

PART 3

**COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE &
RECREATION MISSION**

The Neighborhoods

Allston-Brighton

Back Bay/Beacon Hill

Central Boston

Charlestown

Dorchester

East Boston

Fenway/Kenmore

Hyde Park

Jamaica Plain

Mattapan

Roslindale

Roxbury

South Boston

South End

West Roxbury



PART 3 • COMMUNITY OPEN SPACE & RECREATION MISSION

THE NEIGHBORHOODS:

Roslindale

THE SETTING

History

Roslindale became part of Boston through the 1873 annexation of West Roxbury. While its boundaries are a subject of dispute, its heart is distinct: Roslindale Square. This distinctiveness derives from its history as a classic streetcar suburb. Until the late 1800s extension of mass transit to Roslindale Square, this area was a rural community. The railroad and streetcar made it a garden suburb. Washington Street, running through Roslindale Square, is the commercial spine of Roslindale.

Roslindale Square has received a National Trust for Historic Preservation “Main Street” award. It is the model that inspired Boston’s citywide Main Streets Program. This program seeks to revitalize local neighborhood business districts as a countervailing trend to suburban sprawl and the accompanying loss of historic and scenic character in the city and the countryside. Thanks to funding from the City of Boston for site remediation, a new privately-owned supermarket was recently built in Roslindale Square, an “anchor store” that has helped boost business fortunes in the Square and improved popular perceptions of Roslindale.

New stores and boutiques have since moved into the Square due in part to the 1990s economic boom, but also in reaction to the rise in commercial rents in other parts of the city such as the South End and Jamaica Plain. The late 1990s also saw a spike in home sales in Roslindale, resulting in part from rising home prices in Jamaica Plain, good proximity to public transportation, and the increasing attractiveness and responsiveness of the Roslindale Square business district.

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DEMOGRAPHICS/HOUSING

After population increased in the 1950s and the 1960s, the 1970s saw a precipitous drop in Roslindale’s population. The population then held steady during the 1980s – the 1990 census shows a 1% increase in the population since 1980. The 1990s saw a dramatic 5% increase, from 32,959 in the 1990 census to 34,618 in the 2000 census.

Roslindale Demographic and Housing Profile

POPULATION

1990 Census	32,959
2000 Census	34,618
1980 Census	32,626
Population Growth/Decline, 1990-2000	5.03%
Population Growth/Decline, 1980-1990	1.02%

Roslindale’s age distribution closely approximates Boston’s. Where differences lie are in the 18-24 age range, where Roslindale has 10% share versus Boston’s 18% share; and in the 0-4 age range, where Roslindale has an 8% share versus Boston’s 6% share. The 2000 census shows Roslindale with a 23% share in the under 18 age range versus Boston with a 20% share.

Racially, Roslindale has been predominantly white, but with significant increases in the black and Hispanic portions of the population during the 1980s and 1990s. Given the 2000 Census

AGE

2000 Census		
0-17 years	8,049	23%
18 and over	26,569	77%
1990 Census		
0-4 years	2,621	8%
5-9 years	1,989	6%
10-14 years	1,541	5%
15-17 years	980	3%
18-20 years	1,057	3%
21-24 years	2,160	7%
25-29 years	3,802	12%
30-34 years	3,742	11%
35-44 years	4,742	14%
45-54 years	2,546	8%
55-59 years	1,232	4%
60-64 years	1,387	4%
65-74 years	2,325	7%
75-84 years	1,663	5%
85 years and over	1,032	3%
Average Age (1990 Census)	36.9	

SOCIO-ECONOMIC/HOUSING/DENSITY

Population 16 Years and Older, by Employment Status	
(1990 Census)	%
Employed in armed forces	0
Employed civilians	63
Unemployed civilians	4
Not in labor force	33
Median Household Income (1990 Census)	\$34,469
Occupied Units Ownership	
(1990 Census)	% Units
Owner occupied	46
Renter occupied	54
Number of Year Round Units in Structure	
(1990 Census)	% Units
Single units	30
Double units	28
3-9 units	29
10-19 units	6
20-49 units	2
50 or more units	3
All other	2
Single/Multiple Unit Ratio	0.44

Households by Age and Poverty Status

(1990 Census)	% Households
Above poverty, under age 65	68
Above poverty, age 65 and over	22
Below poverty, under age 65	7
Below poverty, age 65 and over	3

Household by Number of Vehicles

(1990 Census)	% Households
No vehicles	23
1 vehicles	42
2 or more vehicles	35

Population Density

	Persons per Square Mile
1980 Census	8,075.9
1990 Census	8,095.4
Density Change 1980 to 1990	19.5

RACE	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census
White	29,569 91%	25,494 77%	19,317 56%
Black	1,184 4%	2,590 8%	5,667 16%
Hispanic	1,173 4%	3,761 11%	6,904 20%
Asian or Pacific Islander	452 1%	1,015 3%	1,346 4%
Other	248 1%	99 less than 1%	1,384 4%

figures, its racial/ethnic diversity is now quite comparable to that of the city as a whole.

Most of the population resides in family households (65% of all households versus 51% for Boston). Fewer households were in poverty status as compared to Boston (10% versus 17%, respectively), and median household income was higher in Roslindale than in Boston, \$34,469 compared with Boston's \$29,180. Labor force participation among persons aged 16 years and older was larger (63%) than for Boston (61%), and Roslindale had a lower (4%) unemployment rate than Boston's (6%).

Nearly 60% of Roslindale's housing stock are one- and two-family dwellings versus 30% for Boston. These often have backyards, sometimes sizable. As expected in this suburban neighborhood, only 23% of households have no vehicles available, as compared to 38% of all of Boston's households.

HOUSEHOLDS

Households	
1990 Census	12,101
1980 Census	11,736
Household Growth/Decline, 1980-1990	3.11%

Population by Household Type	
(1990 Census)	% Persons
Family households	79%
Non-family households	17%
Group quarters	4%

Households w/ One or More Persons Under 18 Years		
(1990 Census)	Households	%
All households	12,150	100%
No One under 18	8,269	68%
One or more under 18	3,881	32%

Households with Children by Type	
(1990 Census)	%
Married couple families	66
Other family, male head	4
Other family, female head	30
Non-family	less than 1

Persons in Households		
(1990 Census)	Households	%
1 person households	3,121	26
2 person households	3,736	31
3 person households	2,165	18
4 person households	1,679	14
5 or more person hshlds	1,400	12
Average Persons per Household (1990 Census)		2.61

Family Type	
(1990 Census)	% Families
Married couple	67
Other family, male head	7
Other family, female head	26
Families as a % of All Households	65%

THE OPEN SPACE SYSTEM TODAY

Equity and Investment

Roslindale has a total of 919 acres in its open space inventory of parks, playgrounds, squares, community gardens, cemeteries, and malls, 498 acres of which are protected. These 919 acres constitutes the second largest total open space acreage (both protected and unprotected) for a Boston neighborhood. Blessed with a great variety and quality of open spaces, Roslindale has a protected open space ratio of 14.37 acres per thousand persons, well above the city ratio of 7.43.

The City of Boston invested \$1.7 million in improving open space and recreation facilities in Roslindale from 1993 to 2000 (see table below). The most significant capital project in Roslindale during this period occurred at the 2.7-acre Pagel Playground. This was a 1.5-acre abandoned MDC playground that was to be part of the right-of-way for the proposed I-95 Southwest Corridor Extension. With the demise of the highway extension proposal in the 1970s, this particular parcel lay fallow alongside a vacant 1.2-acre private lot. Given the tremendous growth in soccer participation throughout the city and especially in southwestern Boston and the Forest Hills area, and perceiving these undeveloped parcels as a potential opportunity, the Department responded to the demand for a new soccer-oriented park. The Department asked the state to transfer the abandoned MDC property to the city. Then the Department bought the adjacent private parcel and developed the park with city capital funds and a \$544,000 state Urban Self-Help grant.

In addition, the Department also installed at Pagel a small-sided, artificial turf soccer practice facility – a “sport court.” The 1994 World Cup donated this “sport court” as a token of thanks to Boston, one of the host cities for World Cup events.

This project represents a couple of important “firsts” for the Department. The 1.2-acre acquisition was the first time in decades that the Parks Department had purchased private land for its inventory, marking the beginning of a new era in the Department’s development. The other first is that the new Pagel Playground is the first public recreation facility in Boston built specifically for soccer.

**CAPITAL PROJECTS 1993-2000/
ROSLINDALE**

Adams-King Park	\$ 306,000
Fallon Field	\$ 286,728
Healy Playground	\$ 52,000
Mt. Hope Cemetery	\$ 14,400
Pagel Playground	\$ 912,621
George Wright Golf Course	\$ 100,000
Total	\$ 1,671,749

Assessment

Surrounded by Green

While its acknowledged boundaries are not distinct, the Roslindale planning district is bounded by expansive open spaces. To the east are the large institutional campus of Boston State Hospital and several large cemeteries such as Forest Hills and Mount Hope; to the north, the Arnold Arboretum and the Walter Street Tract; to the west, West Roxbury Parkway; and to the south, George Wright Golf Course and parts of the Stony Brook Reservation. Except for the Arnold Arboretum and the George Wright Golf Course, both essentially passive landscaped parks, these spaces mainly serve as a vital greenbelt containing development. Other resources must be sought to serve the recreational needs of Roslindale’s residents.



McGann Park

Active Recreational Needs

The interior of the neighborhood contains much smaller tracts that help serve the area’s active recreation needs: Fallon, Healy, Pagel, and Parkman. (Because of McGann’s outlying location in orientation to Roslindale, its proximity to Hyde Park, and its location next to George Wright Golf Course, it is not considered to have a significant role in helping to meet Roslindale’s play lot needs.) However, the distribution of play lots and other active recreation facilities in several residential areas, such as the area south and east of Roslindale Square, and the area east of Hyde Park Avenue and south of Walk Hill Street, appears to be limited.

The mitigating factors, as in such suburban neighborhoods as Hyde Park and West Roxbury, are the ample backyard space of most of the housing stock and the greater availability of vehicles for transport to recreation areas not in the immediate vicinity. Yet pressure does exist to provide more play lots and ball fields, especially soccer fields for a neighborhood with an increasing immigrant population. Some of the play lot need in Roslindale is being addressed via the Mayor’s Schoolyard Initiative. The Haley and Sumner schoolyards have been completed; the Bates is in planning, and the Conley is under construction. All of these sites are located in areas generally underserved by other public recreation providers. Children who live in the area, even if they are not students at these schools, can also use the children’s play equipment that is being built in these schoolyards.

When an opportunity exists in this mature, stable, and developed neighborhood to create new active open space, it should be pursued. One significant opportunity has been Pagel Playground, where the Parks Department developed soccer fields.

It is located in what has been one of Roslindale's more underserved areas, the Forest Hills-Mount Hope sub-neighborhood. Its frontage on Hyde Park Avenue, a major arterial, both helps and hinders accessibility. Yet this new park is a noted success in the community.

The Department's inventory includes an undeveloped parcel known as the Poplar Street Play Area. It is located in a well-developed residential area south of Roslindale Square that is underserved by play lots. A portion of the property along its street frontage may be amenable to play lot development. Depending on neighborhood interest, site feasibility, and budgetary considerations, this site may help address this sub-neighborhood's childhood recreation needs.

The Boston State Hospital site is located just to the east of Roslindale, and is big enough to potentially provide sizable active recreation areas to service both Mattapan and Roslindale. Another area that will help service active recreation needs for Roslindale, especially for non-ball diamond sports, is Millennium Park in West Roxbury, opened in 2000. While both areas can provide regional scale open space opportunities, they are both at a sufficient distance that a vehicle, improved open space connections (see Advancing Connectivity below), or both are needed.

Arboretum Expansion

Another opportunity for new publicly accessible open space is the Walter Street Tract, a Harvard University holding near the Peters Hill section of the Arnold Arboretum. The Arboretum master plan designates this parcel for the expansion of the Arboretum's collection. This would create more passive landscaped parkland for Roslindale. To keep this tract open rather than urbanized will also assure better water quality and flood control for Bussey Brook, which feeds into the Arnold Arboretum, Stony Brook, the Back Bay Fens, and the Charles River.

Thanks to a \$491,000 ISTE A Enhancement Program grant awarded in the mid-1990s, the Parks Department recently completed construction on a new path in a newly acquired section of the Arnold Arboretum, the South Street Tract. It will allow commuters in the Jamaica Hills, Roslindale, and West Roxbury neighborhoods to travel comfortably through the Arboretum to the Forest Hills Station, a multi-modal transit center. It will also open up this most recent acquisition of the Arboretum for public access. The Arboretum Park Conservancy, a private non-profit group, has funded construction of two handsome entrance gates at South Street and Washington Streets under a separate \$307,000 contract.

Urban Wilds and Natural Areas

Roslindale has a few urban wilds, but only one that is publicly owned and accessible. The Eldon Street Urban Wild contains a two-acre portion that is city-owned, with a boardwalk for access into its wetland area. Unfortunately, it has been the subject of dumping and encroachment by a neighbor. In 2000, the Boston Conservation Commission has issued a Wetlands Protection Act notice of violation to the offending neighbor, and required the neighbor to correct the violation. Conservation Commission staff will carry out further monitoring to assure the correction effort is carried out and no further violations occur.

Other parts of the Eldon Street Urban Wild (designated Eldon Street II in the open space inventory) are not under Conservation Commission or Parks Department jurisdiction. Some parcels in Eldon Street II are city-owned and some are privately owned. The other Roslindale urban wilds include Metropolitan Avenue, Canterbury I, and Boundary I and II. While Canterbury I and Boundary I are entirely city-owned, Metropolitan Avenue and Boundary II are a mixture of city and private parcels.

Back in 1990, the BNAF's urban wilds report designated Boundary I and II as one of twelve urban wilds in Boston that are of city-wide significance, and in greatest need of protection ... and for good reason. These lands, particularly Boundary I, have been undisturbed and are therefore quite pristine and ecologically significant. They also lie next to the MDC's current holdings in the Stony Brook Reservation. Naturally, they should be included under the MDC's care for the Stony Brook Reservation. Given that four of the five parcels that make up the now unprotected portions of this urban wild assemblage are city-owned, and of little or no use for other public purposes, it made sense for the city to arrange for their disposition to the MDC. Boundary II is now in the MDC's hands (unfortunately, due to time constraints, the map reflects the old city ownership); the next step should be the conveyance by the city of Boundary I to the MDC in the near future.

Sorting out appropriate assemblages and uses for Eldon Street II, Metropolitan Avenue, and Canterbury I should be another focus. Factors such as community sentiment, fiscal and managerial feasibility, development pressures, and acquisition priorities will govern the pace with which these wilds will be addressed in the coming years.

Advancing Connectivity

To address Roslindale's open space needs, opportunities for open space connections must be exploited despite the major constraints presented by the heavy rail lines that cross this neighborhood. The Attleboro/Providence rail line and the Needham Heights commuter line branch split the neighborhood into thirds. This limits connections along the east-west direction as the rail lines generally cut the neighborhood along a north-south direction. The opportunities are the major arterials that generally follow the north-south orientation of these rail lines. Hyde Park Avenue and Washington Street have been improved in recent years, and Centre Street can be similarly improved through enhancements such as additional tree plantings and bicycle accommodations. Cummins Highway is a major east-west connector meriting a similar treatment. South and Walter Streets, Poplar and West Streets, and Belgrade Avenue are secondary arterials that should be targeted as well.

American Legion Highway, with a landscaped median, is an existing connector between Franklin Park and Cummins Highway. It also serves as the frontage for the new Boston Nature Center. The city is keen to have the Massachusetts Highway Department begin work on the reconstruction of this thoroughfare that will both improve the access to the Boston Nature Center and the appearance of the commercial district south of it.

Because so many of Roslindale's parks and open spaces are on these important thoroughfares, and these thoroughfares link up to open spaces outside the neighborhood, their importance in ameliorating Roslindale's need for certain types of open spaces is critical. In a certain sense, these linkages play a similar role as the ring of greenways around the South End. Both neighborhoods have limited opportunities to increase open space acreage, but linear open space features can help reduce the need felt within each neighborhood by increasing access to open spaces outside their boundaries. Southward, the Stony Brook Reservation, Mother Brook, the Neponset River, and the Reservation Road, Beethoven, and Draper Playgrounds are available. Westward, the new Millennium Park can be accessed via the West Roxbury and VFW Parkways. Northward, the Emerald Necklace, the Southwest Corridor Park, and Allandale Woods can be reached via Centre Street, the Jamaicaway, and Washington Street. Eastward, Morton Street, Franklin Park, and the Neponset are regional destinations for Roslindale. A focus on strengthening these links in the coming years will help address Roslindale's needs for open space opportunities.

Given the interest in neighborhood business revitalization in Roslindale Square and other commercial areas, aesthetic improvements to these arterials that support the adjacent commercial districts will pay dividends for both neighborhood business

and residents. This will help increase the success the city has had with both the Roslindale Main Streets Program and the Parks Department's enhancement of Adams Park, the heart of Roslindale Square. (This park receives maintenance support from the local Fleet Bank branch.)

THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

The rehabilitation of Roslindale's city recreation facilities and open space has accompanied the overall strengthening of this neighborhood in the past decade. Yet several sub-areas remain somewhat underserved by open space – especially for children's play and active recreation. Improved use of existing resources will be a key strategy, including the development of underutilized parcels such as the Walter Street Tract, the Poplar Street Play Area, and schoolyards. Major city thoroughfares should be greened and made bicycle-friendly in keeping with the green character of Roslindale's residential neighborhoods. As in other areas, urban wilds need to be made more accessible and protected from development threats.



Fallon Field

Opportunities

Surrounded by Green

- Explore programming Boston Park Ranger tours through Forest Hills Cemetery, with the cooperation of the owners. The cemetery is a rich open space and cultural resource, a possible destination on a brochure-guided bike tour of city cemeteries. With lightly trafficked roads and pastoral environments, cemeteries can become suitable attractions for local bicycle enthusiasts and walkers.

Active Recreational Needs

- Continue the Schoolyard Initiative reconstruction projects for the Bates and the Conley. Explore a potential schoolyard reconstruction with a play lot at the Mozart School.
- Determine the feasibility of building a play lot at the Poplar Street Play Area once community need expresses itself.
- Pursue opportunities where feasible for more land for play lots, ball fields, courts, and other active recreation facilities in the underserved sections of this neighborhood. Explore opportunities to create a regional scale active recreation facility at the Boston State Hospital site.

Healy Playground
Athletic Field



Arboretum Expansion

- Support the Arboretum expansion at the Walter Street Tract, the Harvard-owned parcel between Walter, Weld, and Centre Streets.

Advancing Connectivity

- Green-up and make more bicycle-friendly such major neighborhood thoroughfares as South Street, Walter Street, Centre Street, Cummins Highway, Hyde Park Avenue, and American Legion Highway. Investigate the potential for similar treatments for secondary arterials such as South and Walter Streets, Poplar and West Streets, and Belgrade Avenue. Encourage a regional linkage/greenway approach to open space access for Roslindale.

Urban Wilds and Natural Areas

- Encourage the transfer of the city-owned parcel in the urban wild known as Boundary II to the MDC for incorporation into the Stony Brook Reservation.
- Follow the new urban wilds master plan recommendations for protecting and providing access to other Roslindale urban wilds such as Eldon Street II, Metropolitan Avenue, and Canterbury I.

Strengthening Existing Facilities

- Continue to fund capital rehabilitation of city park facilities as needed in the capital renewal cycle.

Community Priorities

- Provide more playgrounds and tot lots in the Mt. Hope area.
- Clean up the Canterbury urban wild. Provide improvements to limit access (allowing people only, not cars) for both the Canterbury and the Eldon Street urban wilds.

FACILITIES

ROSLINDALE

Malls, Squares & Plazas

Site Name	Acreage	P	Ownership	BB	SB	LL	FB	SC	BK	TN	SH	PL	WS	CS	CR	FH	FN	HB	HS	LC	PA	PK	RG	VB	AR	CG	NT	Other
Delano Park	0.21		COB																									
Forest Hills Rotary	0.10	●	MDC																									

Parkways, Reservations & Beaches

Site Name	Acreage	P	Ownership	BB	SB	LL	FB	SC	BK	TN	SH	PL	WS	CS	CR	FH	FN	HB	HS	LC	PA	PK	RG	VB	AR	CG	NT	Other
American Legion Highway	2.20		COB																									
Morton Street	0.51	●	MDC																									
Stony Brook Reservation	56.61	●	MDC																									
West Roxbury Parkway	9.73	●	MDC																									

Parks, Playgrounds & Athletic Fields

Site Name	Acreage	P	Ownership	BB	SB	LL	FB	SC	BK	TN	SH	PL	WS	CS	CR	FH	FN	HB	HS	LC	PA	PK	RG	VB	AR	CG	NT	Other
Adams Park	0.78	●	Parks																									
Arnold Arboretum	90.38	●	Parks*																									Paths, Scenic Overlook
Fallon Field	7.57	●	Parks	1			1	1	2	1	1	1																
Franklin Park	24.31	●	Parks																									
George Wright Golf Course	158.50	●	Parks																									Golf Course
Healy Playground	9.63	●	Parks	1	1	1		1	1				1															
McGann Park	0.38	●	Parks																									
Page! Playground	1.90	●	Parks																									Soccer Court
Parkman Playground	2.06	●	Parks																									Open Shelter
Poplar Street Play Area	0.44	●	Parks																									Undeveloped
Walter Street Tract	14.20		Private																									Paths

* Under long-term lease to Harvard University

Cemeteries & Burying Grounds

Site Name	Acreage	P	Ownership	BB	SB	LL	FB	SC	BK	TN	SH	PL	WS	CS	CR	FH	FN	HB	HS	LC	PA	PK	RG	VB	AR	CG	NT	Other
Calvary Cemetery	75.00		Private																									
Forest Hills Cemetery	265.00		Private																									
Mt. Hope Cemetery	125.00	●	Parks																									
St. Michael's Cemetery	34.13		Private																									
Toll Gate Cemetery	0.90		Private																									
Walter Street Cemetery	0.80	●	Parks																									

Community Gardens

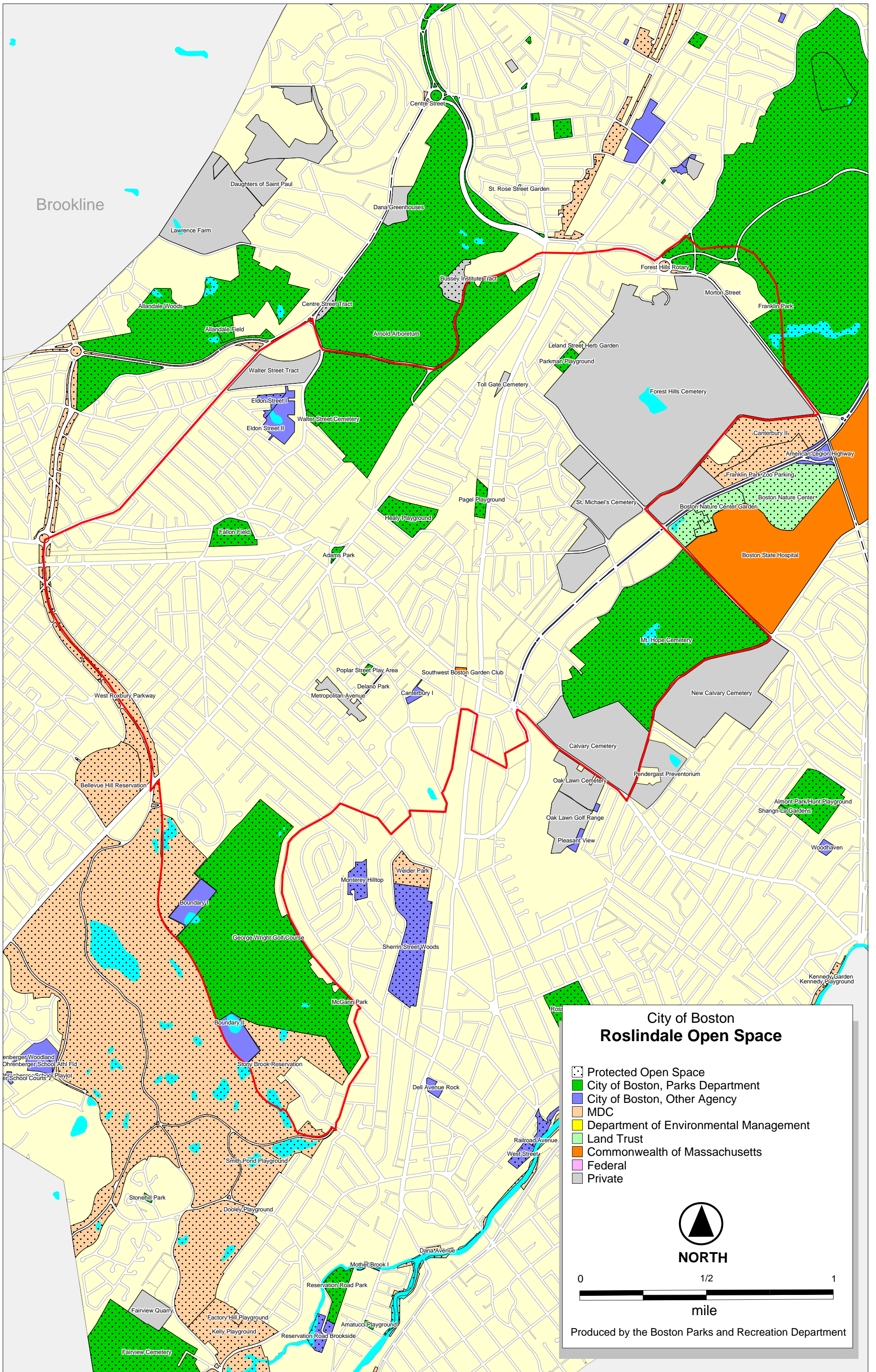
Site Name	Acreage	P	Ownership	BB	SB	LL	FB	SC	BK	TN	SH	PL	WS	CS	CR	FH	FN	HB	HS	LC	PA	PK	RG	VB	AR	CG	NT	Other
Leland Street Herb Garden	0.26	●	BNAN																									
Southwest Boston Garden Club	0.47		COM/MBTA																									

Urban Wilds & Natural Areas

Site Name	Acreage	P	Ownership	BB	SB	LL	FB	SC	BK	TN	SH	PL	WS	CS	CR	FH	FN	HB	HS	LC	PA	PK	RG	VB	AR	CG	NT	Other
Boundary I	7.05		COB/DND																									
Boundary II	8.01		MDC																									Part of Stony Brook Reservation
Canterbury I	2.50		COB																									
Eldon Street I	2.01	●	BCC																									1
Eldon Street II	7.53		COB+Private																									
Metropolitan Avenue	4.04		COB+Private																									

Legend

P	Protected	TN	Tennis Court	FN	Fountain	VB	Volleyball Area
BB	Baseball Field	SH	Street Hockey	HB	Handball	AR	Artwork/Monuments
SB	Softball Field	PL	Children's Play Lot	HS	Horseshoes	CG	Community Garden
LL	Little League Field	WS	Water Spray Feature	LC	Lacrosse	NT	Nature Trail
FB	Football Field	CS	Concessions	PA	Passive Area		
SC	Soccer Field	CR	Cricket Field	PK	Parking Area		
BK	Basketball Court	FH	Field House	RG	Rugby Field		



City of Boston Roslindale Open Space

- Protected Open Space
- City of Boston, Parks Department
- City of Boston, Other Agency
- MDC
- Department of Environmental Management
- Land Trust
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- Federal
- Private



NORTH



mile

Produced by the Boston Parks and Recreation Department