
Open Space Plan 2015-2021

Section 7

Analysis of Needs

**Section 7.2.5 Community Open Space &
Recreation
DORCHESTER**

Section 7.2.5:

Community Open Space & Recreation

DORCHESTER

The Community Open Space & Recreation Needs Analysis breaks down the open space analysis by neighborhood, in contrast to the city-wide assessment which was explored in Sections 3, 4 and 5. At the neighborhood scale we are better able to inventory and analyze the specific fabric and make-up of a community, and explore how the open space resources in that community respond to its needs. Functionally, neighborhood boundaries have no meaning in the use and operation of the city's open space system but these established perimeters help organize the discussion for the purposes of the Open Space Plan. This is why we chose to call these areas "communities" rather than neighborhoods.

The six basic components of the Open Space Plan neighborhood needs assessment are:

- What is the neighborhood setting and history?
- Who is the parks and open space system serving in each neighborhood?
- Where in the neighborhood are the populations with the greatest need for access to open space and how well served are these areas?
- Where are the parks and open spaces in the neighborhood and what kinds of facilities are located in these places?
- Can residents easily walk to a public park?
- What planning and development is happening in the neighborhood? What are the potential open space impacts and opportunities associated with those projects?

For further detail on the components of this analysis, see pages 7.2-1, et seq.

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 harborfront and riverfront hosted commerce, particularly at Lower Mills and around Commercial Point. In the early 1800s, Dorchester estates and

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summer houses were built as second homes for wealthy Bostonians, especially on the area's numerous hilltops. South Boston was annexed to the city in 1804. In 1868, Hyde Park was incorporated as a separate town.

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.

Analysis

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 running along 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 serving 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-Indigo 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 1000 residents is still below the city average of 7.63. Dorchester is a family neighborhood with over 28% of the population below the age of 20.

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Many parks in Dorchester are large enough to accommodate a mix of active and passive park uses. In the northern, denser, part of the neighborhood, parks are smaller but are clustered more closely together. Active facilities are lacking in these parks due to their size, which puts more pressure on the courts and fields in adjacent areas. This situation echoes the conditions in the city's inner core neighborhoods and will be challenging to address given the lack of available land (Dorchester Maps 7 & 8).

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). Perhaps 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.

The Southeast Expressway cuts through the eastern edge of Dorchester, creating a physical barrier between most of its residential areas to the west and the waterfront to its east, with the exception of the Savin Hill, Columbia Point, and Port Norfolk sub-neighborhoods. Columbia Point, Port Norfolk, and Savin Hill, while blessed with a diverse open space inventory, have limited access to 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.

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 & 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).

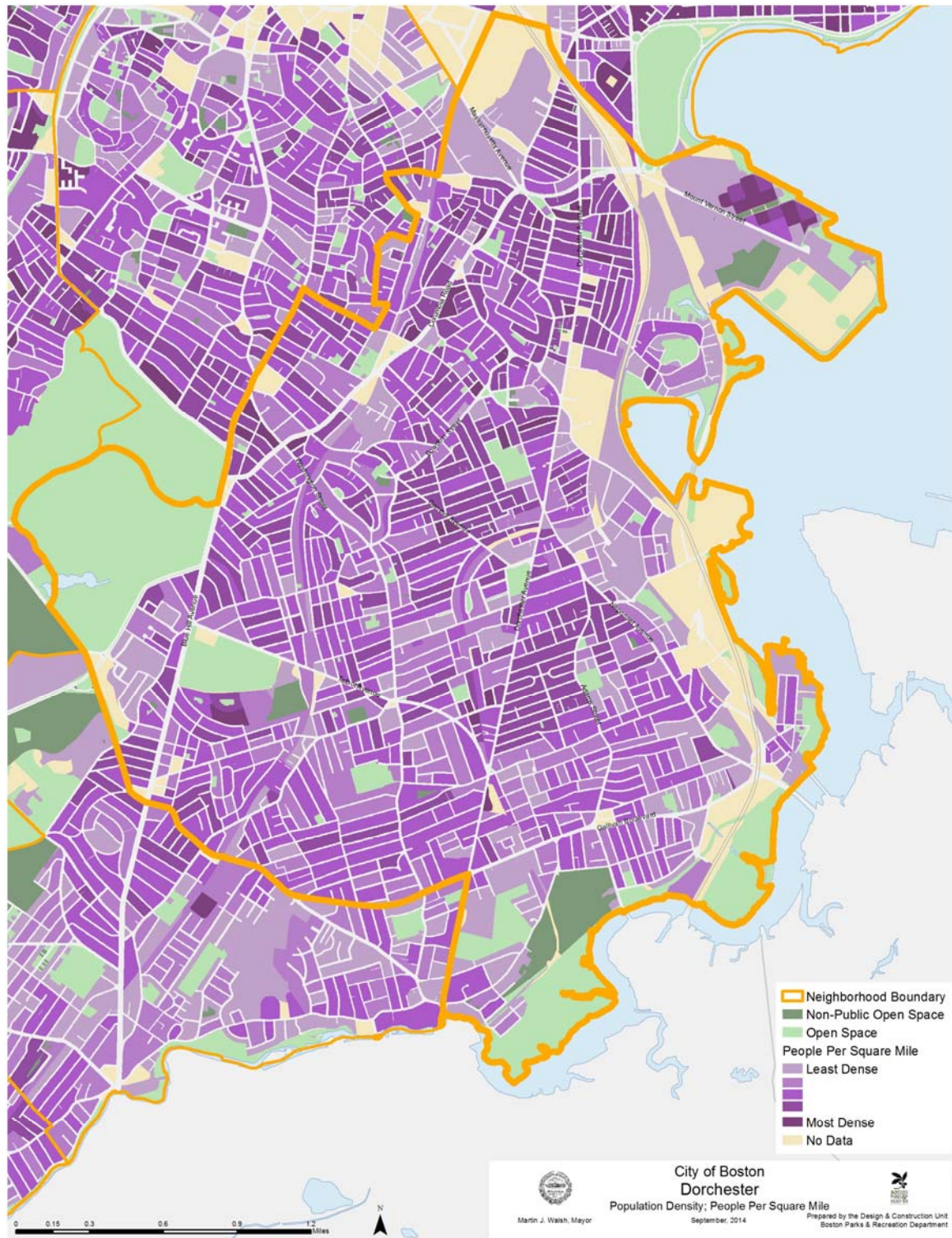
The BRA planning staff is in the final stages of preparing a Corridor Plan for their Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative. This planning effort in part responds to a 2011 proposal by a group of non-profit organizations known as the Fairmount Greenway Task Force. In turn, both efforts are responding to the transportation access opportunities afforded by the state's investment in the Fairmount Line, a commuter rail line that runs from South Station to Readville in Hyde Park, the only

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commuter rail line wholly within the City of Boston, and located in several environmental justice communities.

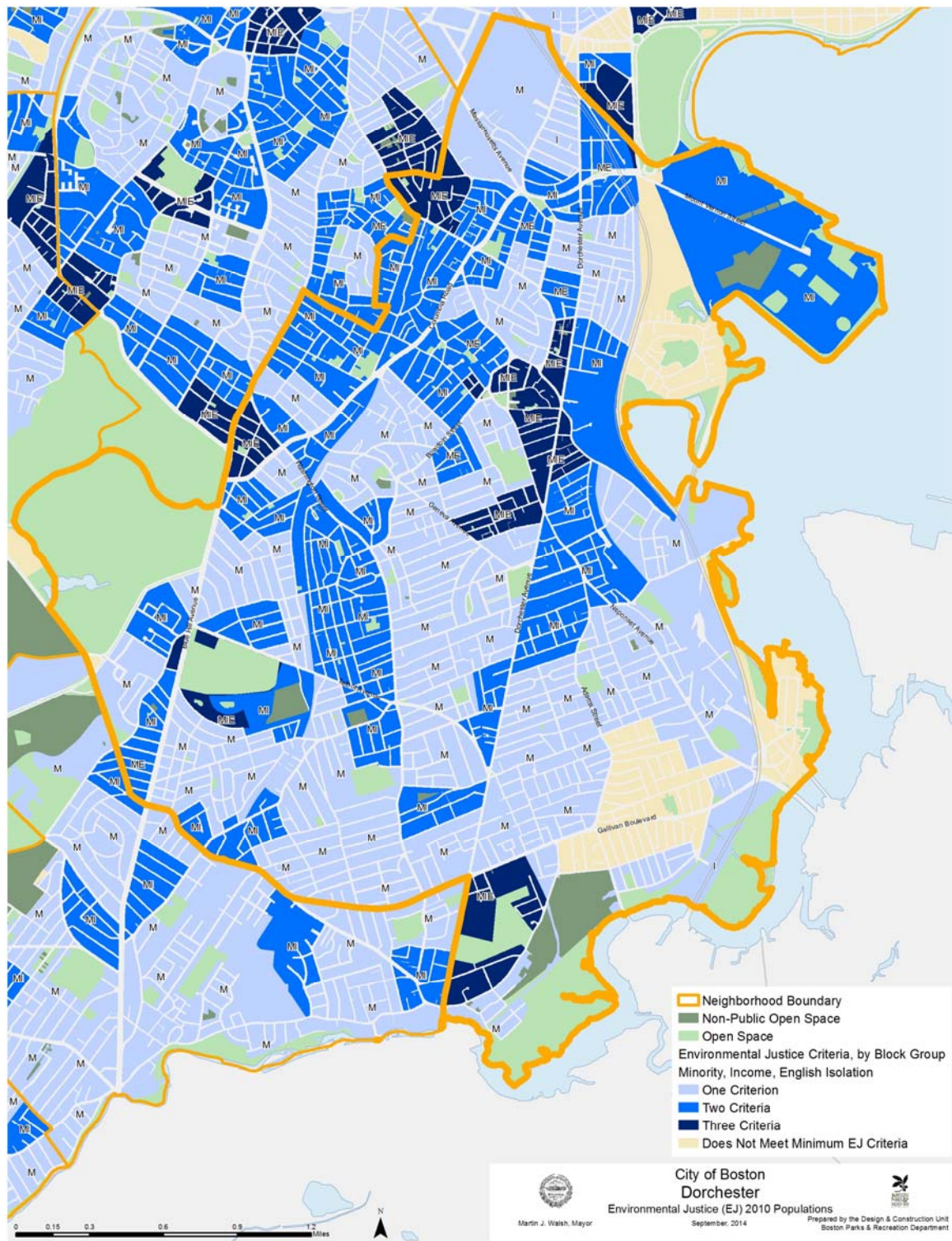
Three of the four new stations built by the MBTA as part of this reinvestment to better serve this corridor are in Dorchester: Newmarket, Four Corners/Geneva Avenue, and Talbot Avenue. It is recommended that a wayfinding system be built to help rail users orient themselves to the community the station 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 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 development would be generated by private development of these parcels for housing and commercial uses. As market conditions warrant, this open space opportunity will need to be reviewed to insure it can be maintained by the private owner of the parcels.



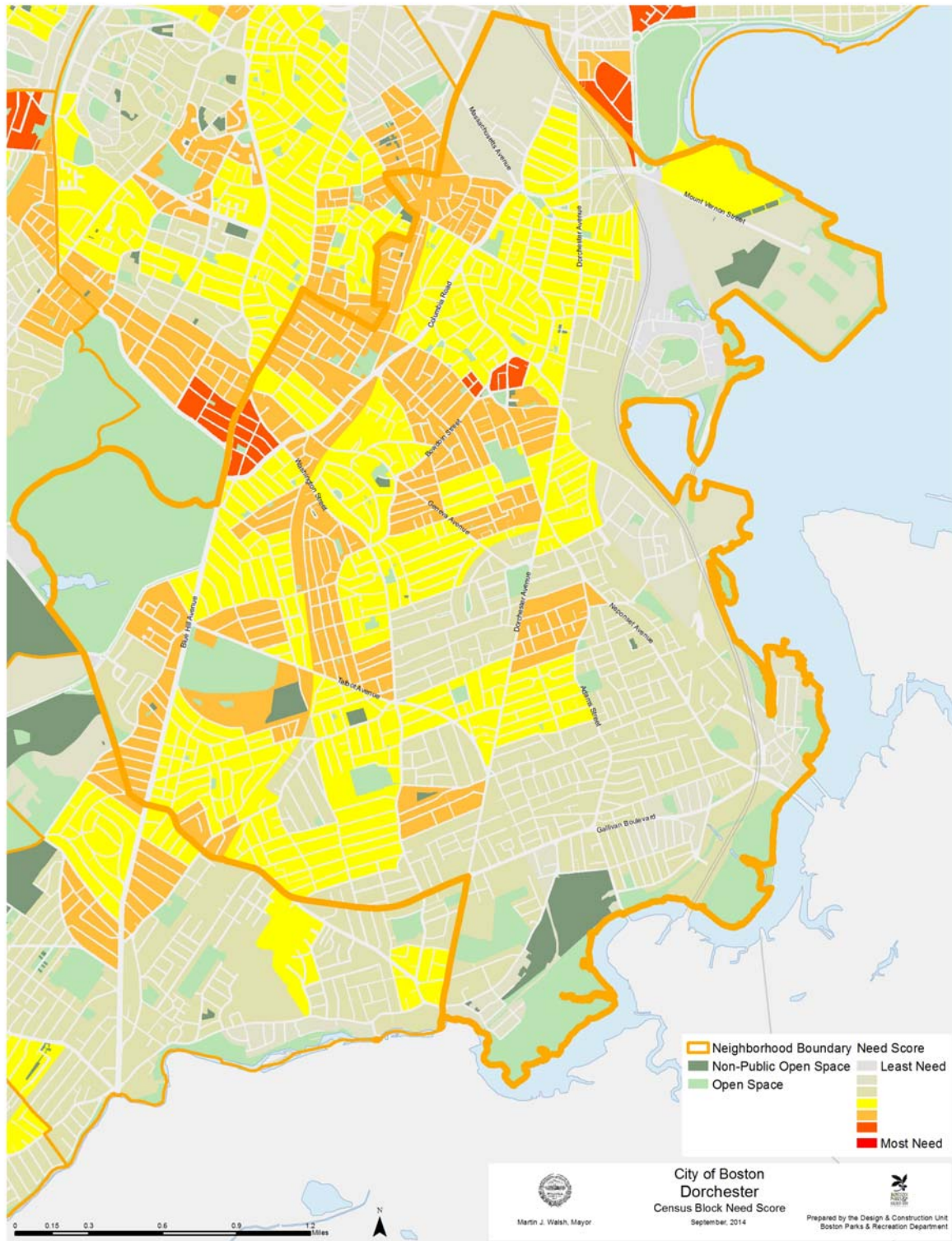
Map 1: Population Density, Dorchester

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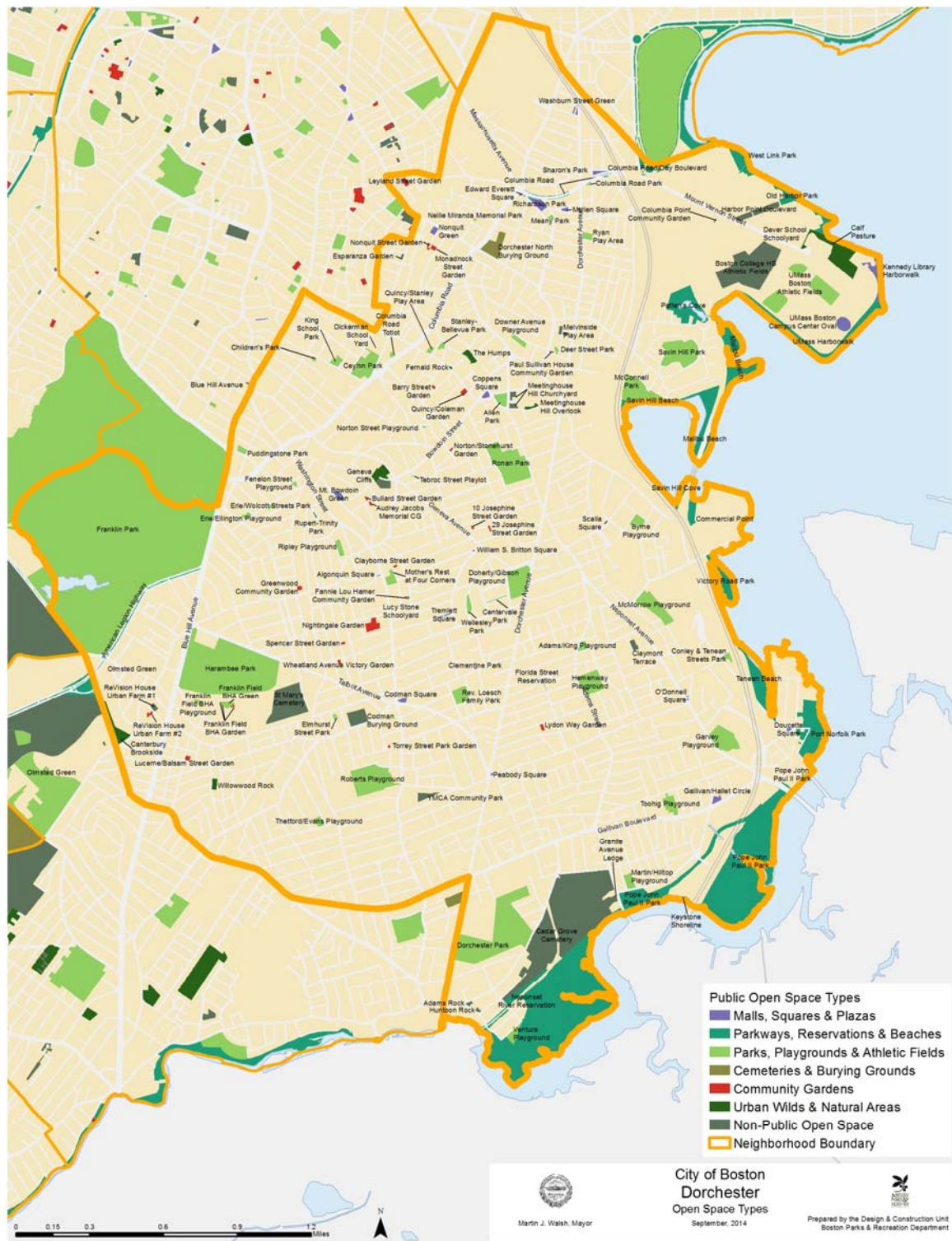
Map 2: Environmental Justice Populations, Dorchester

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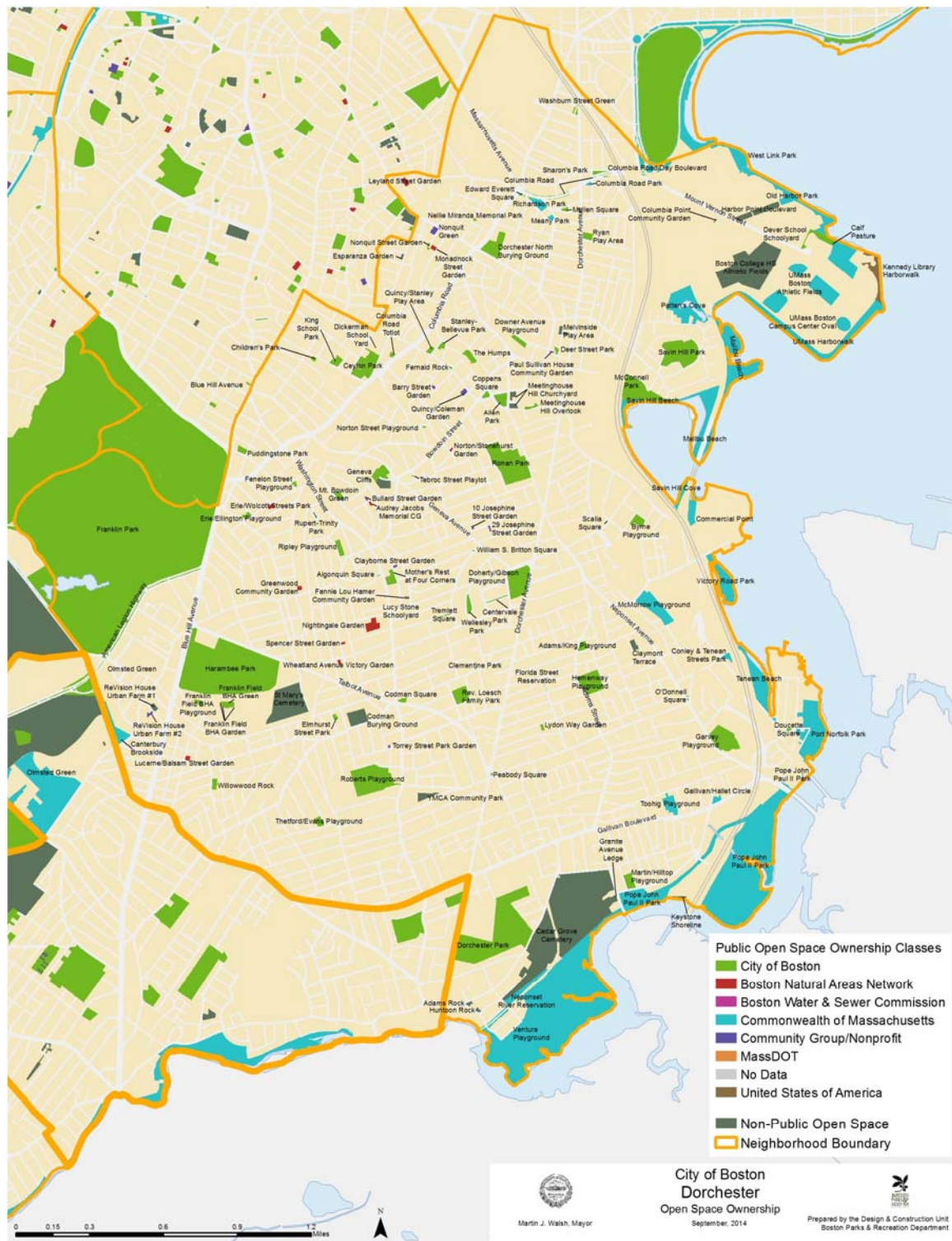
Map 3: Need Score by Census Block Group, Dorchester

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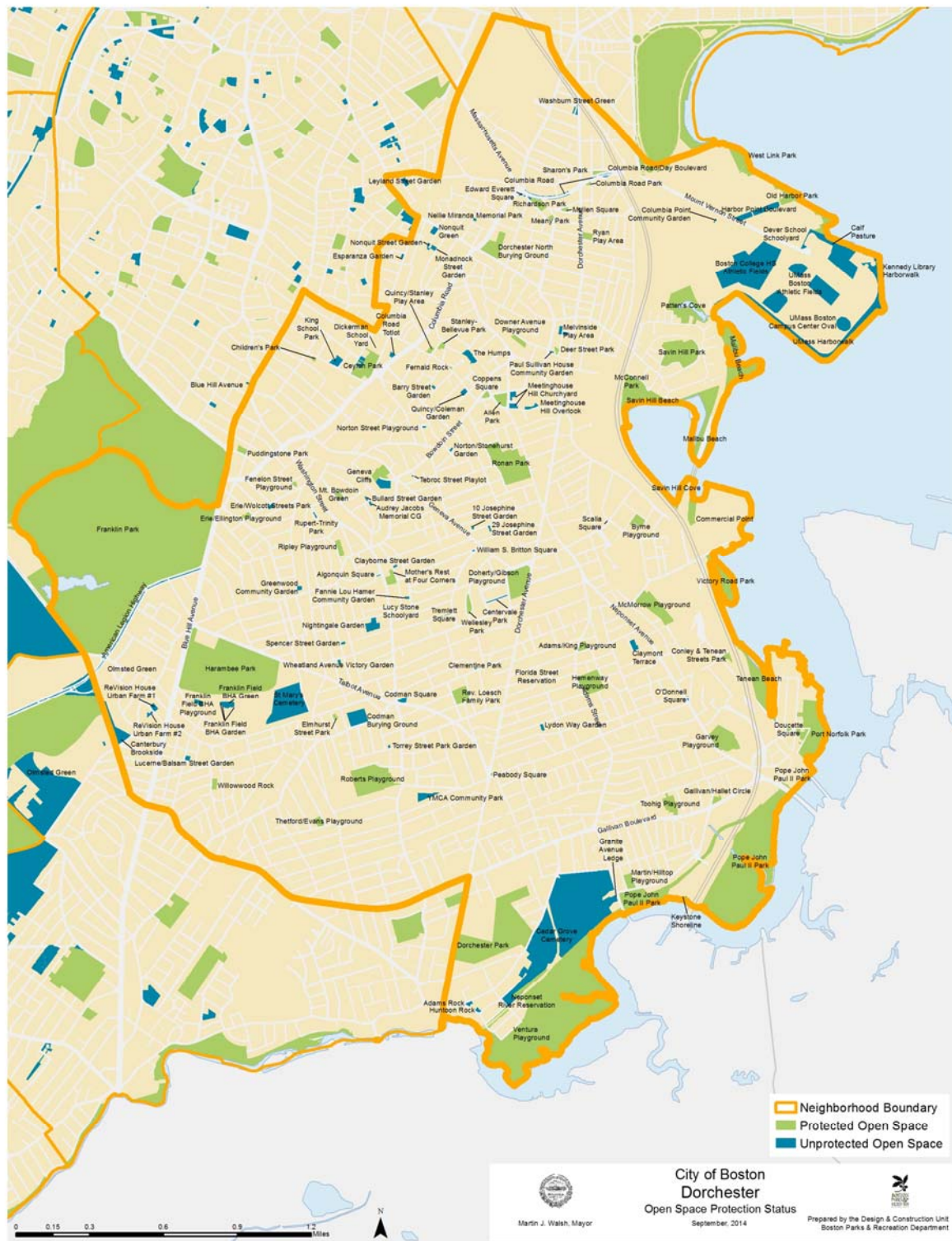
Map 4: Open Space by Type, Dorchester

Needs Analysis



Map 5: Open Space by Ownership, Dorchester

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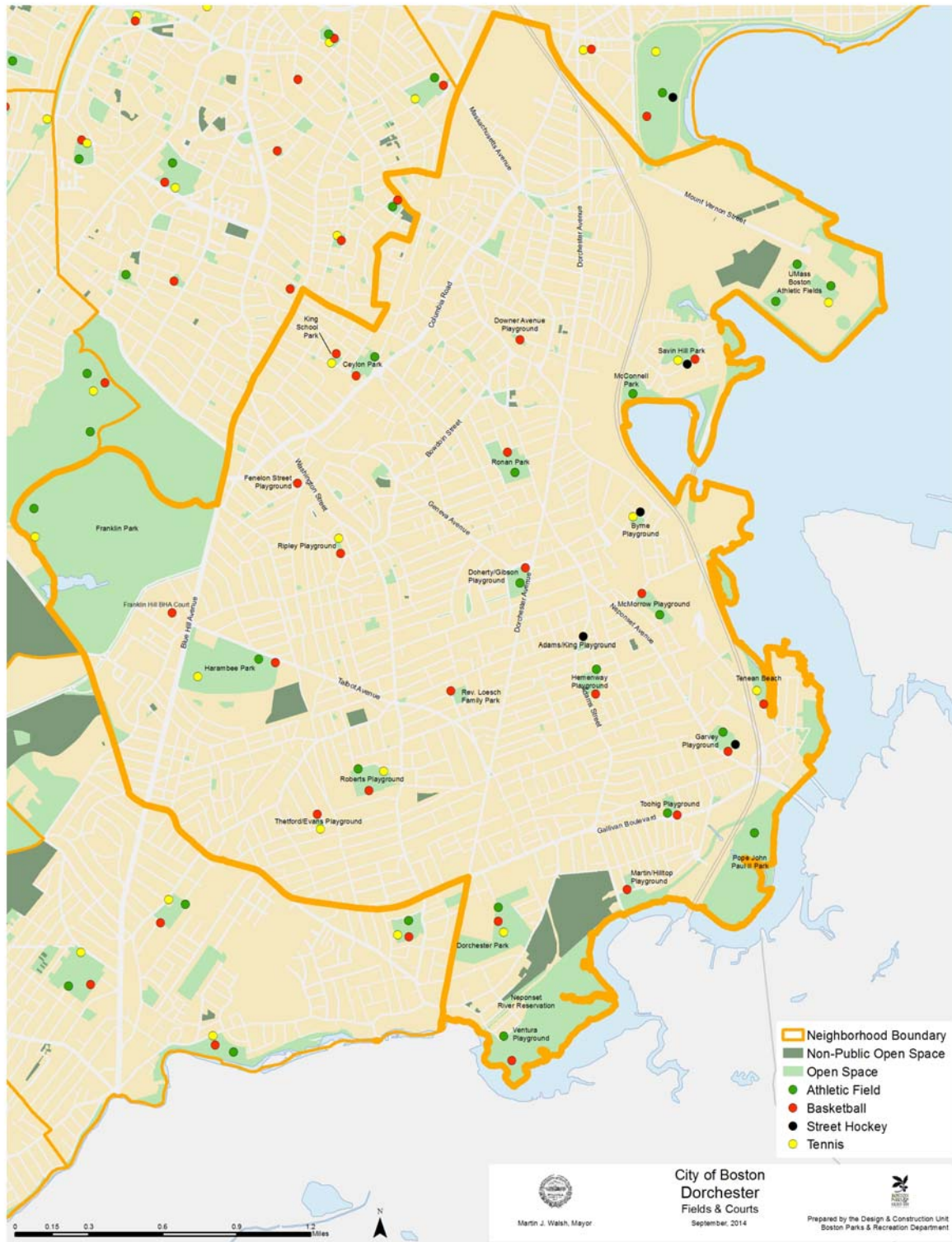
Map 6: Open Space by Protection Status, Dorchester

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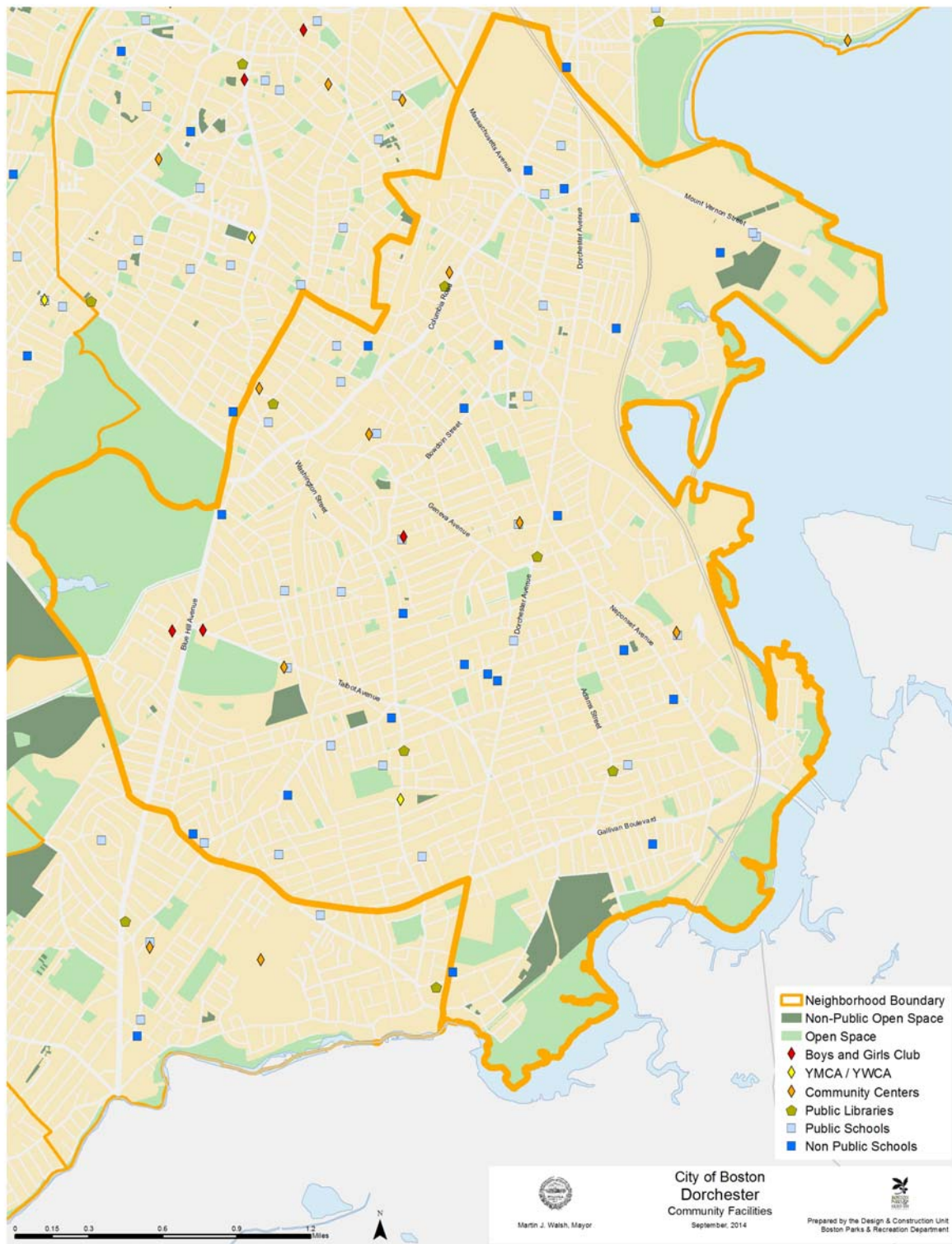
Map 7: Play Areas and Water Spray Features, Dorchester

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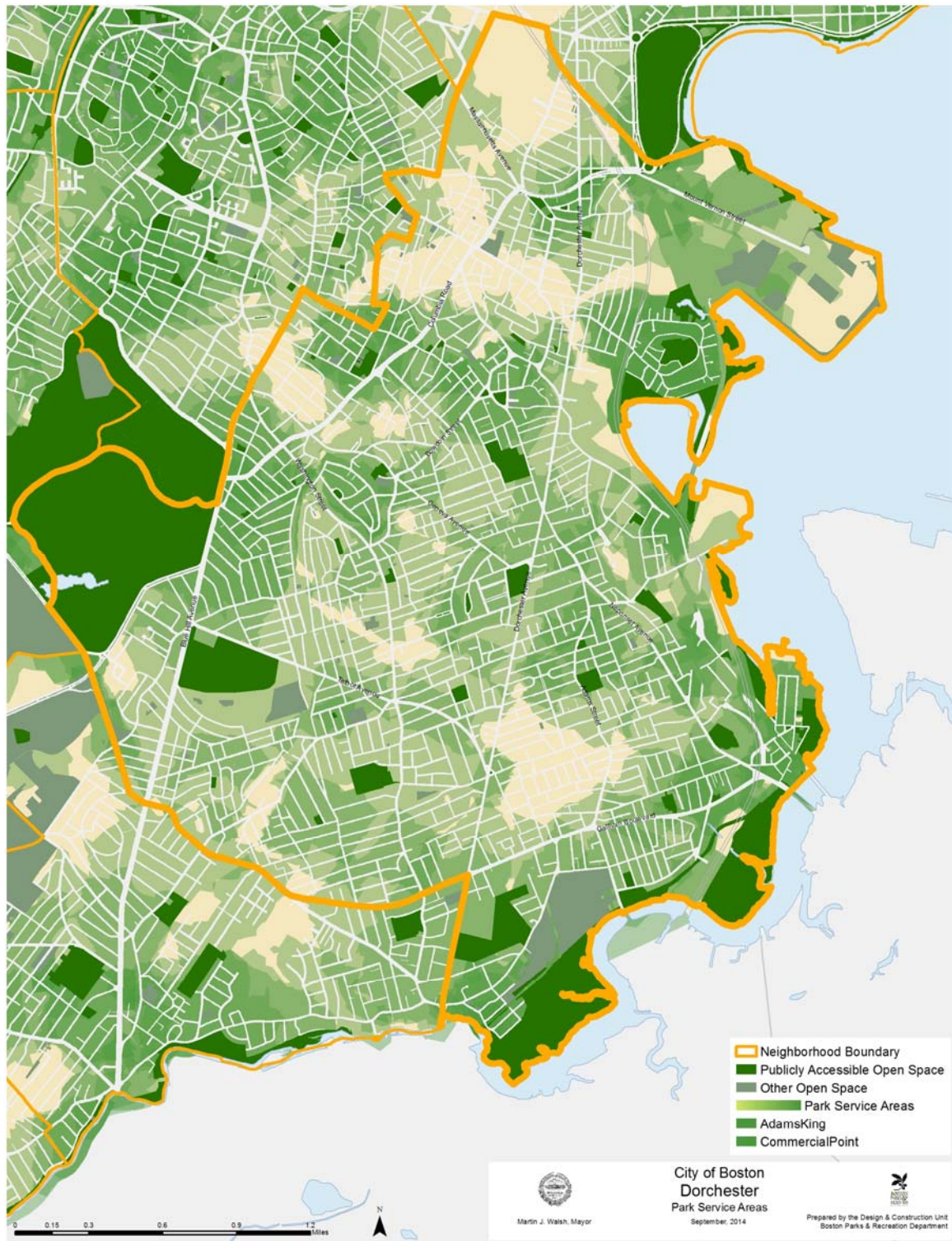
Map 8: Fields and Courts, Dorchester

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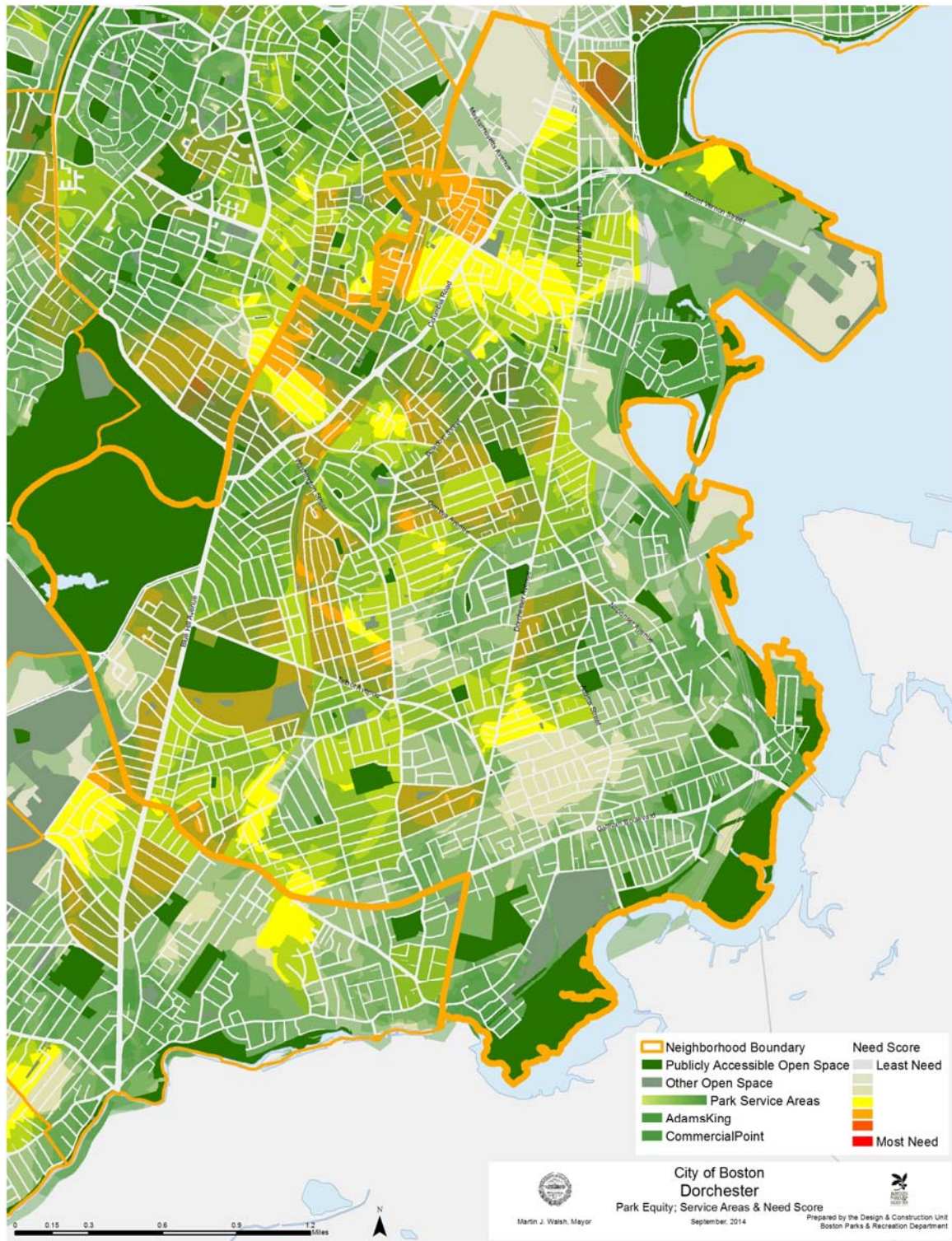
Map 9: Community Facilities, Dorchester

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Map 10: Park Service Areas, Dorchester

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Map 11, Park Equity: Service Areas & Need Scores, Dorchester

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Population	
2010 Census	114,235
2000 Census	118,848
Population growth/decline, 2000-2010	-3.9%

Age		
Under 9	15,543	13.6%
10-19	17,209	15.1%
20-34	28,441	24.9%
35-54	30,936	27.1%
55-64	11,364	9.9%
65 and over	10,742	9.4%

Race	
	% of Total Population
White Alone	22.2%
Black or African American alone	43.0%
Asian Alone	9.3%
Other	8.6%

Latino Status	
	% of Total Population
Not Hispanic or Latino	
Hispanic or Latino	17.0%

Population Density	
	Persons Per Acre
2010 Census	23.3

Median Household Income
\$46,266

Household by Number of Vehicles Available	
No Vehicle	31.6%
1 vehicle	41.8%
2 vehicles	20.7%
3 or more vehicles	5.9%