

## Section 7.2.9

**JAMAICA PLAIN**

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 secession of West Roxbury from the Town of Roxbury in 1851 included Jamaica Plain in the new town. In fact, what we now know as Jamaica Plain was the most urbanized area of the Town of West Roxbury. The village had developed along its earliest major streets, Centre Street and Washington Street (originally the Norfolk and Bristol Turnpike, opened in 1803). In the latter half of the 18th century, wealthy citizens built summer estates—such as Commodore Joshua Loring’s 1760 house on Centre Street—in what was even then known as scenic Jamaica Plain. Jamaica Pond was the major water source for Boston from 1795 to 1845.

The wholly bucolic character of Jamaica Plain began to change in 1834 when the Boston and Providence Railroad was built through the Stony Brook Valley. The combination of the Stony Brook’s waterpower and improved transportation access brought industrial development. Cottages for workers were built. Commuters to Boston were now able to live in Jamaica Plain as the farms and estates were subdivided for housing. By 1873, West Roxbury had voted to annex itself to Boston. With the extension of streetcar service from Roxbury to West Roxbury along Centre and Washington Streets after 1890, less affluent middle class commuters moved in, accelerating the subdivision of large tracts and tying the village’s fate further to that of Boston.

With the decrease in rural character in the mid-1800s, open space began to emerge as a means to help maintain the community’s desirable qualities. Even before the development of a formal park system, open space was designated. Forest Hills Cemetery, a rural cemetery modeled on Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, was consecrated in 1848. Benjamin Bussey gave 250 acres to Harvard University in 1842 for what became the Arnold Arboretum. Olmsted later designed the Arboretum to fit with the pastoral landscape style of the other Emerald Necklace parks.

When the Parks Department was established in 1875, its first report a year later identified Jamaica Pond as a key feature in parks for Boston. Jamaica Pond was developed as a park between 1894 and 1898. Other scenic lands of this area were preserved and incorporated into the system now known as the Emerald Necklace, providing an escape from the urban pressures of late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Open space has continued to be a defining neighborhood characteristic of Jamaica Plain. In more recent times, the completion of the new MBTA Orange Line in 1987 created the Southwest Corridor Park with 27 acres in Jamaica Plain. Open space, mass transit access, and relatively low-scaled tree-lined residential streets continue to attract new residents, but have put pressure on longtime lower-income and elderly residents to match the housing prices generated by the new demand. The ethnic, economic, and lifestyle mix of people, many with a strong sense of community, has continued to make Jamaica Plain one of Boston’s most vibrant neighborhoods.

**Open Space Access & Equity**

Between the Emerald Necklace parks and the Southwest Corridor, Jamaica Plain is blessed with open space acreage which averages 10.94 acres per thousand residents versus the 7.59 acres citywide average. Given the number of Jamaica Plain households owning no motor vehicles is 50.62%, a much higher percentage than for Boston as a whole (35.9%), this abundance of close-to-home open space gives Jamaica Plain strong livability advantages. Jamaica Plain’s population declined slightly between 2000 and 2010—though young adults continue to move into this desirable neighborhood. The population of children and teens is just under 19% whereas the 20–34 age bracket is 31.9%.

In addition to its well-designed public open spaces, private open space also contributes to the character of the neighborhood, including Allandale Farm and various school campuses on the western edge of the neighborhood and cemetery properties to the east. Jamaica Plain is also punctuated with small neighborhood parks, squares, and twenty community gardens, which contribute to the character of this diverse neighborhood (Jamaica Plain Map 4).

Population density in Jamaica Plain varies; there are high-density areas in Jackson Square, Egleston Square, and Hyde Square, and low-density single family neighborhoods in Moss Hill and the Woodbourne area. About half of the neighborhood meets at least one of the State’s criteria for environmental justice populations and only a few pockets—notably the Jackson Square and Egleston Square areas - are identified as high need for park access based on these demographic factors (Jamaica Plain Maps 1, 2 and 3).

Due to the primarily passive nature of the Emerald Necklace Parks, most active park facilities in Jamaica Plain are centered along the Southwest Corridor which cuts through the center of the neighborhood. This configuration works well for facilities access, as the Southwest Corridor is a linked system of parks. Residents who live west of Centre Street have only the Brewer-Burroughs Tot Lot within close proximity, but this is mitigated by the direct access to the Arboretum and Jamaica Pond parks this neighborhood is afforded (Jamaica Plain Map 7). Most court facilities—tennis and basketball—are also located along, or just off, the Southwest Corridor parks. Athletic fields are more dispersed throughout the neighborhood (Jamaica Plain Map 8).

Community and civic facilities are located along Centre and Washington Streets, which are also the commercial routes for the neighborhood. The Southwest Corridor is located in between these two streets and all of these corridors come together in Forest Hills.

As expected, park access in Jamaica Plain is widespread and evenly distributed. The Moss Hill neighborhood has areas with very limited walkable access to City of Boston parks, but is in close proximity to the Town of Brookline’s largest park, Larz Anderson. The Woodbourne sub-neighborhood on the border with Roslindale and close to Forest Hills also has less access than elsewhere. This is due in part to the barrier of Hyde Park Avenue, which offers limited crossing points, and is only slightly

improved by the single-use facilities at Pagel Playground. Connectivity of this sub-neighborhood to Forest Hills, especially as Forest Hills undergoes redevelopment, would facilitate access to the open space opportunities along the Southwest Corridor that most of the rest of Jamaica Plain already enjoys (Jamaica Plain Map 10).

## Future Development

Recent City planning efforts for Jamaica Plain include the South Huntington Corridor Study which seeks to manage the change from an institutional district to a residential district. Public realm improvements are discussed including how new residential developments will relate visually and physically to the Jamaicaaway and Olmsted Park.

Community planning staff at the BRA anticipate a similar planning study for the Washington Street/Stony Brook corridor where light industrial zoned land is slated for residential proposals due to market forces. The removal of the Casey Overpass has informed the re-design of the public realm in the Forest Hills station area and offers possibilities for improved access to open space upon completion of this major transportation project.

The Centre and South Street Study proposes a series of improvements to this corridor which is anchored by two state owned open spaces—the Arborway and the Southwest Corridor Park—and possesses two key nodes held by the Parks Department, Hyde (Mahoney) Square and Monument Square. As incremental projects are developed, the Parks Department will provide guidance for its squares so as to retain their place-making qualities in this corridor.

At the Southwest Corridor Park end of this streetscape corridor, the city has been engaged with the community in a planning effort to develop guidelines for development at Jackson Square. In addition to housing and commercial uses, the development proposal created in response to these guidelines calls for an indoor recreation center and outdoor gathering spaces and protection of the Southwest Corridor Park from negative development impacts.

Another BRA planning effort has also taken place in the southern end of Centre and South Street corridor, the Forest Hills Improvement Initiative. This work has generated guidelines for development of underutilized parcels held by the MBTA and private owners in the vicinity of the Forest Hill transit center. Open space-oriented goals are to encourage family/child-oriented recreation in the residential developments, and to create area improvements to pedestrian and bicycle access that will not only benefit commuters but also users of the nearby major open spaces such as the Arboretum and Franklin Park. Some of the MBTA parcels have already been built under these guidelines.

## Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile

### JAMAICA PLAIN

Population	
2010 Census	37,468
2000 Census	38,176
<b>Population Growth/Decline, 2000–2010</b>	<b>-1.9%</b>

Population Density		Persons per Acre
2010 Census		14.4
2000 Census		14.7
<b>Density Change, 2000–2010</b>		<b>-0.3</b>

Age	Persons	Percent of Population
0 to 9	3,851	10%
10 to 19	3,234	9%
20 to 34	11,936	32%
35 to 54	10,295	27%
55 to 64	4,145	11%
65 and over	4,007	11%

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%
Jamaica Plain	37,806	1,866	5.5%	4.9%

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

Race/Ethnicity/Latino Status	Persons	Percent of Population
White alone	20,070	54%
Hispanic or Latino	9,464	25%
Black or African American alone	5,038	13%
Asian alone	1,665	4%
Other	1,231	3%

Median Household Income
\$66,361

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

Percent of Households by Number of Vehicles Available	
No vehicles	24%
1 vehicle	50%
2 vehicles	23%
3 or more vehicles	3%

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

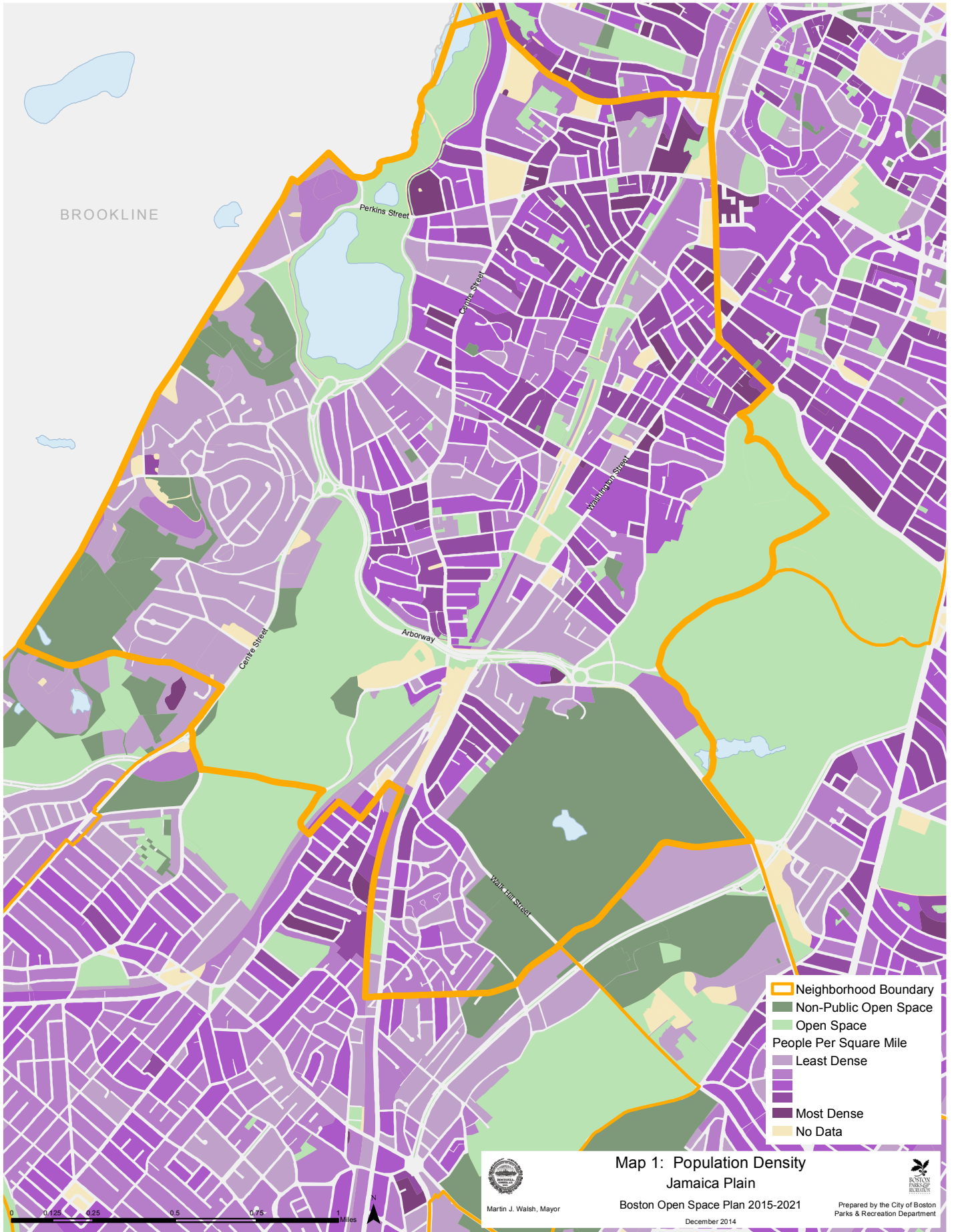
Population* with Disability	Persons	Percent of Population
Boston	72,390	11.6%
Jamaica Plain	3,525	9.4%

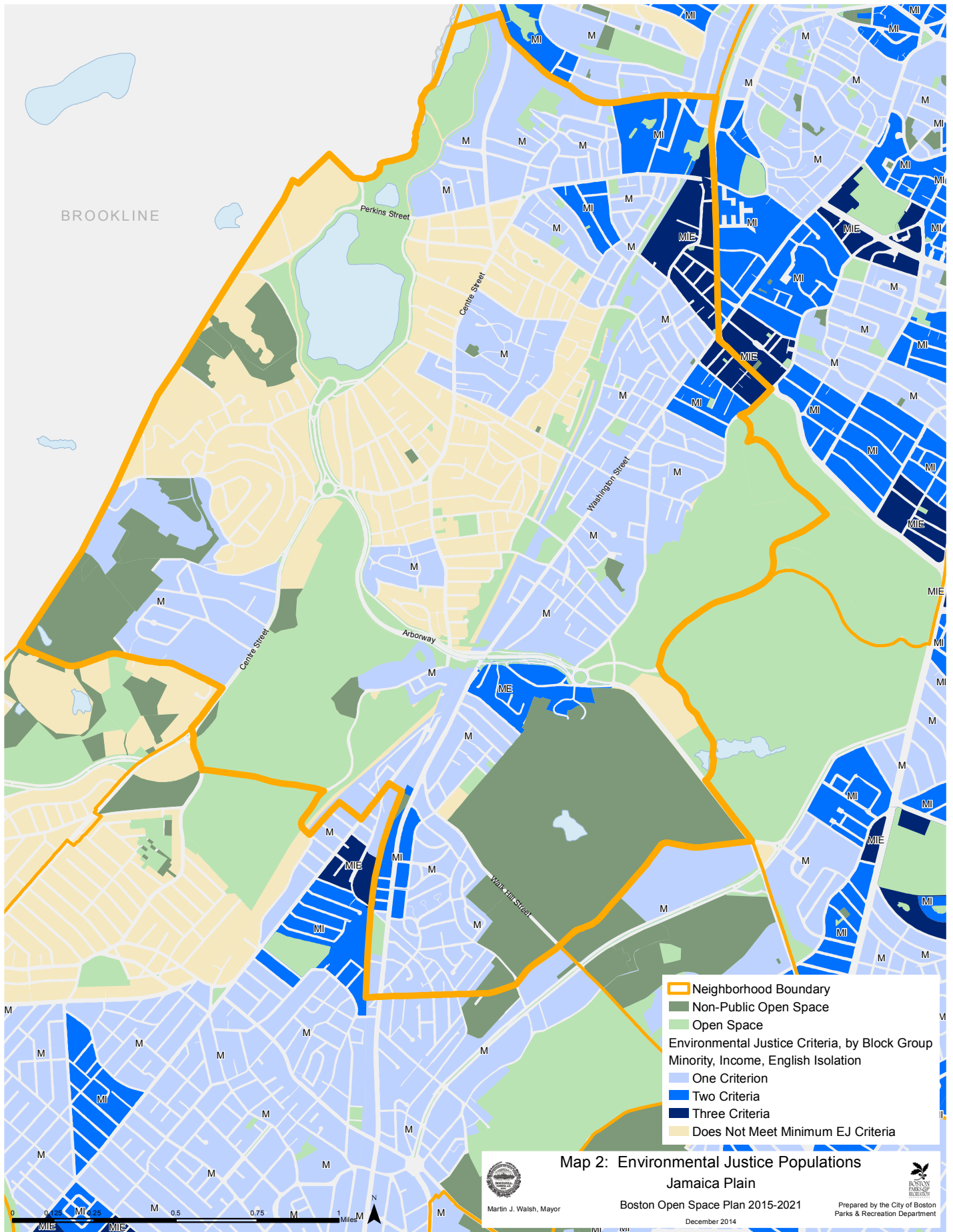
\*Civilian Noninstitutionalized

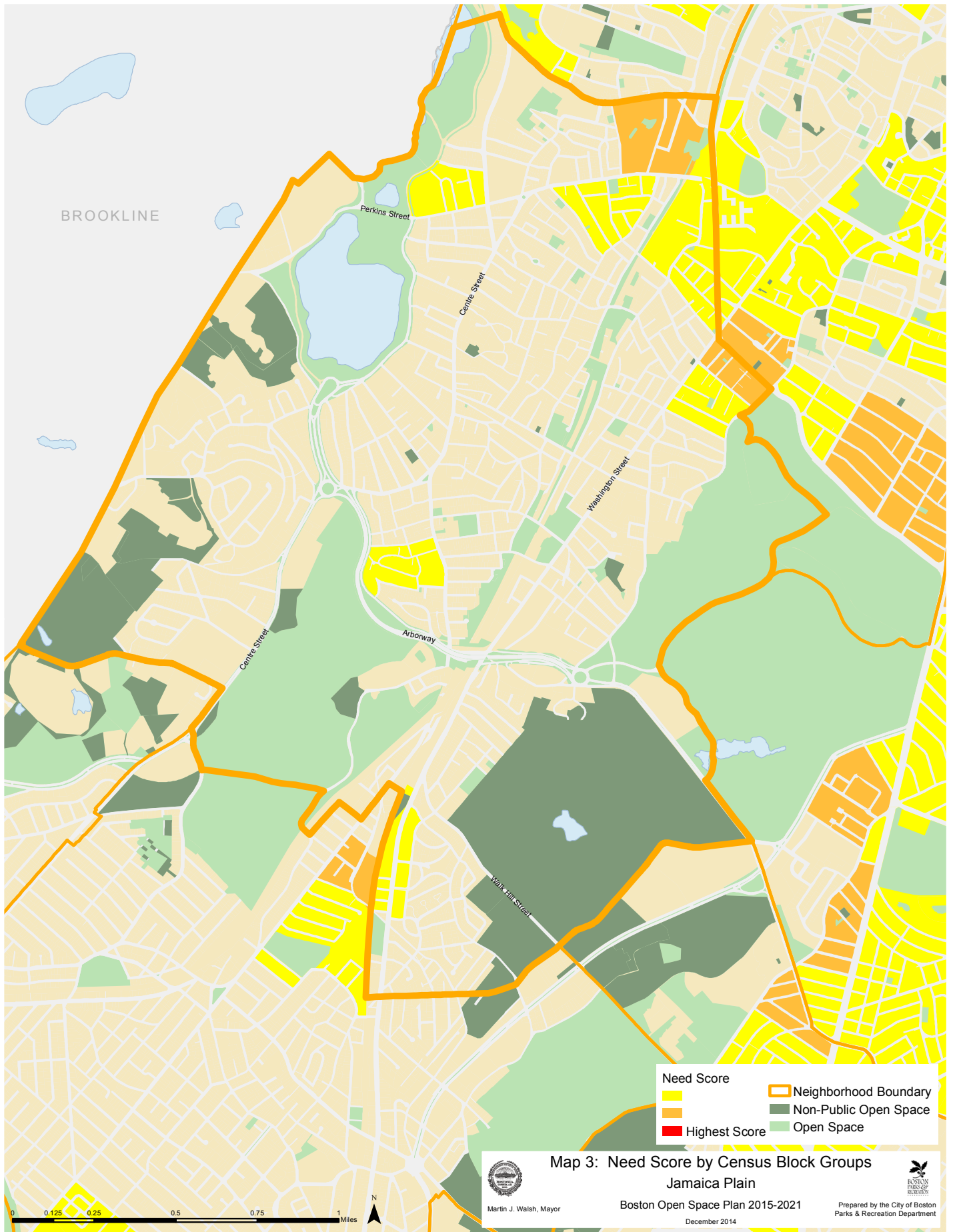
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 American Community Survey, BRA Research Division Analysis

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

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





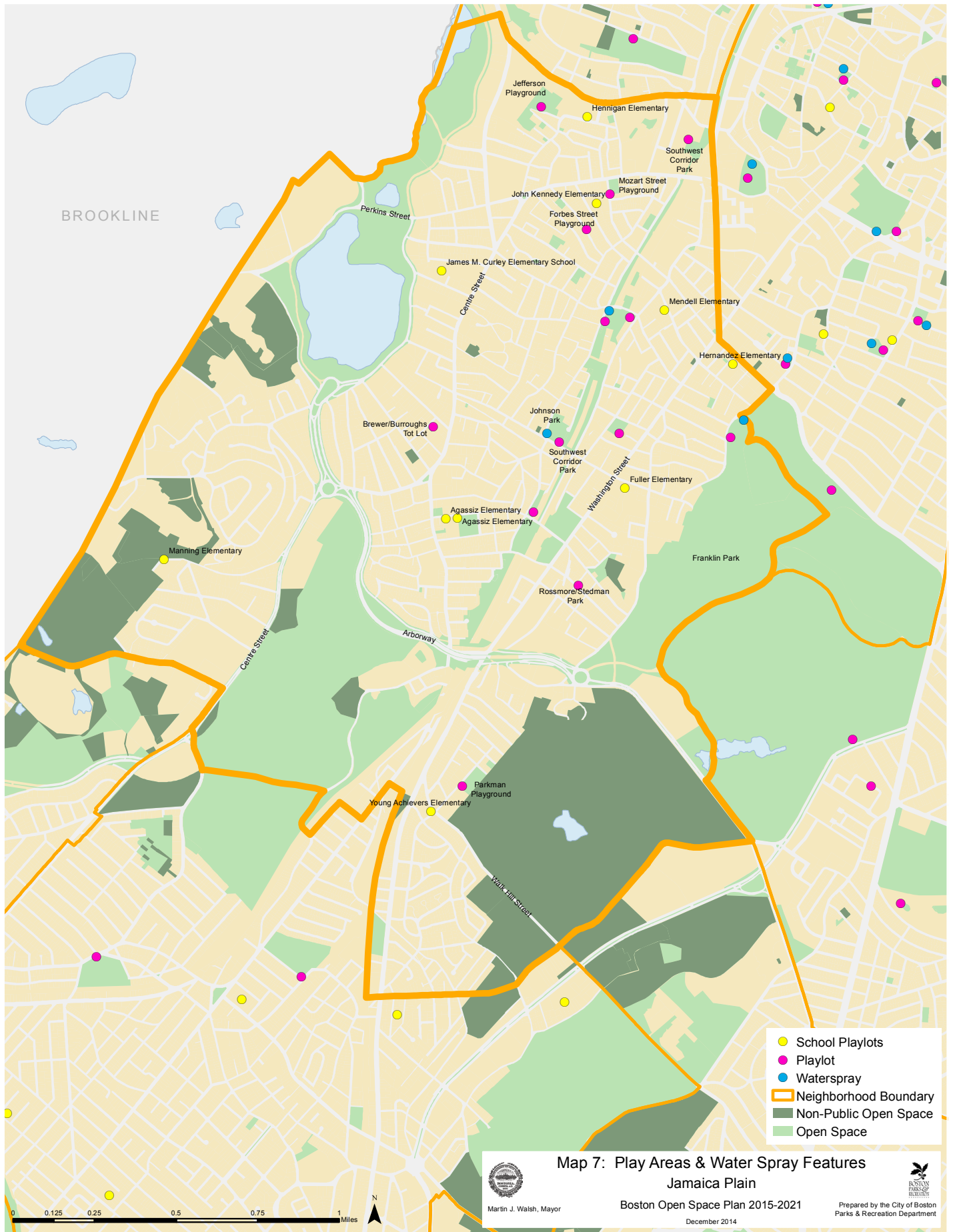


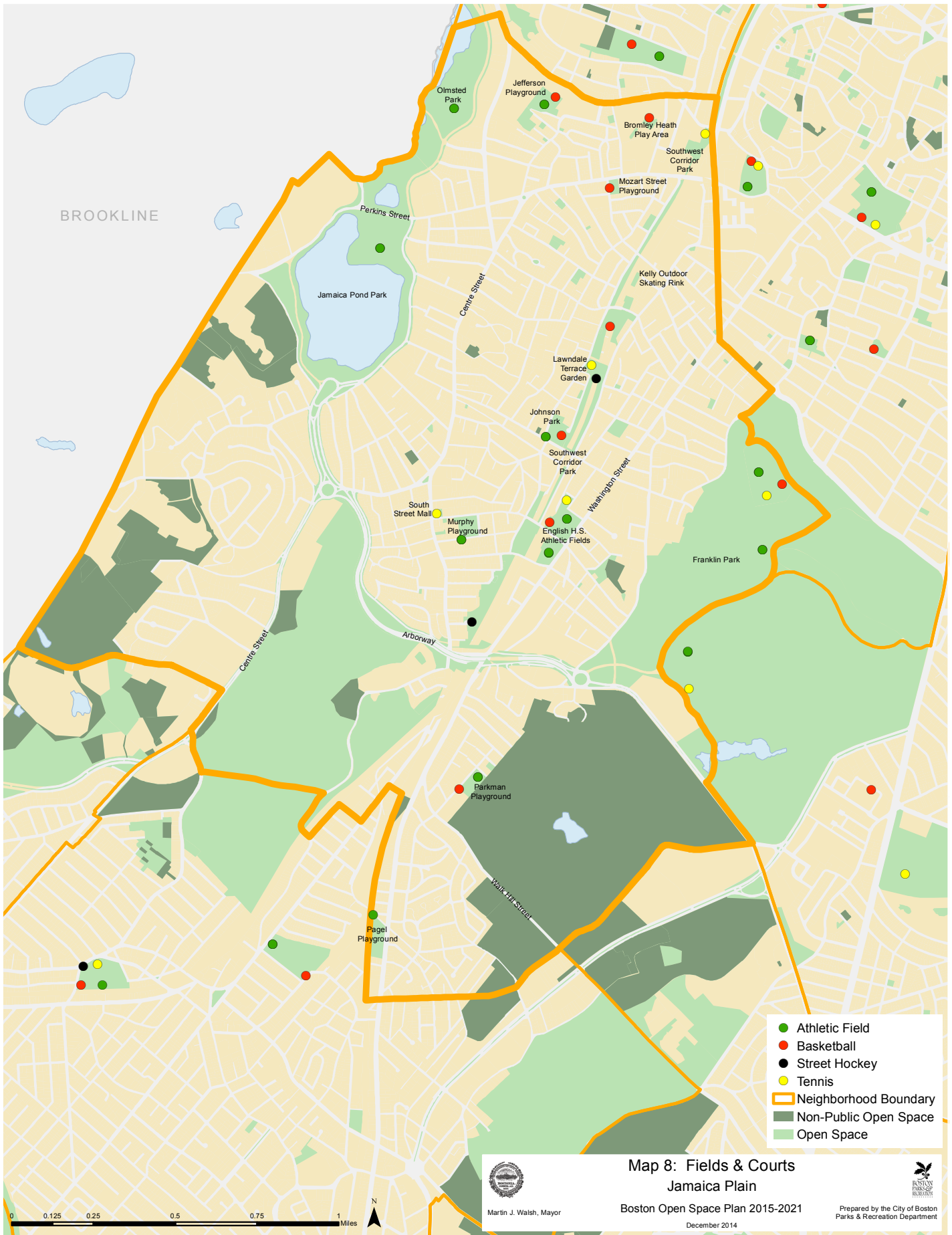












**Map 8: Fields & Courts**  
**Jamaica Plain**  
 Boston Open Space Plan 2015-2021  
 December 2014

Martin J. Walsh, Mayor

Prepared by the City of Boston  
 Parks & Recreation Department

