
Open Space Plan 2015 - 2021

Section 7

Analysis of Needs

**Section 7.2.14 Community Open Space &
Recreation**
SOUTH BOSTON

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Section 7.2.14: Community Open Space & Recreation SOUTH BOSTON

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.

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Background

First connected by bridge to Boston Proper in 1805, the South Boston peninsula soon began the gradual process of reaching its current shape through landfilling. At that time the street grid was laid out and wealthy Yankee investors began to build wooden houses near Telegraph Hill. With the opening of the Old Colony railroad, the northern marshes began to be filled in to accommodate a thriving timber and foundry industry. Further landfilling created space for larger railroad yards, linking the rail system to the waterfront as the South Boston port developed into one of the busiest in the country.

By the end of the 19th century South Boston's residential development included many simple row houses and detached three-family dwellings. The early part of the 20th century saw the completion of Frederick Law Olmsted's vision to create a grand open space system along the water's edge to be enjoyed by residents.

The industrial waterfront's decline began after World War II as Boston's maritime industry was adversely affected by changing freight transportation technologies. Many of the piers were abandoned or turned into parking lots. However, in the few two decades there has been an increase in maritime commercial uses with trucking and containerized shipping feeding off the remaining piers. Investments by public agencies like EDIC and Massport has revitalized the remaining port area

Three major developments in the 1990s catalyzed reinvestment in the former industrial port area, remaking it as a new urban frontier. One was the decision by the federal government to construct a new federal courthouse on the Fan Pier. This provided a destination and an attraction – including a large, new open space on the waterfront – that gave people a reason to come across Fort Point Channel.

Another major decision was the one by the MBTA to construct a transitway – a dedicated line for use by a dual mode bus (electric in the tunnel under Fort Point Channel, a clean diesel above-ground) – that would connect the South Boston piers area with South Station. This transitway has created a mass transit line – now known as the Silver Line – from mass transit hubs in downtown Boston, making this area more accessible and the surrounding land more attractive for development.

The third major decision was to develop a joint city-state project – the new Boston Convention & Exhibition Center and a companion hotel in the industrial area south of the waterfront. The Center, the largest convention venue in the northeastern U.S. with a building footprint of 1.6 million square feet, was completed in 2004.

Given such factors, the City through the BRA developed a plan for the South Boston Waterfront District, understanding that a major part of the growth of the city lay in this area. In 1999, the BRA released The Seaport Public Realm Plan to outline the

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potential public realm assets of this newly emerging neighborhood that should be preserved or developed in the proposed build-out.

The Convention Center has embarked on an expansion plan that will include additional hotel capacity, drawing more visitors to the area. Plans are also in the works to expand residential development in the area nearby in addition to the ongoing infill residential projects that have helped bring in new residents to South Boston as varied as young professionals and empty nesters.

Analysis

South Boston – including the new waterfront-oriented Seaport District – is a transforming neighborhood. Between 2000 and 2010, the neighborhood population increased by 11.7%, and that growth is likely to increase as new high density residential development continues to come into the Seaport District. Adults between the ages of 20-54 are 67% of the community population, while only 14.7% are children or teens.

Population density is currently greatest in the older, established residential areas, but this may very well change in the coming years (South Boston Map 1). The current ratio of 5.97 acres of open space per 1000 residents is somewhat lower than the city average of 7.64.

Current park need scores and equity maps indicate that the existing populations in greatest need for park access are centered in the Old Colony, Mary McCormack, and West Broadway Boston Housing Authority developments (South Boston Map 3). Each of these developments incorporates open space areas and recreational facilities which are not included as part of the city's park inventory. As these developments are renovated, retention or expansion of these facilities is crucial.

Civic and community facilities are arrayed through the center of South Boston, on or near the Broadway corridor (South Boston Map 9). New development in the Seaport does not yet include community facilities, which will limit the cohesive character of this as a neighborhood long term. Connectivity between the Seaport and the rest of South Boston will be important to develop and sustain over time.

South Boston's greatest open space asset is its waterfront, the majority of which is publicly accessible. The beaches and reservations along Day Boulevard to Castle Island provide several miles of linear parklands within reasonable walking distance for much of the long-established South Boston residential areas. The West Broadway, St. Vincent's, Fort Point Channel and Seaport communities are not as well served by this interconnected system. (South Boston Map 10) As new residential and commercial development transforms these areas, open space resources need to be considered in planning and development decisions. The

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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.

Play areas at Buckley, Sweeney, Flaherty Parks (and likely the newly opened A Street Park as well) are high demand / high use facilities. These spaces are constrained and continued growth in this community will add pressures on these spaces that are already highly valued. (South Boston Map 7)

Athletic Field space in South Boston is largely provided at Moakley Park, which is a destination facility for park users city-wide. Given the pressures on limited field space throughout Central Boston, and the opportunities afforded in South Boston with the redevelopment of large parcels not available elsewhere in the city, development of athletic field space must become a priority in the planning and development efforts in this community. (South Boston Map 8)

New development in this area has resulted in the creation of two new small parks with active recreation elements: the Channel Center Park aka A Street Park, with a half basketball court and a children's play area, and Q Park, with a half court basketball court, a small children's play area, and a small lawn. The 100 Acre Plan, however, called for a sports field at A Street Park location. Q Park, a privately owned park, is the only open space with any active recreation elements in the Seaport Square project, which will generate enough population to increase the city's population by about 1%.

The expansion of the Conley Terminal and the development of a dedicated freight corridor by Massport is to be accompanied by the proposed development of a buffer open space along the northern side of West First Street, across from Christopher Lee Playground. Per 2010 state legislation, this 5.4 acre buffer open space is to be protected under Article 97, and built and managed by Massport. It will contain a multi-use pedestrian/bicycle path along most of its length that will connect to the Harborwalk, and enable this more interior part of the South Boston community, which is separated from the water (Reserved Channel) by a Designated Port Area, to reach the portions of the South Boston waterfront that are publicly accessible. Massport anticipates that construction of this new park, to be named in honor of their former director of external relations and former South Boston resident, Thomas J. Butler, will be completed in 2016. Once completed, the park will be added to the map of protected open spaces in Boston as well as mitigate the effects of the port expansion on this southern section of the South Boston community.

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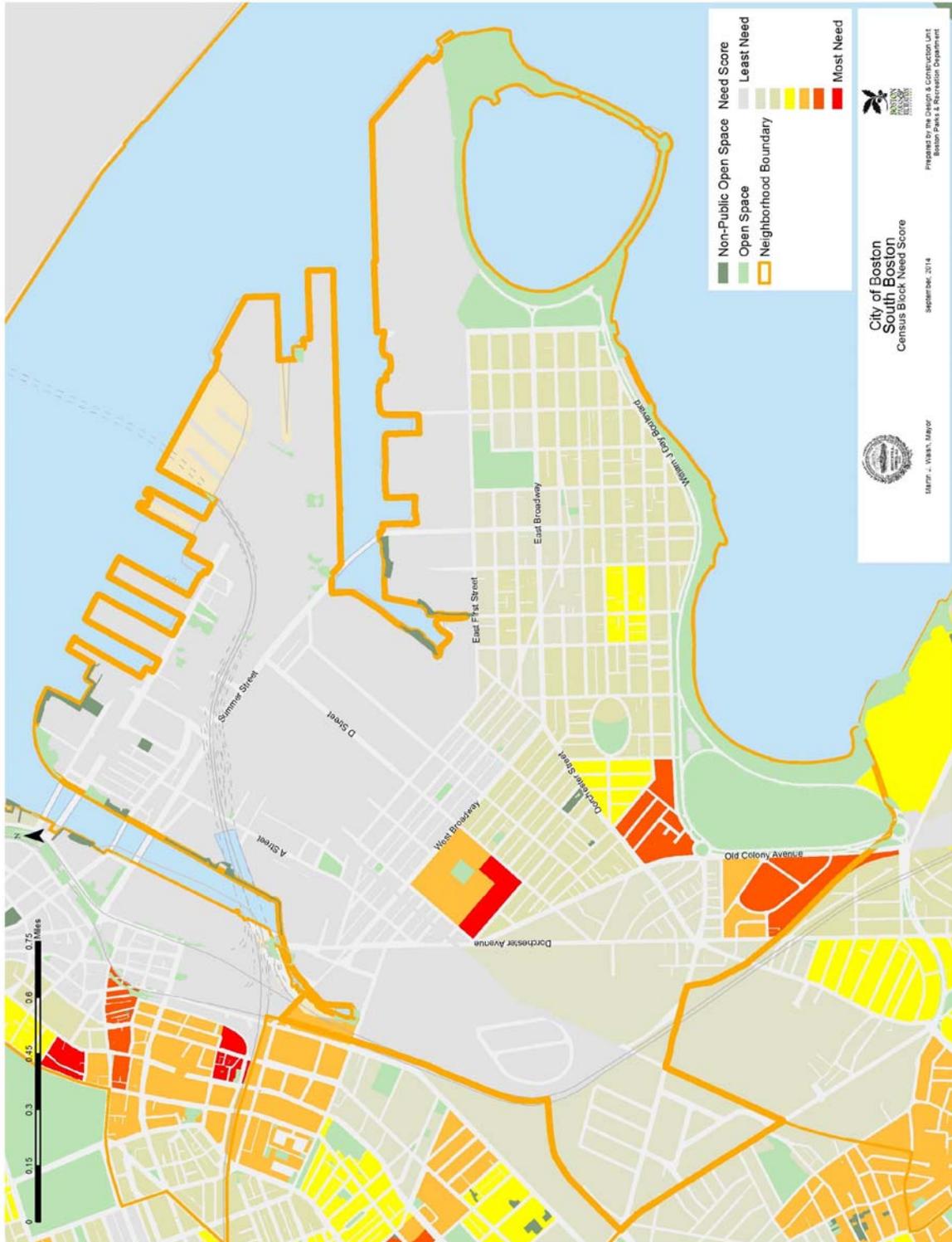
Map 1: Population Density, South Boston

Needs Analysis



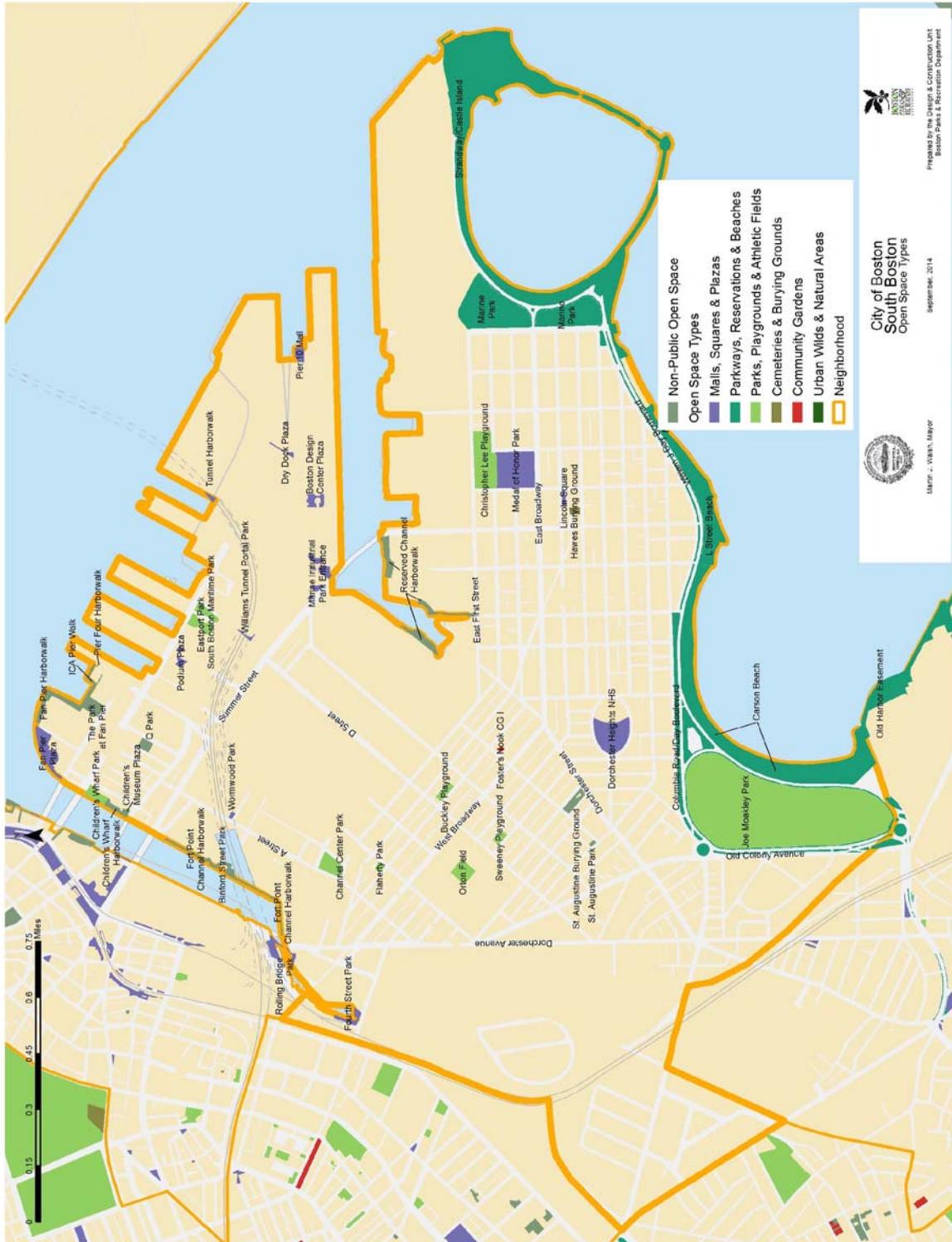
Map 2: Environmental Justice Populations, South Boston

Needs Analysis



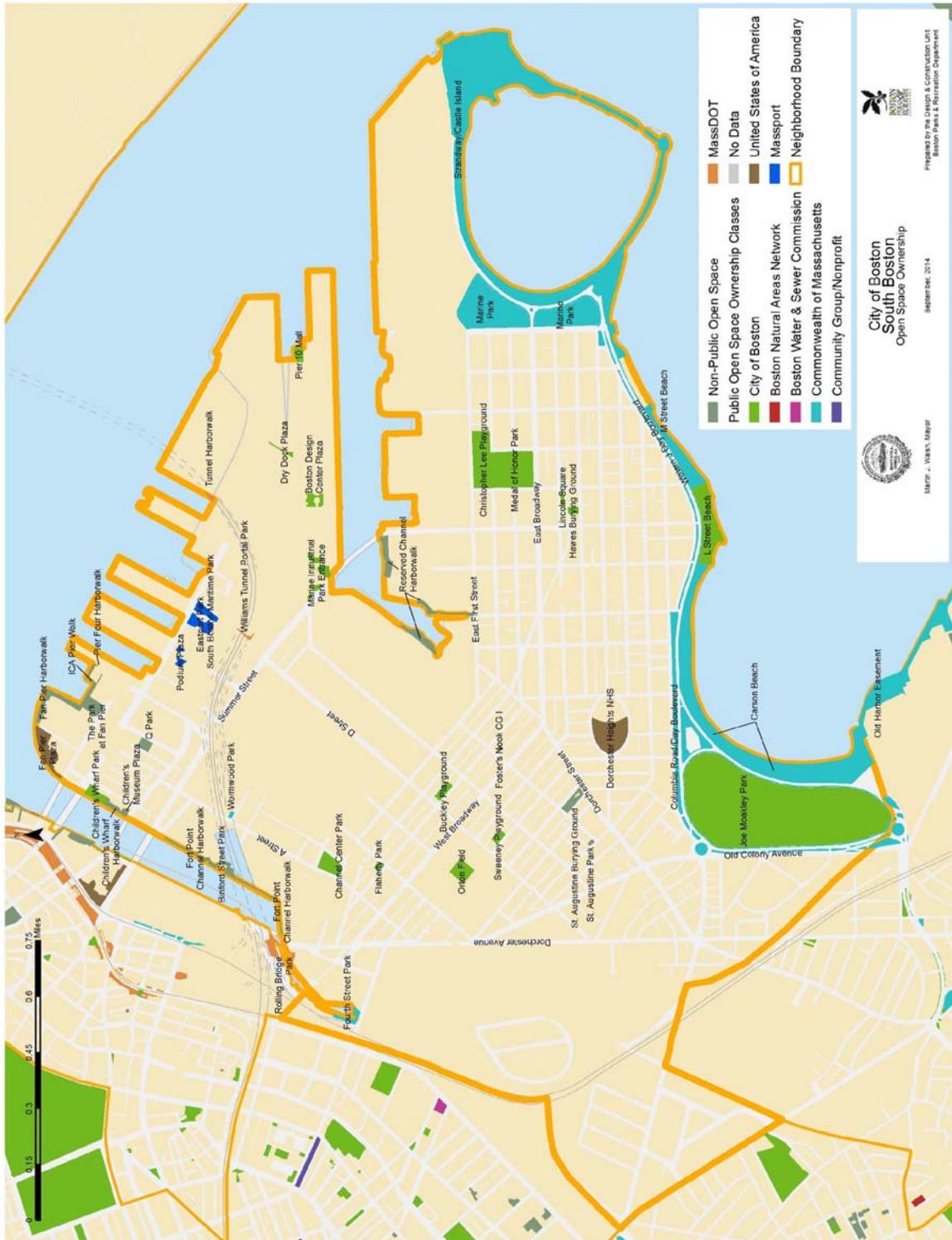
Map 3: Need Score by Census Block Groups, South Boston

Needs Analysis



Map 4: Open Space by Type, South Boston

Needs Analysis



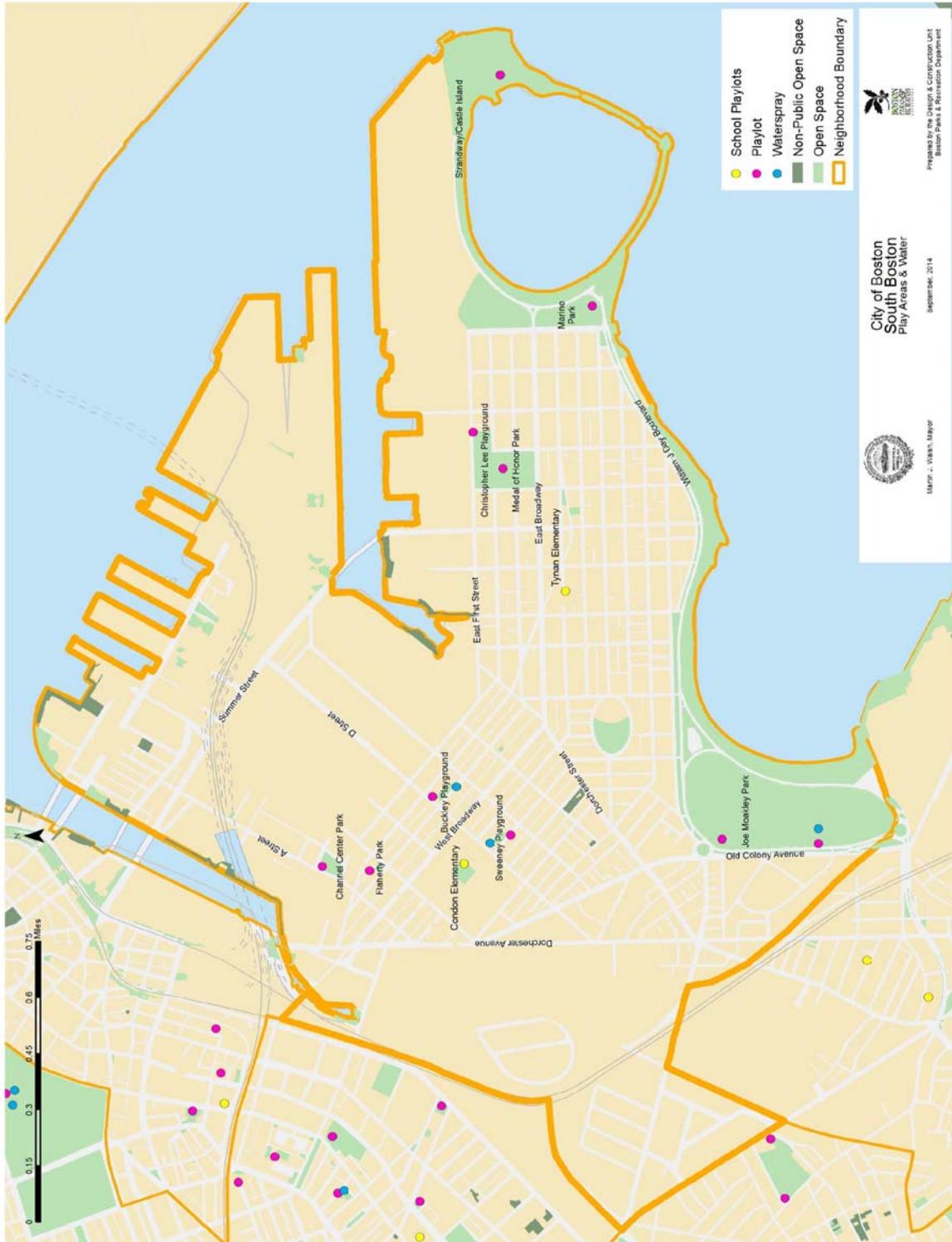
Map 5: Open Space by Ownership, South Boston

Needs Analysis



Map 6: Open Space by Protection Status, South Boston

Needs Analysis



Map 7: Play Areas and Water Spray Features, South Boston

Needs Analysis



Map 8: Fields and Courts, South Boston

Needs Analysis



Map 9: Community Facilities, South Boston

Needs Analysis



Map 10: Park Service Areas, South Boston

Needs Analysis



Map 11: Park Equity: Service Areas and Need Scores, South Boston

Needs Analysis

Population	
2010 Census	35,200
2000 Census	31,514
Population growth/decline, 2000-2010	139.25%

Age		
Under 9	2,642	7.5%
10-19	2,537	7.2%
20-34	14,760	41.93%
35-54	8,853	25.15%
55-64	3,114	8.84%
65 and over	3,294	9.35%

Race	
	% of Total Population
White Alone	76.33%
Black or African American alone	6.47%
Asian Alone	4.7%
Other	1.68%

Latino Status	
	% of Total Population
Hispanic or Latino	10.8%

Population Density	
	Persons Per Acre
2010 Census	17.1

Median Household Income	
	\$71,005

Household by Number of Vehicles Available	
No Vehicle	27.2%
1 vehicle	48.8%
2 vehicles	20.4%
3 or more vehicles	3.37%