
Open Space Plan 2015-2021

Section 7

Analysis of Needs

**Section 7.2.7 Community Open Space &
Recreation
FENWAY/LONGWOOD**

DRAFT

Section 7.2.7: Community Open Space & Recreation FENWAY/LONGWOOD

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 Fenway, Kenmore, and Longwood communities date from approximately a century ago, created on the last land to be filled for neighborhood growth in Boston. In the latter half of the 1800s, the tidal swamps and mud flats at the confluence of the Muddy River and Stony Brook had become a sanitary concern due to the city's tremendous growth.

Frederick Law Olmsted addressed this concern, simultaneously solving a major drainage/sewage problem and creating a park system for the city, now known as the Emerald Necklace. Tidal gates were installed for the Muddy River and Stony

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Brook, a sewage interceptor was built below the Fens Basin, and the surrounding land was reshaped to create parkland. Park and streetcar development stimulated the westward expansion of Boston proper. The Fens parkland divided the area: Kenmore and the west Fenway developed to the north and west; the east Fenway and Longwood developed to the south and east.

The Fenway/Longwood community includes three distinct geographic areas with their own history and identity:

Kenmore

This western portion of the neighborhood is generally bordered by Beacon Street, the Brookline town line, the Allston-Brighton community, the Charles River, and the Muddy River. Kenmore Square developed with fine hotels, shops, and professional offices flanking the streetcar tracks. Close to the river on Bay State Road, townhouses were built for affluent families. The Peterborough and Audubon Circle areas had large apartment buildings along Beacon Street and the streetcar line. The Back Bay West/Bay State Road Historic District and the landmark designation for Commonwealth Avenue Mall recognize the architectural and scenic qualities of this area, and afford these areas legal protection by the city.

West of Kenmore Square, Commonwealth Avenue was slow to develop. Temple Adath Israel stood virtually alone following the turn of the twentieth century. Automobile showrooms began to line Commonwealth Avenue starting in the years between 1910-1919. Boston University purchased the last unbuilt tract of land in 1920 and raised the residential height limit, but did not begin to build the campus for another 20 years. Many extant buildings, including car showrooms, have been converted to campus and support facilities as well as housing.

As in other parts of this neighborhood, in recent years there has been increasing development in the Kenmore area. Boston University has constructed class and administrative buildings and converted existing structures to university use, a hotel has been built in Kenmore Square, and some moderately priced residential buildings have been converted to upscale condominiums.

Fenway

This is the central part of the larger community. It is generally bounded by Boylston Street, Massachusetts Avenue, the Southwest Corridor, Mission Hill, and the Brookline town line. Brownstone and brick residences typify the Symphony area and apartment blocks form the streetscape along the Fenway and Park Drive parkways. Institutions including the Christian Science Center, the Massachusetts Historical Society, Symphony Hall, Horticultural Hall, the New England Conservatory of Music, Simmons College, the Museum of Fine Arts, and the Isabella

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Stewart Gardner House (now Museum) were built starting in the 1890s and early 1900s.

The Fenway also has experienced development pressures in recent years. While the old Fenway Park remains, but has been modified to increase attendance and revenues, other parcels in the area have been or are in the process of development. The former Sears building had been converted into an office/retail/entertainment complex now known as the Landmark Center (and is being redeveloped as this is written): it stands at a critical node in the city's transportation and Emerald Necklace open space systems. In-fill housing, including new residential buildings on Boylston Street, has added population to an already densely settled residential community.

A long-paved-over portion of the Emerald Necklace - the infamous "Missing Link" in front of the former Sears building - reverted back to green space under the Parks Department's jurisdiction. The restoration of this 70,805 square foot parcel was negotiated as part of the former Sears building's redevelopment into the Landmark Center. This parcel has restored this easternmost segment of the Riverway and its linkage to the Back Bay Fens, and is being re-engineered to be another segment of the Muddy River that is open to the sky and public view.

Longwood

The Longwood Medical Area, or Longwood, comprises the southern portion of this neighborhood. Bounded by the Riverway, the Fenway, Huntington Avenue, and Francis Street, Longwood has developed a large institutional presence since the turn of the twentieth century. Notable facilities include Harvard Medical School, several major Boston-area hospitals and medical institutions, higher education institutions, including four stand-alone colleges, a private girls school and a public high school (Boston Latin School, America's oldest school), and Temple Israel. These facilities employ 26,000 people. Longwood has a student population of 10,000. The residential community here is mostly comprised of employees and students.

Building and development also continues apace in this area as area hospitals and colleges construct or seek additional facilities. A recent example is the Merck Pharmaceuticals Research Laboratories, a 12 story high building owned by a private drug company, located on the Emanuel College campus so as to be close to other researchers in this major medical research area.

Analysis

The Fenway Longwood community is the city's second densest after the South End and is dominated by non-profit institutions (Fenway/Longwood Map 1). Eight colleges and universities are located within (or immediately adjacent to) this

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neighborhood as well as the city's medical and research area and two major art museums. The games at Fenway Park generate a population jolt as well. Contrasting with this intensity of use, the neighborhood is also defined by the Back Bay Fens section of the Emerald Necklace, which winds through the neighborhood and meets the Charles River Reservation at Charlesgate at the edge of the Back Bay. The ratio of 3.68 acres of open space per 1000 persons in this neighborhood is lower than the city average of 7.64.

Less than 2% of the total population in Fenway/Longwood are children under the age of 9. Only 13.4% are over the age of 34. This is a neighborhood of young adults. About half of the neighborhood meets at least one of the state's criteria for Environmental Justice populations and the areas with the highest need scores for access to open space are in the Symphony neighborhood west of Massachusetts Avenue and east of the Back Bay Fens.

Like Back Bay/Beacon Hill, most of Fenway/Longwood's parklands and recreational facilities are located in either the Charles River Reservation (DCR) or within the Emerald Necklace park system. The Commonwealth Avenue Mall, the Back Bay Fens, and the Riverway are designated Boston Landmarks and are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Muddy River, the waterway connecting Jamaica Pond to the Charles River, is in the midst of a multi-phase restoration being led by the US Army Corps of Engineers. This project is detailed in Section 7.3.3, The Emerald Necklace. Improvements for the neighborhood and visitors to this section of the Emerald Necklace park system to be realized through the completion of the Muddy River project include providing flood control, improving water quality, enhancing riparian and aquatic habitats, preserving historic landscape resources, and instituting best management practices.

There are two community gardens in Fenway/Kenmore, the Symphony Road Community Garden and the sprawling Richard Parker Memorial Victory Gardens in the Back Bay Fens, believed to be the last surviving World War II Victory Garden in the nation.

The major open space resources near Longwood are the southern Fens and the northern Riverway. Smaller open spaces exist within the fabric of institutional buildings. Open space on member institutions' property is coordinated by the Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization, Inc. (MASCO). This association works closely with public agencies such as the Parks Department, the Public Works Department, and the Transportation Department to help provide an open space system with maximum public access to, from, and within Longwood.

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As institutions continue to build out onto their campus open space and recreational facilities, greater pressure results on the limited resources in this highly populated neighborhood.

Passive park uses dominate the neighborhood from the Back Bay Fens, to Ramler Park, Symphony Park and Evans Way. The Fens accommodates some active recreation facilities at on the west side of the parks at the Joseph Lee Playground, which includes Clemente Field and the Bradley Basketball courts, and on the east side of the park at Mothers' Rest Playground, a children's play lot (Fenway / Kenmore Maps 7 & 8).

Redevelopment of Boylston Street and Brookline Ave between the Landmark Center and Kenmore Square is bringing additional young adults to this neighborhood. The Landmark Center redevelopment proposes to bring 2 acres of additional passive open space to the area as well as a multi-use path connection between the Riverway and Fenway MBTA Station. A new commuter rail station at Yawkey Way provides additional public transit access to this busy neighborhood. A major development is proposed for parking lots west of Fenway Park combined with air rights over the Turnpike. These and other developments in this community will lead to sharply increasing total population, with consequent impacts on the Back Bay Fens and other parks in the community. The Boston Parks and Recreation Department will articulate minimum standards for open space quantity and quality associated with livable, vibrant urban neighborhoods to help inform development decisions in this and other neighborhoods facing or about to face rapid change.

A change that could directly impact open space in the Fenway Longwood community may result from the state Department of Transportation effort ease growing congestion on city streets by adding Turnpike ramps in the Back Bay, Fenway/Longwood, and Seaport Districts, which would also enable use of bus public transit. One option being discussed within this study is the fate of the Bowker Overpass, which looms over Charlesgate and makes access to the Charles River Reservation (the Esplanade) difficult. An alternative may be the elimination of this overpass, but what takes its place may also have impacts for Charlesgate, the Back Bay Fens, and the Esplanade. A public review process of the alternatives is underway.

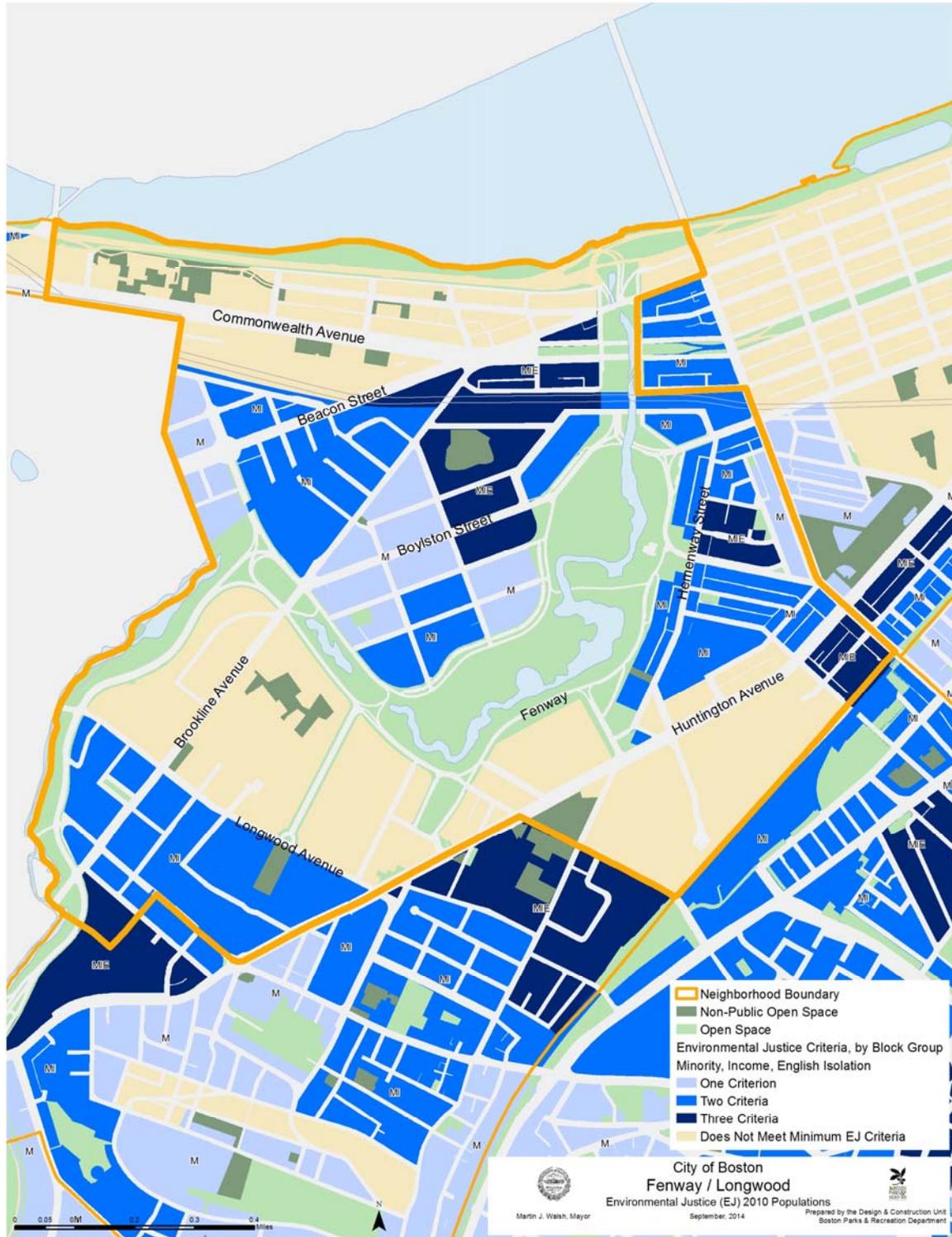
Another change that could directly impact open space straddles the Fenway/Longwood and Back Bay/Beacon Hill communities. Turnpike Air Rights Parcels 12-15 could be the sites where proposed buildings could create shadows on parklands north of their location, in this case, particularly the Commonwealth Avenue Mall.

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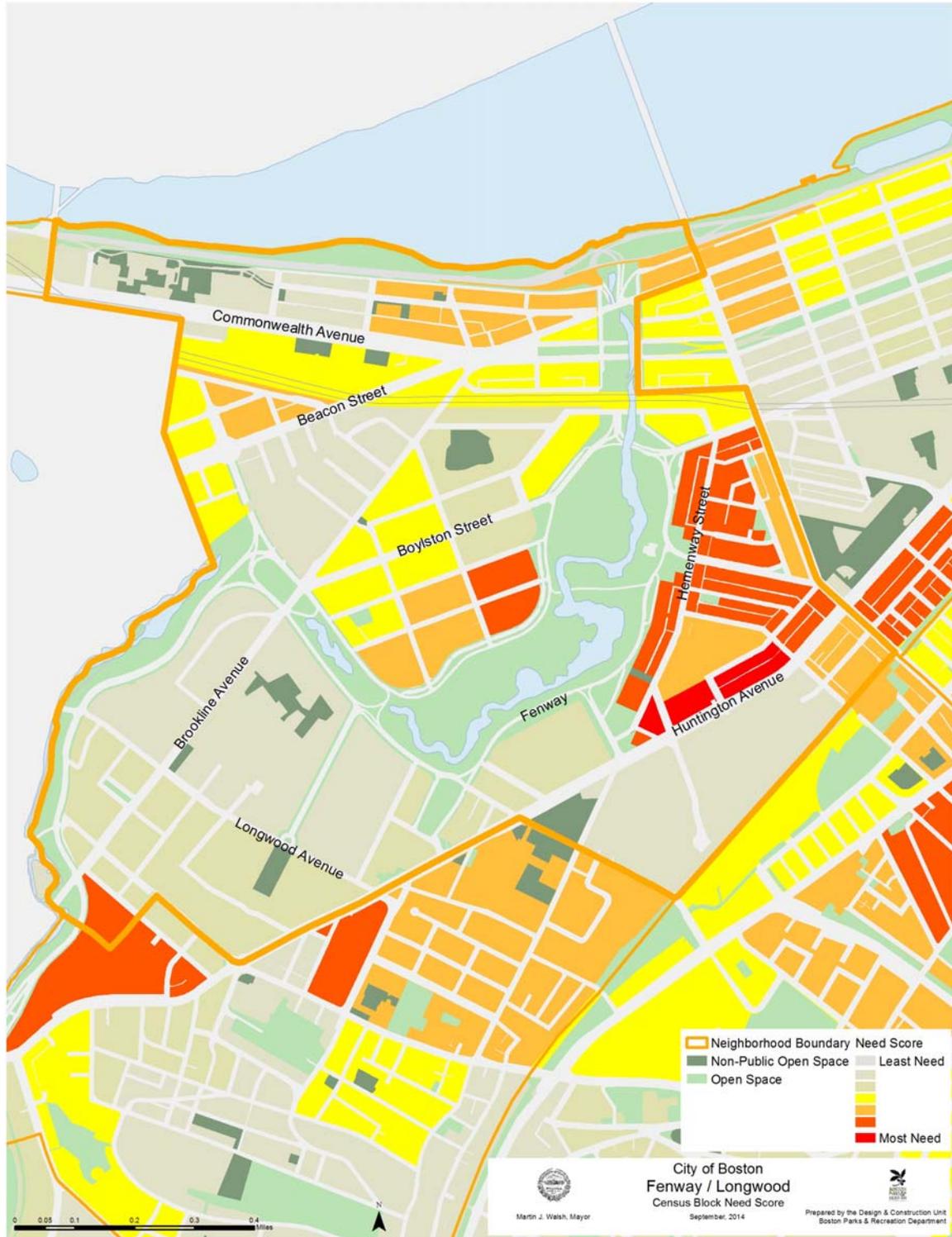
Map 1: Population Density, Fenway/Longwood

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Map 2: Environmental Justice Populations, Fenway/Longwood

Needs Analysis



Map 3: Need Score by Census Block Group, Fenway/Longwood

Needs Analysis



Map 4: Open Space by Type, Fenway/Longwood

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Map 5: Open Space by Ownership, Fenway/Longwood

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Map 6: Open Space by Protection Status, Fenway/Longwood

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Map 7: Play Areas and Water Spray Features, Fenway/Longwood

Needs Analysis



Map 8: Fields and Courts, Fenway/Longwood

Needs Analysis



Map 9: Community Facilities, Fenway/Longwood

Needs Analysis



Map 10: Park Service Areas, Fenway/Longwood

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Map 11: Park Equity: Service Areas and Need Scores, Fenway/Longwood

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Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile

Fenway/Longwood

Population	
2010 Census	37,581
2000 Census	33,285
Population Growth/Decline, 2000-2010	12.91%

Population Density		Persons per Acre
2010 Census		50.2
2000 Census		44.4
Density Change, 2000-2010		5.7

Age		
0 to 9	448	1%
10 to 19	10102	27%
20 to 34	21976	58%
35 to 54	2549	7%
55 to 64	963	3%
65 and over	1543	4%

Race/Ethnicity/Latino Status		
White alone	24544	65%
Hispanic or Latino	3057	8%
Black or African American alone	1975	5%
Asian alone	6741	18%
Other	1264	3%

Median Household Income
\$24,707

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

Percent of Households by Number of Vehicles Available	
No vehicles	68%
1 vehicle	29%
2 vehicles	5%
3 or more vehicles	1%

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

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

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