
Open Space Plan 2015-2021

Section 7

Analysis of Needs

Section 7.2.10 Community Open
Space & Recreation
MATTAPAN

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Section 7.2.10: Community Open Space & Recreation MATTAPAN

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.

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Background

Mattapan became part of Boston in 1870 as through the annexation of the town of Dorchester. Mattapan is predominantly residential, a classic “streetcar suburb.” First the Midlands Branch railroad in 1855 and then the trolley in the 1890s opened up Mattapan to waves of residential construction. The northern half of Mattapan had single-family home construction mixed in with the two- and three-family homes. In the southern half of Mattapan, east and west of Mattapan Square, single-family homes on larger lots were built in the middle of the 20th century. Mattapan Square, at the confluence of Blue Hill Avenue, River Street, and Cummins Highway, with MBTA Red Line trolley service, became the commercial heart of Mattapan.

Mattapan Square has seen slow but sustained reinvestment over the last twenty years beginning with the building of the Mattapan Community Health Center. Mattapan Community Health Center is a comprehensive health delivery organization that serves individuals from Mattapan and its surrounding areas of Dorchester, Roxbury, and Hyde Park. It is the only community health center in Mattapan and Hyde Park.

Another key development in Mattapan is the creation of the Morton Street station on the MBTA Fairmount commuter rail line. Located in the northeastern part of this community, it provides an alternative to bus service and the Mattapan High Speed trolley service to the Red Line to access Dorchester and the downtown urban core, where employment opportunities are significant. In turn, it opens the possibility of economic and community activity in the Morton Street corridor near this station.

Analysis

The neighborhood boundaries for Mattapan were redrawn in the late 2000’s, which reduced its overall area while adding to adjacent neighborhoods, Dorchester and Hyde Park. Mattapan now has the smallest population of any city neighborhood and it has lost over 7% of its population between 2000 and 2010 (redrawn boundary

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not withstanding). Its population density is similar to Roslindale or Jamaica Plain, and its open space ratio of 6.38 acres per thousand residents is a bit lower than the city average of 7.64.

While the entire neighborhood satisfies at least one of the State's criteria for an environmental justice population, park need scores are not as high in this neighborhood as in Dorchester, likely due to Mattapan's lower density (Mattapan Maps 2 & 3). At 27.6%, Mattapan has a higher proportion of children than most of the other city neighborhoods.

Mattapan has four large community parks, as well as the two DCR parks along the Neponset River Reservation (Ryan and Kennedy), all of which support a range of active recreational uses. All the parks but Kennedy Playground contain athletic fields, basketball and tennis courts, play areas, and four have water spray features (Mattapan Maps 7 & 8).

While the community parks serve this neighborhood well, much of the remaining open spaces are urban wilds, cemeteries and other limited access, low use areas. The Gladeside urban wild, in particular, is a large natural area with trails and habitat area suitable for exploration, but site access has limited visibility. The neighborhood has expressed interest in increased access and programming in the urban wilds. Similarly, the Boston Nature Center is isolated by virtue of its location at the northwest edge of the community, with the State Hospital Campus and Olmsted Green - large institutional and residential developments -limiting connections to the rest of the neighborhood to the south.

The Mattapan neighborhood also contains the large campuses of the Foley Senior Housing Development, the Boston Public Health Commission Campus, and the Boston Nature Center which limit neighborhood connectivity. Improving the character of the thoroughfares through the neighborhood would help improve the cohesion of the green infrastructure in this neighborhood which seems disjointed due to the large institutional holdings within the community fabric.

Waterfront access is an unrealized opportunity in Mattapan. Only the DCR's Ryan Playground and Kennedy Playground and

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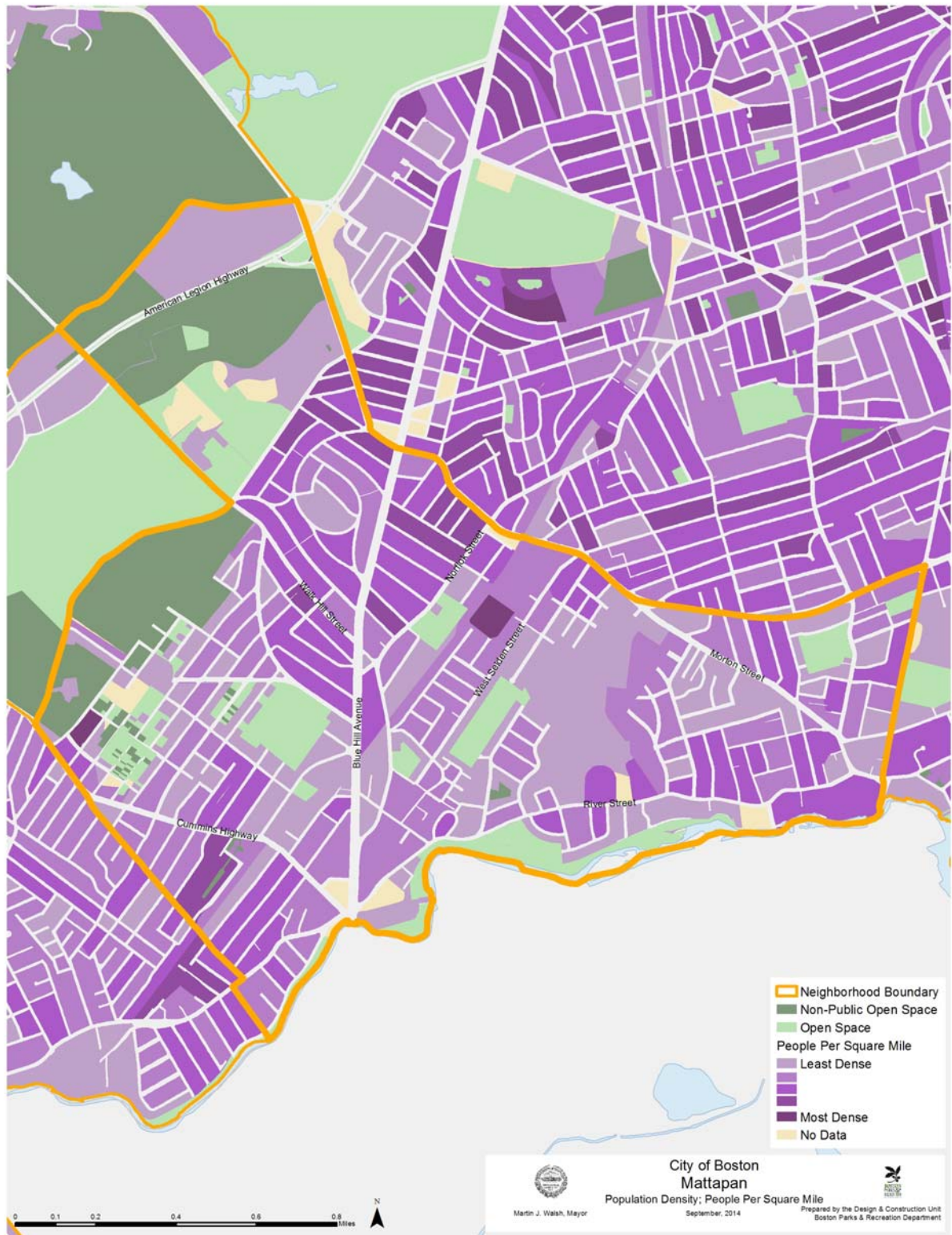
Community Gardens offer access to the Neponset. The rebuilding of Ryan and Kennedy Playgrounds and the additional attention from the Greenways to the Harbor program has provided paths down to and along the river including canoe launches. As the Department of Conservation and Recreation further develops the Neponset River Greenway (most of which in this section is on the Milton side of the Reservation), Mattapan will benefit from the connectivity this greenway provides.

The DCR recognizes the importance of the connection between the Square and the River in its Neponset River Reservation Master Plan Phase II, as improving access between the Reservation and its paths and the Square is described as part of a proposed study for the area of the Reservation between Central Avenue and Ryan Playground. The planning staff at the BRA is aware of this and has suggested that the City re-design Mattapan Square for better pedestrian and bicycle access, using the Complete Streets guidelines, so as to facilitate movement through the Square and onto the Reservation. Coordination between DCR and the City would optimize the accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclists in this whole area, improving the attractiveness of Mattapan as a residential destination, and of the Square as a commercial destination.

The BRA planning staff is in the final stages of preparing a Corridor Plan for their Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative. This planning effort in part responds to a 2011 proposal by a group of non-profit organizations known as the Fairmount Greenway Task Force. In turn, both efforts are responding to the transportation access opportunities afforded by the state's investment in the Fairmount Line, a commuter rail line that runs from South Station to Readville in Hyde Park, the only commuter rail line wholly within the City of Boston, and located in several environmental justice communities.

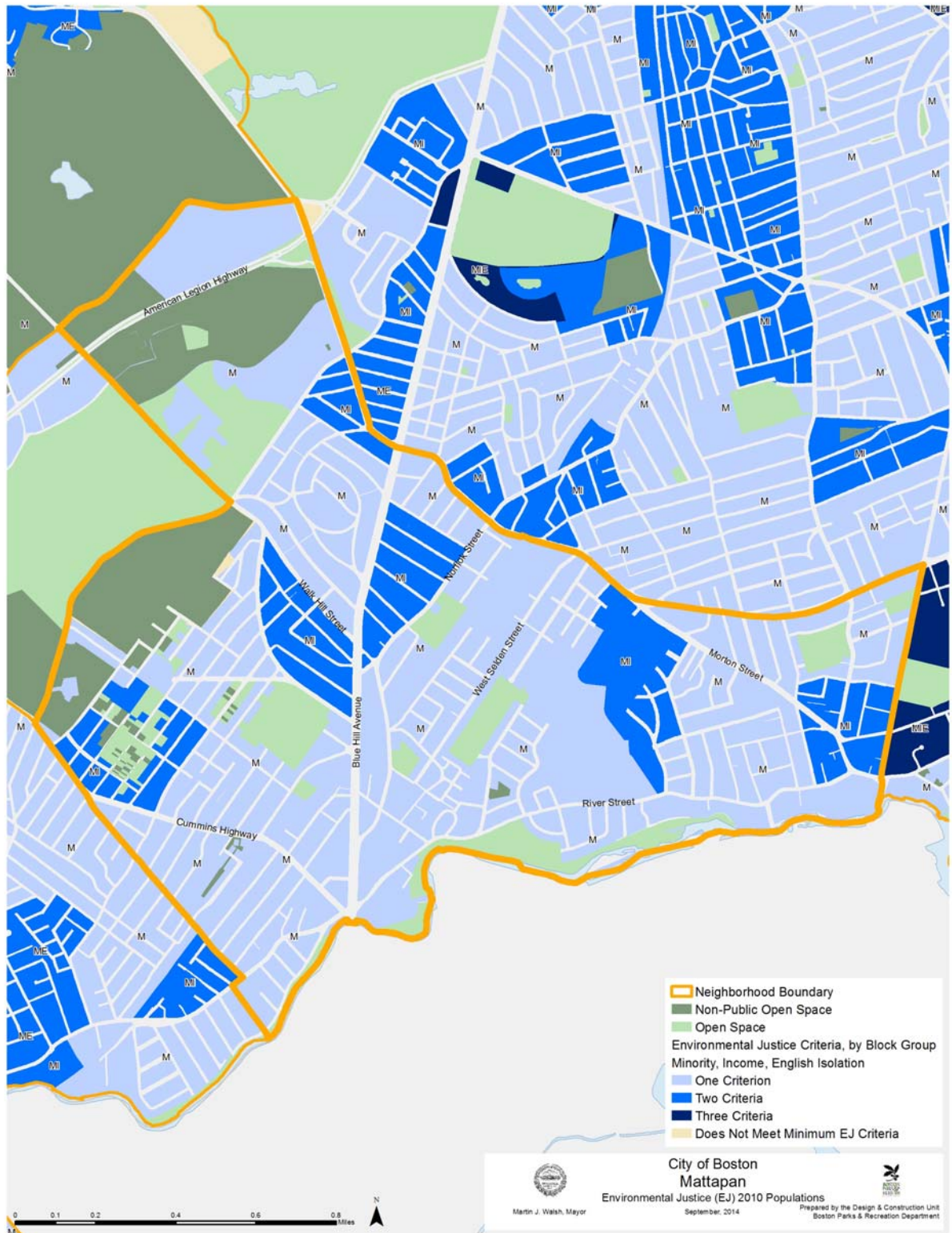
In Mattapan, the proposed Blue Hills/Cummins Highway commuter rail station, which is much closer to Mattapan Square and the Neponset River, is currently in design. A re-design of Mattapan Square and the design of the new Blue Hills/Cummins Highway station is an opportunity to develop an integrated wayfinding system that would help rail users orient themselves not only to the Square but also to the Reservation and its attractions.

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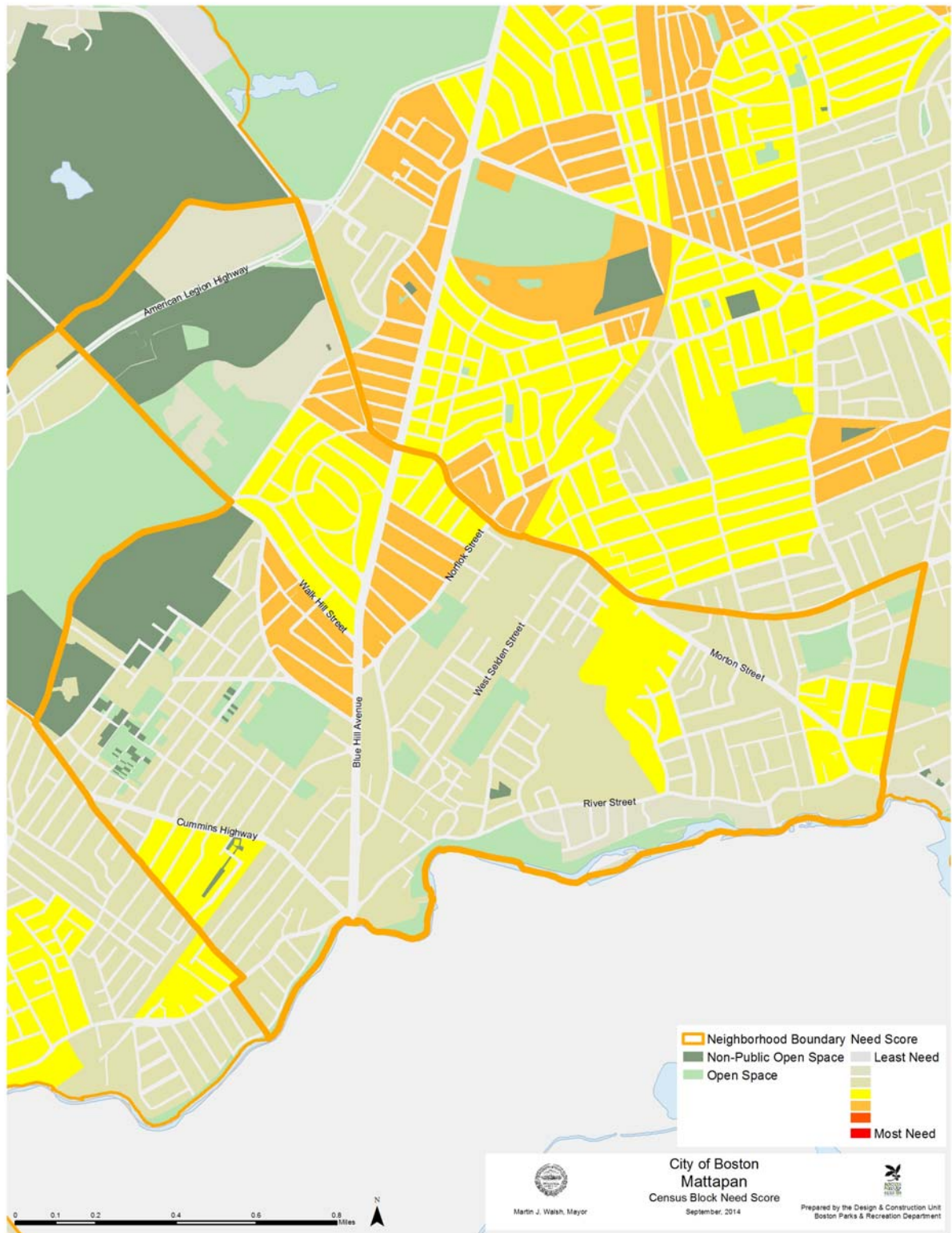
Map 1: Population Density, Mattapan

Needs Analysis



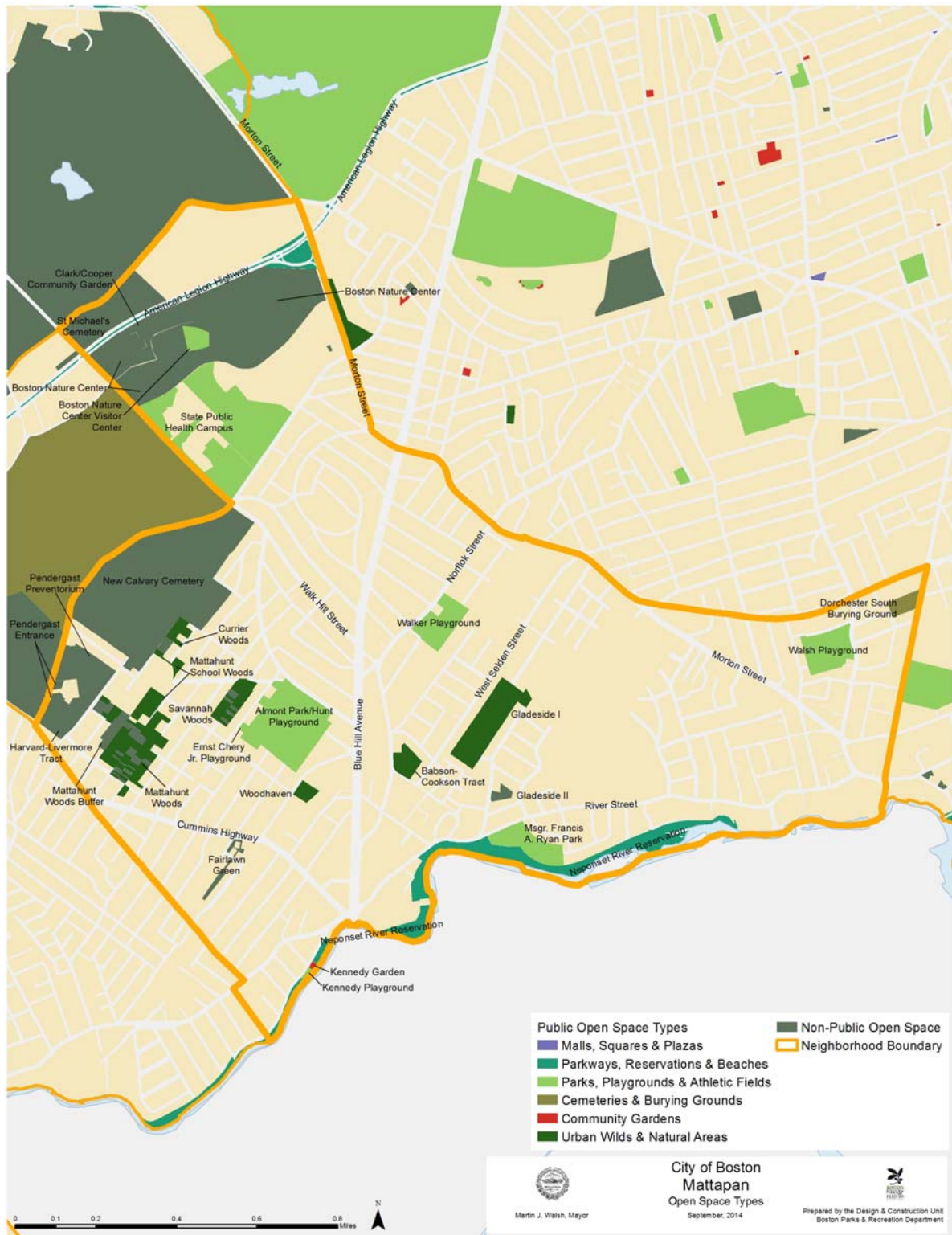
Map 2: Environmental Justice Populations, Mattapan

Needs Analysis



Map 3: Need Score by Census Block Group, Mattapan

Needs Analysis



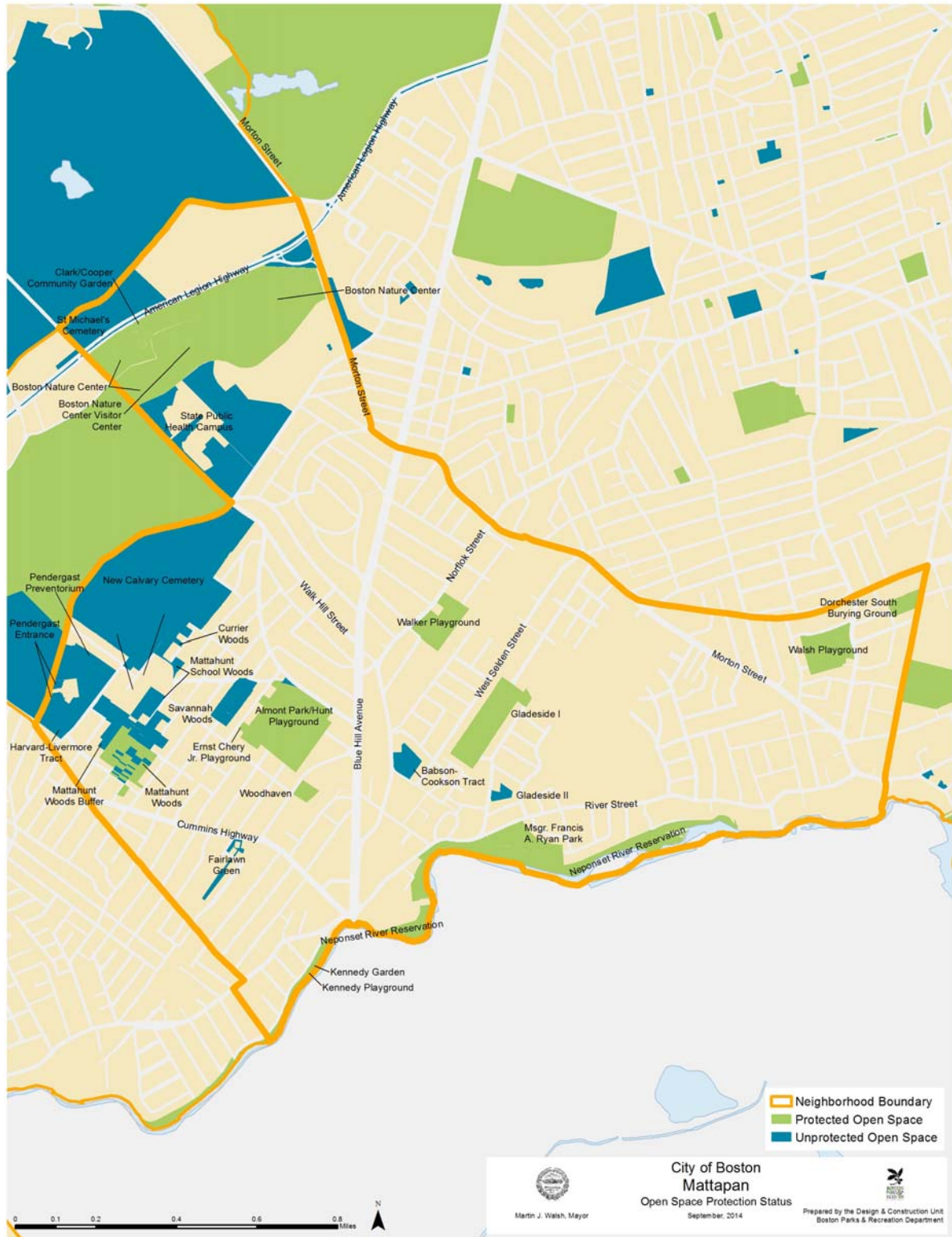
Map 4: Open Space by Type, Mattapan

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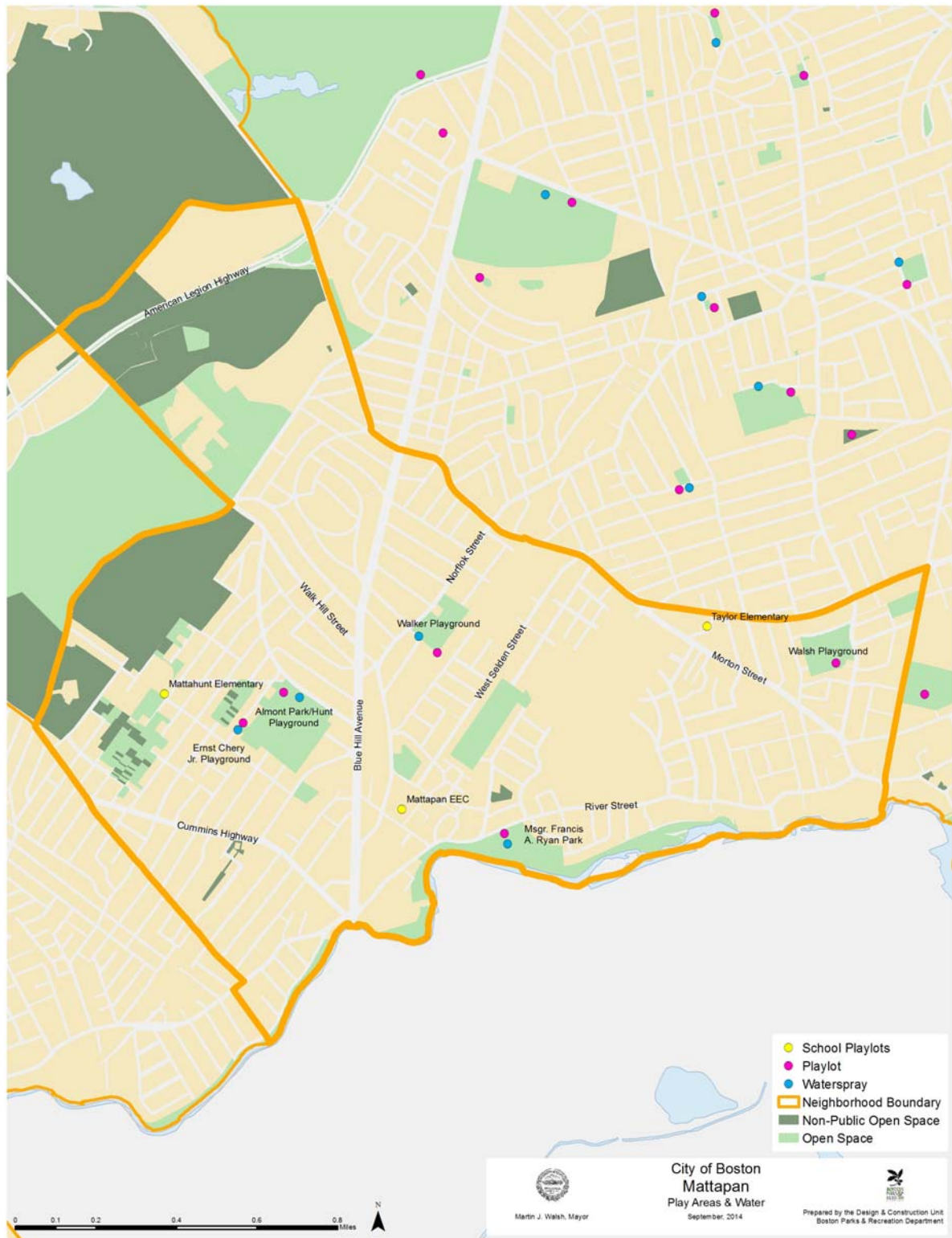
Map 5: Open Space by Ownership, Mattapan

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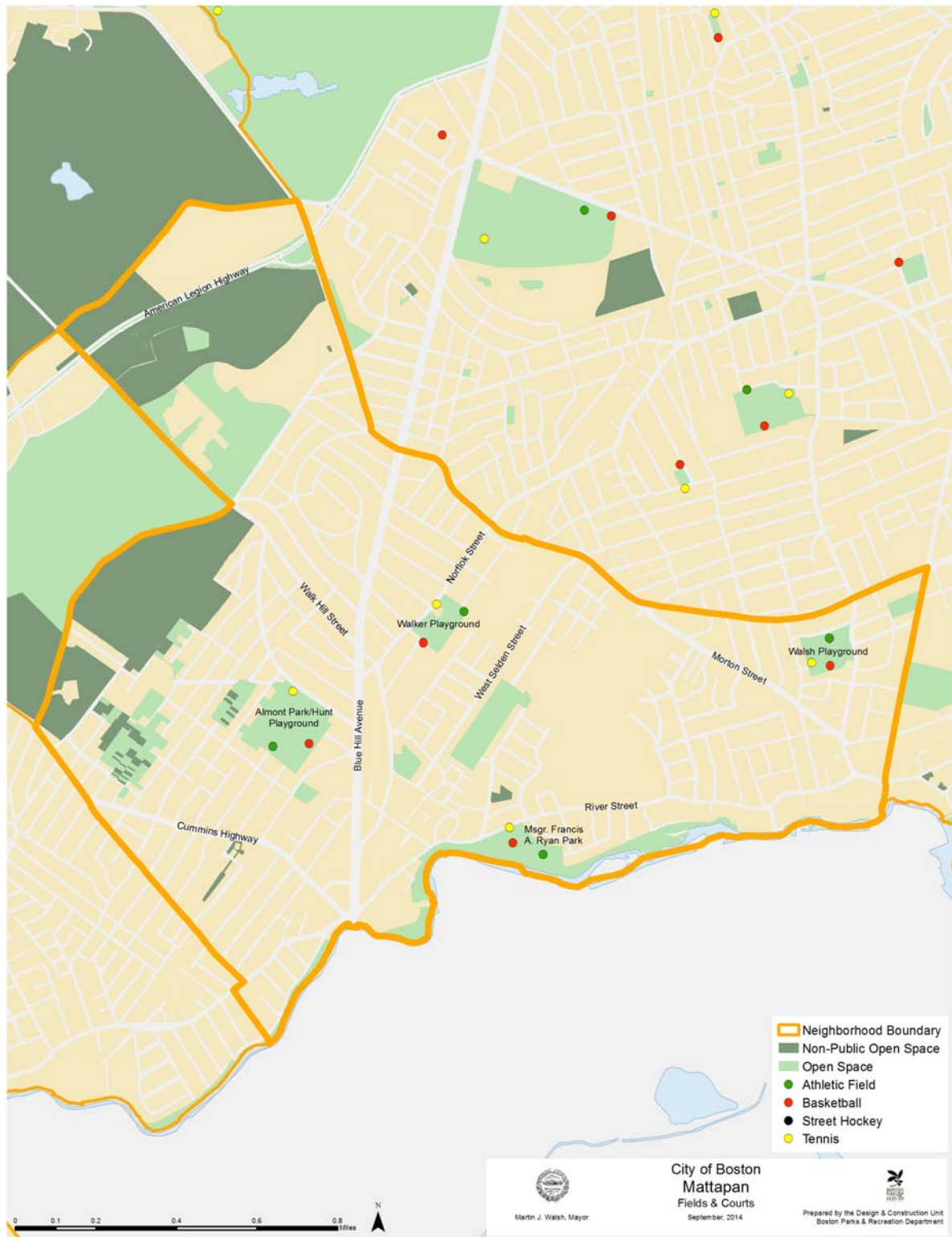
Map 6: Open Space by Protection Status, Mattapan

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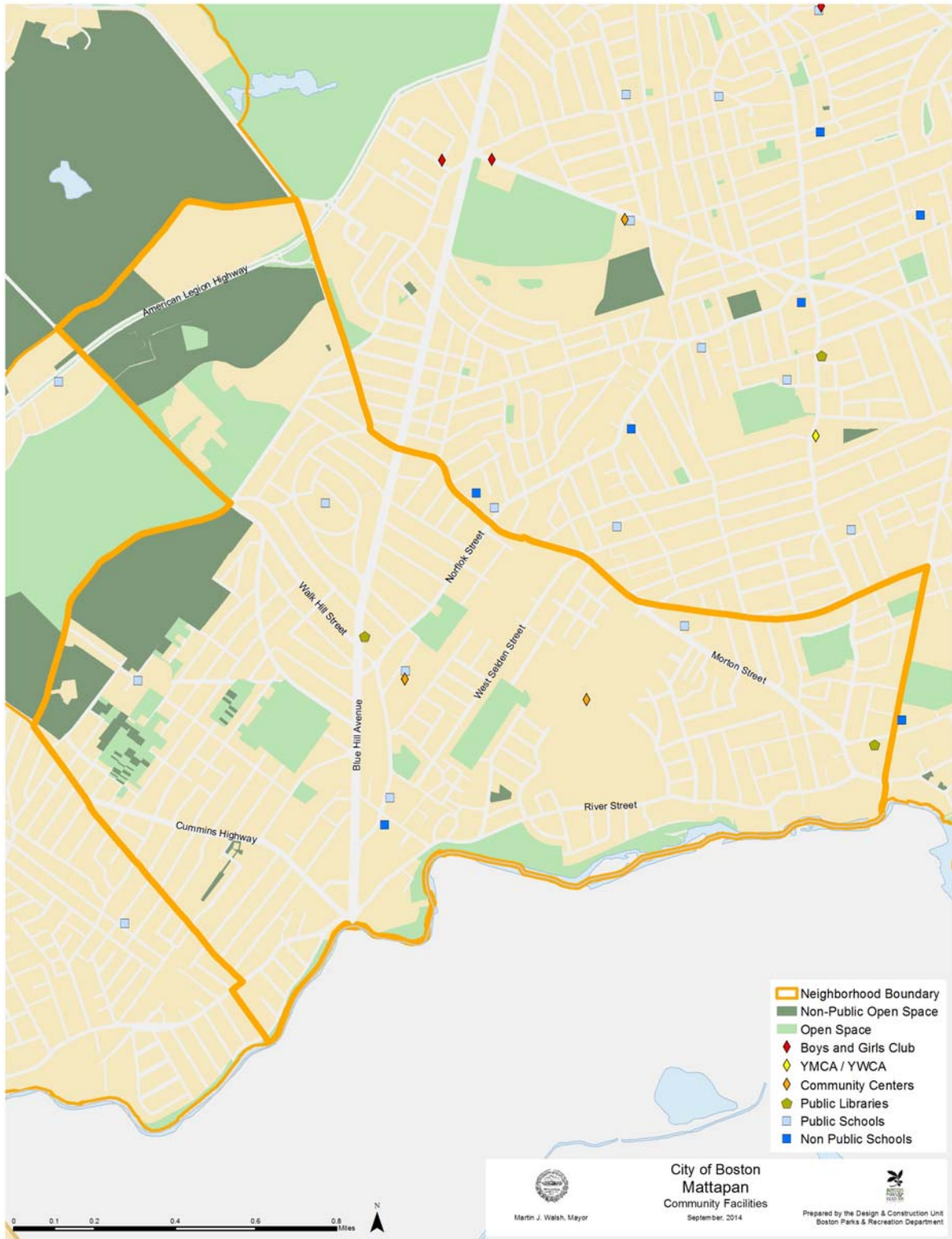
Map 7: Play Areas and Water Spray Features, Mattapan

Needs Analysis

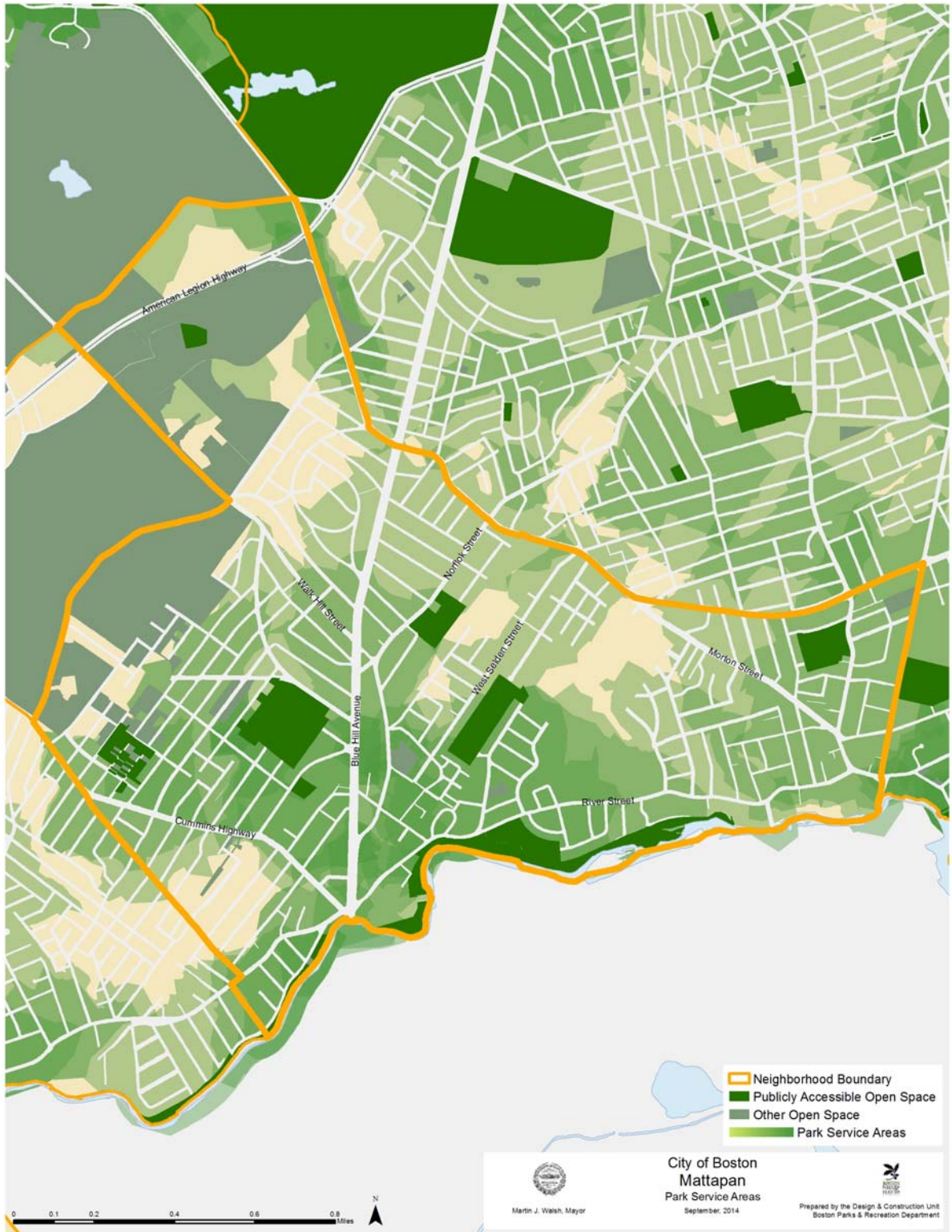


Map 8: Fields and Courts, Mattapan

Needs Analysis

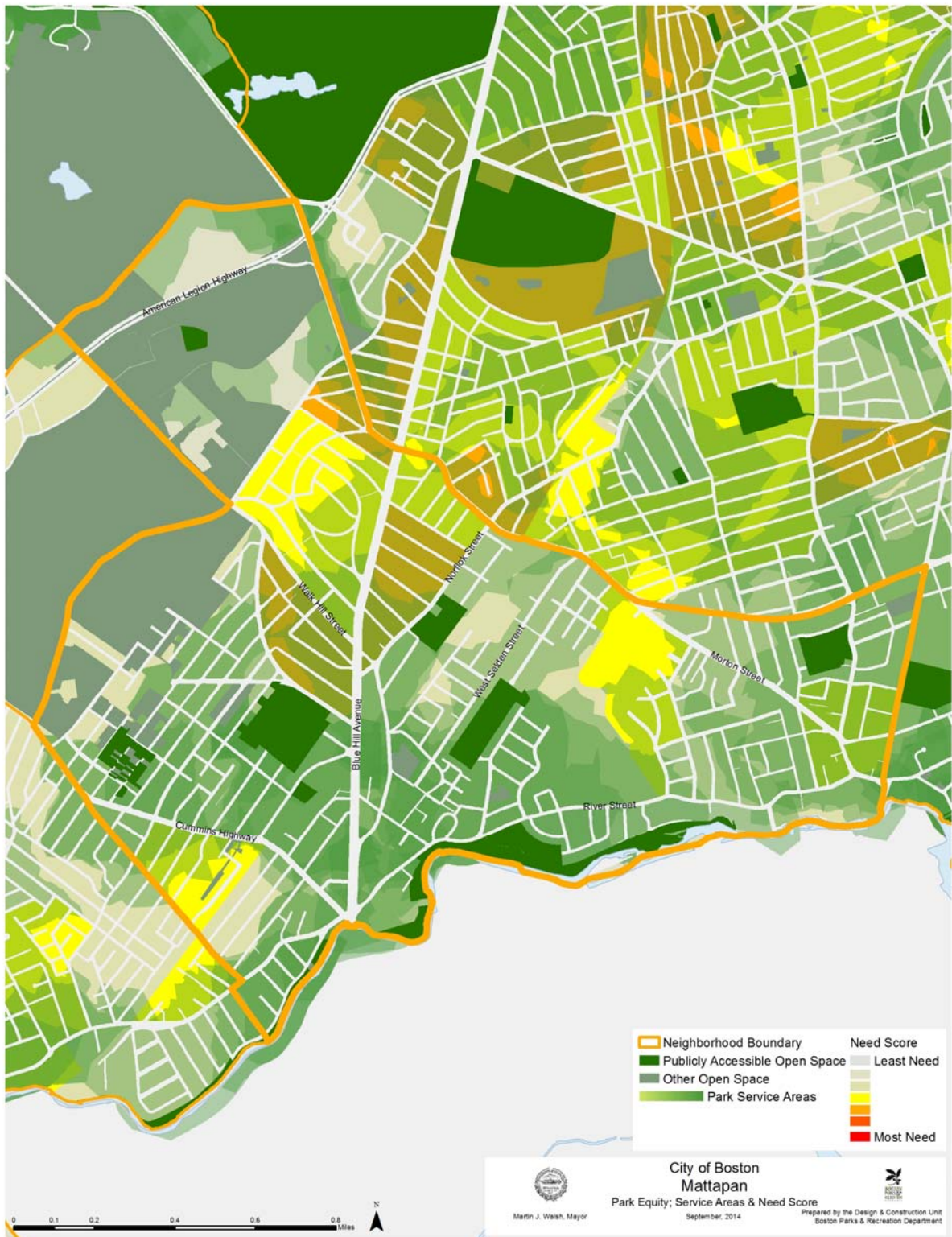


Map 9: Community Facilities, Mattapan



Map 10: Park Service Areas, Mattapan

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Map 11: Park Equity: Service Areas & Need Scores, Mattapan

Needs Analysis

Population	
2010 Census	22,600
2000 Census	24,333
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Population growth/decline, 2000-2010	-7.1%

Age		
Under 9	2,861	12.7%
10-19	3,363	14.9%
20-34	4,677	20.7%
35-54	6,283	27.8%
55-64	2,732	12.1%
65 and over	2,684	11.9%

Race		% of Total Population
White Alone		6.3%
Black or African American alone		76.4%
Asian Alone		1.7%
Other		3.5%

Latino Status		% of Total Population
Hispanic or Latino		12.1%

Population Density		Persons Per Acre
2010 Census		16.7

Median Household Income
\$43,611

Percent of Households by Number of Vehicles Available	
No Vehicle	27.0%
1 vehicle	42.6%
2 vehicles	23.4%
3 or more vehicles	6.9%