
Open Space Plan 2015-2021

Section 7

Analysis of Needs

**Section 7.2.8 Community Open Space &
Recreation
HYDE PARK**

DRAFT

Section 7.2.8: Community Open Space & Recreation HYDE PARK

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 last town annexed to Boston (1912), Hyde Park's history illustrates the original, independent identity of many of Boston's neighborhoods. It also illustrates the steady process that each neighborhood underwent as it later came under the influence of Boston. Hyde Park had a manufacturing base as far back as the early 18th century with associated residential and commercial development. That manufacturing base was dependent on the major water resource of Hyde Park, the Neponset River. The Mother Brook Canal, built in the mid-1800s to connect the Charles to the Neponset, enhanced the river's flow. The first dam and paper mill were built in 1714 along the Neponset, near where the former Bay State Paper mill is located. By the late 1800s, industry (paper and cotton mills and other factories) grew

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so rapidly from the available water power that the town population increased a startling 900% from 1,512 persons in 1887 to 15,000 persons in 1912. Thanks to the extension of rail lines and the proximity to major highways, manufacturing continues to have a large place in Hyde Park's economy.

Another factor in the rapid population growth of Hyde Park in the late 19th and early 20th century was the introduction of the trolley and rail lines to and from Boston. New residents who worked in Boston sought the grassy lawns and lower housing density available in Hyde Park. The pull toward Boston was now taking hold. Dissatisfied with town water rates and service, Hyde Park voted to join Boston in 1911.

Analysis

Hyde Park boasts the most acreage of protected open space of any community in the city and a generous ratio of 25.54 acres of protected open space per 1000 residents. The population did not change significantly between 2000 and 2010. Hyde Park is a family community with 26.5% of the population under the age of 18. Population density in this community is low in comparison with most other communities. All parts of Hyde Park meets at least one of the state's environmental justice criteria, and some sections register a moderate park need score (Hyde Park Maps 2 & 3).

Given the large amount of open space in Hyde Park, it is not unusual to find it has great diversity in the kind of open space – downtown squares, playing fields and courts, and remote natural areas are all available. The largest holder of open space in this neighborhood (470 acres) is the DCR. Their major holdings are in the Stony Brook and Neponset River Reservations (Hyde Park Maps 4 & 5).

The Stony Brook Reservation is the most significant open space for Hyde Park. It is a regional facility containing large natural tracts crisscrossed by trails and paths, parking for visitors, and a pond (Turtle Pond) with fishing docks. No other community can match the trail-oriented, natural resource-based outdoor recreation it provides.

The other DCR reservation in Hyde Park is the Neponset River Reservation. Until its southernmost reaches in Hyde Park, this reservation is made up of thin tracts of riverbank along either side of the river. Guiding principles in DCR's Neponset River Greenway Master Plan include the protection and enhancement of the ecological systems along and in the Neponset River, enhancement of recreation opportunities, and protection and enhancement of the river as a living system.

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Access to these natural lands by mass transit – either MBTA bus or commuter rail - makes these reservations valued parts of Boston’s inventory of close-to-home outdoor recreation experiences.

The western half of Hyde Park has much better open space access than the eastern half. The Stony Brook Reservation and George Wright Golf Course extend along the western side where Hyde Park meets West Roxbury/Roslindale and provide a connected system of parks and natural areas. The two railroad lines (Amtrak Northeast Corridor/Commuter Rail to Rhode Island and the Forge Park/I-495 Commuter Rail lines) extend north-south through Hyde Park and therefore limit cross connections through this neighborhood.

The southern part of the neighborhood has good access to playgrounds and water spray features, but from Cleary Square north, these features become more dispersed. The schoolyards through the center of the neighborhood – particularly the Grew and Greenwood schools - become important neighborhood play spaces that provide walkable access for many residential areas. Athletic fields are also clustered to one side of the neighborhood with only Ross Playground providing active recreation opportunities for the east side of Hyde Park (Hyde Park Maps 7, 8 & 10).

Community facilities in Hyde Park are concentrated in Cleary Square, the commercial and municipal hub. This area has no parks or open space beyond sidewalk scale plazas, which is a missed opportunity for one public use to enliven another.

Three areas in Hyde Park stand out as underserved in open space access, but none of the three is exceptionally high need (Hyde Park Map 11). Cleary Square, as noted above, has few open space areas which results in limited opportunities for public gathering in this commercial area. The Fairmount Hill neighborhood has no dedicated parks, but the low density in this neighborhood can be perceived as offsetting the need. The east side of Hyde Park where the neighborhood meets Mattapan also has limited open space access. As the Neponset Greenway develops further there may be some new opportunities here for access to linear spaces.

In 2011, the BRA completed the Hyde Park Neighborhood Strategic Plan (HPNSP). It made several recommendations regarding open space: improve access to the Neponset River and the Mother Brook, encourage DCR in implementing its Neponset River Reservation Master Plan, and acquire city- and privately-owned parcels for a variety of uses, from community gardens to natural area protection to waterfront parks.

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Existing features along the Neponset River under DCR jurisdiction can help improve access and implement its Master Plan. The reconstruction of Doyle Playground which is between River Street and the river is an important action for improving Neponset River access. Given its frontage on a major arterial in this community, its redesign and reconstruction is a top priority. The Master Plan also calls for the creation of a canoe landing at this site, which will further improve public access to the river. Another factor favoring the reconstruction of Doyle Playground is its location in a sub-area of Hyde Park (east of Hyde Park Avenue) that is underserved by park access.

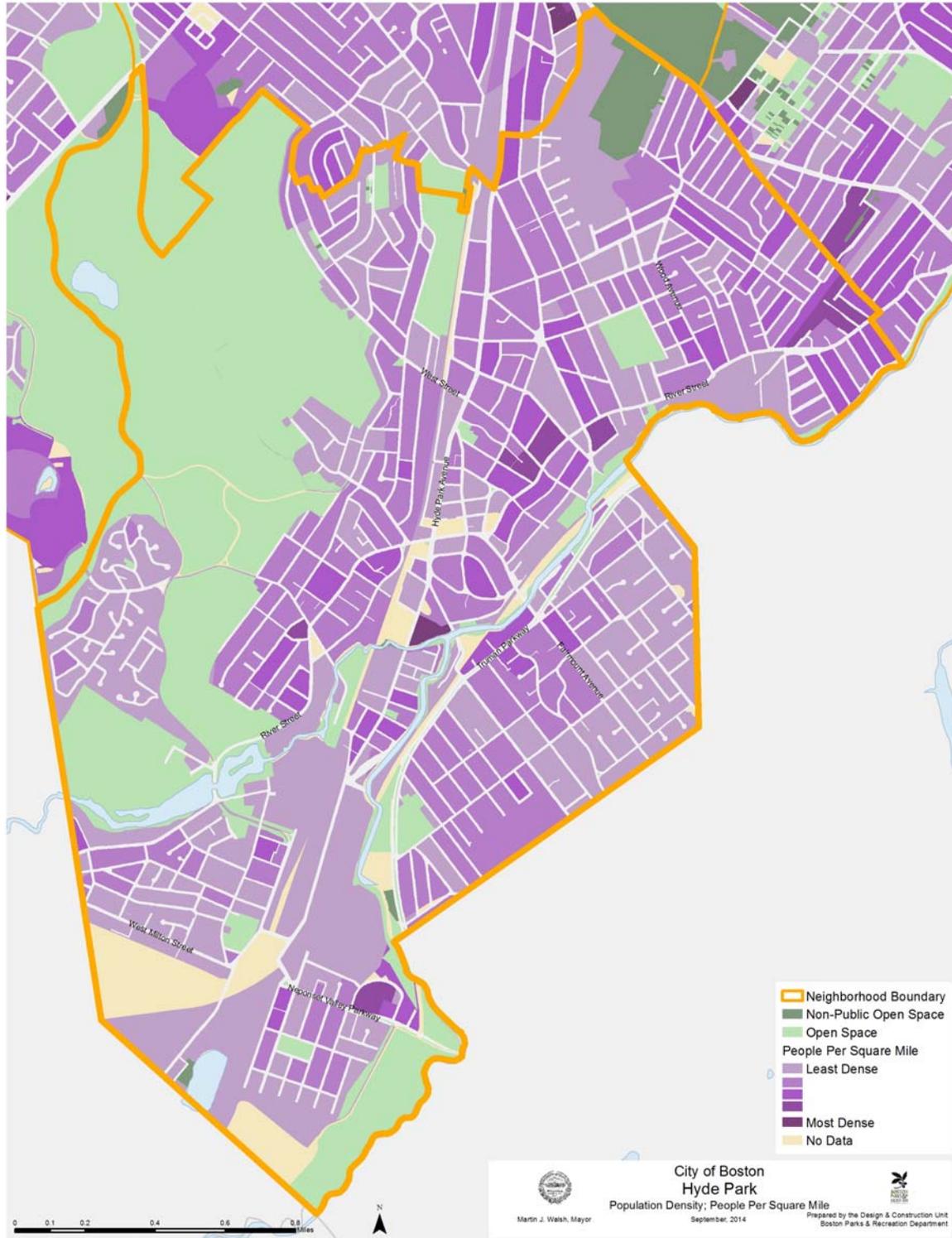
Besides DCR, the BRA has stated it has a role to play to increase access to the Neponset River and the Mother Brook: it has instituted a Riverfront Protection Overlay District in the Hyde Park zoning to protect natural assets and encourage public access on private parcels and public parcels owned by non-park agencies. This district creates a buffer zone on either side of the River and the Brook so that development in that zone must be reviewed and meet certain guidelines set out in the overlay district regulations. One site where this overlay district can work is the Riverwood Phase III project along the riverfront area of the former Bay State Paper mill site. The proximity of this Phase III project to Doyle Playground can lead to synergies in design so that more extensive riverfront access may occur.

The third general set of recommendations in the BRA Neighborhood Strategic Plan called for acquisition of city- and privately owned parcels to expand open space in this community. Partly this will be subject to the appropriateness of the particular parcel in relation to the community's park equity. The intrinsic nature of the parcel itself and its ability to meet other goals also need to be considered. Sometimes there can be a parcel that addresses both a community's park equity deficit and other goals. One such set of parcels is known as the Oak Lawn Driving Range and Crane Ledge, located on the northeastern edge of Hyde Park. These private parcels are presently zoned for Neighborhood Shopping and single-family residential. They are of a size, when taken together, that could help address the park equity deficit in this area of Hyde Park, enabling active recreation features to be developed in selected sections; and also they could also help with the development of a natural area reserve/forest for the maintenance and growth of the existing tree canopy as a way to sequester carbon and provide other benefits of urban forests.

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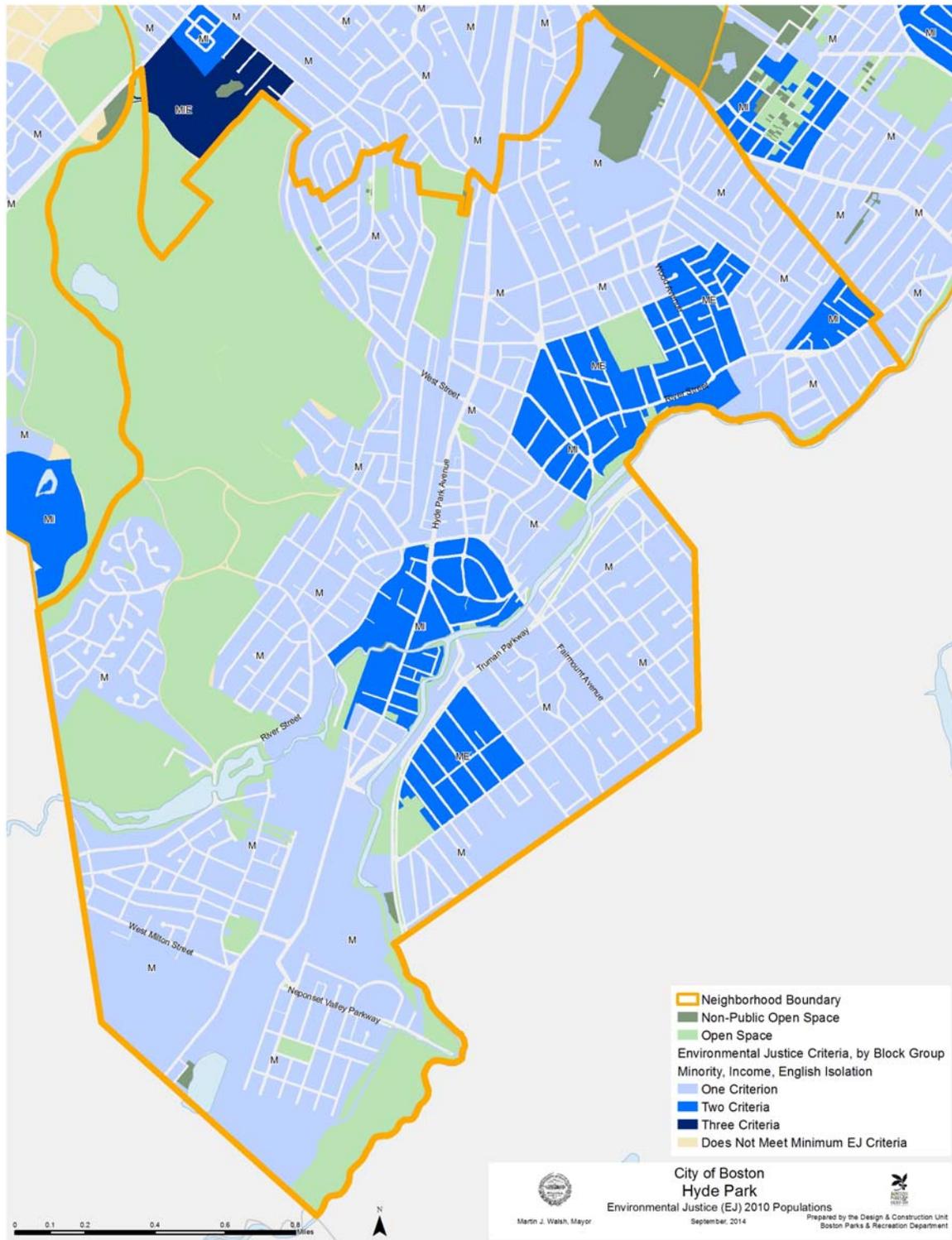
The HPNSP also called for a wayfinding system so that the public can be made more aware of the open space assets throughout the community that have limited visual access, such as the Neponset River and Mother Brook properties. This recommendation is one that bears repeating throughout the city. A system of virtual linkage can emerge that allows residents to use signs, pavement markings, and internet-enabled aids to follow sidewalks, river paths, reservation trails, and bike lanes to connect open spaces and create a wholly new experience of their parks and their community. This can then be replicated in other communities throughout the city, building on their own open spaces and folding in other types of cultural assets as desired.

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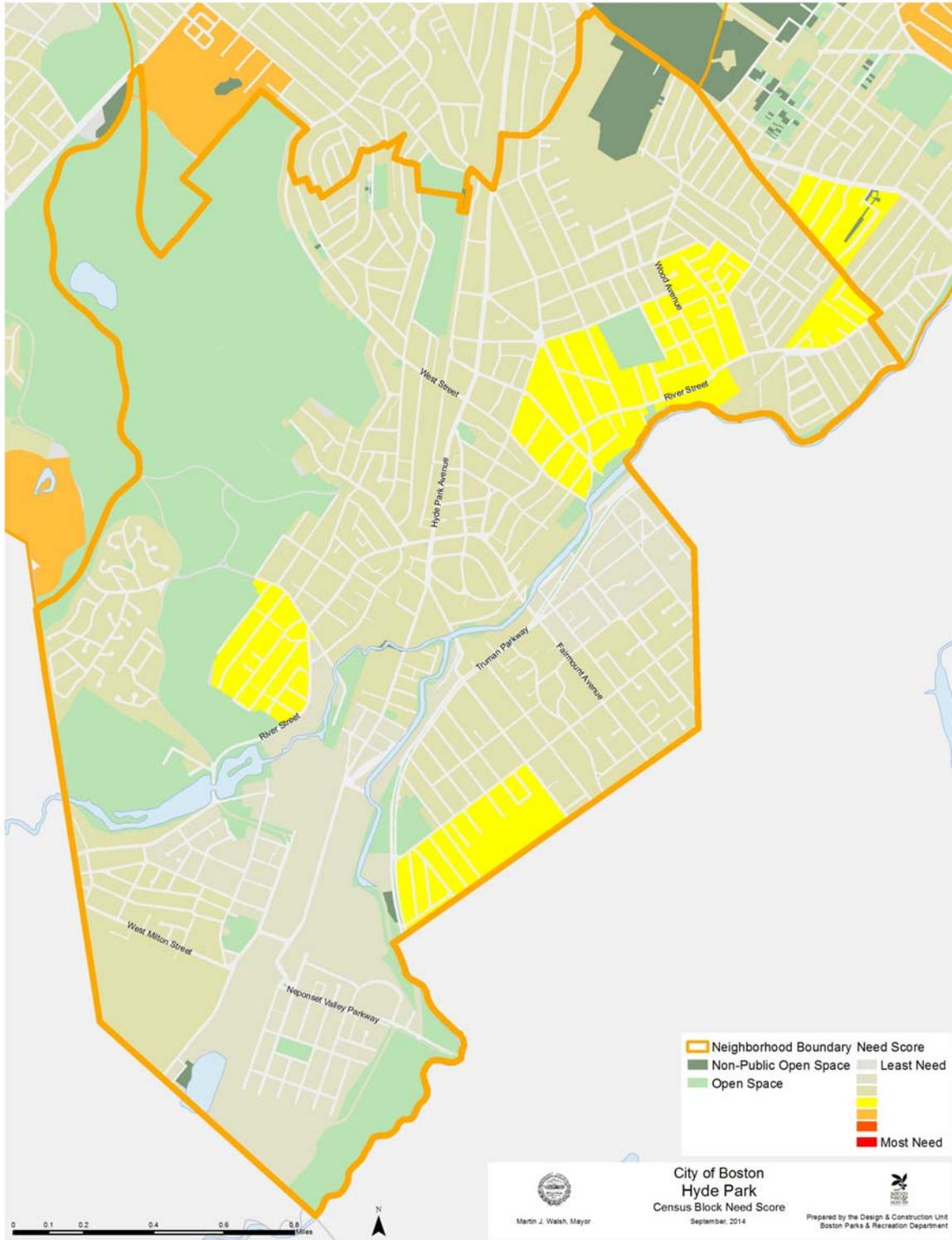
Map 1: Population Density, Hyde Park

Needs Analysis



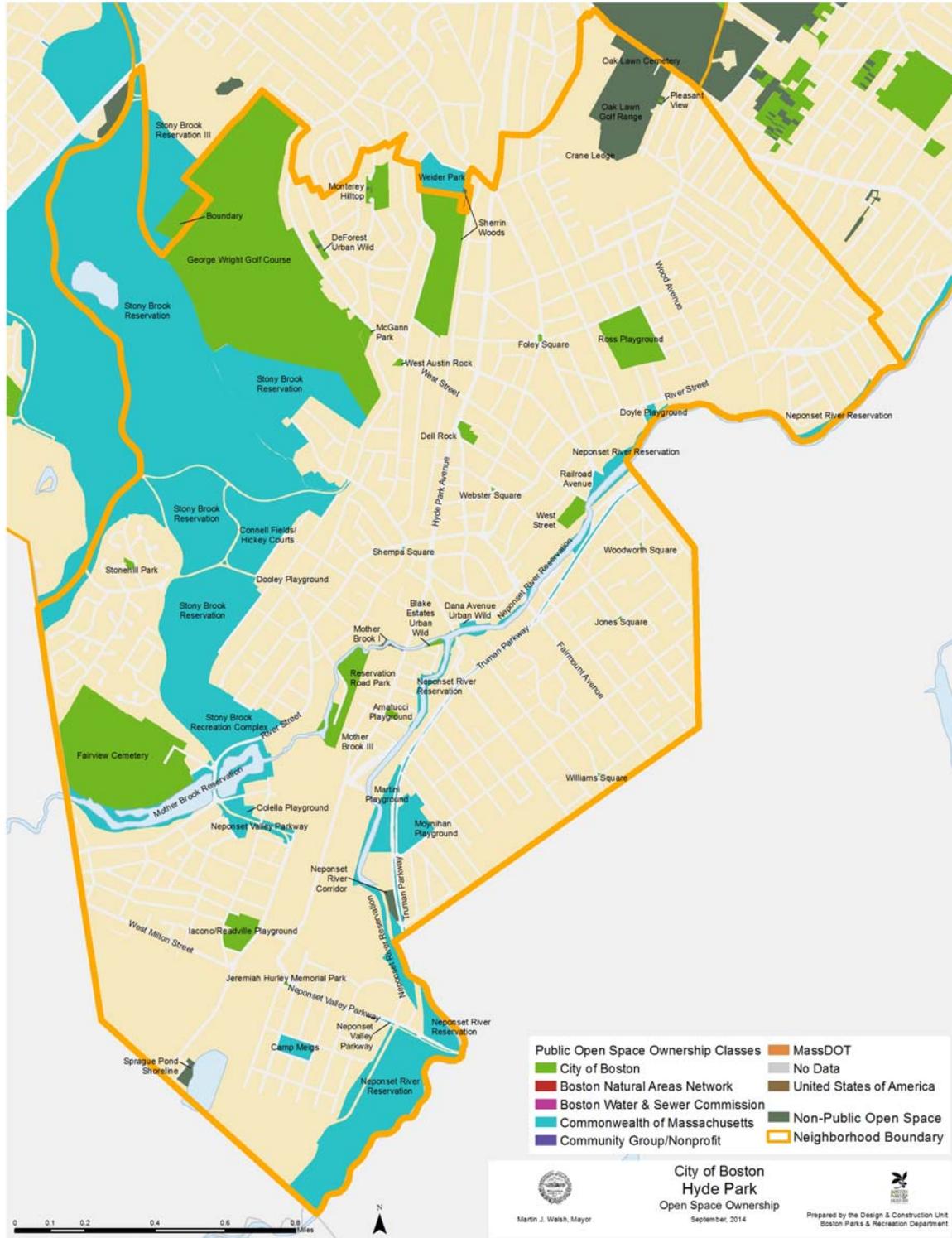
Map 2: Environmental Justice Populations, Hyde Park

Needs Analysis



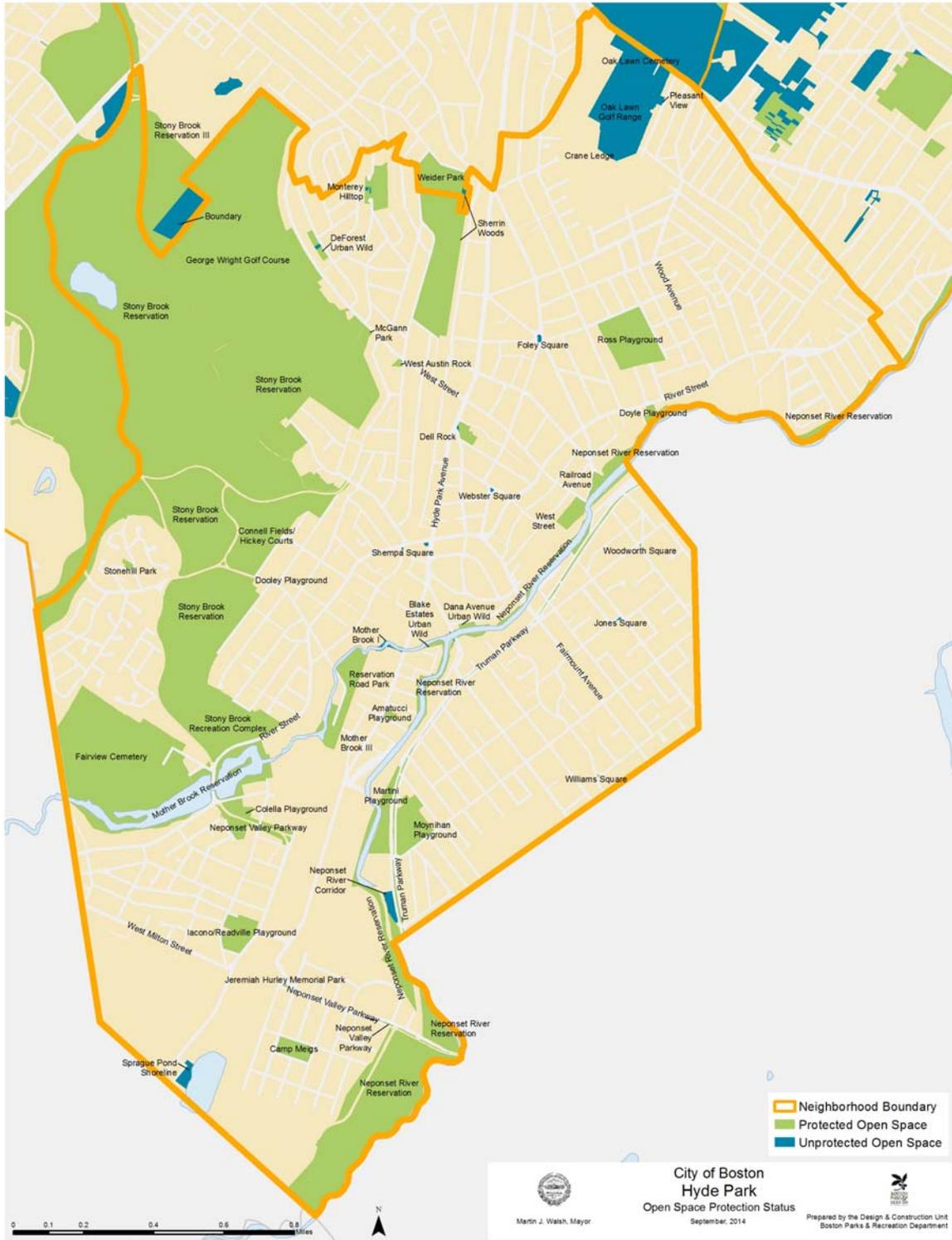
Map 3: Need Score by Census Block Groups, Hyde Park

Needs Analysis



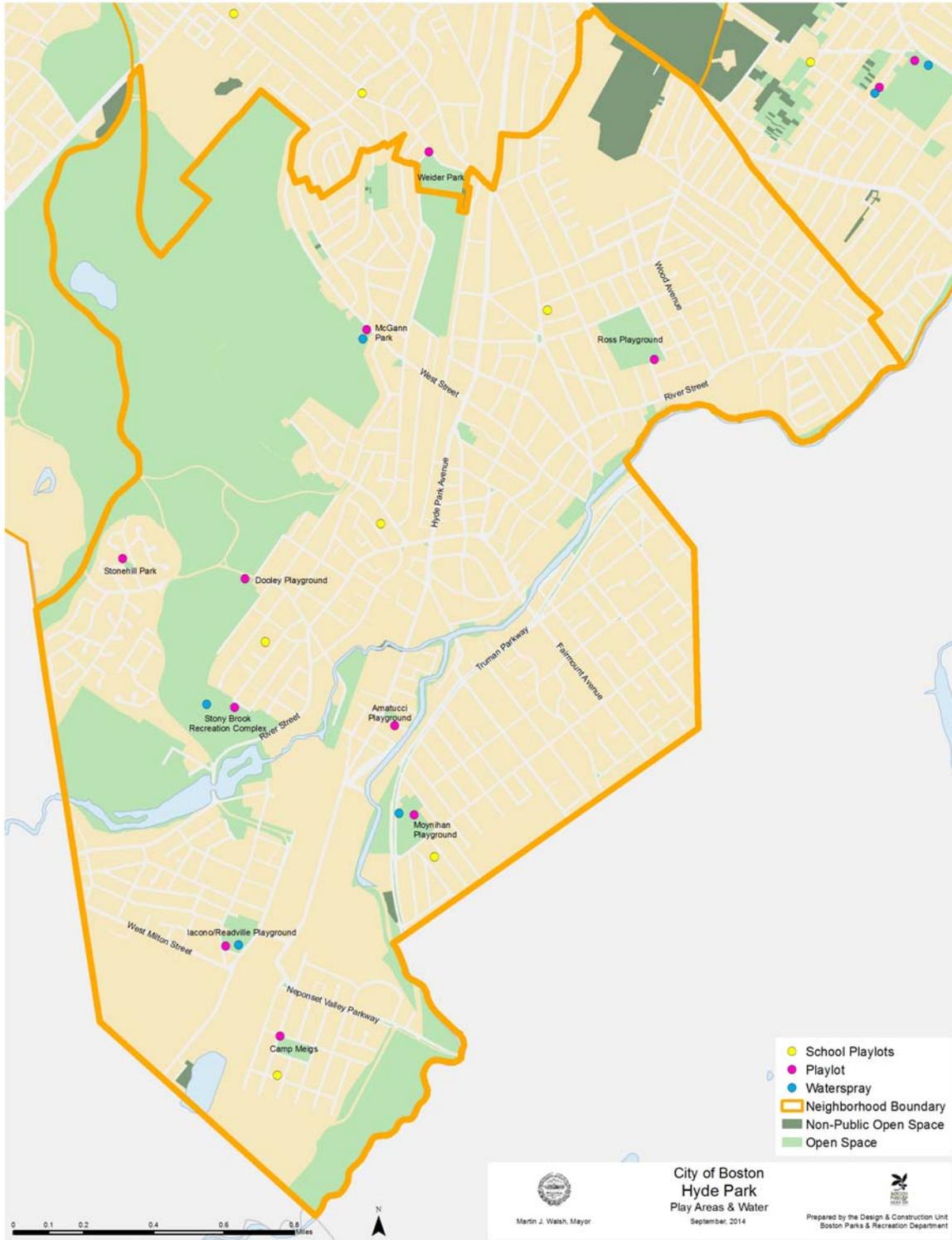
Map 5: Open Space by Ownership, Hyde Park

Needs Analysis



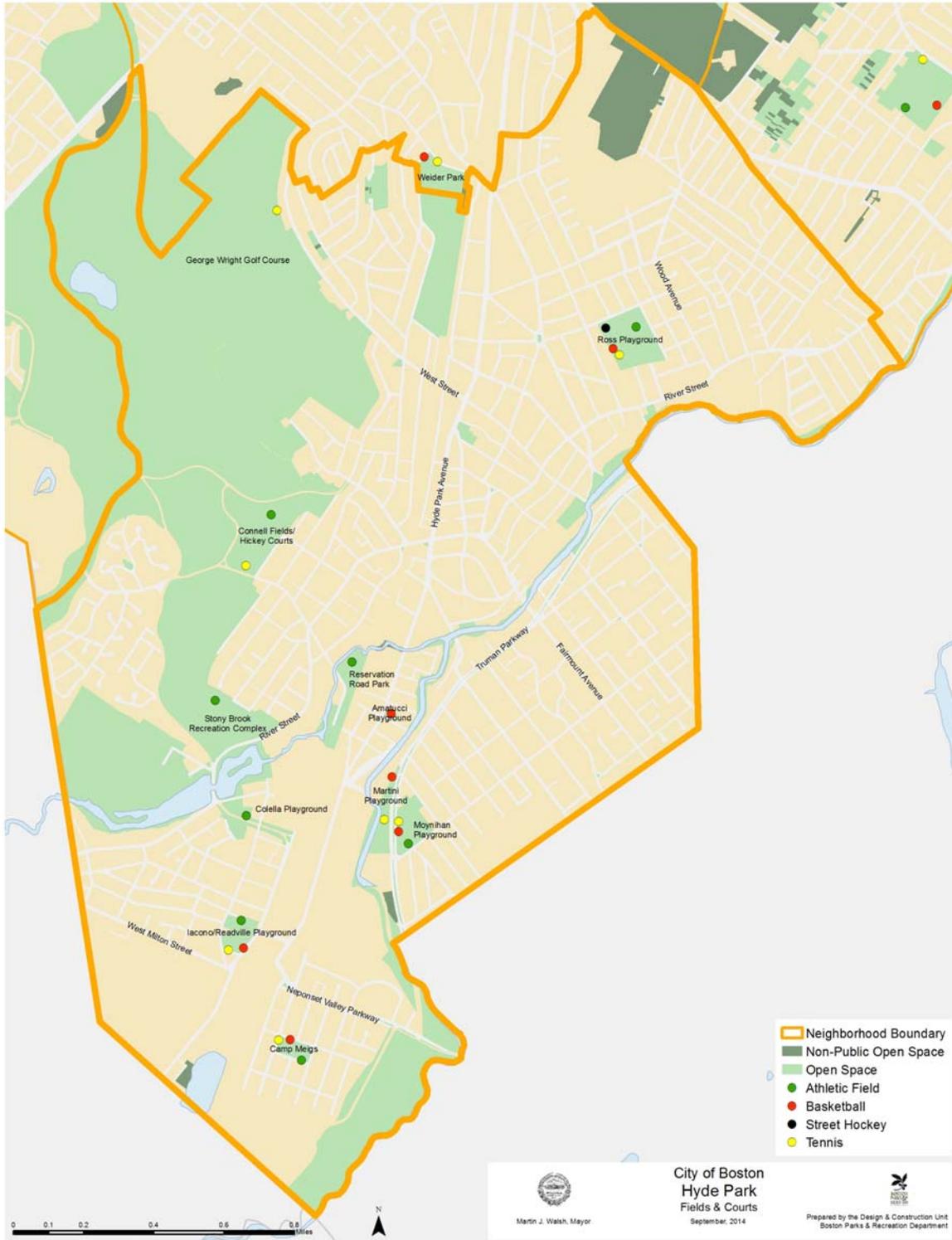
Map 6: Open Space by Protection Status, Hyde Park

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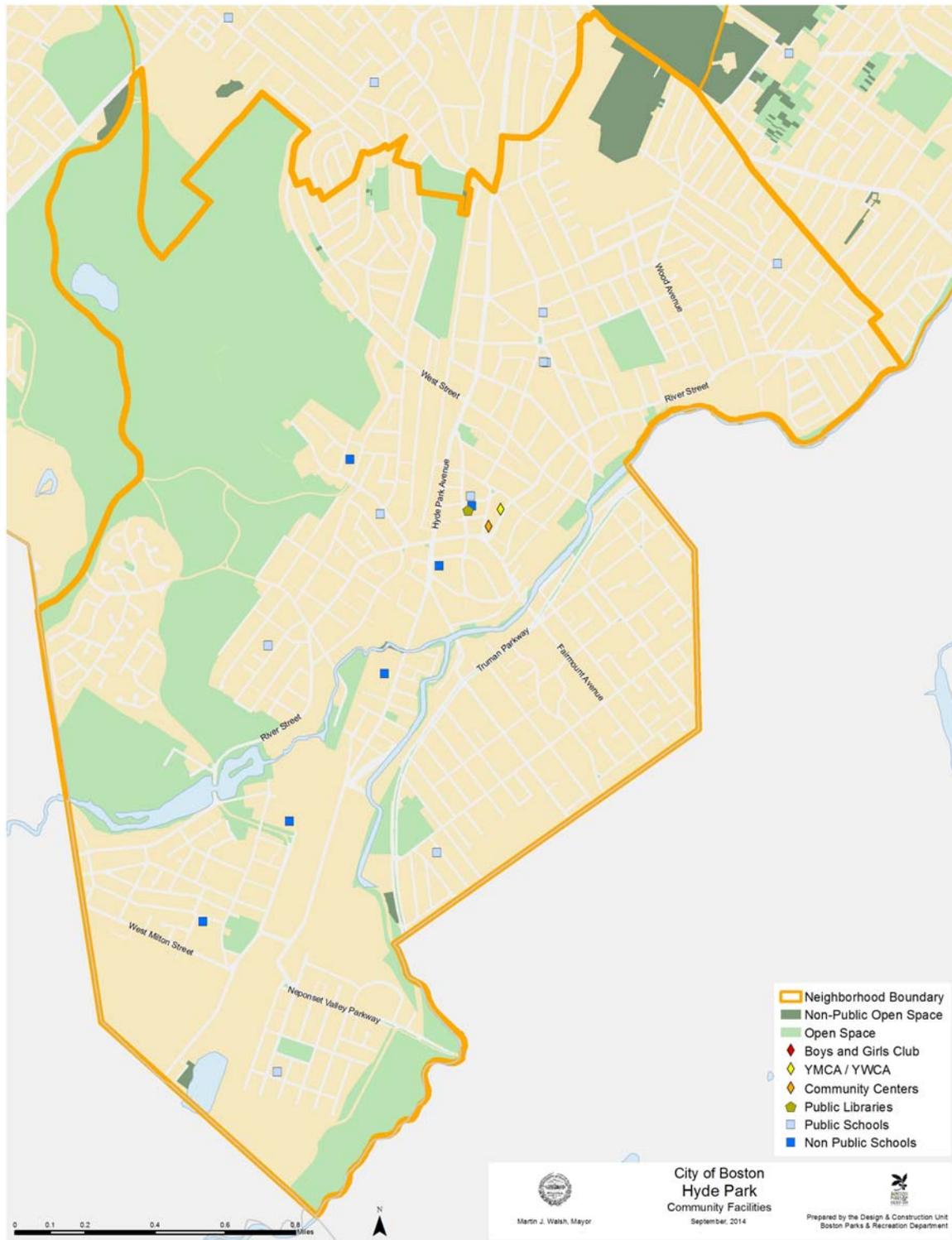
Map 7: Play Areas and Water Spray Features, Hyde Park

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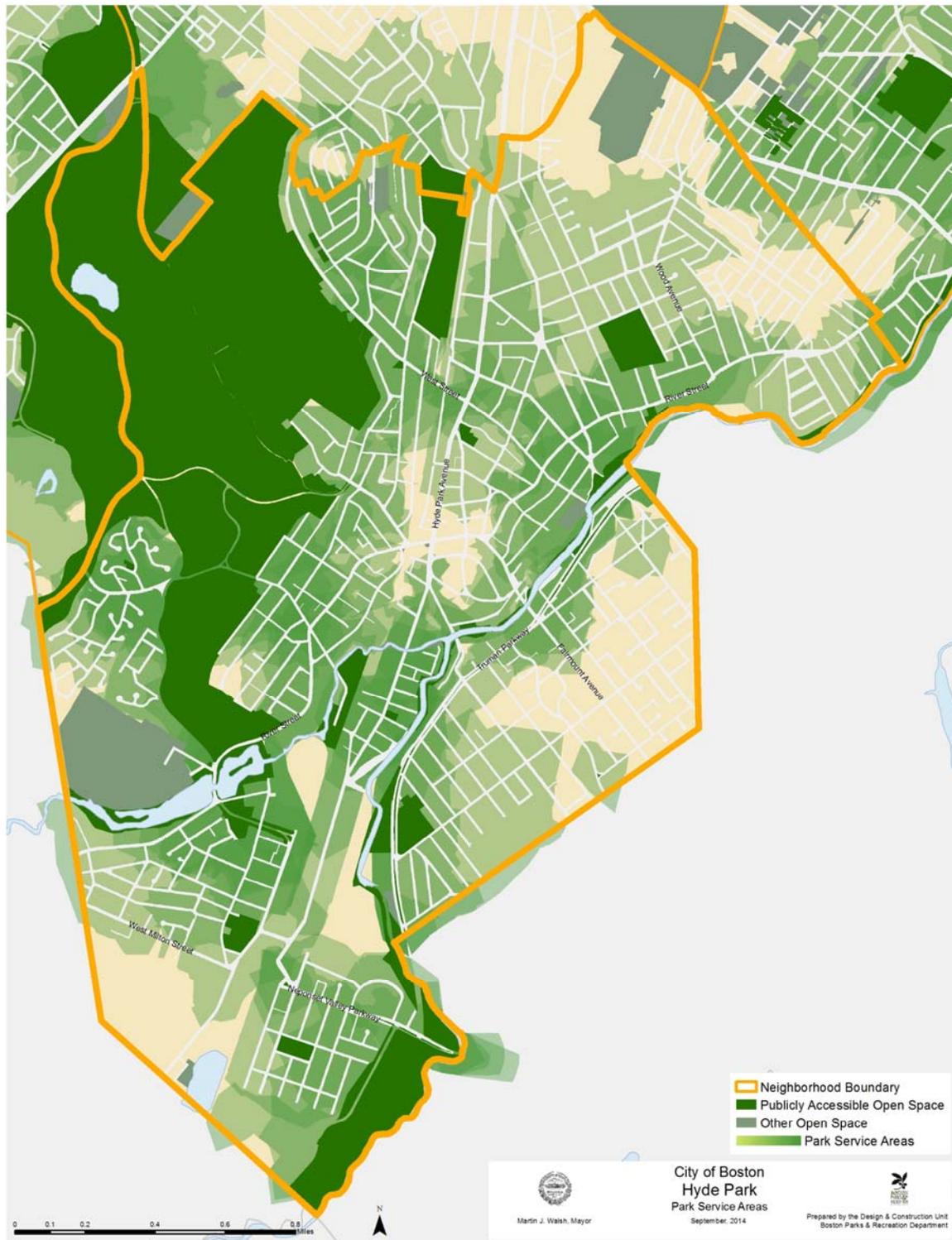
Map 8: Fields and Courts, Hyde Park

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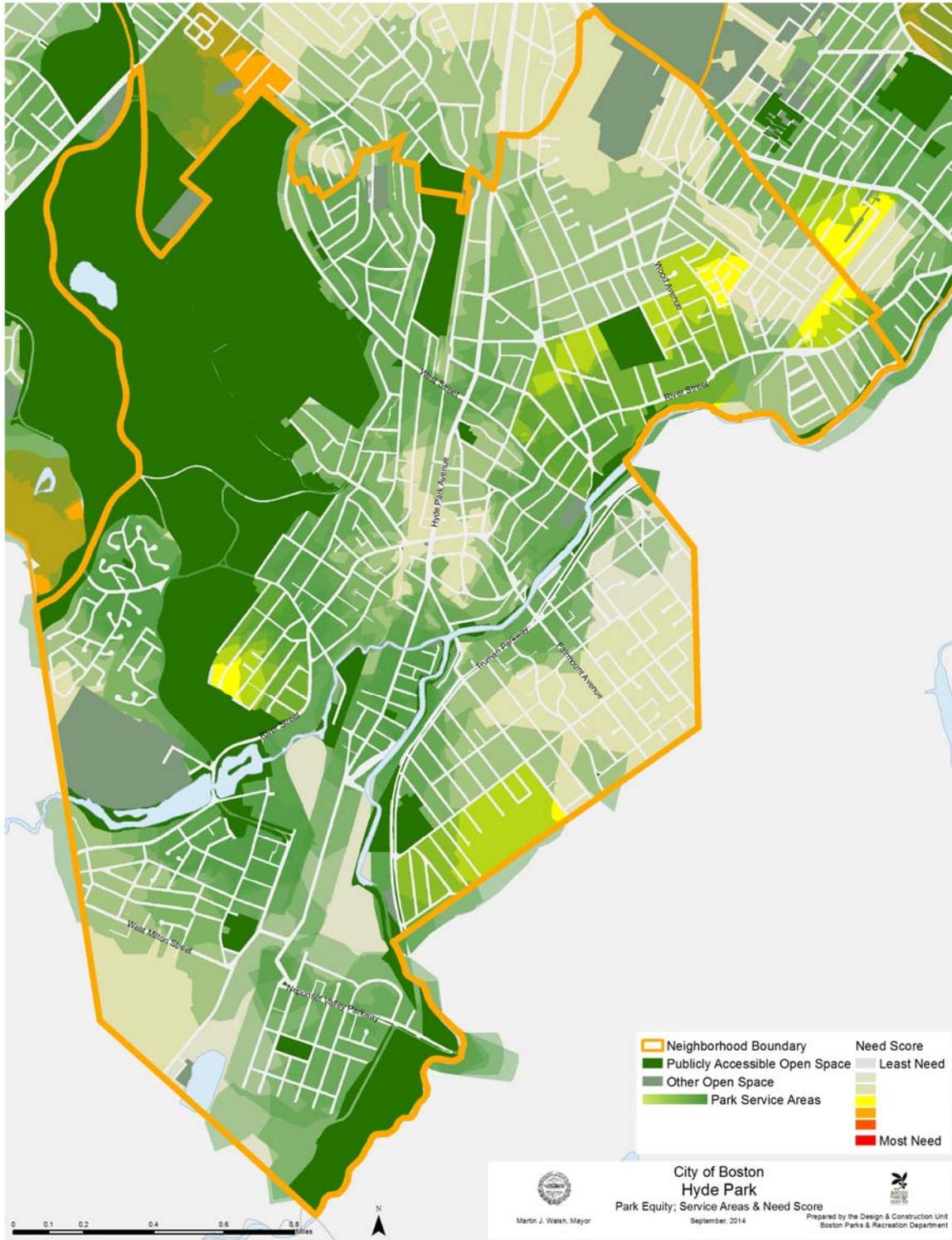
Map 9: Community Facilities, Hyde Park

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Map 10: Park Service Areas, Hyde Park

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Map 11: Park Equity: Service Areas and Need Scores, Hyde Park

Needs Analysis

Population	
2010 Census	30,637
2000 Census	30,076
Population growth/decline, 2000-2010	1.9%

Age		
Under 9	3,663	12.0%
10-19	4,454	14.5%
20-34	5,863	19.1%
35-54	8,993	29.4%
55-64	3,720	12.1%
65 and over	3,944	12.9%

Race	
	% of Total Population
White Alone	28.2%
Black or African American alone	47.3%
Asian Alone	1.6%
Other	3.2%

Latino Status	
	% of Total Population
Not Hispanic or Latino	
Hispanic or Latino	19.7%

Population Density	
	Persons Per Acre
2010 Census	10.5

Median Household Income	
	\$59,453

Household by Number of Vehicles Available	
No Vehicle	16.0%
1 vehicle	43.7%
2 vehicles	30.5%
3 or more vehicles	9.8%