

Section 7.2.5:

DORCHESTER

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

The Town of Dorchester was settled and incorporated in 1630, encompassing present-day Dorchester, South Boston, Mattapan, and Hyde Park. In 1633, Puritans landed at Columbia Point, an area that was later defended from a fort atop Savin Hill. In that first year a burying ground was dedicated in Uphams Corner. Dorchester is also home to one of the city's oldest extant wood frame houses, the Blake House, constructed in 1648.

Although for nearly 200 years Dorchester developed primarily as a farming community, its harbor front and riverfront hosted commerce, particularly at Lower Mills and around Commercial Point. In the early 1800s, Dorchester estates and summer houses were built as second homes for wealthy Bostonians, especially on the area's numerous hilltops.

In 1870, when Dorchester itself was annexed to Boston, it was still a rural community of 12,000 residents. But in that same year came railroad access and ever-increasing residential and commercial development that began to transform what had been essentially an agricultural area. Upper-class Yankees and Irish built one and two-family Victorian homes on Savin Hill and Jones Hill. At the junction of five streetcar lines, Uphams Corner became Dorchester's marketplace.

By 1920, with new streetcar and municipal water lines supporting growth, Dorchester's population climbed to 150,000. Between 1950 and 1980, however, the neighborhood's population dropped by 23,000 people as many families joined the suburban exodus and a process of disinvestment in the neighborhood began. This movement was facilitated by the 1959 opening of the Southeast Expressway and the closing of the Old Colony Railroad commuter line. The recent construction of the Fairmount Commuter Rail Line has reconnected key sections of Dorchester to the city's transit system.

Open Space Access & Equity

Dorchester is the largest neighborhood in Boston, both geographically and by population count. Its northernmost boundary includes the South Bay Shopping Center; from there the community extends south, its eastern edge forming Dorchester Bay. Dorchester's southernmost extent is to the city limits along the Neponset River, while to the west it borders Mattapan and Roxbury. Across this vast community are many residential neighborhoods and the commercial districts that serve them. Some of the most significant include Uphams Corner, Fields Corner, Savin Hill, Jones Hill, Popes Hill, Bowdoin/Geneva, Harbor Point, Codman Square, Cedar Grove, Lower Mills, Adams Village, and Gallivan and Morrissey Boulevards. Dorchester is served by

the MBTA's Red Line, the Fairmount Commuter Rail Line and many interconnected bus lines, while the Southeast Expressway skirts along its eastern edge.

Dorchester has great diversity of open space types and scales—from small squares to large connected waterfront parks along the Neponset River and Dorchester Bay (Dorchester Map 4). The neighborhood is also blessed with close access to two of the city's largest parks: Franklin Park and Harambee Park. These facilities, combined with the established pattern of large community parks throughout the neighborhood provide Dorchester residents with a good opportunity for access to open space. The ratio of 5.63 acres of open space per 1,000 residents is still below the city average of 7.59. Dorchester is a family neighborhood with over 28% of the population below the age of 20; 9% of the neighborhood population is teenagers, one of the highest percentages in the city.

In the denser northern part of the neighborhood, parks are smaller but clustered more closely together. Active facilities (athletic fields and courts) are lacking in these parks due to their size, which puts more pressure on the recreation spaces in adjacent neighborhoods. This situation echoes the conditions in the city's inner core neighborhoods and will be important to address as additional residential development comes to this part of Dorchester (Dorchester Maps 7 and 8). With a high proportion of families and teenagers in this neighborhood, active recreation facilities are essential.

The central and southern portions of the neighborhood contain the larger parks that accommodate both active and passive uses, but Dorchester's scale means that easy walkable access (0.5 miles or less) is not achieved in all pockets of the neighborhood (Dorchester Map 10).

Some of the greatest opportunities for open space in Dorchester reside in the incremental improvements to the Neponset River corridor and the ongoing projects on Columbia Point. Waterfront access and connectivity provide unsurpassed amenities that few other Boston neighborhoods can achieve. Because the Southeast Expressway cuts through the eastern edge of Dorchester, it creates a physical barrier between most of its residential areas to the west and the waterfront to its east. Columbia Point, Port Norfolk, and Savin Hill, while blessed with a diverse open space inventory, have limited access from the rest of Dorchester due to the Expressway, much like the North End was physically isolated from downtown Boston due to the then elevated Central Artery. Improving connectivity to the waterfront for all city residents should be a focus in ongoing planning efforts.

Dorchester's residential areas are quite dense, and nearly the entire neighborhood meets the State's criteria for Environmental Justice populations. These factors, combined with age variables, indicate that highest need areas for open space access are along the western half of the neighborhood (west of Dorchester Avenue) (Dorchester Maps 2 and 3).

When park service areas are mapped, the Grove Hall neighborhood (just north of Franklin Park along the Roxbury border) and Uphams Corner neighborhood are both underserved. The

Adams/Ashmont neighborhood also has limited park access, but it has lower need scores than the aforementioned areas (Dorchester Map 11).

Future Development

The Fairmount Commuter Rail Line and associated Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative, is opening up planning and transit-oriented development opportunities along this new corridor from South Station to Readville. Three of the four new stations built by the MBTA as part of this corridor are in Dorchester: Newmarket, Four Corners/Geneva Avenue, and Talbot Avenue. It is recommended that a wayfinding system be built to help rail users orient themselves to the community the station serves and the nearby open spaces, such as Clifford Playground and the shoreline park system in South Boston/Dorchester (Newmarket); Franklin Park (Four Corners/Geneva Avenue); and Harambee Park as well as Franklin Park (Talbot Avenue). The Boston Transportation Department's Green Links planning project can also facilitate better open space access along this corridor. The Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative, as well as closely aligned Fairmount / Indigo Corridor Collaborative, have identified potential open space improvements along the corridor to be implemented as funding allows.

The BRA and DND completed a Mid-Dorchester Action Plan with development guidelines for a series of vacant parcels in this area of the community. One parcel group at 218-230 Washington Street is proposed for at least partial open space development. This open space would be funded by the development of the adjacent parcels for housing and commercial uses.

The City, through the BRA, has developed a master plan for the Columbia Point area. This master plan seeks to increase residential and retail development to service the neighborhood. The plan calls for additional passive open space; however, as mentioned earlier, active recreational facilities, such as courts and fields, are lacking in northern Dorchester, of which Columbia Point is a part. It is unknown if the University of Massachusetts Boston campus, as it redevelops through its own master plan, will allow non-campus residents to use the proposed active recreation facilities that may become part of the new campus. The City, through the Parks and Recreation Department, will engage with the BRA and the University administration to discuss how this area can better meet active recreation needs.

Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile

DORCHESTER

Population	
2010 Census	114,235
2000 Census	118,848
Population Growth/Decline, 2000–2010	-3.88%

Population Density		Persons per Acre
2010 Census		23.3
2000 Census		24.2
Density Change, 2000–2010		-0.9

Age	Persons	Percent of Population
0 to 9	15,543	14%
10 to 19	17,209	15%
20 to 34	28,441	25%
35 to 54	30,936	27%
55 to 64	11,364	10%
65 and over	10,742	9%

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%
Dorchester	114,235	10,227	30.2%	9.0%

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

Race/Ethnicity/Latino Status	Persons	Percent of Population
White alone	25,308	22%
Hispanic or Latino	19,407	17%
Black or African American alone	49,144	43%
Asian alone	10,605	9%
Other	9,771	9%

Median Household Income
\$42,467

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

Percent of Households by Number of Vehicles Available	
No vehicles	32%
1 vehicle	42%
2 vehicles	21%
3 or more vehicles	6%

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

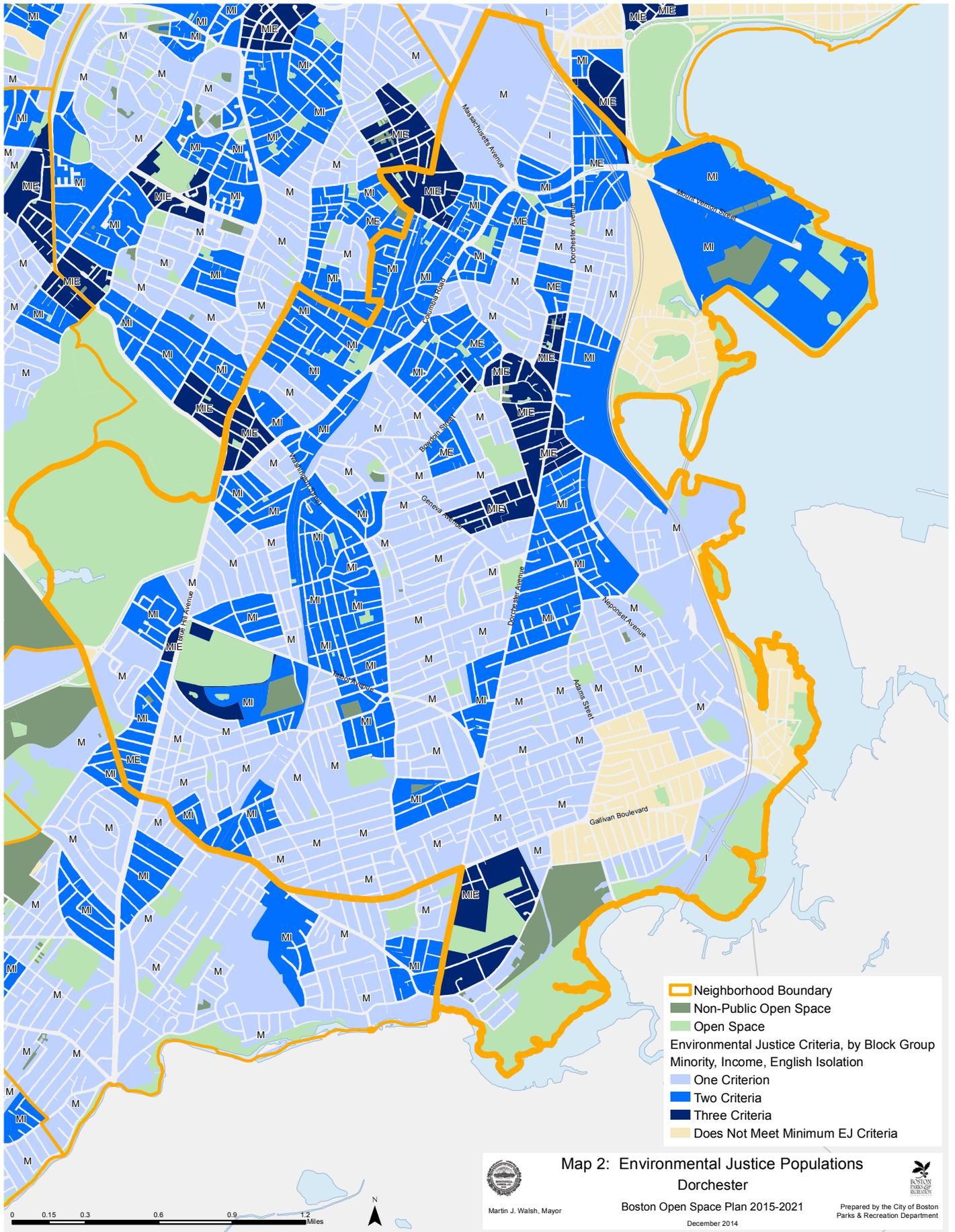
Population* with Disability	Persons	Percent of Population
Boston	72,390	11.6%
Dorchester	18,095	15.1%

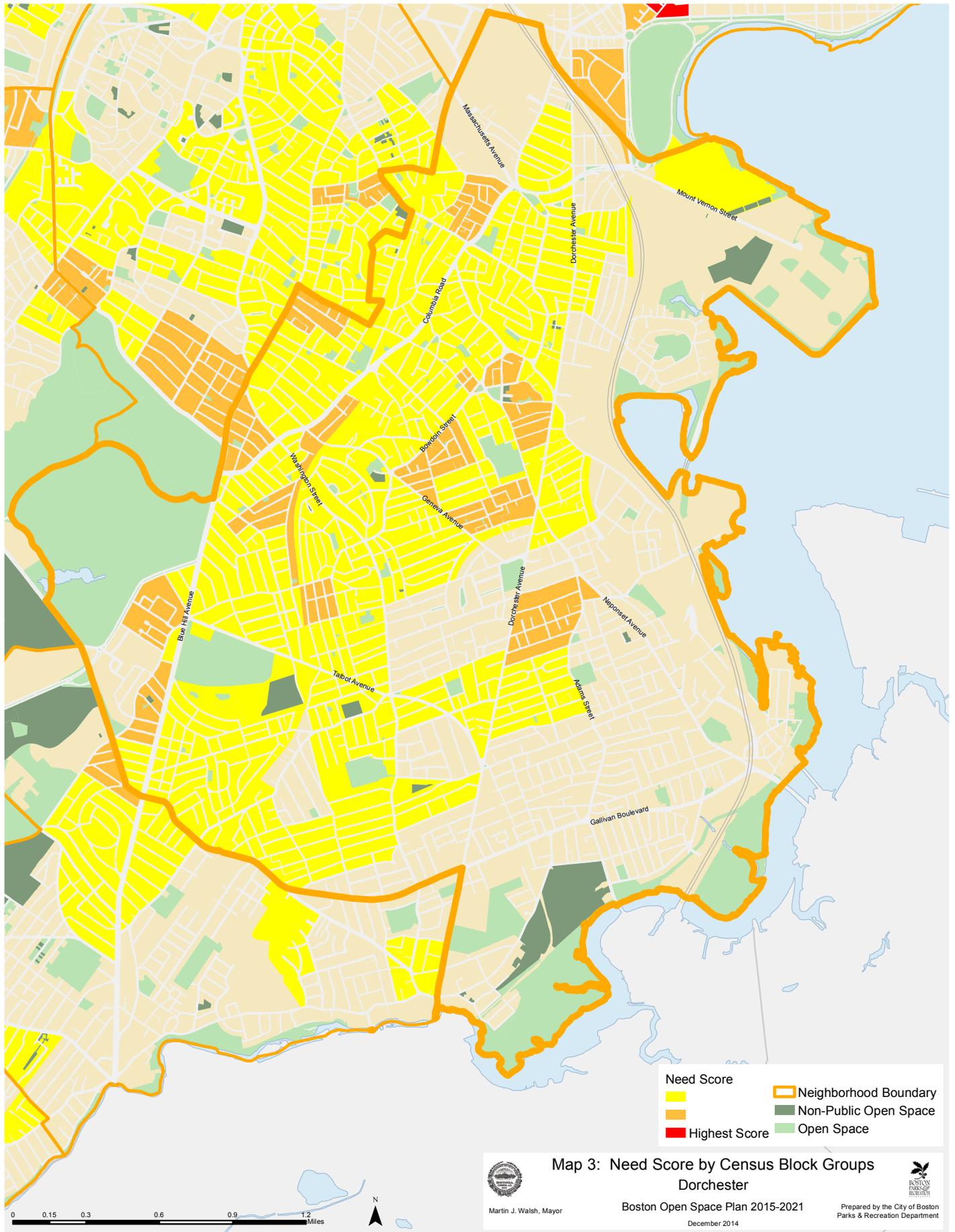
*Civilian Noninstitutionalized

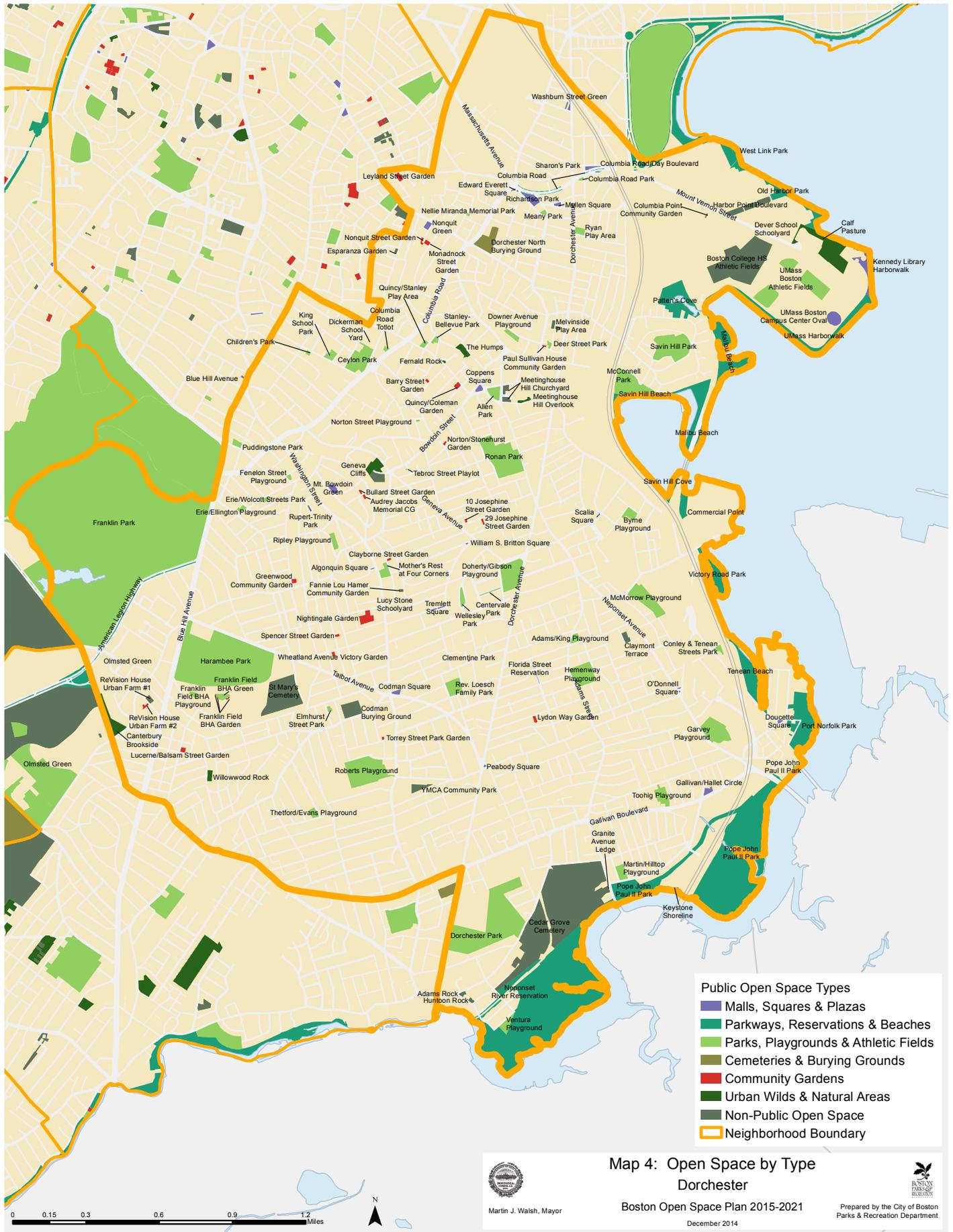
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, BRA Research Division Analysis

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

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

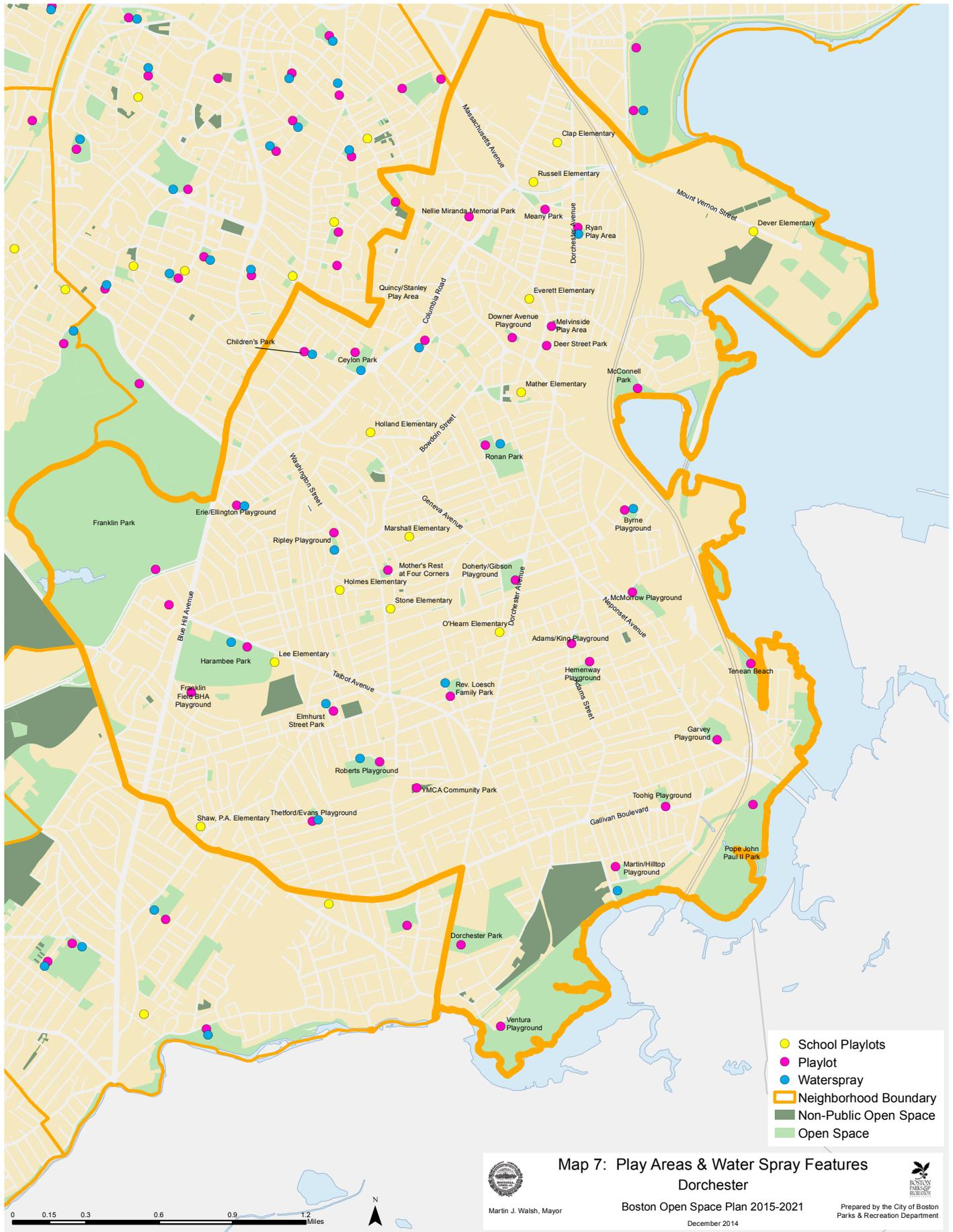


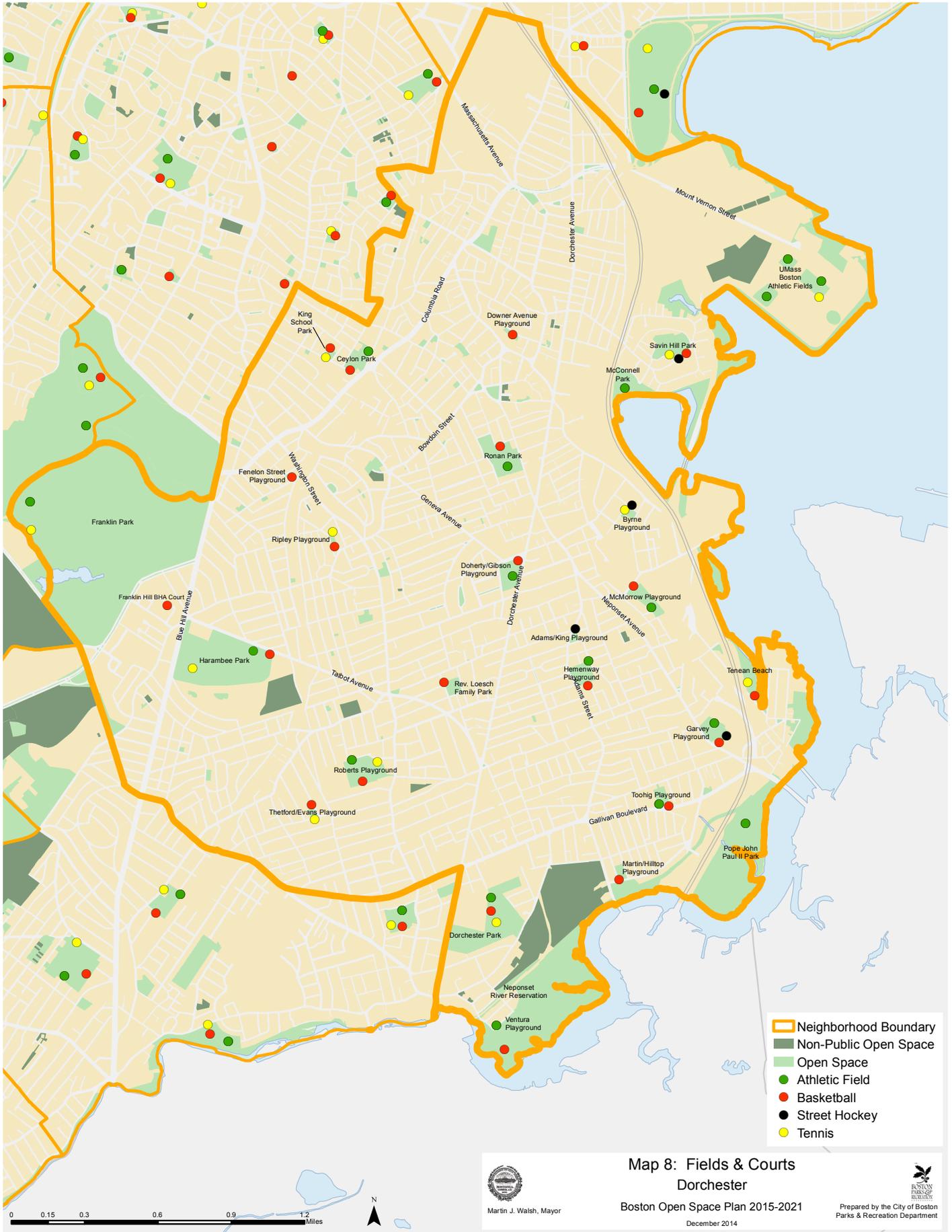


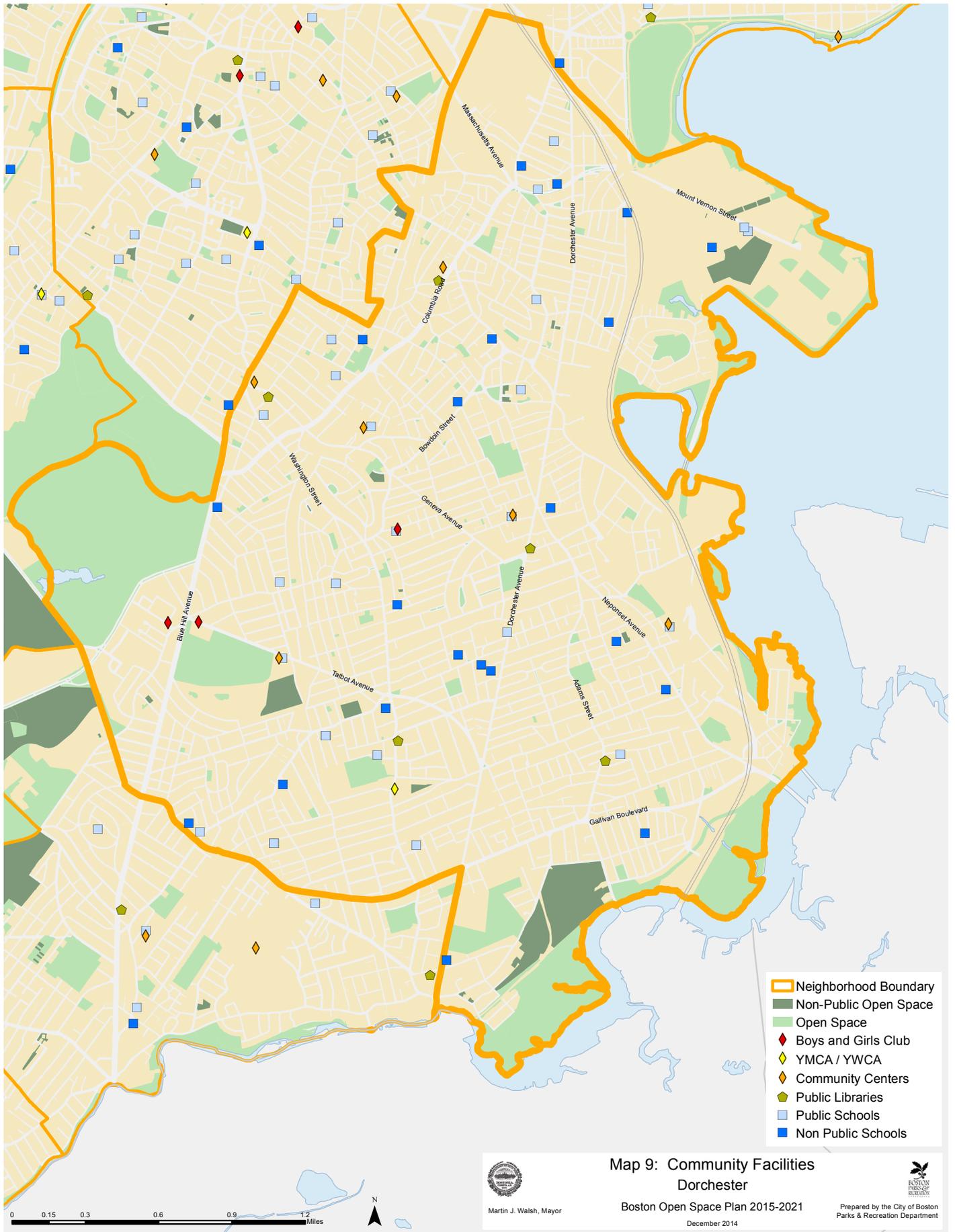












- Neighborhood Boundary
- Non-Public Open Space
- Open Space
- ◆ Boys and Girls Club
- ◆ YMCA / YWCA
- ◆ Community Centers
- ◆ Public Libraries
- Public Schools
- Non Public Schools


 Martin J. Walsh, Mayor

**Map 9: Community Facilities
 Dorchester**
 Boston Open Space Plan 2015-2021
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 Prepared by the City of Boston
 Parks & Recreation Department

