

**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 &amp; RECREATION MISSION

## THE NEIGHBORHOODS:

*West Roxbury*

## THE SETTING

## History

Originally part of the town of Roxbury, West Roxbury broke off to form its own town government in 1851. In the same year rail service was extended to rural West Roxbury, allowing people to live in the new town but work in Boston. With the annexation to Boston in 1874, a second wave of housing construction began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet its development has largely been of more recent times: over 3/4 of West Roxbury's current housing units were built after 1920.

The original West Roxbury village formed along Centre Street near Spring Street. The Roxbury Latin School, the oldest private school in America (1645), was built near the location of the old village and still operates there. A 19<sup>th</sup> century utopian experimental community that attracted many noted American intellectuals, Brook Farm was located in the western reaches of West Roxbury near Saw Mill Brook and the Charles River.

## Demographics/Housing

West Roxbury has continued the trend of population loss begun during the seventies. Population decreased 5.2% from 31,333 in 1980 to 29,706 in 1990, and again decreased, but by only 3.2% to 28,753 from 1990 to 2000. West Roxbury has a generally older population: the average age was 42.1 years versus 34.6 years for Boston (1990); the percentage of West Roxbury residents 55 years and older was 33%, a far higher proportion than the 11% figure for Boston. Families as a share of West Roxbury households was higher than for Boston (61%

## West Roxbury Demographic and Housing Profile

POPULATION	
2000 Census	28,753
1990 Census	29,706
1980 Census	31,333
Population Growth/Decline, 1990-2000	-3.21%
Population Growth/Decline, 1980-1990	-5.19%

**AGE**

2000 Census		
0-17 years	5,679	20%
18 and over	23,074	80%
1990 Census		
0-4 years	1,685	6%
5-9 years	1,317	4%
10-14 years	1,052	4%
15-17 years	666	2%
18-20 years	850	3%
21-24 years	1,856	6%
25-29 years	3,065	10%
30-34 years	2,873	10%
35-44 years	4,149	14%
45-54 years	2,663	9%
55-59 years	1,344	5%
60-64 years	1,666	6%
65-74 years	3,169	11%
75-84 years	2,426	8%
85 years and over	925	3%
Average Age (1990 Census)		42.1

versus 51%, respectively). This was further reflected in the percentage of youth 0-17 at 20%, the same percentage as for Boston. The median income of West Roxbury residents was higher than for all Boston residents: \$41,395 versus \$29,180, respectively. Only 7% of all residents were in poverty status, versus 17% for Boston as a whole. Unemployment was lower too: 4% versus 6% for Boston. Only 15% of West Roxbury households had no vehicles available to it, versus 38% for Boston households.

While West Roxbury remains predominantly white (97% in 1980, 94% in 1990, and 84% in 2000), there has been a trend in the 1990s toward racial/ethnic diversification. The black population rose from 2% in 1990 to 6% in 2000; the Hispanic population rose from 2% in 1990 to 5% in 2000; and the Asian/Pacific Islander population rose from 2% in 1990 to 4% in 2000. Self-identified multi-racial persons accounted for 2% of West Roxbury's 2000 population.

Sixty-two percent (62%) of the West Roxbury occupied housing stock was owner-occupied. Fifty-four percent (54%) of year-round units are single-family, whereas multi-family structures (3 or more units) constitute 31% of the occupied housing stock.

**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)	\$41,395

Occupied Units Ownership (1990 Census)	
	% Units
Owner occupied	62
Renter occupied	38
Number of Year Round Units in Structure (1990 Census)	
	% Units
Single units	54
Double units	16
3-9 units	10
10-19 units	6
20-49 units	6
50 or more units	6
All other	3
Single/Multiple Unit Ratio	1.25

Households by Age and Poverty Status (1990 Census)	
	% Households
Above poverty, under age 65	63
Above poverty, age 65 and over	30
Below poverty, under age 65	3
Below poverty, age 65 and over	4

Household by Number of Vehicles (1990 Census)	
	% Households
No vehicles	15
1 vehicles	44
2 or more vehicles	42

Population Density	
	Persons per Square Mile
1980 Census	5,796.6
1990 Census	5,495.6
Density Change 1980 to 1990	-301.0

RACE	1980 Census		1990 Census		2000 Census	
White	30,332	97%	28,012	94%	24,029	84%
Black	185	1%	472	2%	1,718	6%
Hispanic	395	1%	625	2%	1,309	5%
Asian or Pacific Islander	286	1%	564	2%	1,090	4%
Other	135	less than 1%	33	less than 1%	607	2%

**HOUSEHOLDS**

Households	
1990 Census	12,405
1980 Census	12,055

Household Growth/Decline, 1980-1990	2.90%
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**Population by Household Type**

(1990 Census)	% Persons
Family households	78%
Non-family households	20%
Group quarters	2%

**Households w/ One or More Persons Under 18 Years**

(1990 Census)	Households	%
All households	12,405	100%
No one under 18	9,797	79%
One or more under 18	2,608	21%

**Households with Children by Type**

(1990 Census)	%
Married couple families	82
Other family, male head	3
Other family, female head	15
Non-family	less than 1

**Persons in Households**

(1990 Census)	Households	%
1 person households	4,032	33
2 person households	4,131	33
3 person households	1,823	15
4 person households	1,348	11
5 or more person hshlds	1,071	8
Average Persons per Household (1990 Census)		2.35

**Family Type**

(1990 Census)	% Families
Married couple	76
Other family, male head	6
Other family, female head	18
Families as a % of All Households	61%

**THE OPEN SPACE SYSTEM TODAY**

**Equity and Investment**

West Roxbury has a total of 663 acres of protected open space, and a total of 1146 acres of total open space, both protected and unprotected. With a 2000 population of 28,753, West Roxbury has 23.06 acres of protected open space per thousand persons, more than the citywide ratio of 7.43 acres per thousand persons. However, as in East Boston, much of these protected acres are in relatively undeveloped holdings at the perimeter of the neighborhood far from the denser population centers.

Since 1993, the City of Boston has invested \$1.117 million in improving Beethoven, Draper, and Hynes – three of West Roxbury’s four major recreational parks.

The City has made an even more significant investment in West Roxbury’s newest and largest city-owned park, the 105-acre Millennium Park. This \$14 million investment has capped this former city landfill site, thereby reducing pollution to the Charles River. Its re-use as a park has made it the biggest

“recycling project” in the state. The city completed the landfill closure and park construction in November 2000. The park portion of the project cost \$3.5 million, partly paid for by a state Strategic Urban Recreation Facilities (SURF) grant.

**Assessment**

**W**est Roxbury is the most suburban of Boston’s neighborhoods. Density decreases here, with an abundance of single-family homes and backyards.

The neighborhood itself is largely defined by the open spaces surrounding it. To the east are the MDC’s Stony Brook Reservation, Bellevue Hill, and West Roxbury Parkway. To the west are Millennium Park, a municipally owned urban wild at the West Roxbury High School/Community Center, the MDC’s Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Parkway, Brook Farm, Havey Beach, and large private cemeteries. To the south are two more cemeteries and the West Roxbury Quarry urban wild. To the north is the Allendale Woods urban wild.

*“A Park with a View”*

**N**ow completed, Millennium Park has made a significant addition to the West Roxbury open space system. It has 21 acres of playing fields that feature a variety of activities including soccer, football, and lacrosse. The addition of this acreage at Millennium Park has doubled the amount of parkland devoted to playing fields in West Roxbury. Youth leagues have begun to use these fields. This large new park also includes a nature study area, a play lot for children, a handicapped-accessible canoe launch on the Charles River, and a 360°-scenic overlook. At times quite windy, it is a favorite for flyers of kites.

An issue being addressed is improving pedestrian and bicycle access to this new park, as it is located at the western edge of the neighborhood, and separated from the residential areas by the major thoroughfare of VFW Parkway. This parkway has attractively landscaped sidewalks for use by walkers, runners, in-line skaters, and bicyclists to approach the park. However, the sidewalks themselves are often significantly deteriorated

with unsafe surface conditions that are in need of repair or replacement. In addition, resources will be needed to find a means to safely cross this busy parkway. The City of Boston and the MDC are now in discussion as to how to address this issue. The city has already secured an agreement with the MBTA to have a public bus route designated to reach a bus turnaround built at the park entrance.

**CAPITAL PROJECTS 1993-2000/  
WEST ROXBURY**

Beethoven School Play Area	\$ 215,000
Draper Playground	\$ 473,000
Hynes Playground	\$ 428,631
Millennium Park	\$ 3,500,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 4,616,631</b>



West Roxbury resident Alice Hennessey talks to visitors at the new Millennium Park

### *Beyond Playing Fields*

There are other assets for active field sports that are not considered protected open space yet help function to meet the neighborhood's needs. The Parkway Little League holds title to Praught Field, which contains two diamonds that supplement ball fields at Draper and Billings. Some high school students from West Roxbury who attend West Roxbury High School, Catholic Memorial High School, or Roxbury Latin School use the fields associated with these campuses in West Roxbury. Non-high school student use is also made of the West Roxbury High School fields.

With Millennium Park doubling the playing field acreage in West Roxbury, there is less pressure to address this need in the open space continuum. Instead, the issue for West Roxbury is now not so much overall open space (23.31 acres of protected open space per thousand population, a very substantial open space to population ratio), but the distribution, quality, protection of, and access to, what open space exists.

Children's play lots exist at Beethoven, Billings, Draper, and Hynes. The play lot at Millennium Park adds a fifth play lot under the Parks Department jurisdiction. The Ohrenberger School, thanks to the Schoolyard Initiative, has a children's play lot that is available to the public during non-school hours.

However, this is a type of facility where because of young children's limited mobility, distance is a strong factor in terms of need: the typical primary service radius for play lots is a quarter-mile, while a typical secondary service radius is a half-mile. There are large swaths of West Roxbury that are not within the primary or secondary service areas of the five existing play lots. It will essentially remain so with the addition of the Millennium Park play lot, as it is over a half-mile from West Roxbury's residential areas. However, the low percentage of households with no vehicle available helps to mitigate this problem to a certain degree.

A need has been expressed (by the West Roxbury Neighborhood Council) for more play lots, but there are three factors to consider: most West Roxbury homes have yard space usable for children's play; there are very limited vacant lands available, if any, that are suitable for the type of construction needed for play lot development; and there is considerable competition for such lands by residential and commercial development. With an active real estate market and increasing population growth in the city, such competition is fierce, driving up prices and reducing opportunities for acquisition.



Hynes Playground

Still, though obstacles exist, a thorough review of available opportunities is needed, with some large land holdings possibly offering a chance to better distribute play lots throughout West Roxbury. The VA Hospital and some MDC holdings may offer possibilities. Some options that appear more feasible are play lot developments through the Schoolyard Initiative at the Joyce Kilmer School and the Lyndon Pilot School.

### *Townscape/Scenic Enhancements*

The residential areas of West Roxbury are, for the most part, much admired for their attractively landscaped features. West Roxbury Parkway and VFW Parkway, both MDC facilities, provide exemplary thoroughfares that scenically enhance the overall neighborhood landscape character.

Centre Street/Spring Street, and Washington Street, should be targeted for improved landscape treatments that also will enhance the neighborhood's image and recreational value. Some efforts have already taken place through the Parks Department horticulture unit (median planting beds on Washington Street) and its office of public/private partnerships (planters on Centre Street traffic islands). These thoroughfares link the neighborhood to open space resources, such as playgrounds, cemeteries, urban wilds, and the Charles riverfront, which can provide walking, bicycling, and nature appreciation opportunities. The City of Boston, through both the Department of Public Works and the Browne Fund, is developing a streetscape improvement/road reconstruction project for Centre Street. It is anticipated that Phase II of this project will provide additional street trees and new street furniture. It will also seek to improve the efficiency and safety of traffic movement while using the most appropriate methods of traffic calming to enhance the pedestrian livability of this commercial area.

The process of applying for Browne Fund monies for streetscape improvements identified a need for a central open space in the Centre Street business district, akin to Roslindale Village's Adams Square. (The West Roxbury Neighborhood Council also identified this need.) This would provide for a gathering place for civic functions in West Roxbury (e.g., the traditional Election Eve Truman Rally, or the Little League Season Kick-Off Parade) as well as a meeting place for more casual interactions among residents. Given the recent creation of a Centre Street Main Streets Program, this will likely become part of that organization's goals.

### *Access to Nature*

**W**est Roxbury has considerable resources available for walking/hiking, nature appreciation activities, and scenic enhancement. Substantial acreage is in a natural state: 680.05 protected and unprotected acres in West Roxbury. (Included in this acreage is the 8.9 acres of the Millennium Park riverside natural area, formerly the Municipal Shoreline urban wild, and the approximately 60 acres of the Millennium Park Meadow natural area along the slopes of this park.) Most of this acreage is protected. The largest unprotected parcels are the Roxbury Latin School natural area and the West Roxbury Quarry. Both have some acreage under the jurisdiction of the Wetlands Protection Act. The Conservation Protection subdistrict in the West Roxbury zoning code further protects certain natural resources within them should development go forward.

The major issues for natural area planning and management are the quality of and the access to existing areas in West Roxbury. Quality issues include litter and illegal dumping, control of invasive species and erosion, and native habitat restoration. Access issues include a near total lack of internal access (e.g., trails) within some sites, poor signage and markings, and the development of trail maps and brochures. The improvement of quality and access is contingent upon the documentation of existing resources and the identification of environmentally sensitive areas. This would enable the Department to more effectively restore native habitats and plan for ecologically sound access.



### *The Need for Connectivity*

**A**n access-related planning concept that will be explored in the future is enhancement of system connectivity. With West Roxbury's rich inventory of natural spaces, it seems a given that they should be connected into a system that would increase the utility of these seemingly isolated areas.

One foundation on which to build this system connectivity is the venerable old proposal of the Charles-to-Charles Corridor. This 1975 proposal calls for the linkage of the existing Emerald Necklace corridor to natural open spaces in southern Brookline through to those in West Roxbury and Newton. With the opening of the Millennium Park in the offing, this western terminus of the Charles-to-Charles Corridor should stimulate further efforts toward planning and implementation.

Another opportunity to explore is the abandoned railroad right-of-way between Spring Street and the Boston/Dedham line that includes the New Haven Street Urban Wild. This potential

rail trail/linear park can help improve access from the Grove Street/Spring Valley sub-neighborhood to Millennium Park. It may also support a children's play lot to better serve the surrounding area, which is currently outside any play lot's secondary service area.

Ultimately, a neighborhood-centered trail system that links the major thoroughfares and residential areas to the multitude of natural areas in West Roxbury would enhance the serene, leafy character of this community. Such a system in West Roxbury would advance the concept of such trails in each neighborhood that the draft Boston 400 citywide comprehensive plan has envisioned.

## THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

**W**est Roxbury enjoys many natural areas and such scenic MDC facilities as Veterans of Foreign Wars Parkway, West Roxbury Parkway, and Brook Farm. Two key city recreational facilities, Hynes and Draper, have undergone rehabilitation in the *Getting the Job Done* capital campaign of the last few years. More such facilities will be addressed in the coming years. Improving access to urban wilds and the Charles River shorefront and greening up major city thoroughfares are two important targets for planning. Millennium Park adds substantial space and a diversity of activities to the mix of existing open space, while improving access to nature and the Charles River. Improving access to Millennium Park and other open spaces in this neighborhood will connect the built core of West Roxbury to the more open edges of the neighborhood.

### Opportunities

#### *Capital Renewal*

- Continue the rehabilitation of capital facilities such as the ball fields at Billings.

#### *Greenways, Trails, & Townscape/Scenic Enhancements*

- Green-up and make bicycle-friendly such major thoroughfares as Washington Street, Centre Street, and Spring Street. Support the BPWD Centre Street reconstruction project.
- Work with Brookline on the planning and implementation of the Charles-to-Charles Corridor plan.
- Investigate the potential for recreational use of the abandoned railroad right-of-way (former Dedham Secondary Branch) in the southern part of West Roxbury.
- Explore the feasibility of a neighborhood trail system linking recreational and natural spaces in West Roxbury.
- Develop a natural resource inventory to support the development of an ecologically sound trail system at Allendale Woods, the city's largest urban wild.

*Access to Nature*

- Work with the Appalachian Mountain Club, Massachusetts Audubon Society, Boston Conservation Commission, and Boston Natural Areas Network to protect and make more accessible the urban wilds and natural areas in this neighborhood. Make efforts to create, improve, and restore trails (e.g., the boardwalks at Leatherbee Woods), to develop trail maps and brochures, and provide more programming (such as guided walks). Support the Browne Fund project to create an interpretive nature trail at Millennium Park. Develop a natural resource inventory for Allandale Woods urban wild to support future native habitat restoration projects and ecologically sound trail improvements.
- Prepare a West Roxbury component to the citywide urban wilds/natural areas master plan.
- Increase formalized waterfront access at such protected sites as Havey Beach (MDC) and link them to Millennium Park. Support the MDC's effort to extend the Charles River Reservation along the Charles shoreline in the West Roxbury/Dedham area.
- Work with BT&D and MDC to improve safety for pedestrians using and crossing VFW Parkway to access Millennium Park.
- Support the efforts of the MDC at Brook Farm as this site was noteworthy for this neighborhood's early history, and as a landmark in the nation's cultural history. Maintain a connection between this site and Millennium Park.
- Work with youth groups and neighborhood associations on natural area clean-ups and other natural area restoration projects.
- Explore, as with Forest Hills Cemetery, the use for passive recreation of the private cemeteries northwest of the VFW Parkway, such as for Ranger tours and brochure-guided bicycle tours.



Allandale Woods Urban Wild

**Community Priorities***Capital Renewal*

- Perform major capital rehabilitation to the fields and courts at the West Roxbury High School.

*Access to Nature*

- Work with the MDC to improve the treatment of the Rivermoor urban wild along its Charles River Park Road edge so as to improve pedestrian access to Millennium Park.



*Greenways, Trails, & Townscape/Scenic Enhancements*

- Work with the community and the MDC on the clean-up, repair, and marking of Stony Brook bicycle paths and the Turtle Pond fishing piers.
- Work with the Centre Street Main Streets program on the suggestion to develop a town square/green for West Roxbury Village akin to Adams Square in Roslindale Village.

*Recreational Needs*

- Support BPS parents’ efforts to develop play lots at the Joyce Kilmer School and the Lyndon Pilot School.
- Determine if vacant or underutilized lands are available for the development of children’s play lots. Investigate land at the VA Hospital for this purpose.
- Investigate the feasibility of future parkland in the Grove Street area, especially at the natural areas owned by the West Roxbury Quarry and Roxbury Latin School. Work with the community, the BCC, and the BRA on developing a long-range plan for the future use of the West Roxbury Quarry.

**FACILITIES**

**WEST ROXBURY**

**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
Duffie Square	0.06	•	Parks																									
Piemonte Park	0.09	•	Parks																									

**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
Bellevue Hill Reservation	23.20	•	MDC																		1							Paths
Hancock Woods	47.30	•	MDC																				1					X
Havey Beach	28.00	•	MDC																				1				1	Ice Rink
Sawmill Brook/Brook Farm	148.00	•	MDC																				1				X	Historic Site
Stony Brook Reservation	141.70	•	MDC																				1				X	Bicycle Path
VFW Parkway	13.15	•	MDC																									Sidewalks
West Roxbury Parkway	22.50	•	MDC																									Sidewalks

**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
Allandale Field	2.62	●	Parks (Priv)			1																						Allandale Woods Access
Beethoven School Play Area	0.77	●	Parks									1									1							
Billings Field	10.83	●	Parks	1	1	1	1	1	2	3		1				1												
Catholic Memorial H.S. Athletic Field	3.42		Private																									
Draper Playground	5.76	●	Parks		1	1	1	1	1			1									1							Indoor Pool
Millennium Park	103.60	●	Parks					6				1									1	4				1		Paths, Canoe Launch, Nature Study Area, Scenic Overlook
Hynes Playground	6.42	●	Parks			1		2	2			1									1							
Ohrenberger School Athletic Field	2.70		COB/BPS					1																	1			
Ohrenberger School Playlot	0.12		COB/BPS										1															
Ohrenberger School Courts	0.41		COB/BPS						2																			
Praught Field (Parkway Little League)	2.70		Private			2																						
Roxbury Latin School Athletic Fields	11.00		Private																									
West Roxbury H.S. Athletic Fields	12.25		COB/BPS	1	1		1	1.5		3														2			Track	

**Urban Wilds/Natural Areas**

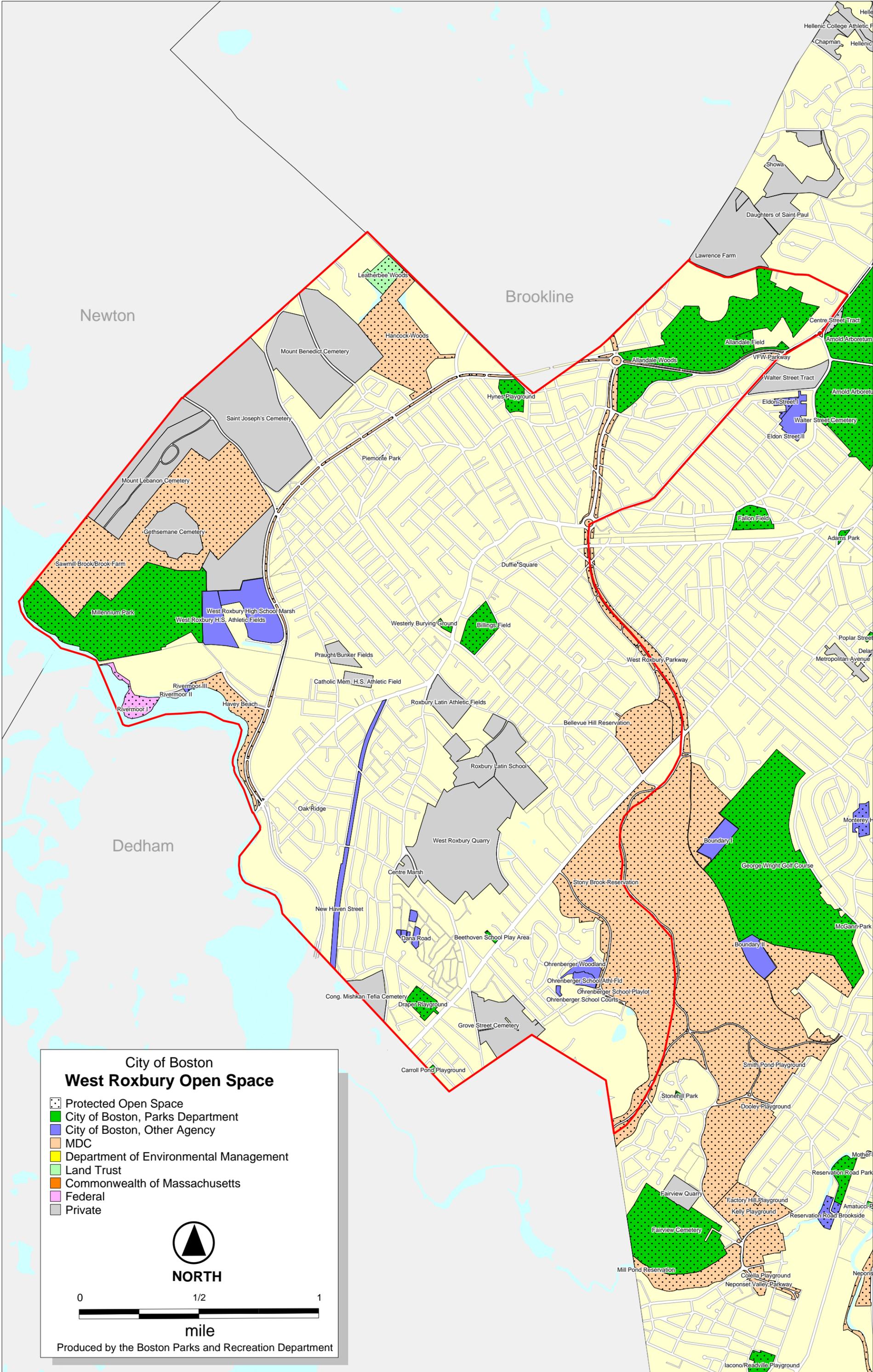
Site Name	Acreage	P	Ownership	BB	SB	LL	FB	SC	BK	TN	SH	PL	WS	CS	CR	FH	FN	HB	HS	LC	PA	PK	RG	VB	AR	CG	NT	Other
Allandale Woods	90.77	●	Parks/BCC																					1				1
Carroll Pond	0.47	●	Parks																									
Centre Marsh	3.70		Private																									
Dana Road	0.86		COB																									
Leatherbee Woods	7.90	●	BNAN																									1
New Haven Street (Belle Ave. Corridor)	9.73		COM/MBTA																									1
Oak Ridge	0.18		Private																									
Ohrenberger Woodland	3.81		COB/BPS																									
Rivermoor I	8.55	●	ACOE																									1
Rivermoor II	1.03		Private																									
Rivermoor III	0.50	●	BCC																									1
Roxbury Latin School Woods	23.62		Private																									
West Roxbury High School Marsh	10.00		COB																									
West Roxbury Quarry	84.86		Private																									

**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
Congregation Mishkan Tefila Cemetery	9.60		Private																									
Gethsemane Cemetery	21.00		Private																									
Grove Street Cemetery	24.83		Private																									
Mt. Benedict Cemetery	79.51		Private																									
Mt. Lebanon Cemetery	49.00		Private																									
St. Joseph's Cemetery	128.10		Private																									
Westerly Burying Ground	0.90	●	Parks																									

**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  
West Roxbury 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