

Section 7.2.8:

HYDE PARK

For an explanation of the organization, content and maps in this section, please see the Introduction to Section 7.2: Community Open Space and Recreation (page 160).

Background

The last town annexed to Boston (1912), Hyde Park's history illustrates the original, independent identity of many of Boston's neighborhoods, as well as 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 the former Bay State Paper mill site at River Street and Wood Avenue, now a shopping center. By the late 1800s, industry (paper and cotton mills and other factories) grew 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 centuries was the introduction of 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 took hold; dissatisfied with town water rates and service, Hyde Park voted to join Boston in 1911.

Open Space Access & Equity

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 1,000 residents, with a relatively low population density. The population did not change significantly between 2000 and 2010. Hyde Park is a family community with 26.5% of residents under the age of 20. 8.8% of the community is teenagers, which is a higher percentage than in all but three other city neighborhoods (Dorchester, Mattapan and Roxbury). All parts of Hyde Park meet at least one of the state's environmental justice criteria, and some sections register a moderate park need score (Hyde Park Maps 2 and 3).

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 edge 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.

Given the large amount of open space in Hyde Park, it is not surprising to find it has great diversity open space types; 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 Commonwealth's Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Their major open spaces are in the Stony Brook and Neponset River Reservations (Hyde Park Maps 4 and 5). 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 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 and active recreation facilities. No other community can match the trail-oriented, natural resource-based outdoor recreation this reservation 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. Within Hyde Park the Reservation broadens to include active and passive recreation spaces including courts, fields, water spray areas, playgrounds, and an outdoor stage. 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.

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 crucial neighborhood play spaces that provide walkable access for many residential areas. Changing use at the Greenwood School site could potentially impact neighborhood access to this open space.

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.

Athletic fields are also clustered to west and southwest sides of the neighborhood with only Ross Playground providing active recreation opportunities for the eastern portion of Hyde Park (Hyde Park Maps 7, 8 and 10). Given comparable needs in the adjacent community of Mattapan, and the high number of youth and teens in both neighborhoods, attention is needed to expand active recreation facilities in this part of the city (Hyde Park Map 11).

Future Development

The landscapes of the large protected natural areas (DCR Reservations and the George Wright Golf Course) in Hyde Park are highly contrasted with the industrial land uses that dominate much of the fabric of this community. Future planning and development in the neighborhood should find ways to extend the verdant quality of these connected open spaces into the neighborhood core.

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.

Existing features along the Neponset River under DCR jurisdiction can help improve access and achieve this Strategic Plan goal. The reconstruction of Doyle Playground between River Street and the Neponset is an important action for improving river access. The Fairmount / Indigo Corridor Collaborative has identified improvements to Doyle Playground as a priority project.

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 both private parcels public parcels owned by non-park agencies. This Overlay District creates a zone along the river and brook that requires additional design review promote implementation of the city and community's goals. 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 calls for acquisition of city- and privately owned parcels to expand open space in this community. Parcel identification and acquisition will require assessment of the appropriateness of the particular parcel to address specific open space needs in the community, or the potential of a parcel to expand an existing open space resource. One set of parcels, known as the Oak Lawn Driving Range and Crane Ledge, offers a significant opportunity of open space expansion 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, which could help address the park equity deficit in this area of Hyde Park, enabling active recreation features to be developed in selected sections. This same site 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.

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.

Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile

HYDE PARK

Population	
2010 Census	30,637
2000 Census	30,076
Population Growth/Decline, 2000–2010	1.9%

Population Density		Persons per Acre
2010 Census		10.5
2000 Census		10.3
Density Change, 2000–2010		0.2

Age	Persons	Percent of Population
0 to 9	3,663	12%
10 to 19	4,454	15%
20 to 34	5,863	19%
35 to 54	8,993	29%
55 to 64	3,720	12%
65 and over	3,944	13%

Teens, City to Community Comparison	Total Population	Total Children 12-17	% of Boston's Children 12-17	Children 12-17 as % of Neighborhood Population
Boston	617,594	33,920	100.0%	5.5%
Hyde Park	30,637	2,693	7.9%	8.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Decennial Census, BRA Research Division Analysis

Race/Ethnicity/Latino Status	Persons	Percent of Population
White alone	8,650	28%
Hispanic or Latino	6,034	20%
Black or African American alone	14,476	47%
Asian alone	485	2%
Other	992	3%

Median Household Income
\$59,502

Source: US Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey, BRA Research Division Analysis

Percent of Households by Number of Vehicles Available	
No vehicles	16%
1 vehicle	44%
2 vehicles	31%
3 or more vehicles	10%

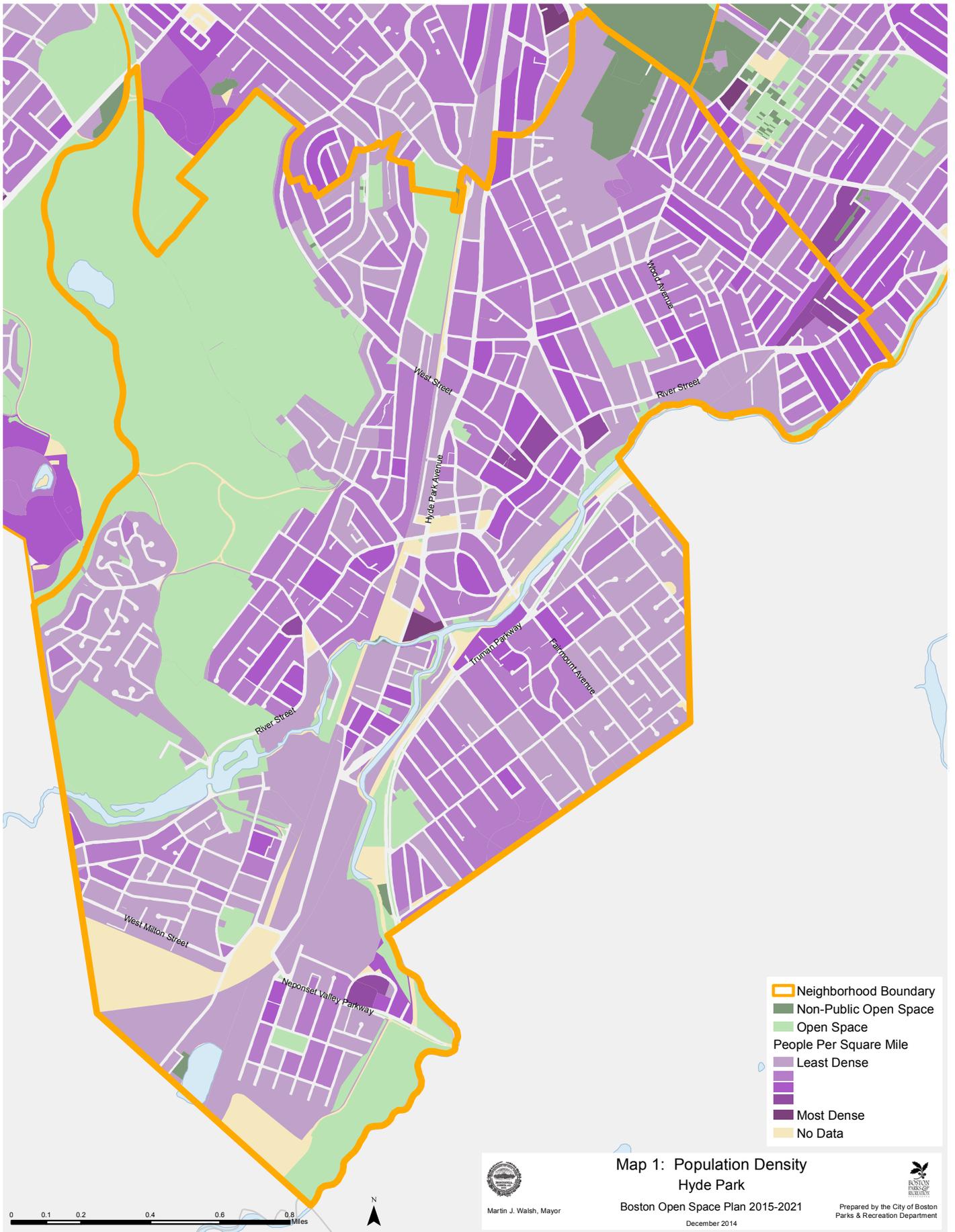
Source: American Community Survey 2006-2010; BRA Research Division Analysis

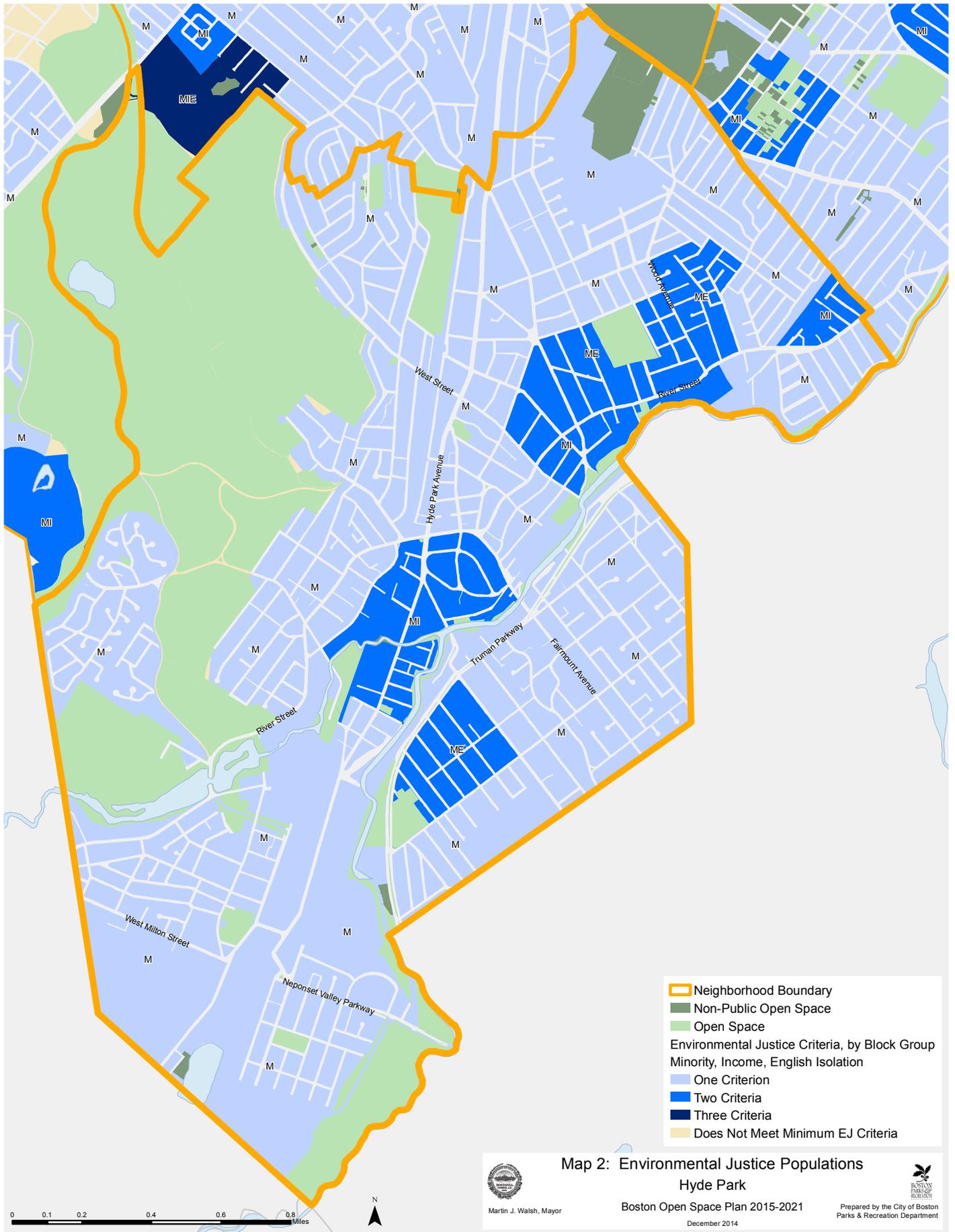
Population* with Disability	Persons	Percent of Population
Boston	72,390	11.6%
Hyde Park	3,441	10.2%

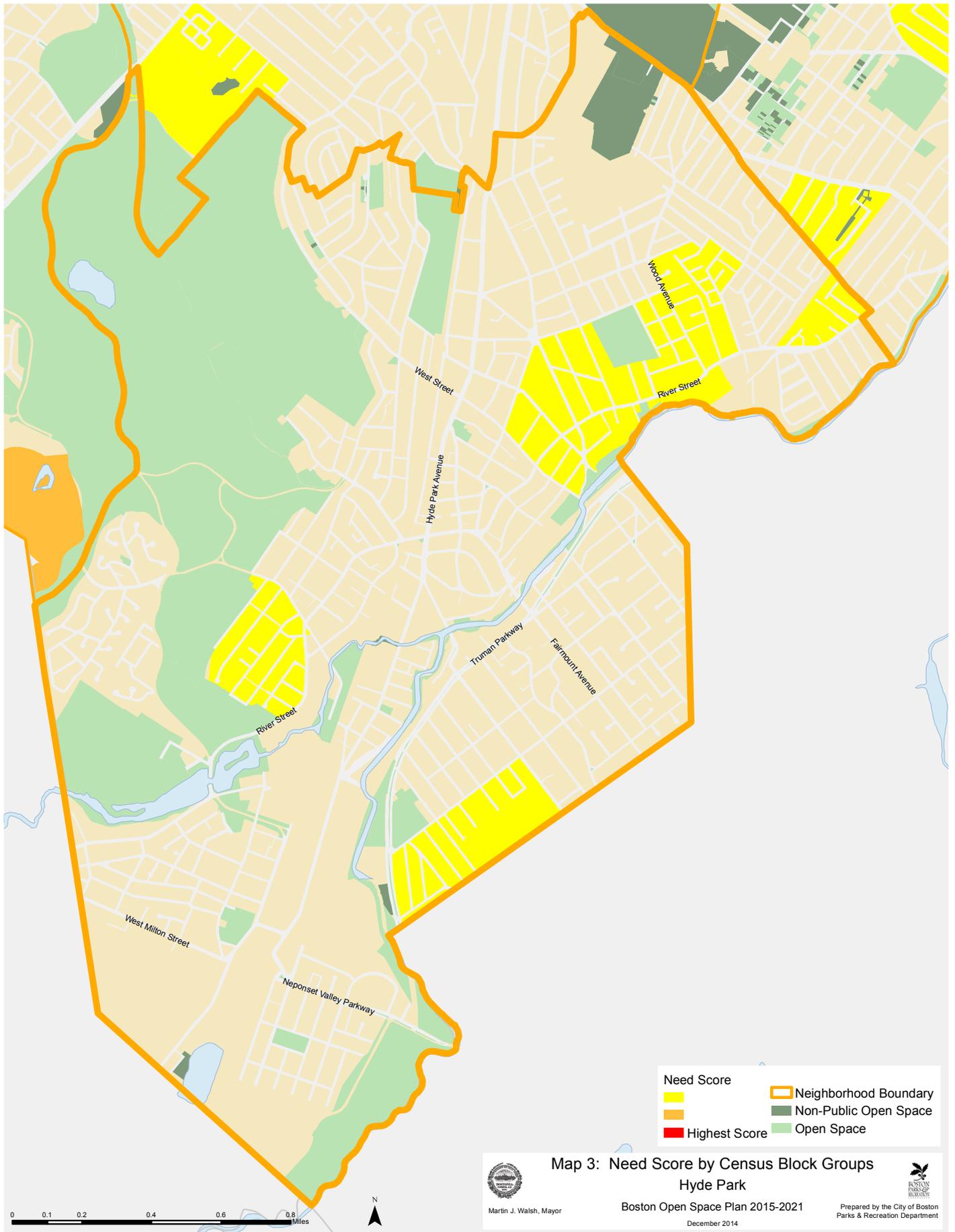
*Civilian Noninstitutionalized
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, BRA Research Division Analysis

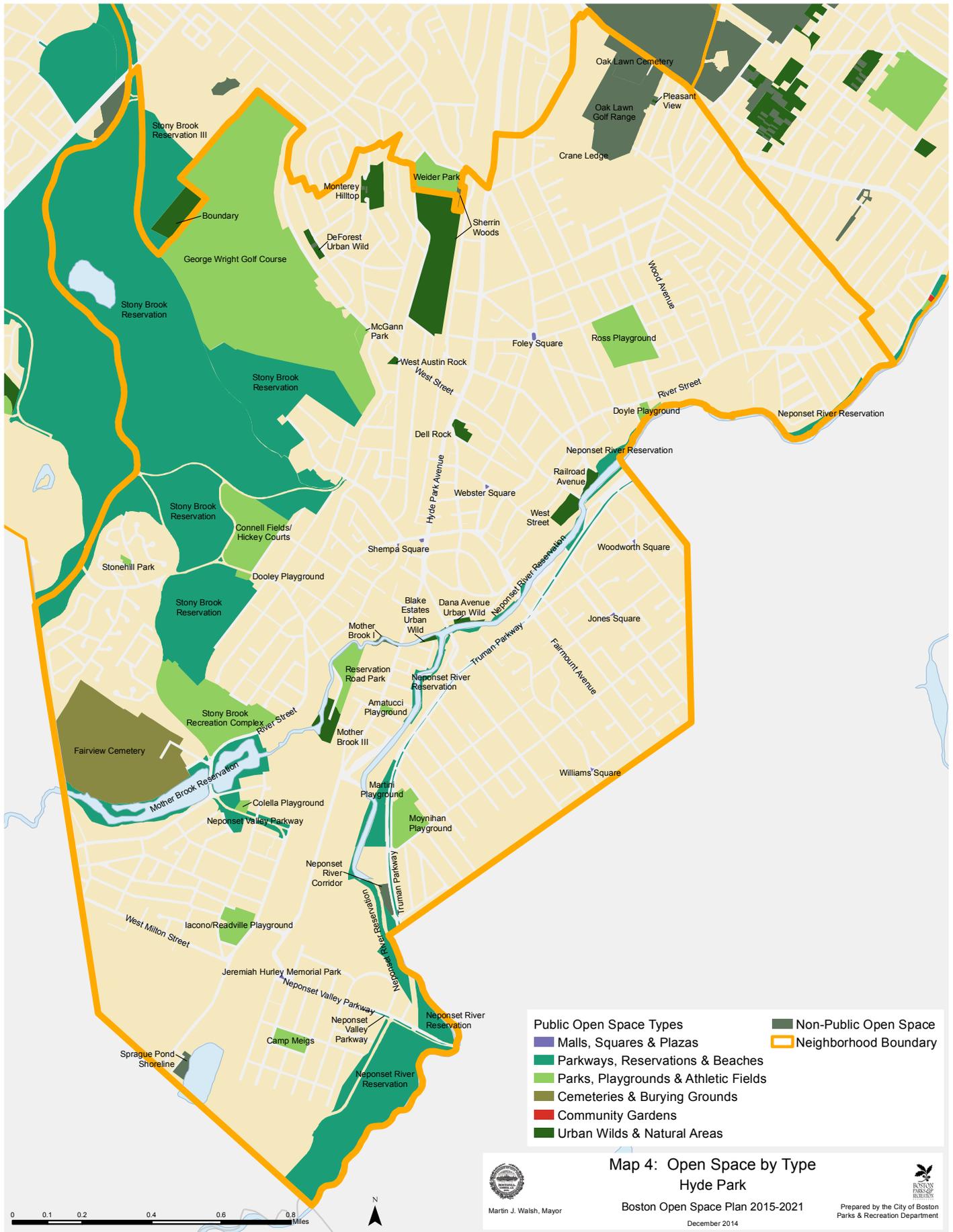
N.B.: "0%" means "less than 1%"

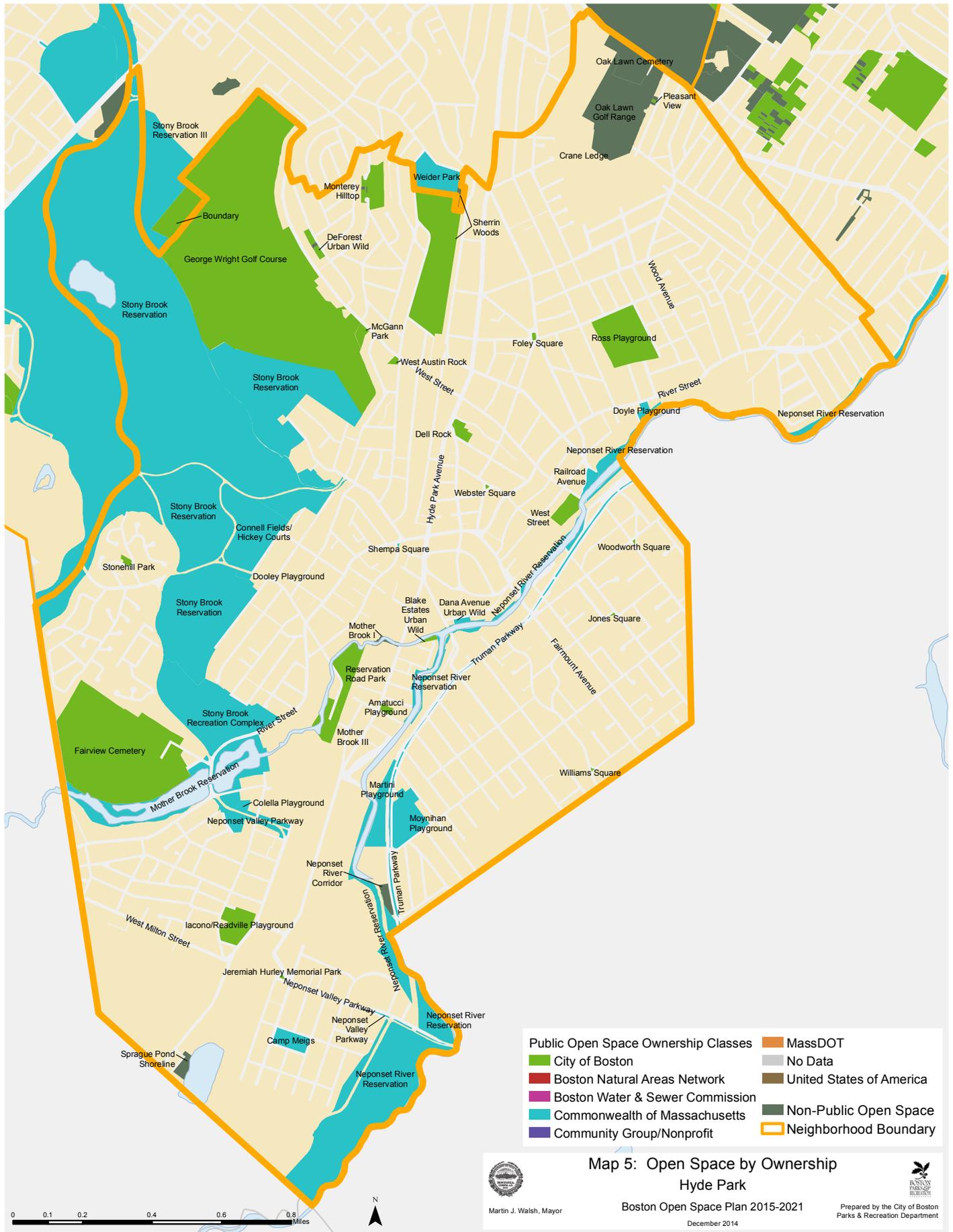
All Tables 2010 U.S. Decennial Census, unless otherwise noted











Public Open Space Ownership Classes	
■ City of Boston	 MassDOT
■ Boston Natural Areas Network	 No Data
■ Boston Water & Sewer Commission	 United States of America
■ Commonwealth of Massachusetts	 Non-Public Open Space
■ Community Group/Nonprofit	 Neighborhood Boundary

Map 5: Open Space by Ownership
Hyde Park

Boston Open Space Plan 2015-2021
December 2014

Martin J. Walsh, Mayor Prepared by the City of Boston
Parks & Recreation Department

