
Open Space Plan 2015-2021

Section 7

Analysis of Needs

Section 7.2.15 Community Open Space &
Recreation
SOUTH END

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Section 7.2.15: Community Open Space & Recreation SOUTH END

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

As originally conceived in the 1850s, the South End was to be a neighborhood of townhouses for wealthy merchants. In laying out the streets, the planners followed the English park model of residential squares, each with a large oval grass plot defining the center of the street. At the turn of the century, however, the more affluent residents had become more attracted to the fashionable Back Bay. The South End instead became the port-of-entry to more than 35 distinct linguistic groups as the dense residential fabric was inherited by wave after wave of primarily working class immigrants. The neighborhood maintains much of this richly diverse and complex character.

Needs Analysis

Urban renewal in general and the Prudential Center and Copley Place developments in particular attracted powerful market forces to the South End. Starting in the mid-1960s, gradual smaller-scale private reinvestment and an accompanying gentrification resulted. Along with market developments, innovative projects like the Villa Victoria housing development, the Southwest Corridor Park, and Tent City have had a positive impact on the quality of life in the community. With the location of biotechnology-related light manufacturing in the area, the expansion of the Boston Medical Center, and the re-focusing on Washington Street resulting from the City's Main Streets program and the MBTA's Silver Line project, the more eastern sections of the South End have seen a revitalization that is likely to continue into the near future.

Analysis

The South End is the densest of any city community, yet with just over 18 acres, has the least amount of protected open space. The ratio of 0.74 acres of open space per 1000 residents is dramatically lower than the city-wide average of 7.64. These numbers reflect the reality that the South End neighborhood doesn't have any large parks within its boundaries (as currently drawn by the Boston Redevelopment Authority).

Much of the neighborhood meets the State's criteria for environmental justice populations and some sections of the neighborhood meet all of the criteria. The neighborhood has seen 12.27% growth from 2000-2010 and this growth will continue as large portions of the Harrison/Albany corridor are redeveloped. (South End Maps 1, 2 & 3)

The South End's open space system is dominated by passive parks and the few active recreational, mixed-use facilities are in such high demand that they are subject to overuse. This is exacerbated by the fact that most of the adjacent neighborhoods (Lower Roxbury is the exception) are lacking in active recreation facilities as well. The limited larger active facilities tend to be located at the fringes of the South End, while the residential squares tend to be more fully integrated into the fabric of the neighborhood.

The South End's population of children under 20 is fairly low compared to other city neighborhoods. Distribution of playgrounds is favorable throughout the established residential portions of the neighborhood (South End Map 7). There are a high number of passive squares and pocket parks that contribute to character of the neighborhood but only support passive uses (and in some cases have limited or no public access). Ornamental fountains (8) outnumber children's water play features (2) which is a proportion unmatched elsewhere in the city.

Needs Analysis

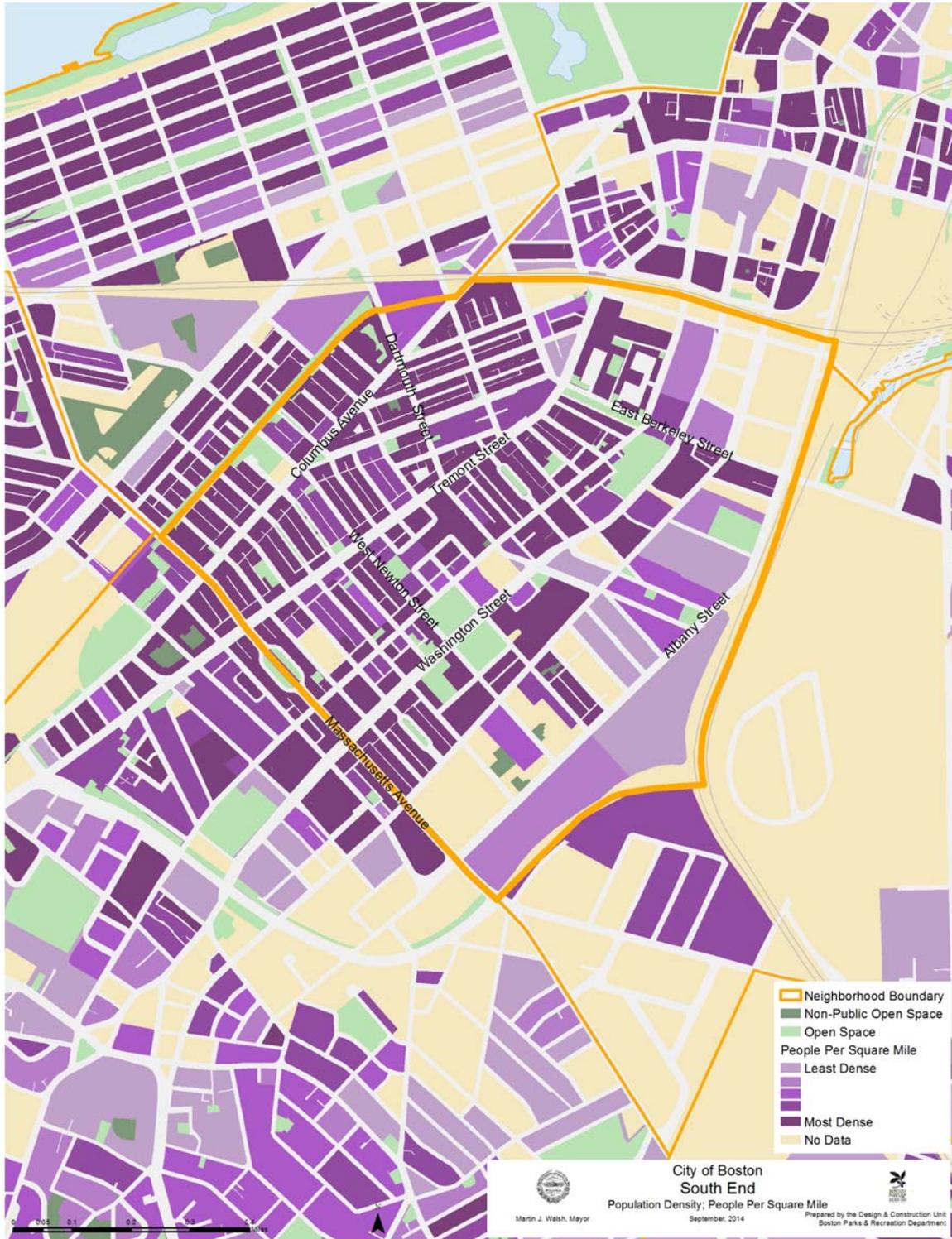
There is only one regularly accessible athletic field in the neighborhood, the baseball field at Peters Park. This one field cannot meet the needs of the neighborhood. Basketball courts are reasonably abundant (given the neighborhood's overall open space constraints) and some additional non-park courts are publicly accessible at Blackstone Community Center and the D-4 Police Station (South End Map 8).

Park service areas and equity show great walkable access to parks throughout the neighborhood in the established residential areas (South End Maps 10 & 11). Where more recent redevelopment is occurring, along Harrison Avenue and Albany Street where industrial uses are being converted to residential uses, there is insufficient existing open space. These new residents will have no choice but to vie for the facilities in Peters Park, which is already oversubscribed. Small scale private open spaces can be provided within these new developments with roof decks, balconies or courtyards. These are meaningful private amenities, but the pressure on shared, active, public facilities will continue to be an issue.

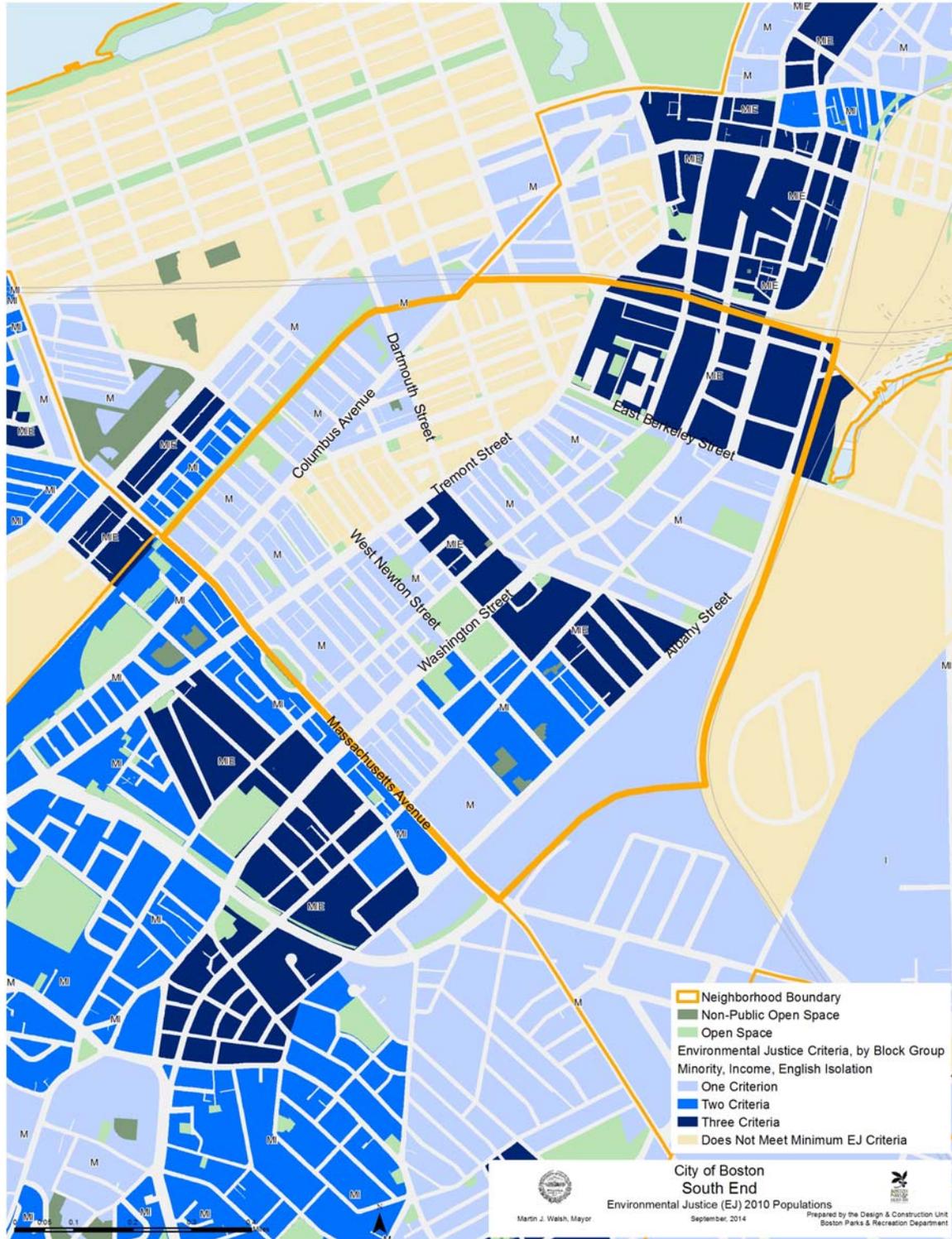
As the South End's population of young adults continues to grow there will be increasing demand for permits from residents to utilize existing facilities. Limited household access to vehicles is also a factor in the need for more open space accessible to residents of this area. There is a need to identify new sites for active recreation as public and private housing developments are planned and as the number of organized leagues and clubs increase.

The 2011 BRA Harrison-Albany Corridor Strategic Plan looks at this corridor as a means for expanding housing opportunities as the industrial properties convert to residential uses. While it recognizes the need to create pedestrian/bicycle corridors to connect to the rest of the community, it provides little guidance to address the need for new sites for active recreation for the population growth it is encouraging.

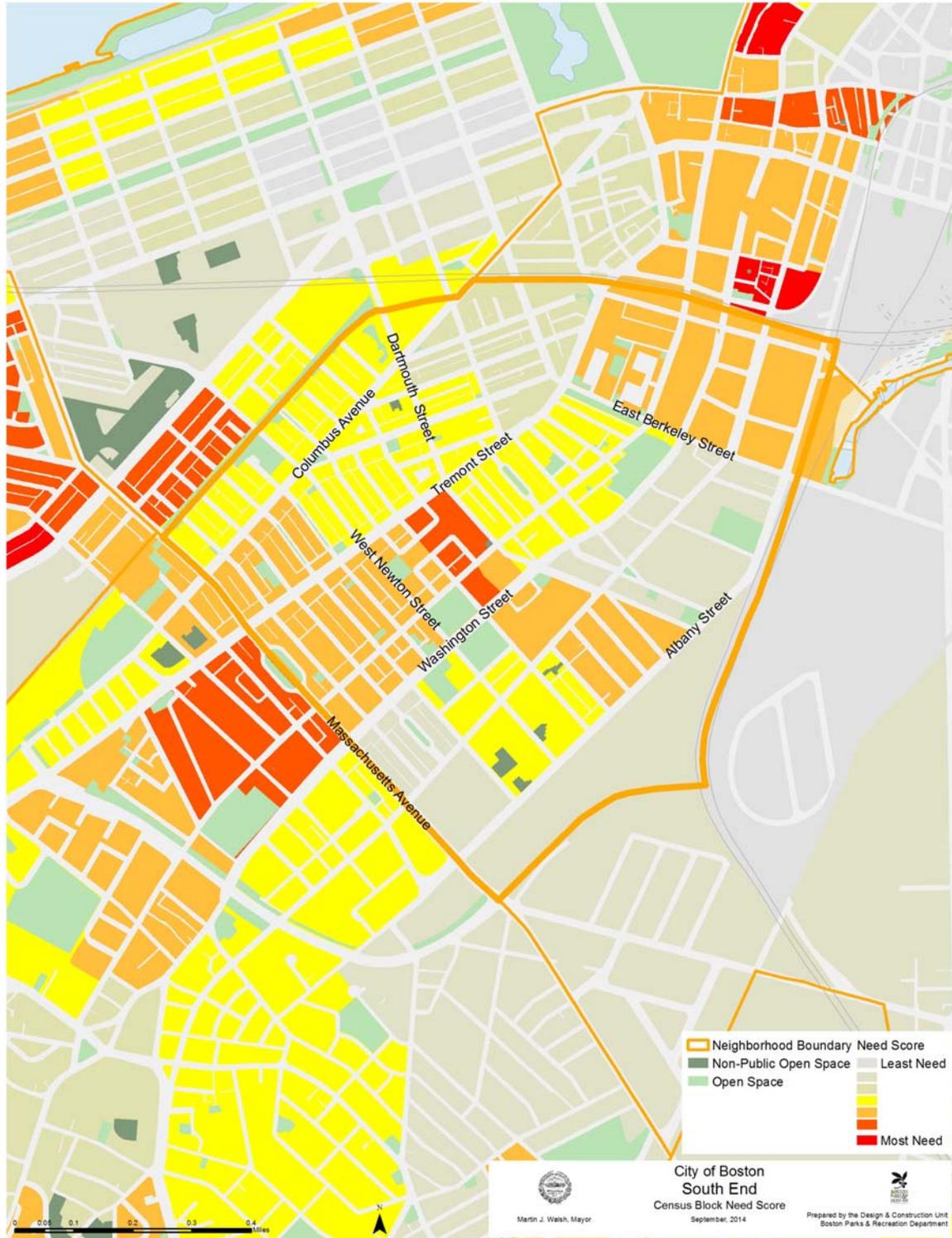
Improvements to the South Bay Harbor Trail will help with the South End residents' need to access open spaces in other communities, such as South Boston, Roxbury, and the Fenway/Longwood area.



Map 1: Population Density, South End



Map 2: Environmental Justice Populations, South End



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

Needs Analysis

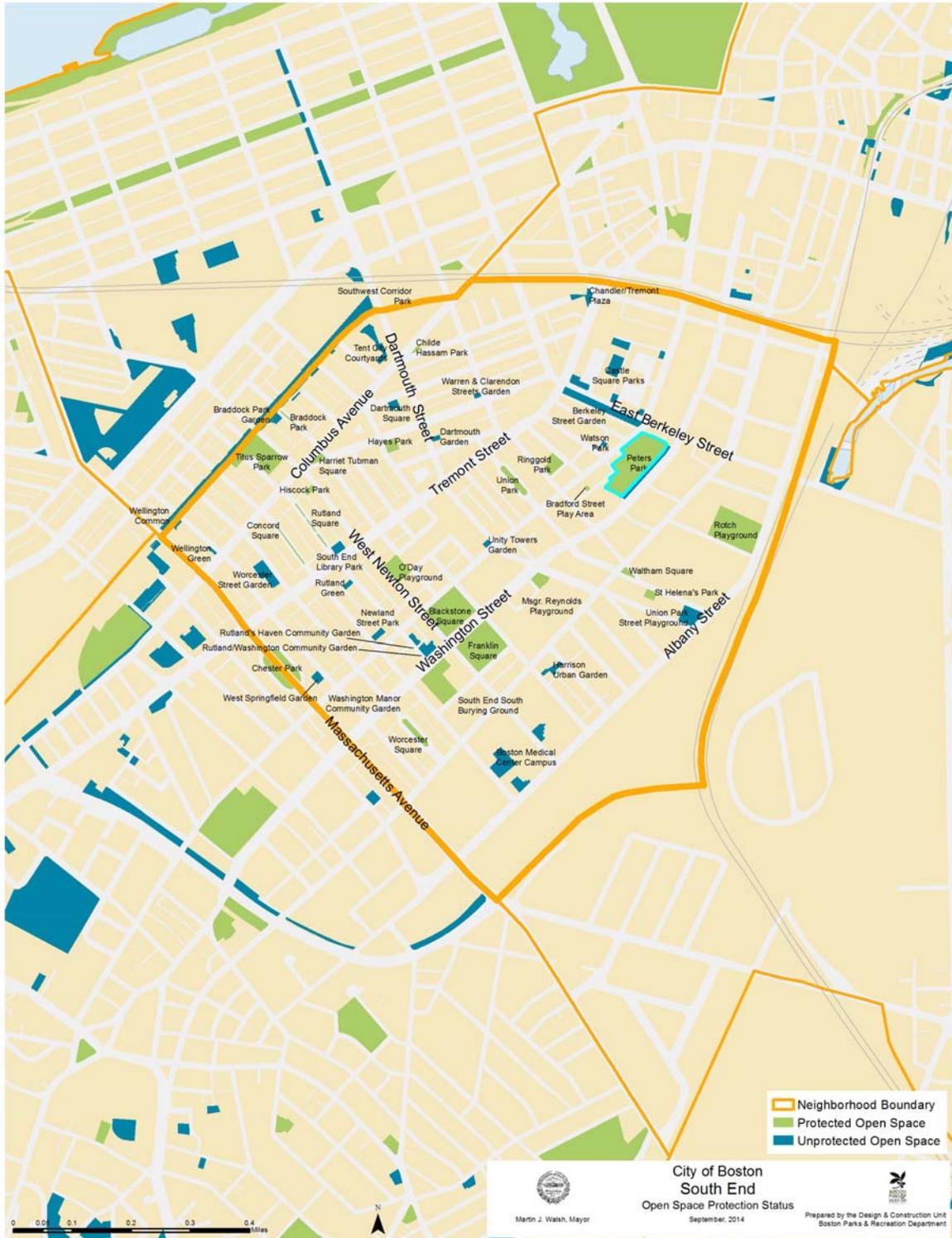


Map 4: Open Space by Type, South End

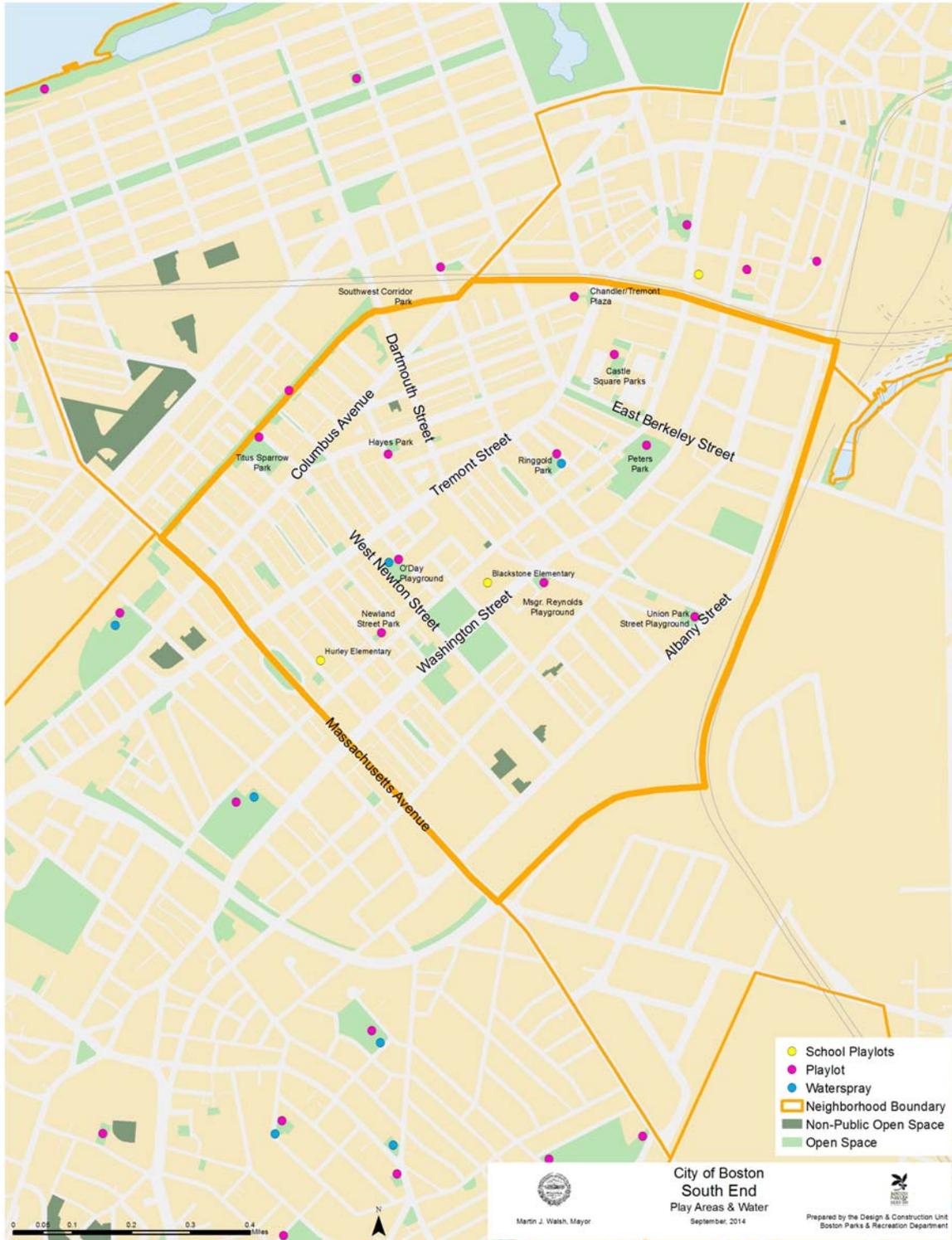
Needs Analysis



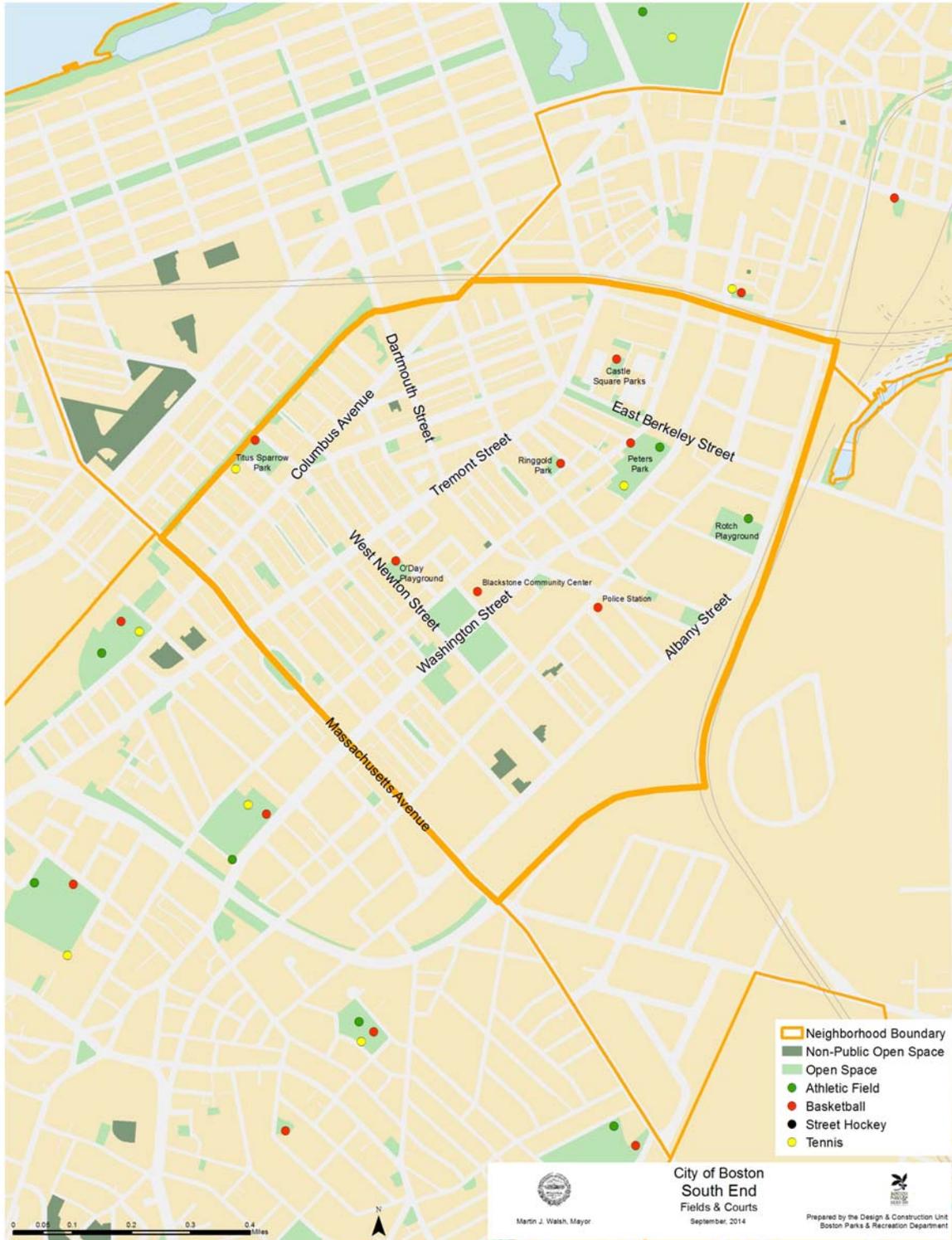
Map 5: Open Space by Ownership, South End



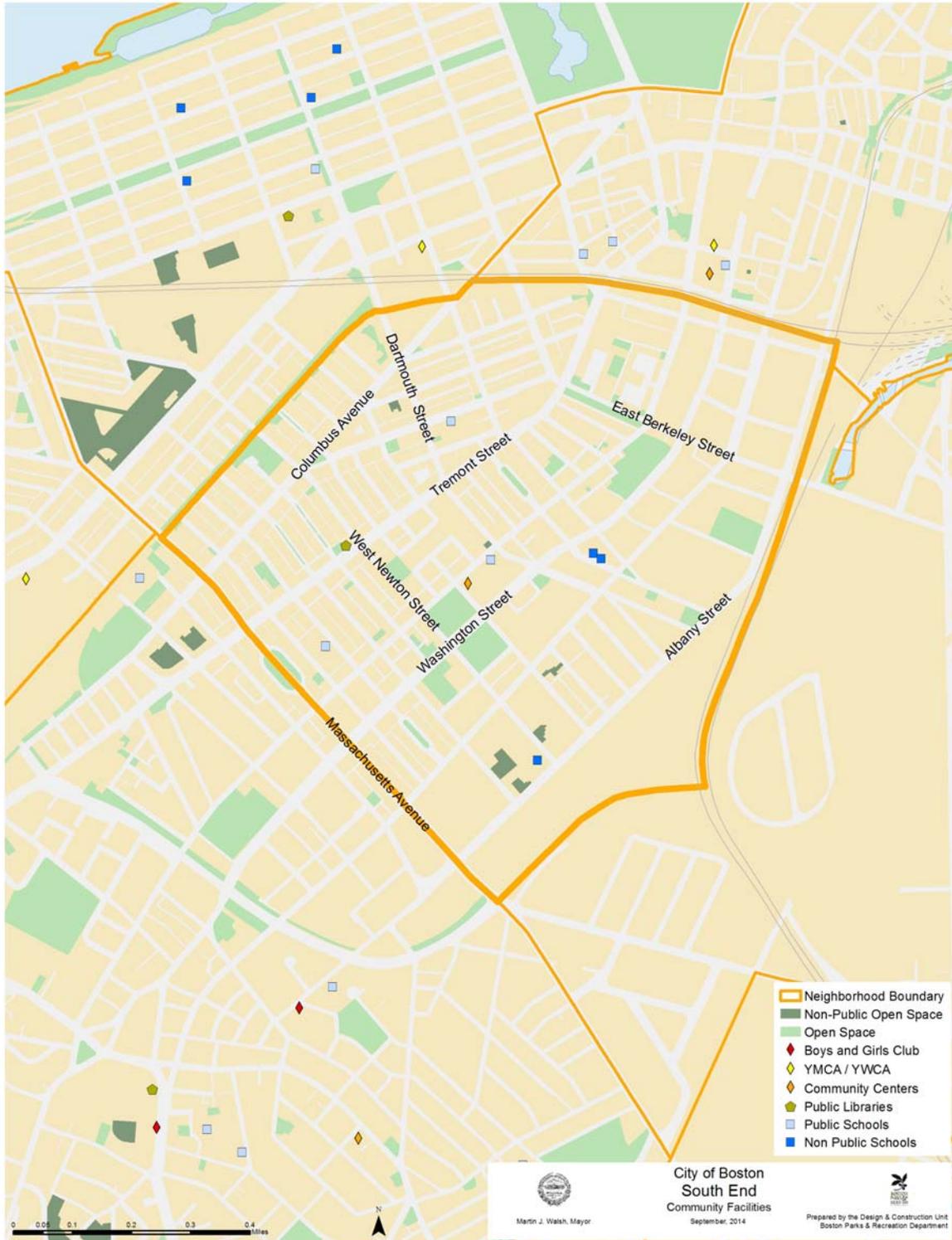
Map 6: Open Space by Protection Status, South End



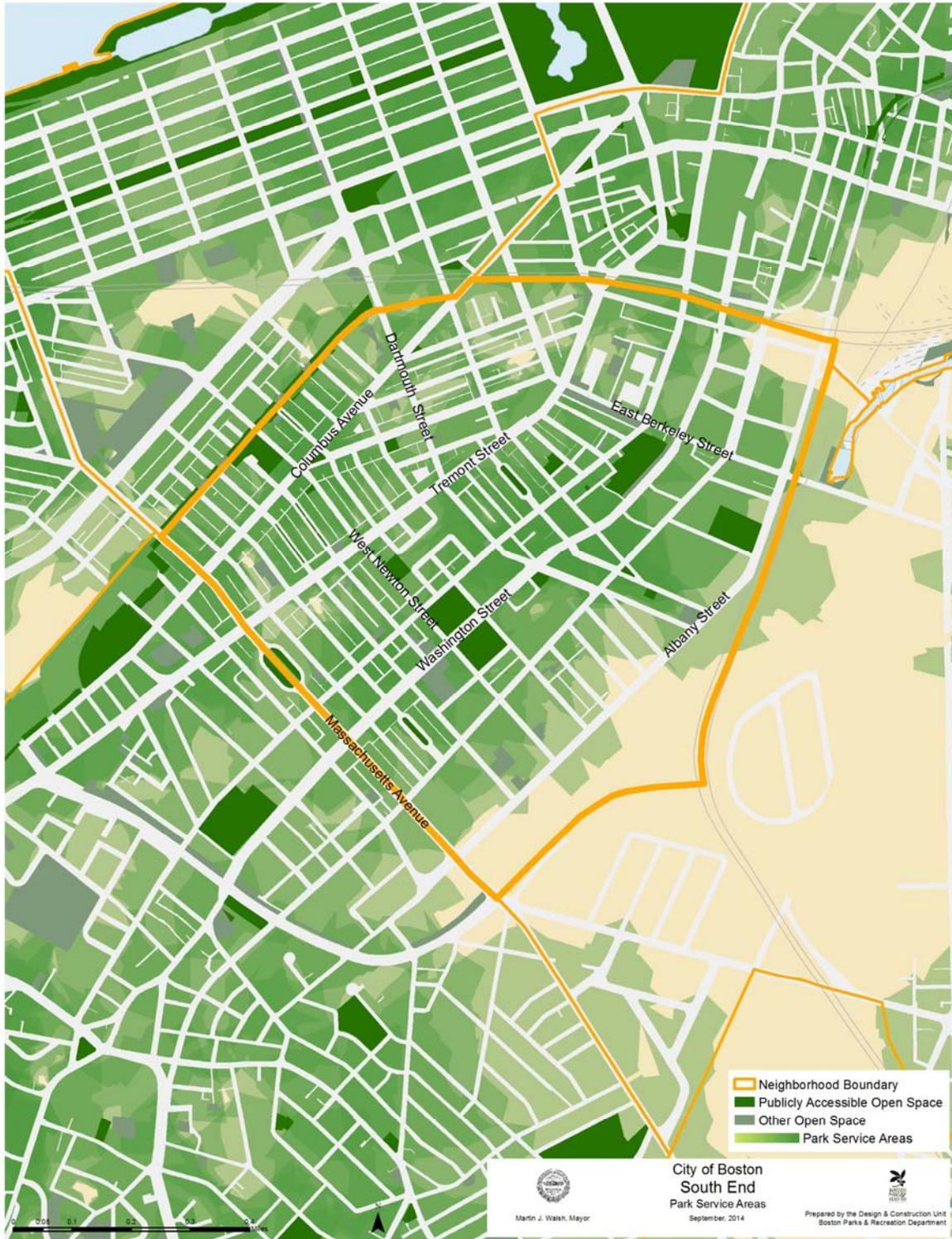
Map 7: Play Areas and Water Spray Features, South End



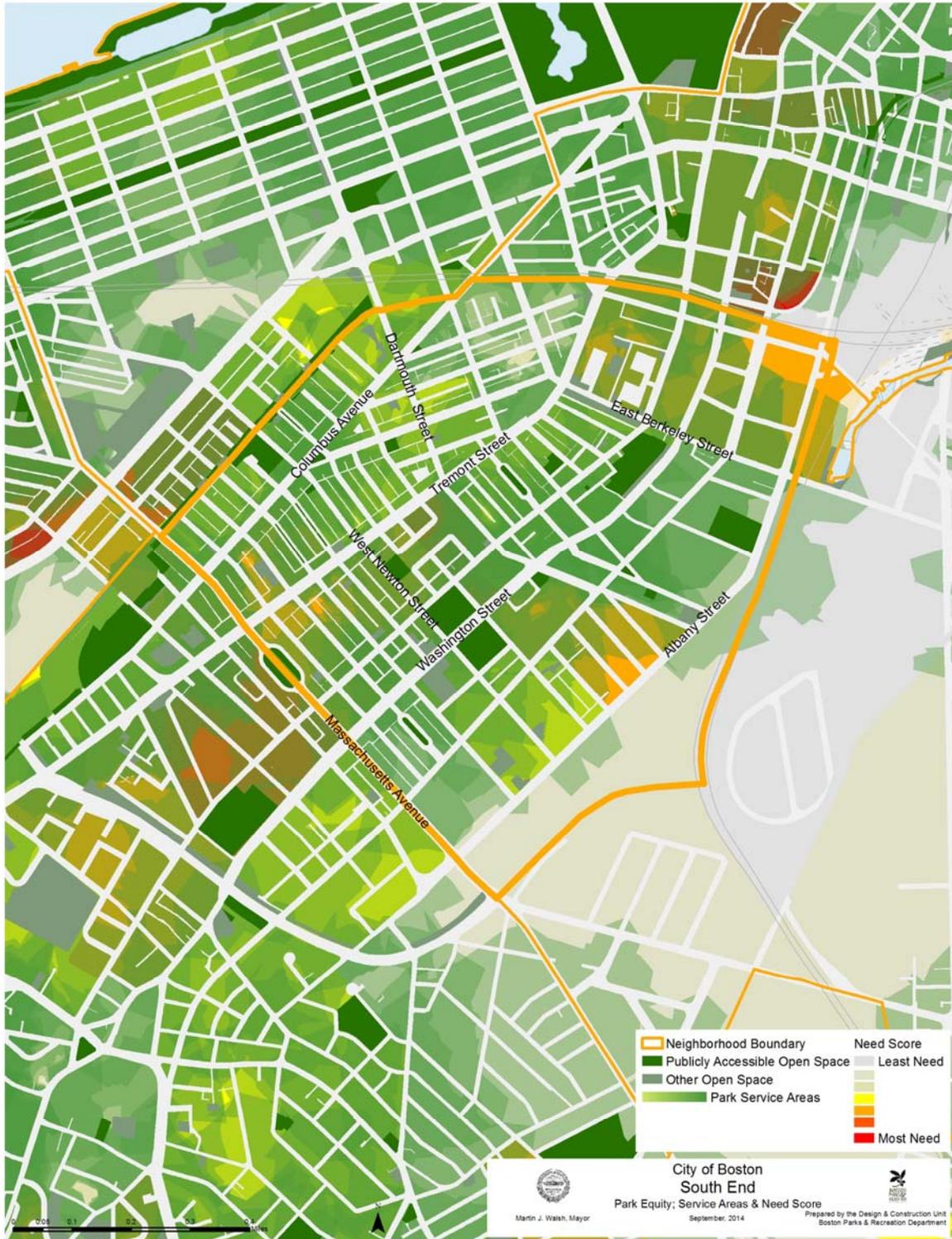
Map 8: Fields and Courts, South End



Map 9: Community Facilities, South End



Map 10: Park Service Areas, South End



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

Needs Analysis

Population	
2010 Census	24,577
2000 Census	21,911
Population growth/decline, 2000-2010	12.27%

Age		
Under 9	1,974	8.0%
10-19	1,453	5.9%
20-34	8,303	33.8%
35-54	7,665	31.2%
55-64	2,571	10.5%
65 and over	2,611	10.6%

Race		% of Total Population
White Alone		55.2%
Black or African American alone		12.5%
Asian Alone		16.2%
Other		2.7%

Latino Status		% of Total Population
Hispanic or Latino		13.3%

Population Density		Persons Per Acre
2010 Census		52.1

Median Household Income	
	\$61,079

Household by Number of Vehicles Available	
No Vehicle	45.2%
1 vehicle	45.2%
2 vehicles	8.0%
3 or more vehicles	1.5%