
Open Space Plan 2015-2021

Section 7

Analysis of Needs

Section 7.2.9 Community Open Space
& Recreation
JAMAICA PLAIN

DRAFT

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Community Open Space & Recreation

JAMAICA PLAIN

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

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

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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 on the farms and estates 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 developed. 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 19th century.

With the completion of the new MBTA Orange Line in 1987, the opening of the Southwest Corridor Park (27 acres in Jamaica Plain), and the reinvestment represented by new homebuyers of houses and condominium conversions, Jamaica Plain in the 1980s became a very desirable neighborhood in which to live. Open space, mass transit access, and relatively low-scaled tree-lined residential streets

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continued to attract new residents in the 1990s through to the current decade, but has put pressure on long-time lower-income and elderly residents to match the housing prices generated by the new demand. Yet 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.

Analysis

With convenient bus, subway, and commuter rail access, low-scaled residential areas mixed with commercial corridors and sub-areas, and a love of nature expressed whether in tending small yard spaces and community gardens, or by supporting the legacy of well-designed public open spaces, a lively mix of people has made Jamaica Plain their neighborhood of choice.

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%. 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 7.64 acres city-wide average. Given the number of Jamaica Plain households owning no motor vehicles is 50.62%, a much higher percentage than for Boston (35.9%), this abundance of close-to-home open space gives Jamaica Plain strong livability advantages.

Private open space also contributes to the character of the neighborhood, with Allandale Farm and various school campuses on the western edge of the neighborhood and Forest Hills Cemetery and St. Michael's Cemetery 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

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Square areas - are identified as high need for park access based on these demographic factors (Jamaica Plain Maps 1, 2 & 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 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, and as a whole, this neighborhood has a fairly high proportion of athletic fields (Jamaica Plain Map 8).

Community and civic facilities are strung 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 Ave, 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 can readily enjoy (Jamaica Plain Map 10).

Recent City planning efforts for Jamaica Plain include the South Huntington Corridor Study ("Framework for Future Development Review") 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 Jamaica Way and Olmsted Park.

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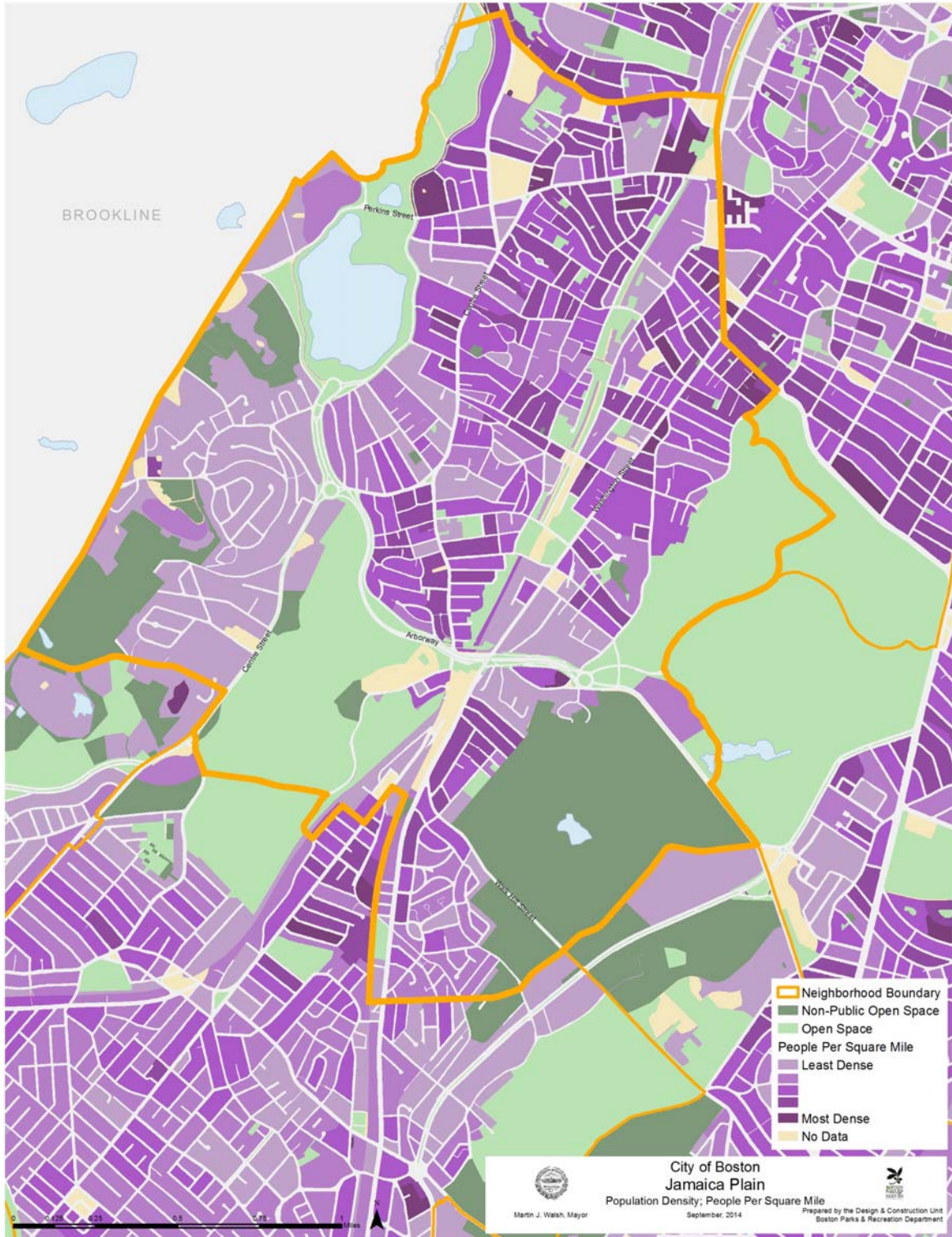
Community planning staff at the BRA anticipate a similar planning study for the Washington Street/Stony Brook corridor where much light industrial zoned land is sited for residential proposals due to market forces. With the changes in the nearby Arborway bus yard due to the MADOT plan to replace the Arborway overpass with an at-grade option, this re-design of the public realm in the Forest Hills station area offers possibilities for more open space here and improved accessibility to that open space.

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 its place-making qualities in this corridor.

At the Southwest Corridor Park end of this streetscape corridor, the city has been engaged in a planning effort at Jackson Square. The BRA's Jackson Square Planning Initiative has been worked with the community to develop guidelines for development at this key node. In addition to housing and commercial uses, the development proposal created in response to these guidelines calls for an indoor recreation center and outdoor recreation areas such as a plaza and a landscaped path, while not causing negative impacts to the Southwest Corridor Park.

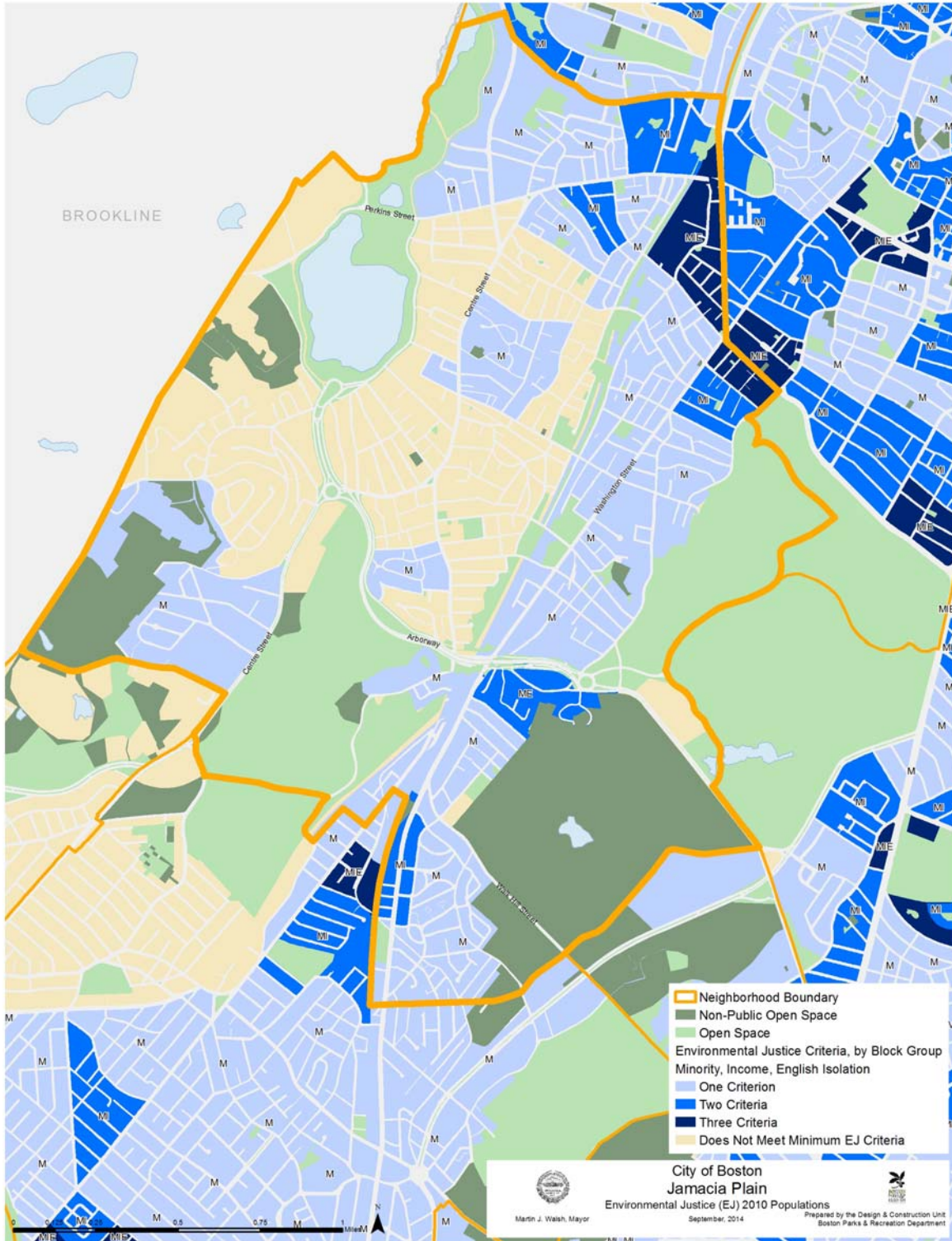
Another BRA planning effort has also taken place in the southern end of Centre and South Street corridor, the Forest Hills Improvement Initiative. This work has generated guidelines for development of underutilized parcels held by the MBTA and private owners in the vicinity of the Forest Hill transit 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.

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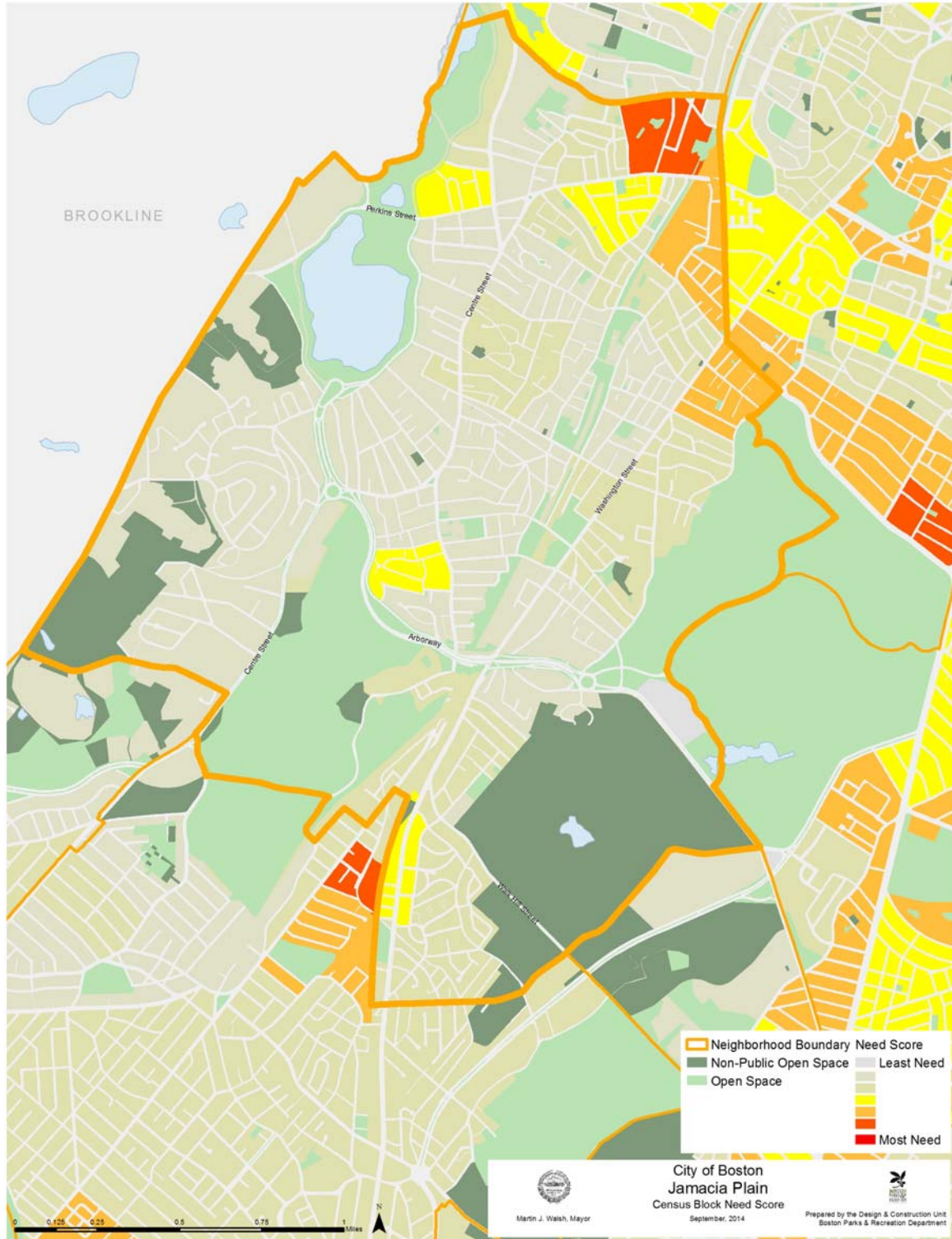
Map 1: Population Density, Jamaica Plain

Needs Analysis



Map 2: Environmental Justice Populations, Jamaica Plain

Needs Analysis



Map 3: Need Score by Census Block Groups, Jamaica Plain

Needs Analysis



Map 4: Open Space by Type, Jamaica Plain

Needs Analysis



Map 5: Open Space by Ownership, Jamaica Plain

Needs Analysis



Map 6: Open Space by Protection Status, Jamaica Plain

Needs Analysis



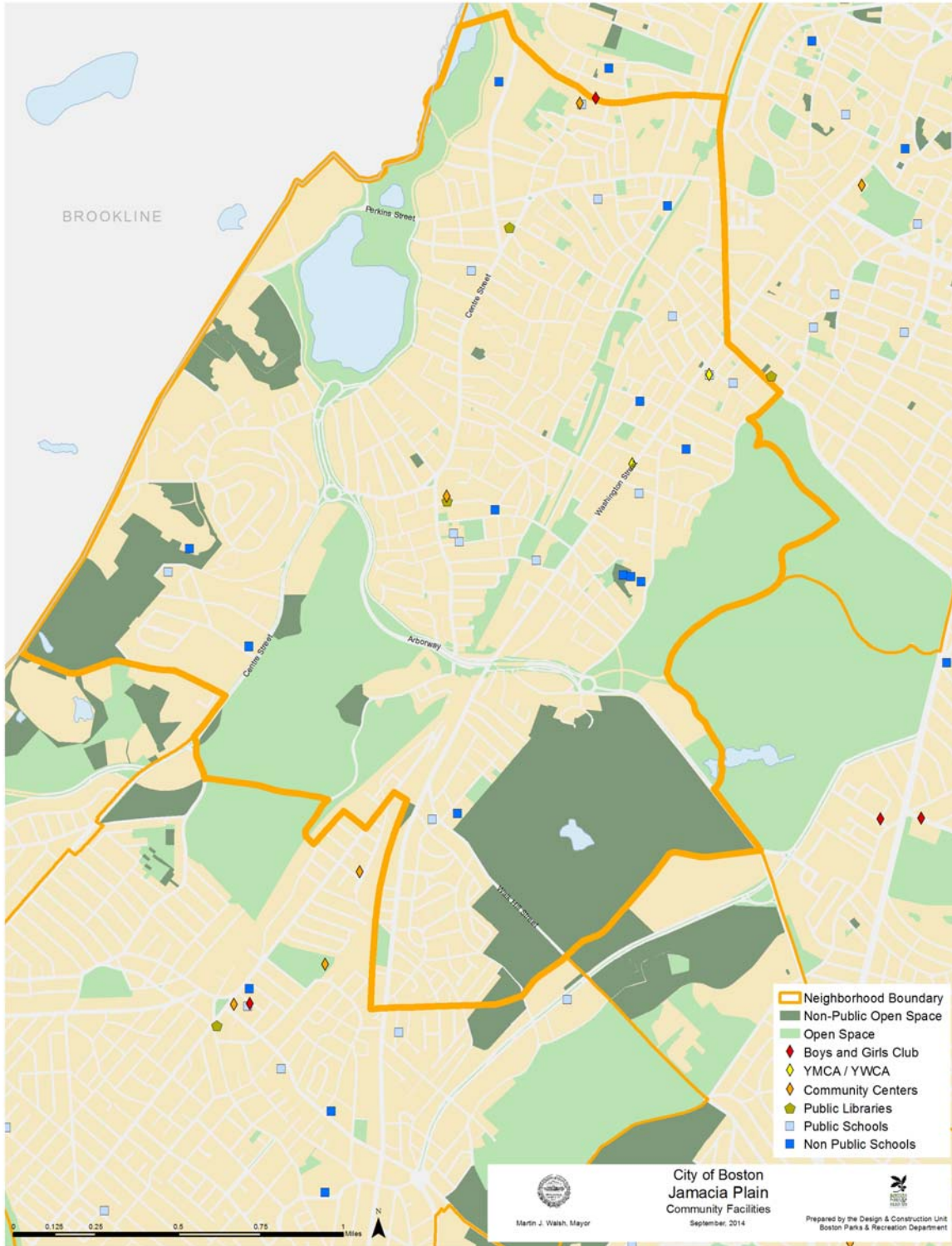
Map 7: Play Areas and Water Spray Features, Jamaica Plain

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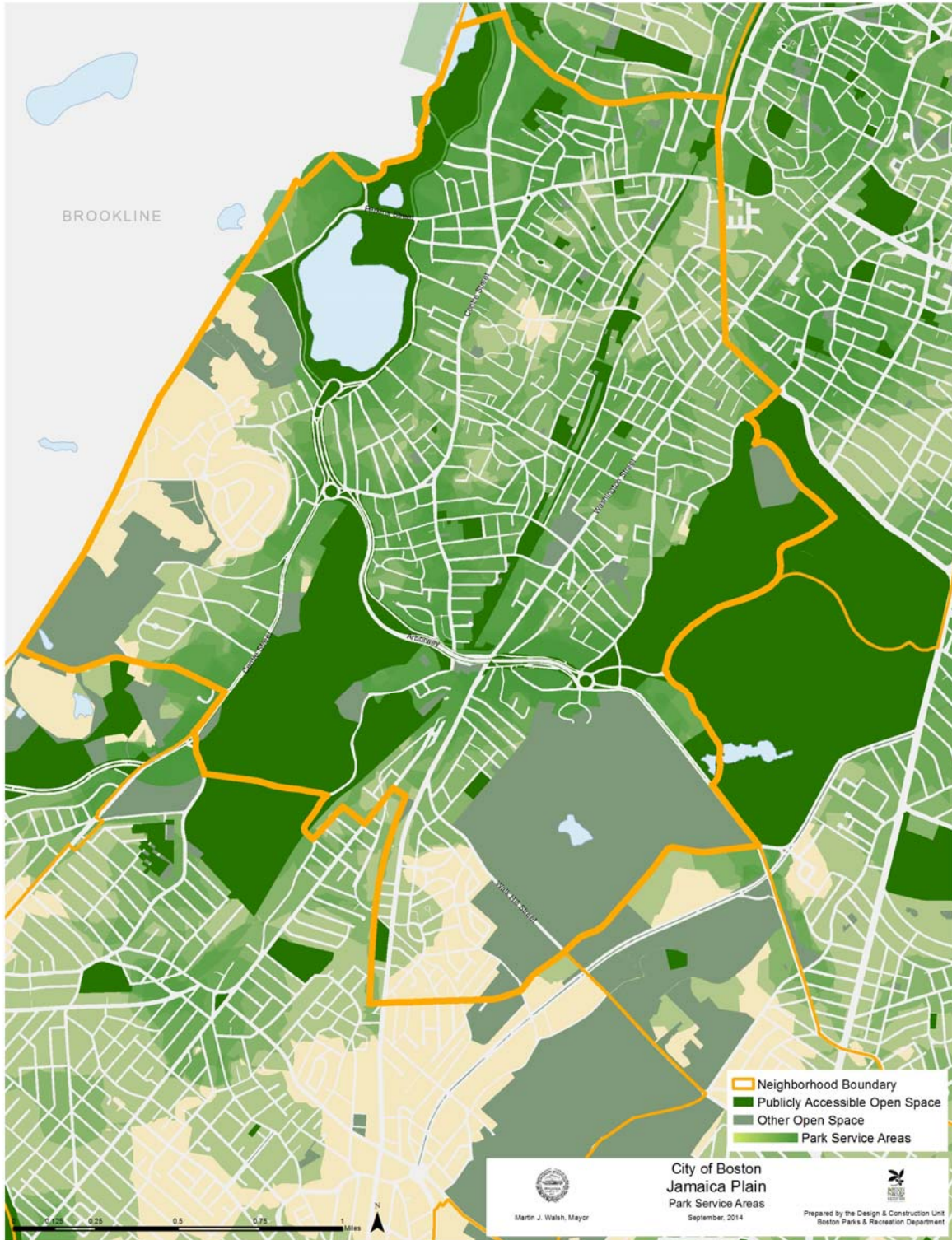


Map 8: Fields and Courts, Jamaica Plain

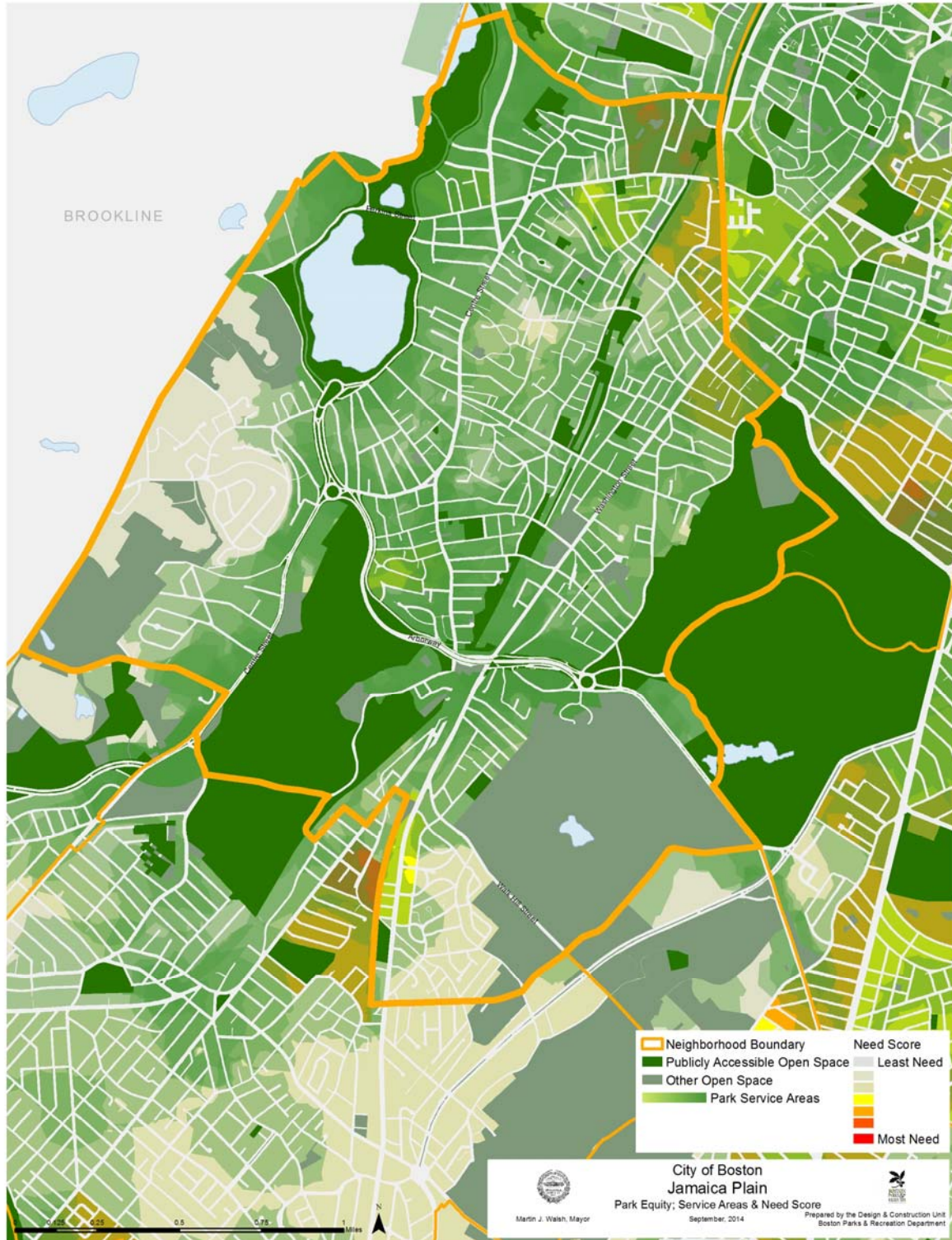
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Map 9: Community Facilities, Jamaica Plain



Map 10: Park Service Areas, Jamaica Plain



Map 11: Park Equity: Service Areas and Need Scores, Jamaica Plain

Needs Analysis

Population	
2010 Census	37,468
2000 Census	38,176
Population growth/decline, 2000-2010	-1.9%

Age		
Under 9	3,851	10.3%
10-19	3,234	8.6%
20-34	11,936	31.9%
35-54	10,295	27.5%
55-64	4,145	11.1%
65 and over	4,007	10.7%

Race		% of Total Population
White Alone		53.6%
Black or African American alone		13.4%
Asian Alone		4.4%
Other		3.3%

Latino Status		% of Total Population
Not Hispanic or Latino		
Hispanic or Latino		25.3%

Population Density		Persons Per Acre
2010 Census		14.4

Median Household Income
\$73,278

Household by Number of Vehicles Available	
No Vehicle	23.7%
1 vehicle	50.2%
2 vehicles	23.0%
3 or more vehicles	3.2%