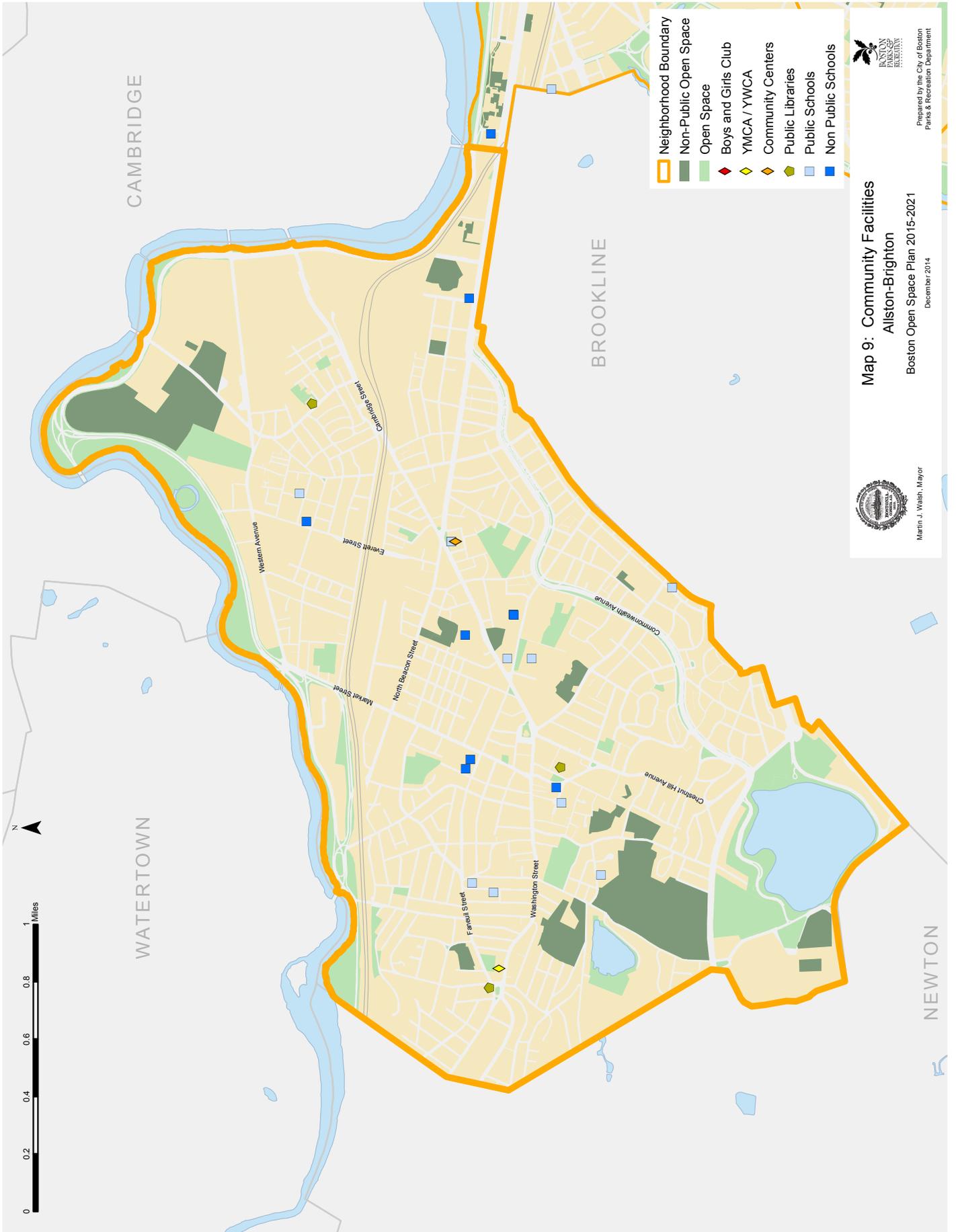


Map 8: Fields & Courts
Allston-Brighton
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Map 9: Community Facilities
Allston-Brighton

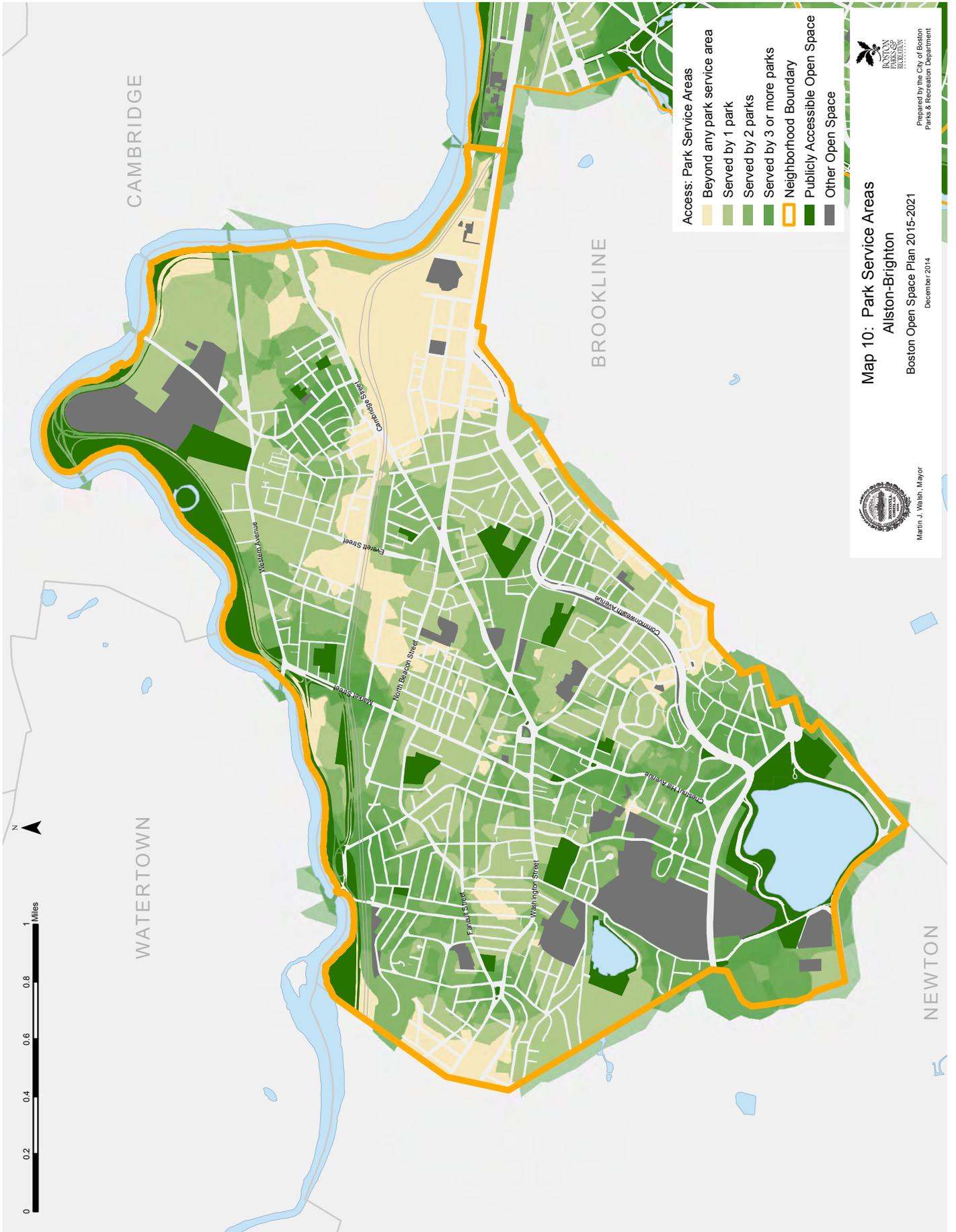
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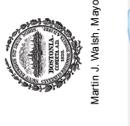
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Map 10: Park Service Areas
 Allston-Brighton
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