
Open Space Plan 2015-2021

Section 7

Analysis of Needs

**Section 7.2.11 Community Open Space &
Recreation
MISSION HILL**

DRAFT

Section 7.2.11: Community Open Space & Recreation MISSION HILL

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

Mission Hill originally developed as part of the town of Roxbury. During the 1700s, the Parker Hill area was divided into large estates; by the early 1800s, streets encircled lower Parker Hill; houses and farms had proliferated, and many still belonged to the area's early families. Development became dense in the Parker/Tremont Street area. Industry along Stony Brook included dye works and the largest concentration of breweries in Boston.

Needs Analysis

In the 19th century, the Mission Hill neighborhood gained much of the character and form it retains today during a period which brought rapid growth to Roxbury. Part of lower Parker Hill was laid out with subdivisions before the Civil War. The neighborhood became firmly defined after the Civil War with the annexation of Roxbury by Boston in 1867 and the establishment of the Mission Church on Tremont Street, completed in 1878. The extension of streetcar and sewage service in the period from 1860 to 1880 increased development and population in this area. A new building boom occurred in the 1885 to 1895 period, primarily low-cost wood frame houses.

Today, Mission Hill's residential streetscapes are set among large institutions. After 1900, institutions began to move from cramped downtown locations to this area where low-priced vacant land and public transit accessibility matched their need for larger facilities. The New England Baptist Hospital has been located on top of Parker Hill since 1895 and its present-day Old Main building was constructed in 1924. The Robert B. Brigham Hospital was built in 1914.

The Wentworth Institute of Technology was built in 1916 on a site formerly occupied by cordage works. The Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral of New England was built in 1923. The institutions in the Fenway/Longwood community have expanded into some portions of the Mission Hill neighborhood.

Mission Hill has seen several large-scale residential developments in the 20th century: the Mission Main and Mission Extension BHA public housing projects; the Whitney Redevelopment Project, which includes the Charlesbank Apartments, Back Bay Manor, and Franklin Square Apartments; Mission Park, a publicly-subsidized mixed-income project near the Riverway and Huntington Avenue; and the Back of the Hill Development, sponsored by the Boston Bricklayers Union.

The commercial centers of Mission Hill are along Huntington Avenue and Tremont Street, with the heart being Brigham Circle where these two arterials meet. In 2003 at this critical intersection a new mixed use development was fostered by the non-profit Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services that provided office space for institutions from Longwood, retail uses that benefit both Mission Hill and Longwood, and a new passive-oriented park with views of downtown Boston.

Analysis

Mission Hill is one of Boston's smallest neighborhoods by acreage, and is also one of its densest (Mission Hill Map 1). Nearly half (48%) of Mission Hill's population is between ages 20-34, many of whom are likely students from one of the many neighboring colleges and universities. Population is increasing in Mission Hill, the

Needs Analysis

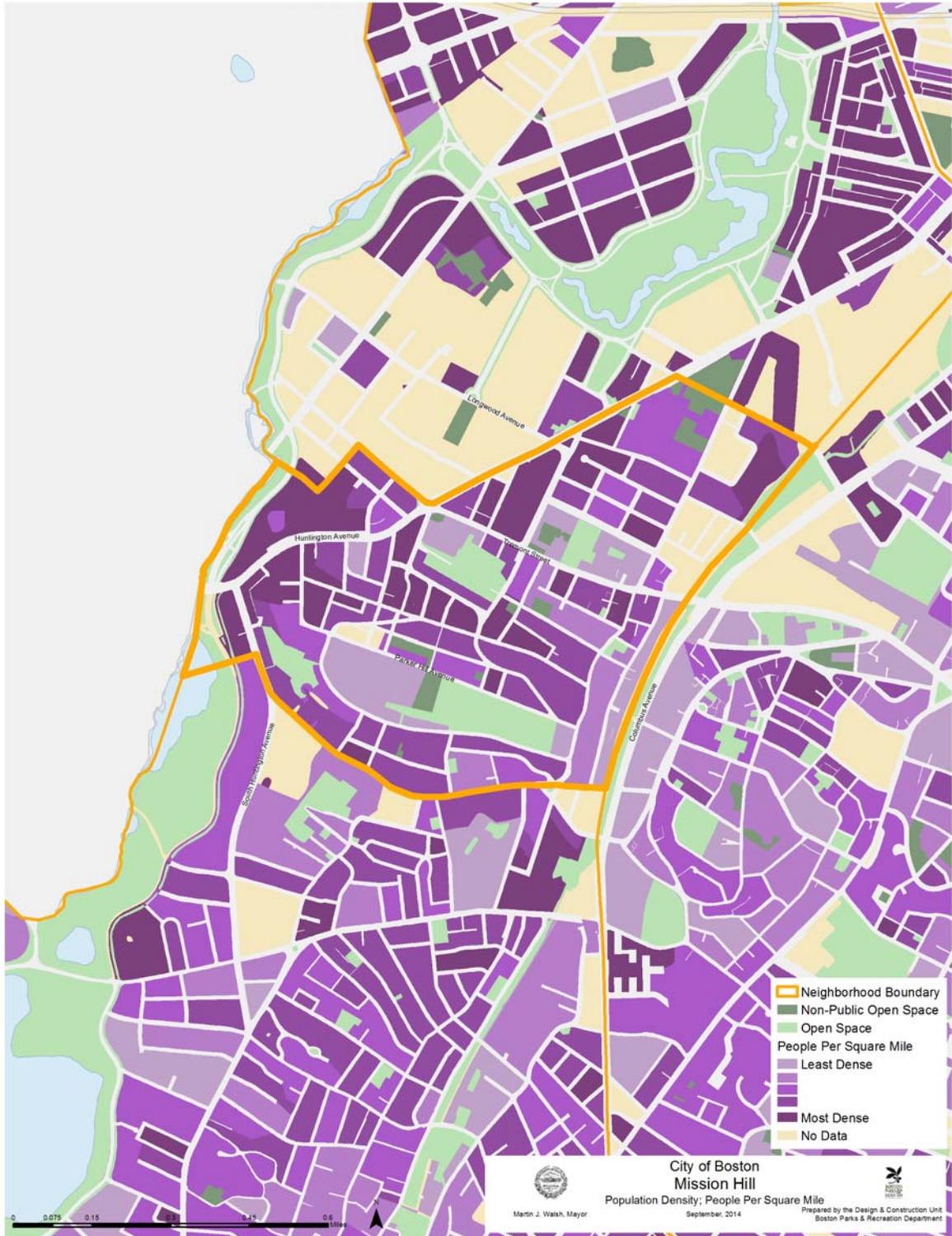
neighborhood saw a 17% increase between 2000 and 2010. At 1.74 acres of open space per 1000 residents, this community has a much lower open space ratio than the city average of 7.64 acres per 1000 residents.

Nearly all of Mission Hill meets at least one of the state's criteria for Environmental Justice populations. Park need scores are highest in the Boston Housing Authority properties and in the Mission Park development (Mission Hill Maps 2 & 3). Because these properties dominate the land area in this compact neighborhood, it is critical that some of the open space needs for these residents are met within the developments. Active facilities should complement small passive areas.

Public park facilities in this compact neighborhood are not abundant. McLaughlin Playground, Mission Hill Playground, and Gibbons Playground are the three developed public parks. Private open space exists in the large Kevin Fitzgerald Park off of St. Alfonsus Street, Parker Hilltop owned by New England Baptist Hospital (but protected by a conservation restriction), and small pocket parks throughout the public housing properties. Both Mission Hill Playground and Gibbons Playground are well co-located with community facilities along Tremont Street. McLaughlin Playground is at the top of the hill alongside Baptist Hospital and offers long scenic views as well as a diverse mix of activities to park users (Mission Hill Map 4).

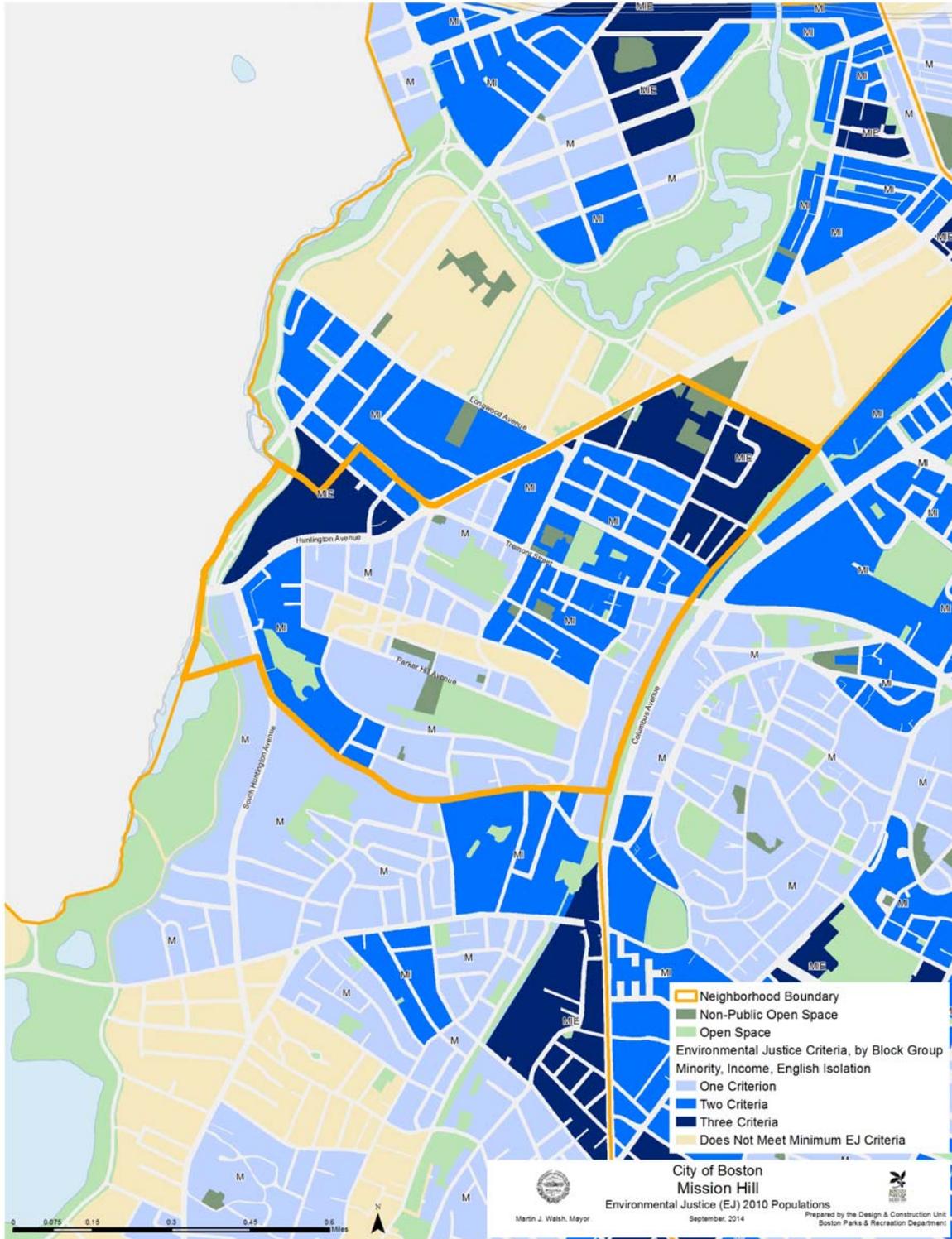
There is a need for improved access to the Emerald Necklace parks, given their proximity, yet institutional land owners and the Jamaicaway traffic serve as barriers. Connections between existing open spaces are achieved along urban wilds and other non-public lands. Urban wilds constitute 15 acres in Mission Hill of which only 5.3 acres are protected to assure their preservation and continued public access. This green space woven into the fabric of the Mission Hill neighborhood, once largely in the form of privately and institutionally owned land, is a distinctive and important neighborhood attribute. The greatest challenge will be protection of such non-publicly owned open space as development pressures increase for both housing and institutional expansions (Mission Hill Map 6).

In 2013, the BRA developed a set of guidelines for review of large development projects in the South Huntington Avenue Corridor, between Huntington Avenue and Perkins Street. This area is experiencing a shift from institutional uses to residential, so the guidelines will assist BRA staff as they oversee individual projects undergoing Article 80 review. The guidelines call for improvements in open space and the public realm to increase pedestrian and bicycle access from the Mission Hill community to the Jamaicaway and Olmsted Park, reduce potential shadow impacts on these open spaces, add open spaces, and create a wayfinding system.



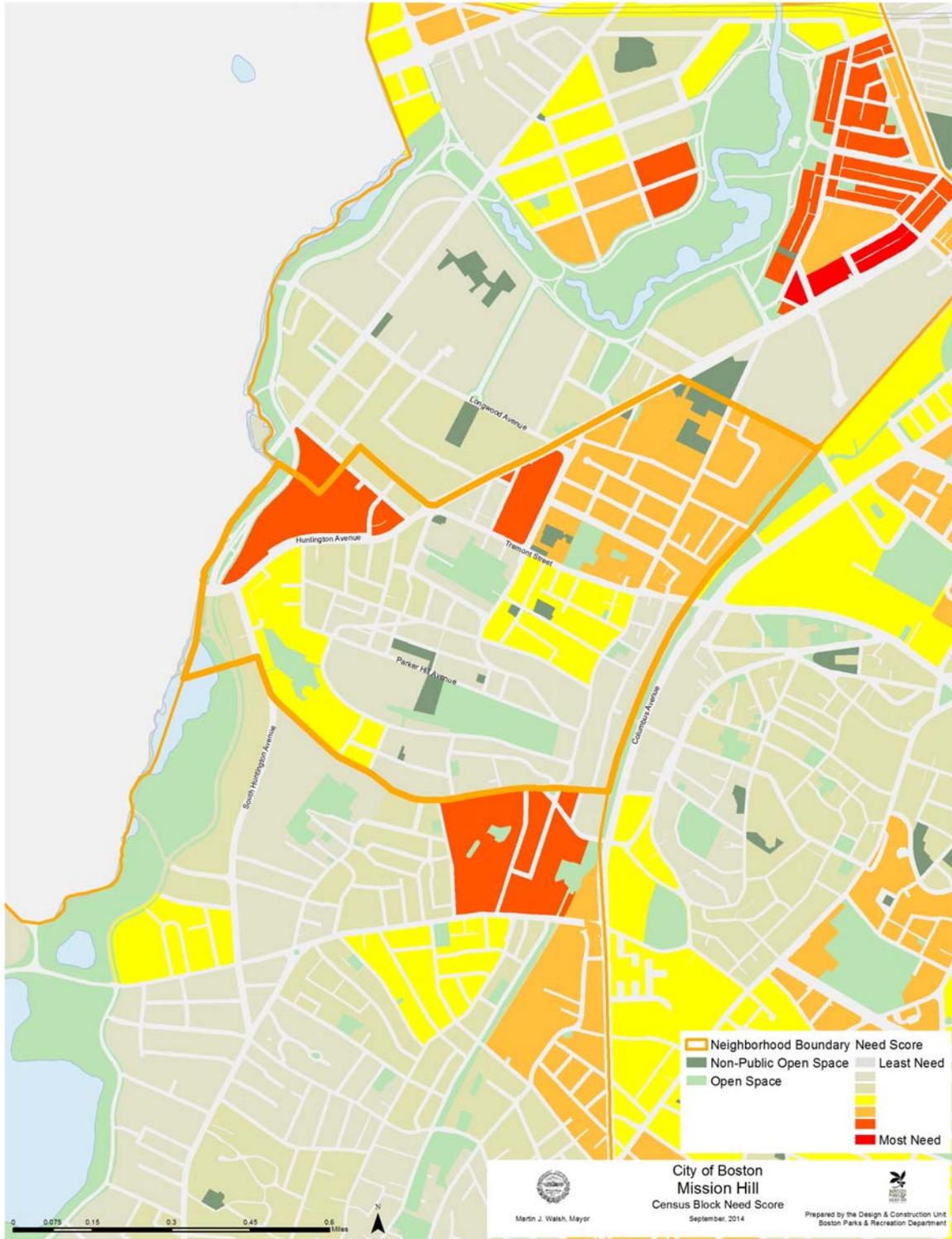
Map 1: Population Density, Mission Hill

Needs Analysis



Map 2: Environmental Justice Populations, Mission Hill

Needs Analysis



Map 3: Need Score by Census Block Groups, Mission Hill

Needs Analysis



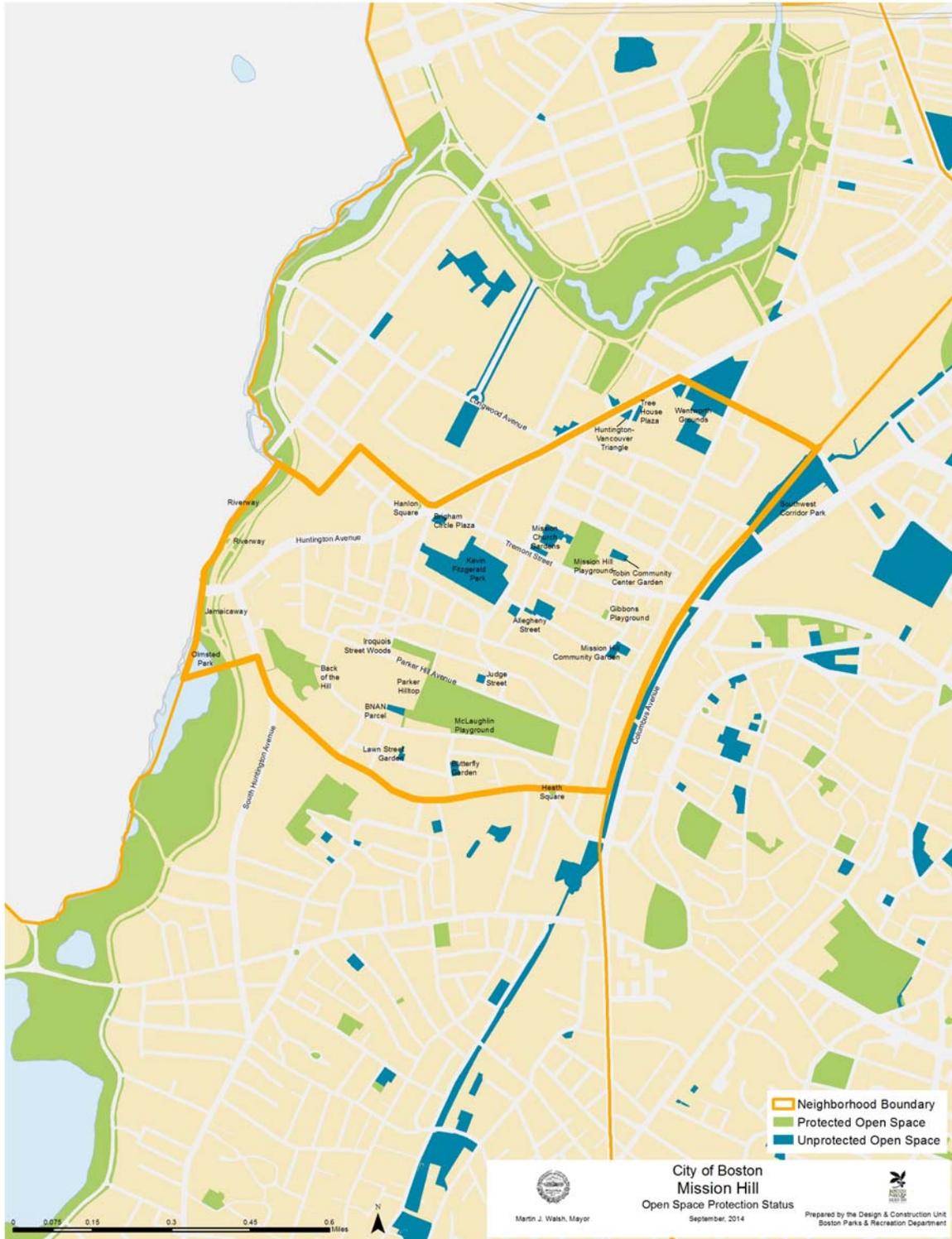
Map 4: Open Space by Type, Mission Hill

Needs Analysis



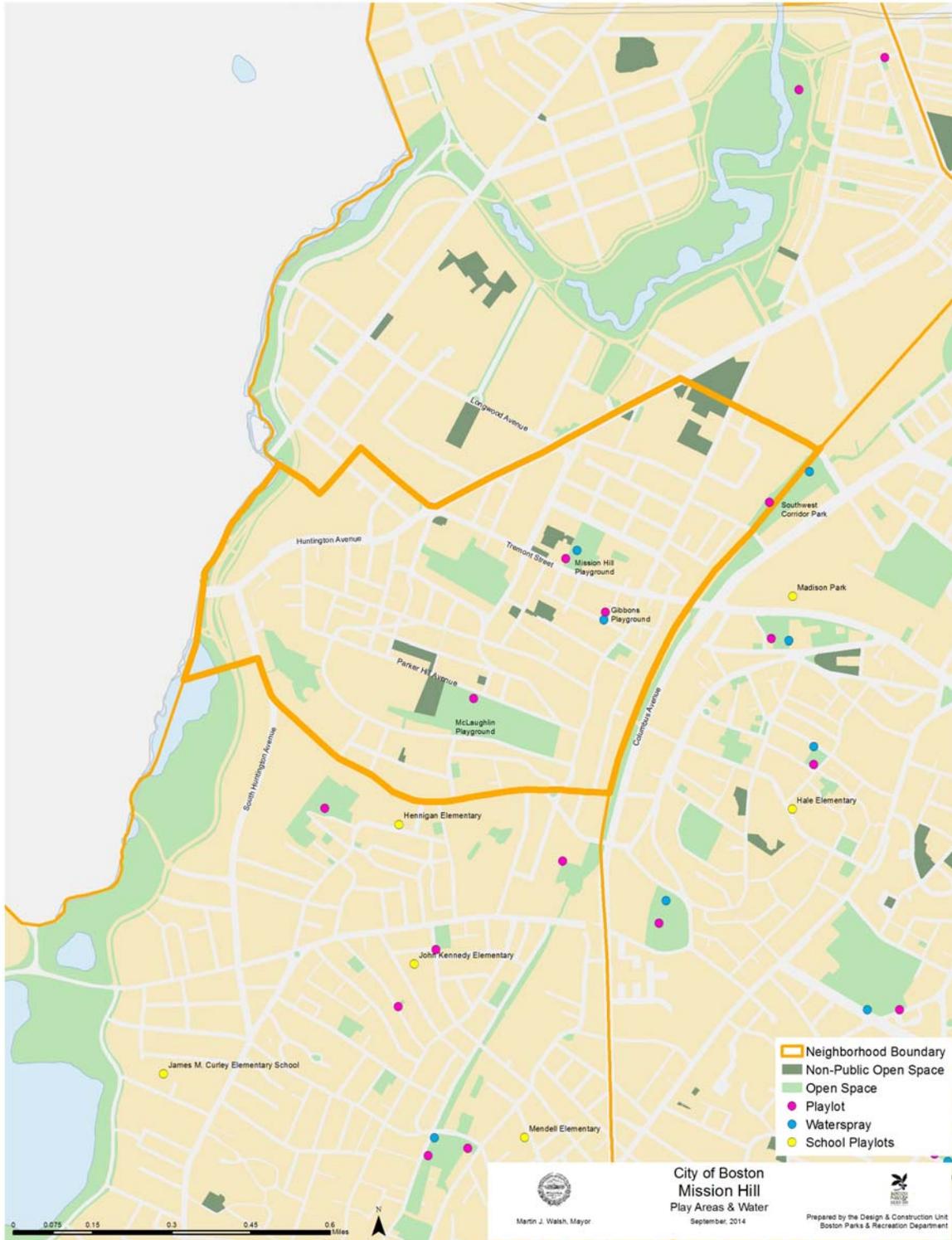
Map 5: Open Space by Ownership, Mission Hill

Needs Analysis



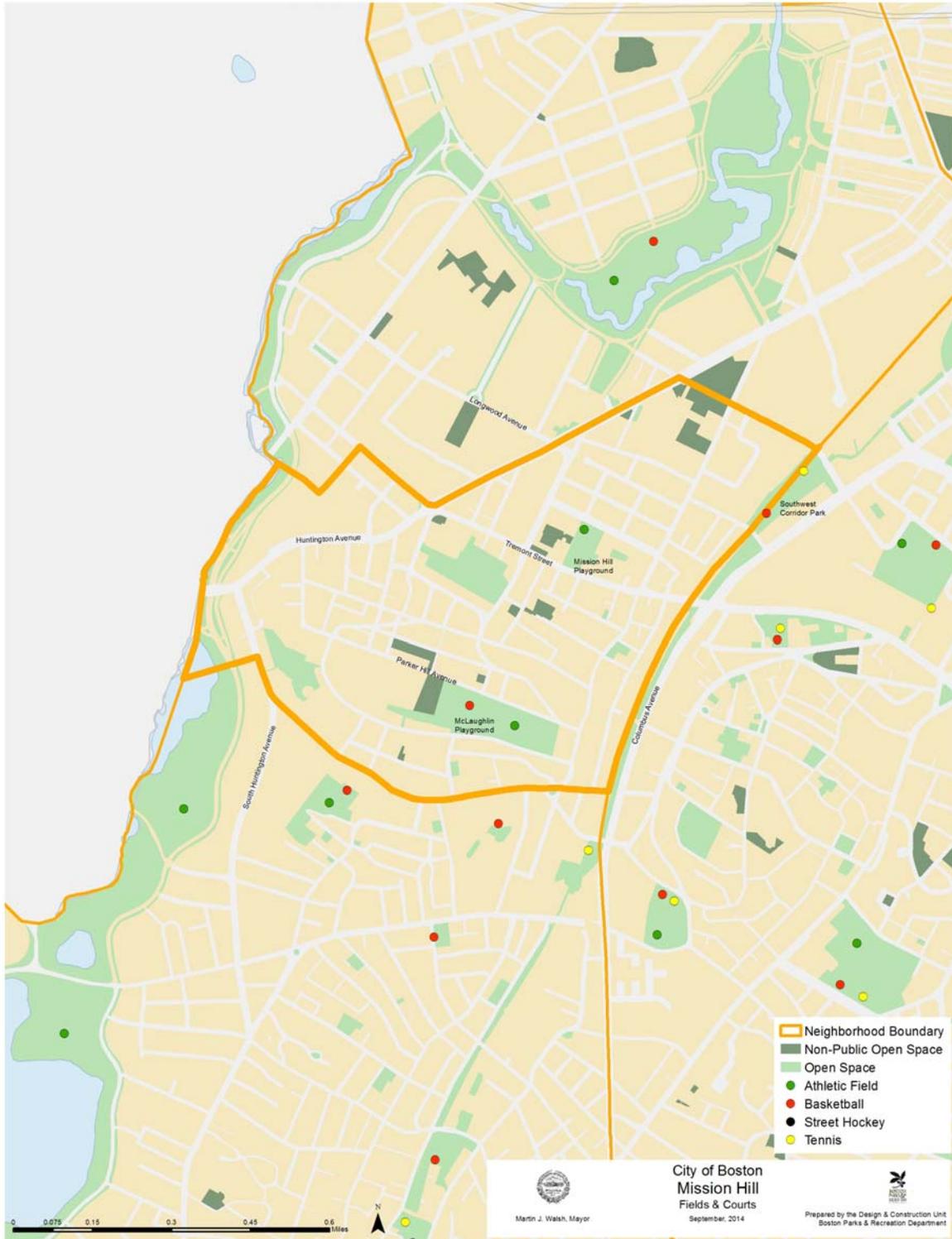
Map 6: Open Space by Protection Status, Mission Hill

Needs Analysis

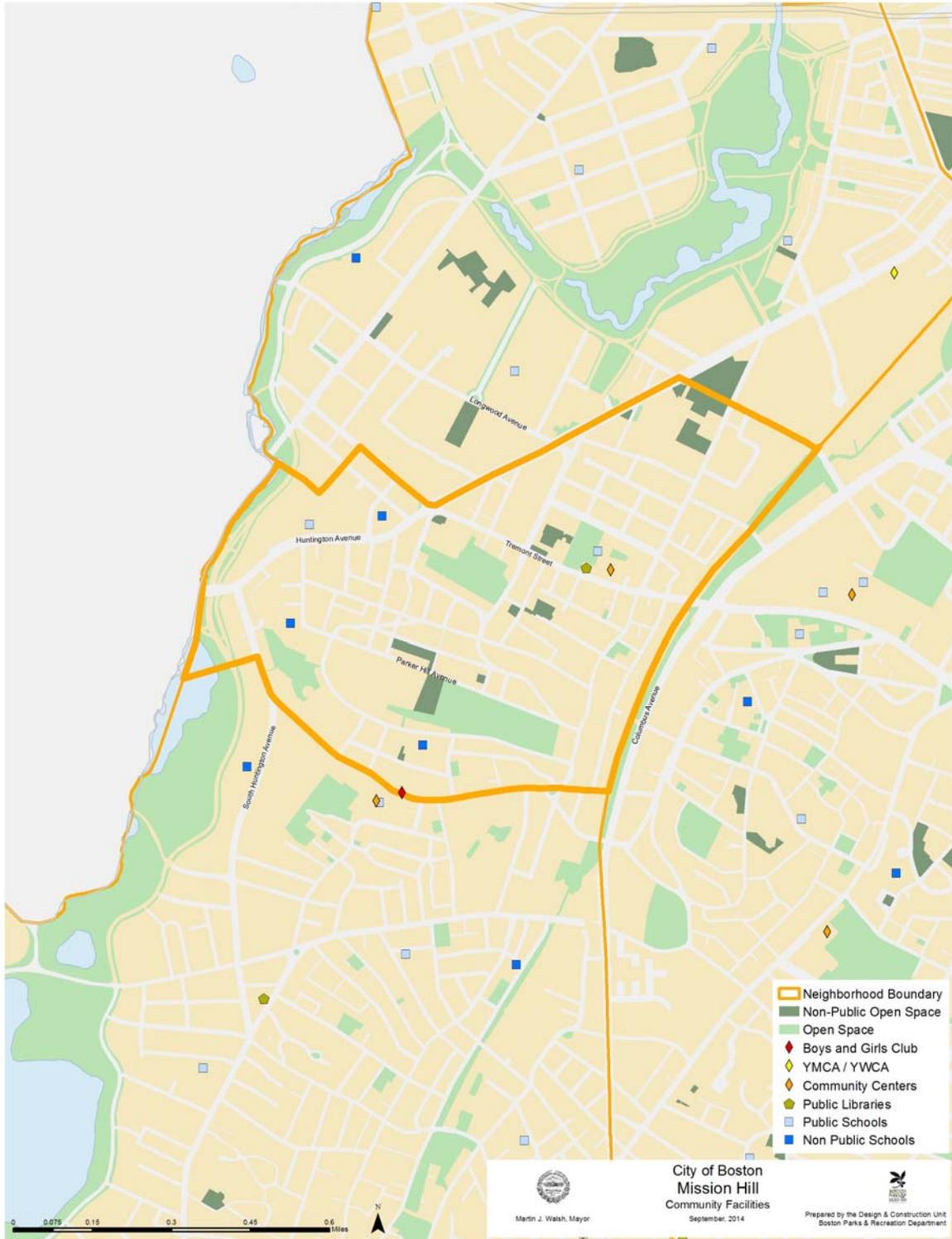


Map 7: Play Areas and Water Spray Features, Mission Hill

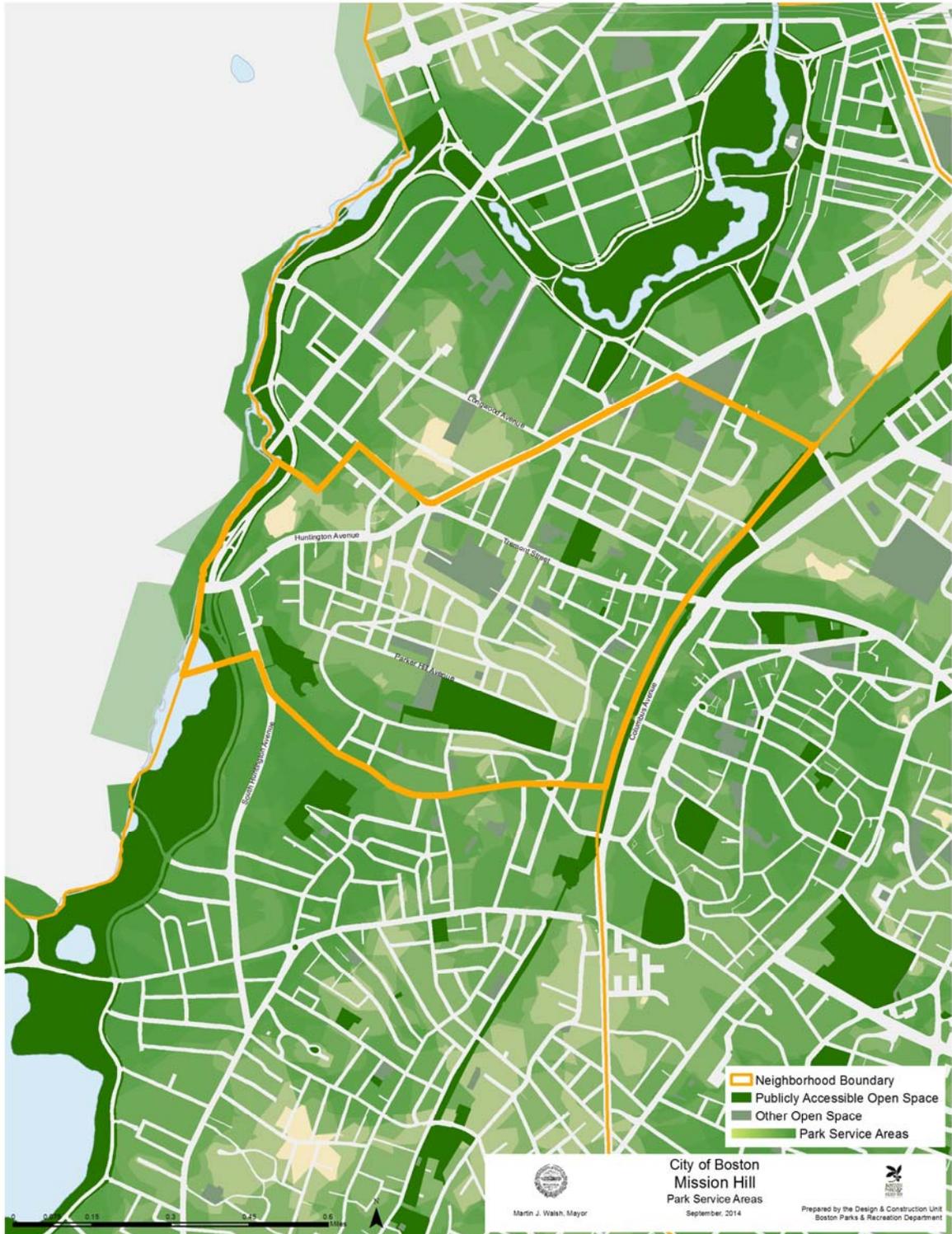
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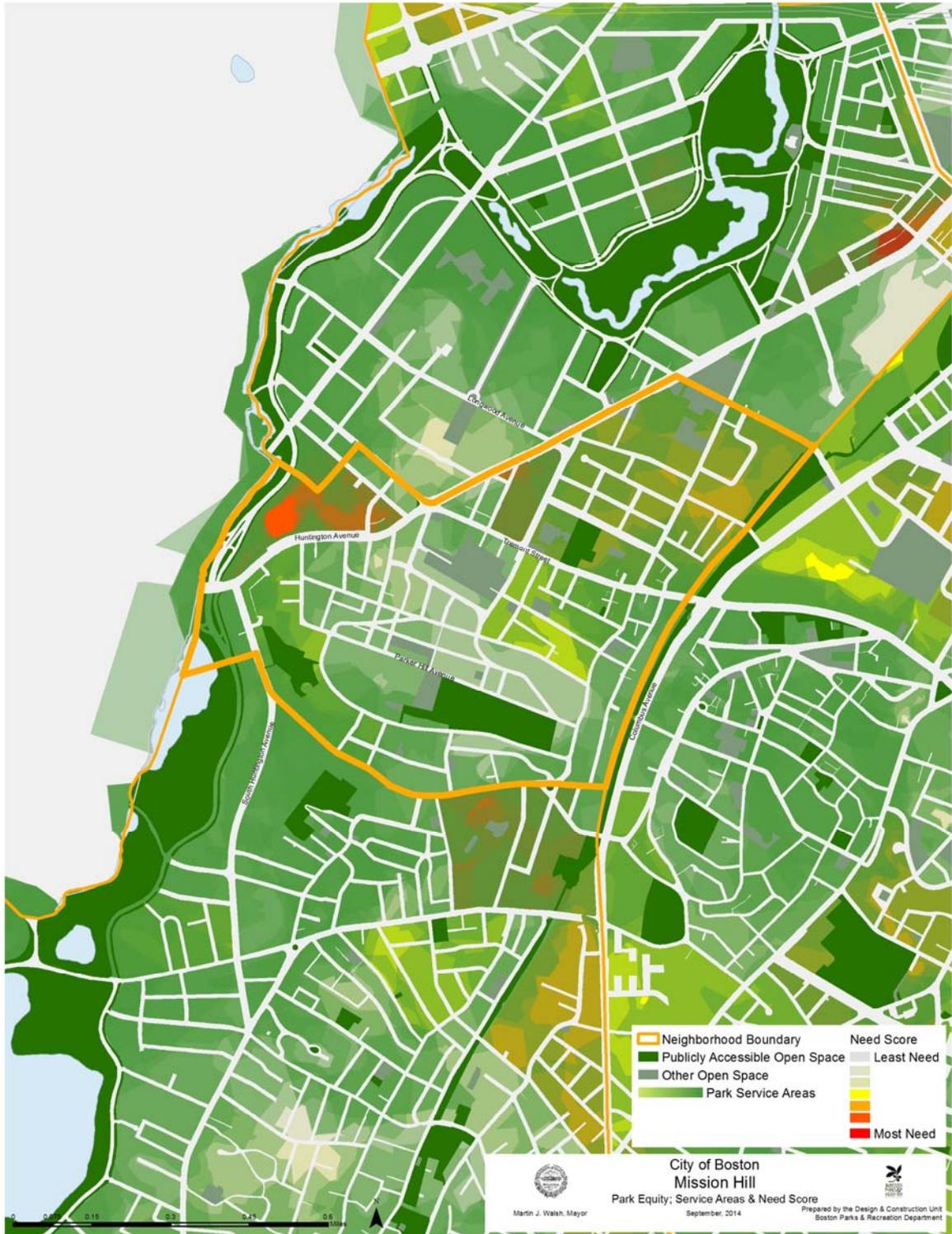
Map 8: Fields and Courts, Mission Hill



Map 9: Community Facilities, Mission Hill



Map 10: Park Service Areas, Mission Hill



Map 11: Park Equity: Service Areas and Need Scores, Mission Hill

Needs Analysis

Population	
2010 Census	16,305
2000 Census	13,935
Population growth/decline, 2000-2010	17.0%

Age		
Under 9	995	6.1%
10-19	2,362	14.5%
20-34	7,832	48.0%
35-54	2,551	15.6%
55-64	1,088	6.7%
65 and over	1,477	9.1%

Race		% of Total Population
White Alone		47.1%
Black or African American alone		15.7%
Asian Alone		14.8%
Other		2.8%

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

Population Density		Persons Per Acre
2010 Census		46.5

Median Household Income	
	\$32,091

Household by Number of Vehicles Available	
No Vehicle	52.3%
1 vehicle	36.7%
2 vehicles	8.9%
3 or more vehicles	2.1%