

---

# **Open Space Plan 2008-2014**

## **Section 7 Analysis of Needs**

**Section 7.2.11 Community Open  
Space & Recreation  
ROSLINDALE**

## **Section 7.2.11: Community Open Space & Recreation ROSLINDALE**

### **THE SETTING**

#### *History*

Roslindale became part of Boston through the 1873 annexation of West Roxbury. While its boundaries are a subject of dispute, its heart is distinct: Roslindale Square. This distinctiveness derives from its history as a classic streetcar suburb. Until the late 1800s extension of mass transit to Roslindale Square, this area was a rural community. The railroad and streetcar made it a garden suburb. Washington Street, running through Roslindale Square, is the commercial spine of Roslindale.

Roslindale Village has received a National Trust for Historic Preservation “Main Street” award. It is the model that inspired Boston’s citywide Main Streets Program. This program seeks to revitalize local neighborhood business districts as a countervailing trend to suburban sprawl and the accompanying loss of historic and scenic character in the city and the countryside. Thanks to funding from the City of Boston for site remediation, a new privately-owned supermarket was recently built in Roslindale Village, an “anchor store” that has helped boost business fortunes in the Village and improved popular perceptions of Roslindale.

New stores and boutiques have since moved into the Village due in part to the 1990s economic boom, but also in reaction to the rise in commercial rents in other parts of the city such as the South End and Jamaica Plain. The late 1990s also saw a spike in home sales in Roslindale, resulting in part from rising home prices in Jamaica Plain, good proximity to public transportation, and the increasing attractiveness and responsiveness of the Roslindale Village business district.

---

Needs Analysis*Demographics/Housing*

After population increased in the 1950s and the 1960s, the 1970s saw a precipitous drop in Roslindale's population. The population then held steady during the 1980s, as the 1990 census showed a 1% increase in the population since 1980. The 1990s saw a dramatic 5% increase, from 32,959 in the 1990 census to 34,628 in the 2000 census.

Roslindale's age distribution closely approximates Boston's. Where differences lie are in the 18-24 age range, where Roslindale has 9% share versus Boston's 16% share. The 2000 census shows Roslindale with a 23% share in the under 18 age range versus Boston with a 20% share.

Racially, Roslindale has been predominantly white, but with significant increases in the black and Hispanic portions of the population during the 1980s and 1990s. Given the 2000 Census figures, its racial/ethnic diversity is now quite comparable to that of the city as a whole. Its Latino share, 20%, is larger than Boston's as a whole, 14%.

Most of the population resides in family households (77% of all persons were in family households versus 65% for Boston). The poverty rate was lower as compared to Boston (14% versus 20%, respectively), and median household income was higher in Roslindale than in Boston, \$46,846 compared with Boston's \$39,629. Roslindale had a lower (5%) unemployment rate than Boston's (7%).

Sixty percent (60%) of Roslindale's housing stock are one- and two-family dwellings versus 32% for Boston. These often have backyards, occasionally sizable. As expected in this suburban neighborhood, only 21% of households have no vehicles available, as compared to 35% of all of Boston's households.

## Demographic and Housing Profile

Population	
2000 Census	34,628
1990 Census	32,959
1980 Census	32,626
Population growth/decline, 1990 - 2000	5.06%
Population growth/decline, 1980 - 1990	1.02%

Age		
0 to 4	2,223	6%
5 to 9	2,266	7%
10 to 14	2,415	7%
15 to 17	1,066	3%
18 to 24	3,078	9%
25 to 44	12,442	36%
45 to 64	6,885	20%
65 to 74	1,979	6%
75 to 84	1,406	4%
85 and over	868	3%

Race	
	% of Total Population
White alone	62%
Black or African American alone	17%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	1%
Asian alone	4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0%
Some other race alone	10%
Two or more races	7%

Latino Status	
	% of Total Population
Not Hispanic or Latino	80%
Hispanic or Latino	20%

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

## Demographic and Housing Profile

Households	
2000 Census	12,885
1990 Census	12,101
1980 Census	11,736
Household Growth/Decline, 1980-1990	3.11%
Household Growth/Decline, 1990-2000	6.48%

Population by Household Type	
	% Persons
Family households	77%
Non-family households	19%
Group quarters	4%

Average Household Size	
	Persons per Household Type
All Households	2.58
Family Households	3.37
Nonfamily Households	1.33

Persons Per Household		
	Households	%
1-person households	3,542	27%
2-person households	3,869	30%
3-person households	2,188	17%
4-person households	1,746	14%
5-person households	935	7%
6-person households	315	2%
7-or more person households	290	2%

## Demographic and Housing Profile

Population Density	
	Persons per Square Mile
1980 Census	8,770.4
1990 Census	8,859.9
2000 Census	9,308.6
Density Change 1980 to 1990	89.5
Density Change 1990 to 2000	448.7

Housing Tenure in Occupied Housing Units	
	% in Occupied Housing Units
Owner occupied	47%
Renter occupied	53%

Total Occupied & Vacant Housing Units in Structure	
Single units	33%
Double units	27%
3-9 units	29%
10-19 units	4%
20-49 units	3%
50 or more units	4%
All other	0%
Single/Multiple Unit Ratio	0.5

Household by Number of Vehicles Available	
No vehicles	21%
1 vehicle	46%
2 vehicles	27%
3 or more vehicles	7%

Median Household Income	
	\$46,846

Civilian Unemployment Rate	
	4.9%

Poverty Rate	
	13.6%

## Needs Analysis

**THE OPEN SPACE SYSTEM TODAY***Equity and Investment*

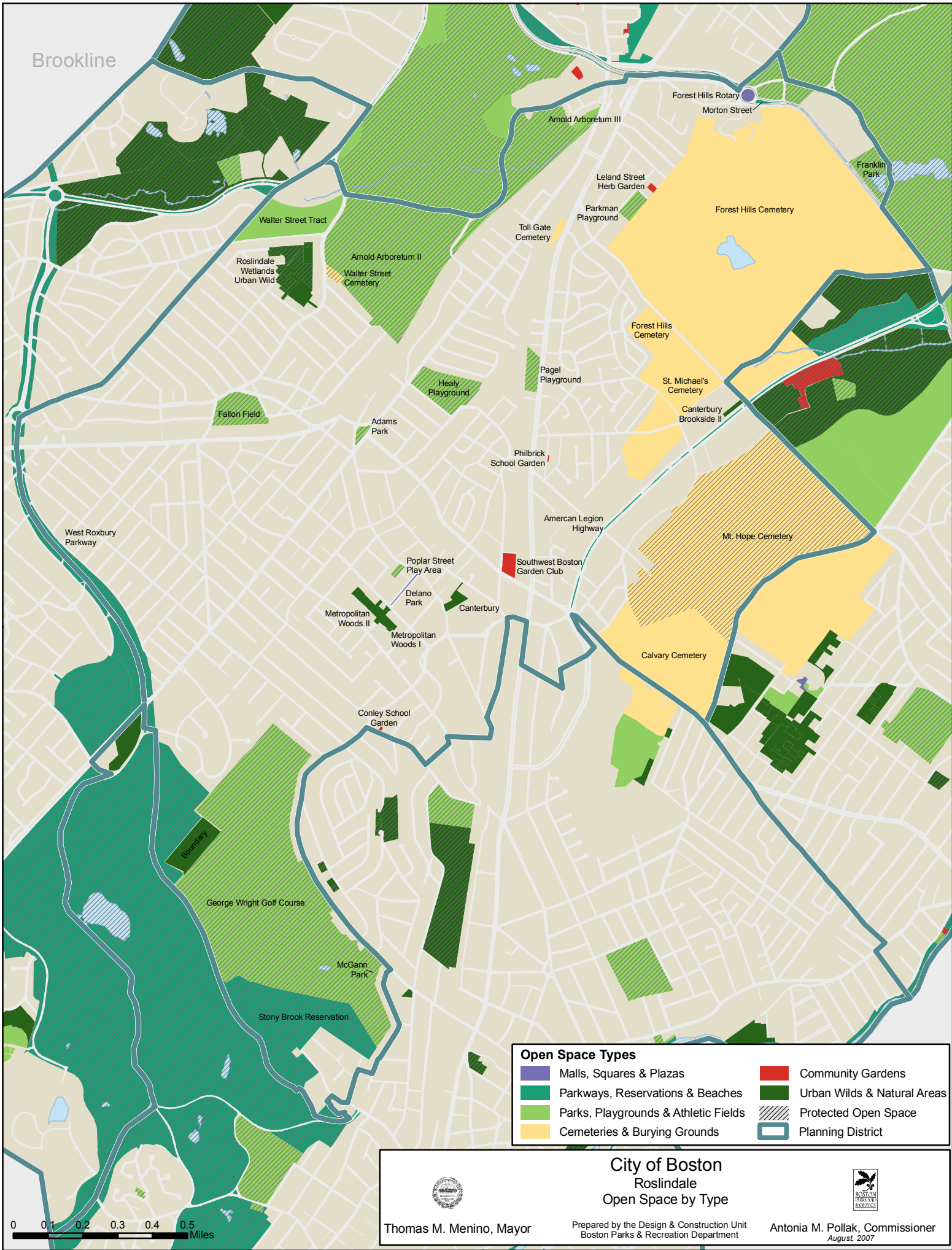
Roslindale has a total of 812 acres in its open space inventory of parks, playgrounds, squares, community gardens, cemeteries, and malls, 496 acres of which are protected. Blessed with a great variety and quality of open spaces, Roslindale has a protected open space ratio of 14.32 acres per thousand persons, well above the city ratio of 7.47.

The City of Boston invested almost \$1 million in improving open space and recreation facilities in Roslindale from 2001 to 2006 (see table below). The most significant capital project in Roslindale during this period occurred at the 2.7-acre Pagel Playground. This was the installation of an artificial turf soccer field that reduces maintenance costs and makes the field more quickly playable after storm events.

Roslindale Capital Projects 2001-2006	
American Legion Highway	\$14,422
Fallon Field	\$178,150
Healy Playground	\$173,767
Pagel Playground	\$601,558
Total	\$967,896

*Assessment***SURROUNDED BY GREEN**

While its acknowledged boundaries are not distinct, the Roslindale planning district is bounded by expansive open spaces. To the east are the large institutional campus of Boston State Hospital, which includes the Boston Nature Center, and several large cemeteries such as Forest Hills and Mount Hope; to the north are the Arnold Arboretum and the Walter Street Tract; to the west is the West Roxbury Parkway; and to the south are George Wright Golf Course and parts of the Stony Brook Reservation. Except for the Arnold Arboretum and the George Wright Golf Course, both essentially passive landscaped parks, these spaces serve as a vital greenbelt containing development. Other resources must be sought to serve the local recreational needs of Roslindale's residents.





Site Name	Baseball Diamond	Softball Diamond	Little League Diamond	Football	Soccer	Cricket Field	Rugby	Lacrosse	Multi-Use Athletic Field	Basketball Court	Basketball Half Court	Tennis Court	Street Hockey Court	Volleyball	Handball	Horseshoes	Children's Playlot	Waterspray Feature	Passive Area	Community Garden	Artwork/Monument	Path	Nature Trail	Landscaped Area	Fountain	Concession(s)	Parking Area	Other Features/Facilities
Adams Park																		1		1								
Arnold Arboretum II																				X		X					Wetland, Brook	
Arnold Arboretum III																					X		X				Wooded Tract	
Boundary I																											Wetland	
Calvary Cemetery																												
Canterbury I																												
Delano Park																							X					
Fallon Field	1							1	2		1	1				1												
Forest Hills Cemetery																												
Forest Hills Rotary																							X					
Franklin Park II											2										X		X					
George Wright Golf Course											2							1							1		Golf Course	
Healy Playground	1	1	1		1				1							1										1		
Leland Street Herb Garden																			1									
McGann Park																1	1											
Metropolitan Woods I																											Wooded Tract	
Metropolitan Woods II																											Wooded Tract	
Mt. Hope Cemetery																												
Pagel Playground					2													1								1	Soccer Court	
Parkman Playground		2							1							1	1										Shelter	
Philbrick School Garden																1				1								
Poplar Street Play Area																												
Roslindale Wetlands Urban Wild I																											Wetlands, Wooded Tract	
Roslindale Wetlands Urban Wild II																											Wetlands, Wooded Tract	
Southwest Boston Garden Club																			1									
Stony Brook Reservation III																					X	X					Wetlands, Wooded Tract	
Toll Gate Cemetery																												
Walter Street Cemetery																												
Walter Street Tract																					X							

---

Needs Analysis

## ACTIVE RECREATIONAL NEEDS

The interior of the neighborhood contains much smaller tracts that help serve the area's active recreation needs: Fallon, Healy, Pagel, and Parkman. (Because of McGann's outlying location in orientation to Roslindale, its proximity to Hyde Park, and its location next to George Wright Golf Course, it is not considered to have a significant role in helping to meet Roslindale's play lot needs.) However, the distribution of play lots and other active recreation facilities in several residential areas, such as the area south and east of Roslindale Village, and the area east of Hyde Park Avenue and south of Walk Hill Street, appears to be limited.

The mitigating factors, as in suburban neighborhoods such as Hyde Park and West Roxbury, are the ample backyard spaces of most of the housing stock and the greater availability of vehicles for transport to recreation areas not in the immediate vicinity. Yet pressure does exist to provide more play lots and ball fields, especially soccer fields for a neighborhood with an increasing immigrant population. Some of the play lot need in Roslindale is being addressed via the Mayor's Schoolyard Initiative. The Bates, Conley, Haley, and Sumner schoolyards have been completed. All of these sites are located in areas generally underserved by other public recreation providers. Children who live in the area, even if they are not students at these schools, can also use the children's play equipment in these schoolyards.

The Department's inventory includes an undeveloped parcel known as the Poplar Street Play Area. It is located in a well-developed residential area south of Roslindale Village that is underserved by play lots. A portion of the property along its street frontage may be amenable to play lot development. Depending on neighborhood interest, site feasibility, and budgetary considerations, this site may help address this sub-neighborhood's childhood recreation needs. Based on the recent Roslindale master planning effort undertaken by the BRA, the nearby area has not expressed an interest yet in the site being turned into a play lot.

The Boston State Hospital site is located just to the east of Roslindale, and is big enough to provide potentially sizable active recreation areas to service both Mattapan and Roslindale. Another area that will help service active recreation needs for Roslindale, especially for non-ball diamond sports, is Millennium Park in West Roxbury, opened in 2000. While both areas can provide regional scale open space opportunities, they are at a sufficient distance and require vehicular travel.

---

Needs Analysis

## ARBORETUM EXPANSION

Another opportunity for new publicly accessible open space is the Walter Street Tract, a Harvard University holding near the Peters Hill section of the Arnold Arboretum. The Arboretum master plan designates this parcel for the expansion of the Arboretum's collection. This would create more passive landscaped parkland for Roslindale. To keep this tract open rather than urbanized will also assure better water quality and flood control for Bussey Brook, which feeds into the Arnold Arboretum, Stony Brook, the Back Bay Fens, and the Charles River. The Parks Department will work to insure that the institutional master plan will limit development here as a way to preserve the Olmsted-based value of limited human intrusion on a pastoral landscape, inherent in the relationship built over the years between Harvard and the City through the 999-year lease arrangement on the main Arboretum holding.

Thanks to a \$491,000 ISTE A Enhancement Program grant awarded in the mid-1990s, the Parks Department completed construction on a new path in a newly acquired section of the Arnold Arboretum, the South Street Tract. It will allow commuters in the Jamaica Hills, Roslindale, and West Roxbury neighborhoods to travel comfortably through the Arboretum to the Forest Hills Station, a multi-modal transit center. It will also open up this most recent acquisition of the Arboretum for public access. The Arboretum Park Conservancy, a private non-profit group, funded construction of two handsome entrance gates at South Street and Washington Streets under a separate \$307,000 contract.

## URBAN WILDS AND NATURAL AREAS

Roslindale has a few urban wilds, but only one that is publicly owned and accessible. The Eldon Street Urban Wild has been the subject of intense community activism, including unrolling their shirt sleeves to clean up debris in this area. As a result of this community activism, the City-owned parcels in this area, now known as the Roslindale Wetlands, have been transferred to the Boston Conservation Commission. The few parcels that are privately held within this area are encumbered by the strictures of the Wetlands Protection Act and the city's 100-foot rule, such that none of the "paper" streets can be developed.

Back in 1990, the BNAF's urban wilds report designated Boundary I as one of twelve urban wilds in Boston that are of citywide significance, and in greatest need of protection ... and for good reason. Boundary I has been undisturbed and is therefore quite pristine and ecologically significant. It is located next to the DCR's current holdings in the Stony Brook Reservation. Logically, it

---

Needs Analysis

should be included under the DCR's care for the Stony Brook Reservation. Given that there is little or no other public use possible there, it would make sense for the City to arrange for its disposition to the DCR.

Canterbury I should be another urban wild to protect, especially if development goes forward on nearby Catholic church property.

#### ADVANCING CONNECTIVITY

To address Roslindale's open space needs, opportunities for open space connections must be exploited despite the major constraints presented by the heavy rail lines that cross this neighborhood. The Attleboro/Providence rail line and the Needham Heights commuter line branch split the neighborhood into thirds. This limits connections along the east-west direction as the rail lines generally cut the neighborhood along a north-south direction. The opportunities are the major arterials that generally follow the north-south orientation of these rail lines. Hyde Park Avenue and Washington Street have been improved in recent years, and Centre Street can be similarly improved through enhancements such as additional tree plantings and bicycle accommodations. Cummins Highway is a major east-west connector meriting a similar treatment. South and Walter Streets, Poplar and West Streets, and Belgrade Avenue are secondary arterials that should be targeted as well.

American Legion Highway, with a landscaped median, is an existing connector between Franklin Park and Cummins Highway. It also serves as the frontage for the Boston Nature Center. Improvements will be made here thanks to the planting of up to 500 trees along this corridor. The tree planting will mitigate the disruption caused by the NStar electric utility company's excavation of the roadbed here for a new major electric power conduit.

Because so many of Roslindale's parks and open spaces are on these important thoroughfares, and these thoroughfares link up to open spaces outside the neighborhood, their importance in ameliorating Roslindale's need for certain types of open spaces is critical. In a certain sense, these linkages play a similar role as the ring of greenways around the South End. Both neighborhoods have limited opportunities to increase open space acreage, but linear open space features can help to connect to open spaces outside their boundaries. Southward, the Stony Brook Reservation, Mother Brook, the Neponset River, and the Reservation Road, Beethoven, and Draper Playgrounds are available. Westward, the

---

Needs Analysis

new Millennium Park can be accessed via the West Roxbury and VFW Parkways. Northward, the Emerald Necklace, the Southwest Corridor Park, and Allandale Woods can be reached via Centre Street, the Jamaica Way, and Washington Street. Eastward, Morton Street, Franklin Park, and the Neponset are regional destinations for Roslindale. A focus on strengthening these links in the coming years will help address Roslindale's needs for open space opportunities.

Given the interest in neighborhood business revitalization in Roslindale Village and other commercial areas, aesthetic improvements to these arterials that support the adjacent commercial districts will pay dividends for both neighborhood business and residents. This will help increase the success the city has had with both the Roslindale Main Streets Program and the Parks Department's enhancement of Adams Park, the heart of Roslindale Village.

Another success in the Roslindale Village area will be the completion of the upgrade to Alexander the Great Park on Belgrade Avenue, thanks to a \$10,000 grant given by the City to the Roslindale Clean and Green community group.

#### GROWING A COMMUNITY GARDEN IN ROSLINDALE

For decades, a large community garden has operated on some land owned by the MBTA along its tracks that cross Cummins Highway at Rowe Street, known as the Southwest Boston Garden Club. Recent discussions have generated an interest in making this garden permanently protected via ownership by an organization such as the Boston Natural Areas Network (BNAN). In the interim, the BRA will, through its Roslindale rezoning process, downzone from a two-family residential zone to a one-family residential zone as a short-term protection measure.

## THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

The rehabilitation of Roslindale's City recreation facilities and open space has accompanied the overall strengthening of this neighborhood in the past decade. Yet several sub-areas remain somewhat underserved by open space – especially for children's play and active recreation. Improved use of existing resources will be a key strategy, including the development of underutilized parcels such as the Walter Street Tract and schoolyards. Major city thoroughfares should be greened and made bicycle-friendly in keeping with the green character of Roslindale's residential neighborhoods. As in other areas, urban wilds need to be made more accessible and protected from development threats.

### *Opportunities*

#### ACTIVE RECREATIONAL NEEDS

- Support a schoolyard reconstruction with a play lot at the Mozart School.
- Determine the feasibility of building a play lot at the Poplar Street Play Area once community need expresses itself.
- Explore opportunities to create a regional scale active recreation facility at the Boston State Hospital site.

#### ARBORETUM EXPANSION

- Limit built development as the Arboretum expands at the Walter Street Tract, the Harvard-owned parcel between Walter, Weld, and Centre Streets, so as to preserve the maximum open space and public access.

#### ADVANCING CONNECTIVITY

- Green-up and make more bicycle-friendly such major neighborhood thoroughfares as South Street, Walter Street, Centre Street (both City- and state-owned portions), Cummins Highway, Hyde Park Avenue, and American Legion Highway. Investigate the potential for similar treatments for secondary arterials such as South and Walter Streets, Poplar and West Streets, and Belgrade Avenue. Encourage a regional linkage/greenway approach to open space access for Roslindale.

---

## Needs Analysis

### URBAN WILDS AND NATURAL AREAS

- Encourage the transfer of the City-owned urban wild known as Boundary I to the DCR for incorporation into the Stony Brook Reservation.
- Follow the new urban wilds master plan recommendations for protecting and providing access to other Roslindale urban wilds such as the Roslindale Wetlands and Canterbury I.

### STRENGTHENING EXISTING FACILITIES

- Continue to fund capital rehabilitation of City park facilities as needed in the capital renewal cycle, such as ball field improvements to Fallon Field.

### GROWING A COMMUNITY GARDEN IN ROSLINDALE

- Support the effort to have ownership of the Southwest Boston Garden Club community garden held by an entity that can assure permanent protection.

### *Community Priorities*

- Provide more playgrounds and tot lots in the Mt. Hope area.
- Clean up the Canterbury urban wild. Provide improvements to limit access (allowing people only, not cars) for both the Canterbury and the Eldon Street urban wilds.
- Improve streetscape planting maintenance in the Roslindale Village area.