

# Chelsea



## Chelsea Open Space and Recreation Plan 2010-2016

PREPARED FOR

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Planning & Development  
*Chelsea, Massachusetts*

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# 1

## Plan Summary

Chelsea is a densely populated, urban community located just north of Boston. Once including the territory that now makes up Revere, Winthrop, and a portion of Saugus, and once being part of Boston, today's 2.2 square mile city comprises the smallest community in the Commonwealth.

Since 1995, City government has operated under a manager/council form of government. A strong city manager maintains all hiring and firing authority and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of a twenty-first century municipality. The 11-member City Council that selects a City Manager is also responsible for budget adoption, general policy development and approval and oversight of the municipal administration. The two-year Council is comprised of three members elected at-large and eight elected in individual districts.

In 2000, with the appointment of the current City Manager, the philosophical tenet of City government was identified and subsequently advanced by a core set of principles, dubbed the "Fundamentals." Those six guiding principles continue to steer the administration of the City on matters relating to finance, economic development, public safety, neighborhood enhancement, community development, and general government philosophy. As a result of an adherence to the Fundamentals, as well as responsible municipal leadership from the City's elected and appointed leaders and significant contributions from the City's other stakeholders, today's Chelsea enjoys a growing reputation for operation and revitalization.

As the Fundamentals relate to open space, finance ensures funds exist to create and maintain open space. Economic development helps to support the expansion of the tax base to finance open space and also creates opportunities for open space development as part of an overall development project. Public safety is obviously critical to the safe enjoyment of open space. Neighborhood enhancement especially promotes the creation and maintenance of open space supporting the City's neighborhoods. Community development counts among its goals the need to have municipal facilities, including open space, support the needs of the City's residents,

especially its youth. General government philosophy supports the concept that stakeholders, including open space advocates, need to and should be heard on important issues impacting them and their community, with that input then translating into action.

Just as open space is supported by all the Fundamentals, the City's open space and recreation initiatives can play a pivotal role in achieving the Fundamentals. Open space promotes economic growth and opportunity that supports finance, economic development, neighborhood enhancement, and community development. This is especially true of neighborhood enhancement, where the upgrade or establishment of a new park can be a major determining factor in the revitalization of that neighborhood. Public safety is advanced as parks and other recreational opportunities provide kids with places to get off of the streets and help reduce the stress of living in a densely populated community. Even when it comes to general government philosophy, stakeholders react more favorably to the City's overall agenda when they see their needs and desires being addressed through open space emphasis. The participation in planning meetings and neighborhood cleanups helps to build community, a substantial goal of that Fundamental.

In October of 2003, and with the goal of promoting the livability and vitality of the community, the City published its last Open Space and Recreation Plan. Since that time Chelsea has made significant progress towards the goals of that plan and subsequent updates. A series of parks and open spaces were rehabbed, three schools and adjacent open space were rebuilt, new parks have been built, and community groups have become active in developing improved access to the Chelsea waterfront. This plan seeks to continue the efforts outlined in the 2003 Plan and provide the facilities and environments that are most needed by Chelsea's dense urban population.

# 2

## Introduction

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### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this Plan is to provide both a targeted framework and strategy for future management of Chelsea's open space and recreation resources. It comes at a time when the demand for parks and recreation facilities has grown dramatically given the dense population and lack of open spaces in Chelsea. This updated plan will assist Chelsea in making intelligent decisions about its future policies, particularly with respect to maintenance and enhancement of existing facilities, given the lack of space for significant expansion. The purpose of this plan is to make those decisions clear and prioritize them relative to the City's needs.

The last Chelsea Open Space and Recreation Plan was completed in 2003. This plan reviews progress since then, elaborates on some of the goals and objectives, and identifies actions to direct open space improvements for the next seven years.

The primary goals of the plan are:

- Provide recreational and fitness opportunities suited to Chelsea's population;
- Take advantage of Chelsea's environmental, historic, and scenic resources;
- Integrate the open space into the city fabric.

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### Planning Process and Public Participation

The goals, objectives and actions outlined in this plan were developed from the following sources:

- Chelsea Department of Planning and Development;
- Two Public Meetings;
- A inventory of the conditions of City-owned parks and facilities;
- Consultation with state and local stakeholders;

- Consultation with the Chelsea Green Space and Recreation Committee;
- Consultation with the Chelsea Housing Authority;
- Consultation with the Chelsea School Department; and
- Review of information in the 2003 Open Space and Recreation Plan

A key step in the planning process was site visits to significant open space and recreation parcels in Chelsea in June 2009. The tour was guided by staff from the Department of Planning and Development and provided a means of gaining insight into the condition, type, and quality of Chelsea's open space and recreation resources. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 5 (Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest), the City has conducted detailed assessments of each park to determine its condition and need for enhancements during this seven-year planning horizon.

A public forum was held in the process of updating the Plan. The forum was held at City Hall in June 2009. The forum served to inform the public on open space and recreation planning in general, the progress of the Plan, as well as to seek input on how to shape the new Plan. It provided valuable insight into what the citizens of Chelsea felt the most important areas of the Plan should be and how to successfully fulfill them. Two key exercises were performed at the first public forum to reach these conclusions:

- A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) exercise
- A voting exercise designed to validate and update the goals and objectives from the 2003 Open Space and Recreation Plan

The results of the SWOT exercise are discussed in Appendix B.

Additionally, the City has undertaken a number of planning efforts that involve stakeholders with an interest in open space and recreation. In 2007, the City conducted a planning study for the Chelsea Creek waterfront, which included local community groups including community groups such as the Chelsea Creek Action Group, the Chelsea Green Space and Recreation Committee, and the Chelsea Creek Restoration Partnership.

That same year, the City completed a plan for its Gerrish-Bellingham neighborhood that, among other issues, identified a need for open space. This plan was followed by a cooperative planning effort between the City and Chelsea Neighborhood Developers (CND), a local non-profit, that identified specific open space initiatives in that neighborhood.

In 2009, the City was designated a Gateway Community and was awarded a Gateway Communities Plus grant to complete a planning study for the Addison-Orange neighborhood. That study identified a number of constraints that affect the neighborhood, including the lack of open space, and developed an action plan to address the neighborhood's needs.

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## Enhanced Outreach and Public Participation

MassGIS has identified the City as having Environmental Justice populations throughout the entire City. See *Map 2, Environmental Justice Populations*. The largest of these populations are the Spanish speaking groups from Central America and Puerto Rico. For specialized planning efforts, the City traditionally issues its meeting notices in English and Spanish, posts the meeting notices with the City Clerk and on the City Hall bulletin board, provides copies of the notices to the City Councilors, and places the notice in the local paper. In the case of the Open Space and Recreation Plan hearing, the City not only did all of this, but also posted the notice in the Chelsea Library, on the City's web site and the cable television channel, and in the offices of the nonprofit community development corporations with which we work. The Department of Planning and Development solicited the assistance of the Chelsea Green Space Committee to undertake extra outreach. The Green Space Committee is adept at working within its community network to solicit the input of residents in the open space and recreation planning effort. These nonprofit community development corporations and the Chelsea Green Space Committee are adept at reaching out to the bilingual community in Chelsea and have worked cooperatively with the City to provide needed outreach to the City's Spanish-speaking populations.

In addition, the City involved the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission in its open space and recreation effort by providing the boards with briefings. These briefings, which included updates on the progress of the planning effort and opportunity for input, were provided at open public meetings. The Planning Board was also provided with a copy of the draft plan for review and comment.

Aside from the briefings for the Planning Board, the City conducted a public hearing in June 2009, during which the goals and objectives of the previous plan were reviewed for relevancy in the updated plan. New ideas, comments, concerns and goals and objectives were identified and analyzed for insertion in the final plan.

Finally, as part of the Lower Mystic River Corridor Strategy, the City will work with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the other participating cities of Boston, Everett, Malden, Medford and Somerville to integrate environmental justice into all of the strategy elements. This planning effort is discussed in more detail in Section 3 of this Plan. As implementation goes forward, MAPC and the six cities will seek to work in partnership with established local organizations such as La Comunidad Inc., Roca, Alternatives for Community and Environment, Inc., and Neighborhood of Affordable Housing to gain a better understanding of the concerns and needs of residents regarding public health/environmental concerns, open space, recreation, and land use. The mission of each of these organizations is to reach out to local environmental justice populations and to engage them in civic activities in ways that can improve their quality of life.

See Section 6 for more details on the public participation process.

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## Progress Since the 2003 Plan

Chelsea has made considerable progress since the 2003 plan, which build upon the many upgrades that have occurred since 2000. Streetscape improvements have been made in many neighborhoods, additional new schools and associated play spaces were completed, and a series of parks were improved. This list below outlines some of the improvements:

- Pocket park renovations and additions, including a new park on 5<sup>th</sup> St.
- Williams School provides indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities
- CCS program expansions
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial Pool renovation (a Department of Conservation and Recreation facility)
- Riverwalk addition
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) upgrades at several parks and playgrounds
- Completion of the Creekside Commons new park acquisition/development
- Completion of the Chelsea Creek Waterfront Plan
- Reconstruction of Dever Park
- Improved site plan review process and standards



Boys and Girls Club built in 2001

# 3

## Community Setting

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### Regional Context

Chelsea is located just north of Boston and shares borders with Revere on the north and east, Everett on the west, and Boston across the harbor and Chelsea Creek. As a diverse, working class community that contains a high level of industrial activity, Chelsea has many similarities to its surroundings. Revere, Everett and the portions of Boston adjacent to Chelsea are similarly working class residential and industrial areas. Chelsea is only 2.2 square miles in area, with an estimated population of 41,577<sup>1</sup>; the city is very densely settled, surpassing its neighbors with almost 18,899 people per square mile. Chelsea is the 38<sup>th</sup> highest populated city or town of the 351 in Massachusetts.

Chelsea has four and one-half miles of waterfront made up of four bordering waterways. These are the Island End River, the Mystic River, Chelsea Creek, and Mill Creek. Three bridges provide vehicular access from Chelsea to Boston. The Tobin Bridge (Route 1) connects to Charlestown, and the Meridian Street and Chelsea Street Bridges connect to East Boston.

Most of Chelsea's major land use patterns have been influenced by its context. As a result of its proximity to Boston, Chelsea has become the site of distribution centers such as the New England Produce Market. The relationship to Logan Airport has made Chelsea an attractive location for airport-related commercial and industrial activity, including freight forwarding and employee parking. Chelsea's waterfront provides access to Boston Harbor, the majority of which is restricted to industrial and maritime uses under the state's Designated Port Area (DPA) regulations. As a result of this, a number of petroleum storage facilities and a salt pile are located here.



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<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program—2008

<sup>2</sup> The ICC is comprised of representatives from twenty of the metropolitan area's innermost communities: Arlington,



## MAPC and MetroFuture

Chelsea is a member of the Inner Core Committee (ICC), which is one of eight subregions of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). The ICC is a group of 20 cities and towns<sup>2</sup> that meet regularly to discuss issues of common interest, thereby creating an excellent forum for discussing regional issues, including open space and recreation planning and opportunities.

Adopted in June 2009, *MetroFuture*<sup>3</sup> is the official regional smart growth plan for the Greater Boston area. The plan includes goals and objectives, along with thirteen detailed implementation strategies for accomplishing these goals. Several examples of how this Plan is consistent with *MetroFuture* include:

- Implement Coordinated Plans – As discussed in more detail below, Chelsea collaborated with five other Inner Core communities to prepare the Lower Mystic River Corridor Strategy.
- Protect Natural Landscapes – As demonstrated in this Plan, the recommendations provide support for the enhancement and preservation of natural landscapes such as those along the waterfront. While recognizing that Chelsea is predominantly an urban environment, efforts have been made to protect existing natural resources such as the Mystic River.
- Expand Coordinated Transportation – The Chelsea OSRP advocates for increased bicycle, pedestrian, and transit accessibility.
- Conserve Natural Resources – The City will continue to seek ways to better manage water, stormwater, and energy resources throughout the City's operations.

Additionally, this Plan includes discussion of regional resources, which is consistent with *MetroFuture*'s goal of encouraging regional efforts to protect open space and natural resources – particularly ones that cross municipal borders. The Lower Mystic River Corridor Strategy is a primary example of this and is discussed below.

## The Lower Mystic River Corridor Strategy<sup>4</sup>

The Lower Mystic River Corridor Strategy is a plan prepared for the cities of Boston, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford and Somerville by the MAPC. The study area encompassed 6.14 square miles of the 76 square mile Mystic River watershed. This

<sup>2</sup> The ICC is comprised of representatives from twenty of the metropolitan area's innermost communities: Arlington, Belmont, Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Lynn, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Milton, Newton, Quincy, Revere, Saugus, Somerville, Waltham, Watertown and Winthrop.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.metrofuture.org>

<sup>4</sup> Metropolitan Area Planning Council, The Lower Mystic River Corridor Strategy: Working Together to Achieve the Full Potential of the Lower Mystic, June 2009, <http://www.mapc.org/smart-growth/environment/mystic-river>

effort is designed to improve the quality of life along the river corridor and enhance the river environment. The overall vision of the plan is to create new open space opportunities by improving existing open spaces, acquiring new ones, and creating a connected trail network that is easily accessible through a variety of transportation modes. It is envisioned that economically viable maritime uses would continue to exist in a manner that is compatible with adjacent commercial, residential, and recreational uses along the corridor. Environmentally sustainable practices and low impact development techniques will be utilized to maintain and improve the environmental quality of the area.

Six strategies will be employed to achieve this vision<sup>5</sup>.

- Strategy #1: Acquire, Protect, Enhance and Link Regionally Significant Open Space Parcels
- Strategy #2: Enhance and Encourage Sustainable Development and Redevelopment within the Corridor
- Strategy #3: Improve Access to and along the River through the Development of Water Transportation, Public Transit, Roadway Improvements, and Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations
- Strategy #4: Work With Regional Partners to Influence Policy and Ensure that Agencies and Organizations Have Sufficient Resources to Effect Change on the Mystic River
- Strategy #5: Develop and Advocate for a Strong Legislative Response to Mystic River Needs
- Strategy #6: Develop and Maintain an Information Clearinghouse

The plan identified 11 priority open space initiatives. The one that is listed in Chelsea is the CSX right-of-way. This project, which was mentioned in the 2003 Chelsea OSRP, involves the development of a multi-use path along all or a portion of the unused right-of-way in Chelsea from Eastern Avenue to Sixth Street, which is now owned by CSX. This right-of-way serves as a critical link between various public transportation routes, the neighborhoods, and the river as part of the proposed Urban Ring project (a plan to develop a transit ring through Boston's inner suburbs). This is identified as an implementation strategy in the Seven Year Action Plan described in Section 9 of this Plan.

The plan also includes reference to identifying open space opportunities in the Designated Port Area along Chelsea Creek. This is discussed further in Section 4 below.



<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-4

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## History of the Community

The Pawtucket Indians, a division of the Algonkian Tribe, had a settlement called Winnisimmet on the site of present-day Chelsea. In 1624, a 22-year-old Englishman named Samuel Maverick saw the lucrative potential in establishing permanent trade with Winnisimmet. With a small band of followers, he set up a permanent homestead there, the first one in Boston Harbor, and began a profitable career trading with the Pawtuckets.

Ten years later, Maverick sold his homestead to Governor Richard Bellingham. The Governor divided the land into four farms named after the tenant farmers who leased them; Williams, Carter, Shurtleff and Gary, for whom city streets are named. The area became known as Chelsea and developed a role as an agricultural community and beach resort.

An act of the legislature, passed January 10, 1739 established Chelsea as an independent town, separate from Boston. The extent of Chelsea at this time included all of present day Chelsea, Winthrop, Revere, and part of Saugus. In 1841, the area of Chelsea known as the panhandle was set off to the town of Saugus. On March 19, 1846, North Chelsea (present day Revere and Winthrop) became a separate town. In 1857, Chelsea was granted a charter as a city.

Historically, Chelsea's development was the result of water-related transportation facilities, including bridges, ferries, and Naval installations. As early as 1631, there was a ferry service between Chelsea and Boston, which operated in some form for 250 years. In 1775, at the Battle of Chelsea Creek, Colonial forces captured a British schooner in the first naval battle of the American Revolution. In 1803, the first Chelsea-Charlestown bridge was built. However, Chelsea remained largely uninhabited until a new Steam Ferry was provided in 1831.

Along with greater access to the city came greater population. In 1820, Chelsea's population was only 642. When chartered as a city in 1857, its population skyrocketed to in excess of 12,000 people. In 1925, Chelsea's population peaked at 47,247.

In the early 1800s, the U.S. Navy established one of the first naval hospitals in the nation on Admiral's Hill in Chelsea. Munitions for the USS Constitution were stored in a building that still stands on this site.

The Mystic River Bridge, now known as the Tobin Bridge, was opened in 1950. The construction of this bridge and the elevated Route 1 caused 55 houses and 462 families to be relocated, and effectively cut the physical fabric of the community in half. This impact of the bridge's presence in the city persists to this day.

Another major factor in the development of Chelsea has been fire. On the morning of Palm Sunday, April 12, 1908, a devastating fire swept across the center of the city. School buildings, churches, public buildings and seventeen miles of city streets were completely destroyed and 16,000 people were left homeless. Over 2,800 buildings

covering 280 acres in the heart of the city were burned to the ground, resulting in a reduction in the city's valuation of about 20%. In 1973, another major fire occurred that devastated 18 city blocks west of Route 1.

The damage caused by these fires was repaired through a reconstruction effort that occurred over a relatively short period of time rather than through incremental development with gradual replacement, rehabilitation, or modification of older buildings. This process has created a marked contrast in building type, scale, and urban character between newer and older parts of the city. In particular, the area destroyed by the 1973 fire has been rebuilt with large-scale buildings serving commercial and industrial uses.

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## Demographic Characteristics

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### Overall Population Trends

Chelsea is a densely developed, working class community with a diverse population. After 1920, the population of Chelsea steadily declined, reaching its lowest point in 60 years with a population of 25,431 in 1980. In the last twenty years, there has been a steady recovery, and the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 population estimate for Chelsea has risen to 41,577. Since 1990 when Chelsea counted 28,710 residents, there has been an increase of over 45%. Since 1980, the increase has been almost 66%. This can be attributed to in-migration, including significant influxes of a number of minority populations, as well as better counting in "hard-to-count" communities such as Chelsea.

**Table 3-1**  
**Population Trend 1920 - 2008**

1920	41,000
1930	45,000
1940	39,500
1950	38,000
1960	33,500
1970	30,500
1980	25,431
1990	28,710
2000	35,080
2008	41,577



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## Density

Chelsea is a very densely populated community. There are pockets (census blocks) in the Shurtleff-Bellingham, Downtown, and Addison-Orange neighborhoods where population density is above 200 people per acre. The least dense residential portions of the city are Prattville and the Mill Hill area. High density in Chelsea results from a combination of a housing stock that includes many apartments and the tendency for recent immigrant groups to share apartments with extended family members and friends. Twelve census blocks within the city have mean housing unit densities above 50 units per acre.



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## Ethnic Composition

According to the Census Bureau's 2006–2008 American Community Survey 3-year estimates, the total number of minority residents now stands at approximately 37.1 percent of the total population. Thus, Chelsea is a highly diverse community, with many cultures added to the mix.

The following statistics from the American Community Survey 3-year estimates illustrate the diversity of Chelsea's population:

- 56.1 percent of the city's population is of Hispanic or Latino origin; this identity overlaps with various racial identities<sup>6</sup>
- 56 percent identified themselves as White (31.7 percent as "White alone")
- 9 percent identified themselves as Black or African-American
- 1.9 percent are Asian
- 10.9 percent identified themselves as some other race
- 22.1 percent are of two or more races



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## Age and Gender Distribution

According to the American Community Survey, 8.9 percent of Chelsea's population is under five years of age, 17 percent of the population is between five and seventeen years, and 11.4 percent of the population is over age sixty-five. Altogether, these younger and older age groups constitute 37.3 percent of Chelsea's population. These age groups represent the least independent segment of the population in terms of transportation access, and therefore the most in need of nearby open space and recreational facilities.



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<sup>6</sup> Due to the number of sample cases being too small, updated data was not available through the American Community Survey. The information presented in this bullet reflects 2000 Census information.

**Table 3-2**  
**2008 Population Distribution by Age**

Age	Percent of Population
Under five years	8.9
5-17 years	17
18-24 years	8.9
25-44 years	35.7
45-54 years	10.9
55-64 years	7.2
65-74 years	5.3
Over 75 years	6.1

The male population represented 46.7 percent and the female population is 53.3 percent of the total.

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## Jobs and Income

Chelsea's population has one of the lowest median incomes in the state. The median household income in 2008 according to the American Community Survey was \$21,783. The median household income is \$39,439, which is lower than any of the communities surrounding the City. The percentage of Chelsea residents living below the poverty level was 20 percent in 2008, which is significantly higher than the statewide average.

In December 2009, the unemployment rate in Chelsea was 10.9 percent, compared to a state average of 9.4 percent, recognizing that this is a statistical high as a result of the current recession.



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## Industry

### Average Employment

The sector of industry with the largest average employment in Chelsea is Public Administration. According to the 2008 figures from the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, 1,727 people are employed in this sector, see Table 3-3. It is interesting to note that while this sector employs the most people in Chelsea it has one of the lowest establishment totals—16, as seen in Chart 3-1. The industries with the next highest level of average employment are respectively: Health Care & Social Assistance and Retail Trade. The Health Care & Social Assistance sector employs 1,696 while the Retail Trade sector employs 1,427.<sup>7</sup>

### Total Wages

Public Administration also accounts for the largest sum of total wages in Chelsea by more than 18 percent over the second place industry of Wholesale Trade. The Transportation and Warehousing sector represents the next highest contributor to total wages in the City. The combination of the large amount of total employees in the Wholesale Trade and Public Administration sectors, along with the relatively high average weekly wages contribute to the higher ranking for these two industries.<sup>8</sup>

### Average Weekly Wage

The industry with the highest average weekly wage is Wholesale Trade with an average of \$1,265 per employee. This is followed by Construction and then Professional & Technical Services. The lowest average weekly wage in Chelsea is \$332 in the Accommodation and Food Services sector. The average weekly wage for all industries in Chelsea is \$846 per employee.<sup>9</sup>



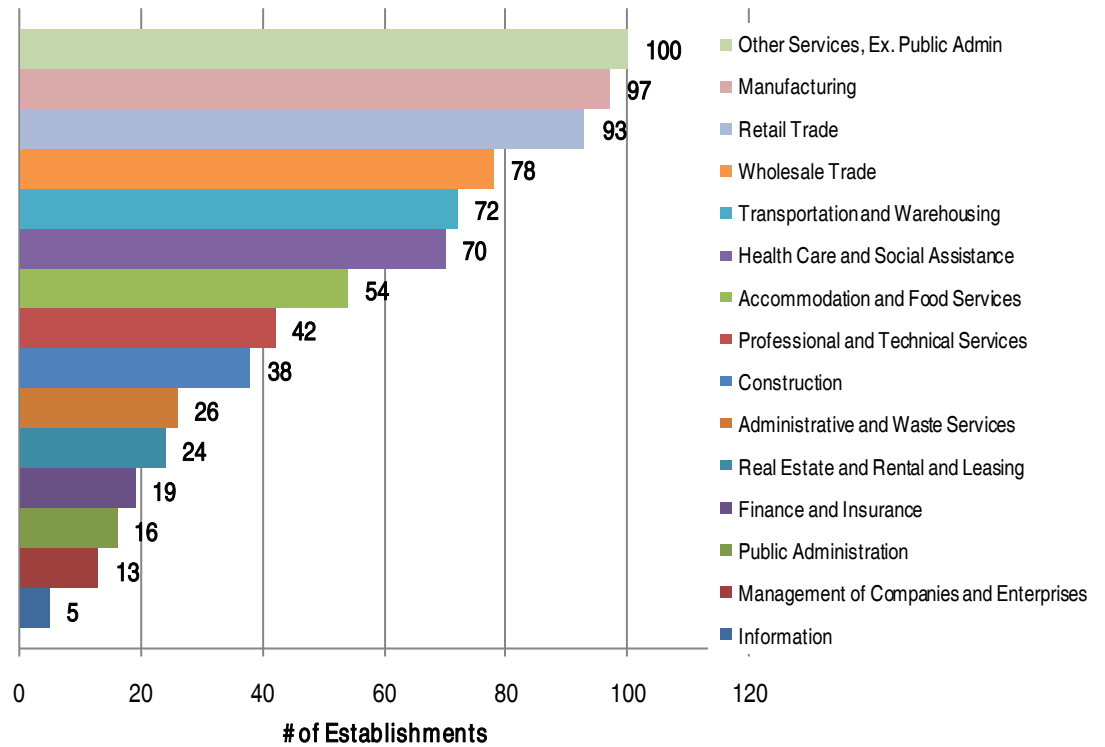
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<sup>7</sup> Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, [http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/lmi\\_town.asp?Area=000141](http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/lmi_town.asp?Area=000141)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

**Chart 3-1**  
**2008 Industry Establishment Totals in Chelsea**



Source: Commonwealth of MA, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development—<http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/Townbox.asp>



**Table 3-3**  
**2008 Average Employment and Wages by Industry in Chelsea**

Industry	Establishments	Total Wages	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wage
Construction	38	\$21,399,635	340	\$1,210
Manufacturing	97	\$61,697, 448	1,391	\$853
Wholesale Trade	78	\$85,415,705	1,299	\$1,265
Retail Trade	93	\$42,791,947	1,427	\$577
Transportation and Warehousing	72	\$68,310,906	1,421	\$924
Information	5	\$741, 475	25	\$570
Finance and Insurance	19	\$4,501,044	123	\$704
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	24	\$4,759,834	116	\$789
Professional and Technical Services	42	\$16,788,423	272	\$1,187
Management of Companies and Enterprises	13	\$16,525,677	296	\$1,074
Administrative and Waste Services	26	\$27,743,359	1,045	\$511
Health Care and Social Assistance	70	\$60,785,633	1,696	\$689
Accommodation and Food Services	54	\$11,942,809	691	\$332
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	100	\$11,641,520	362	\$618
Public Administration	16	\$104,149,198	1,727	\$1,160
<b>Total</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>\$586,087,992</b>	<b>13,328</b>	<b>\$846</b>

Source: Commonwealth of MA, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development—<http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/Townbox.asp>

## ■ Environmental Justice Population(s) Characteristics

...  
*Environmental justice populations are those segments of the population that include high percentages of minority and low-income people that may experience disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental impacts.*  
 ...

The entire City of Chelsea is occupied with environmental justice (EJ) populations. Specifically, there are twenty-seven EJ census block groups within the City, as identified by MassGIS. These EJ populations are defined as minority or foreign born populations exceeding 25 percent of the total block group or a household earning 65 percent or less of the statewide median household income according to the most recent US Census data. The areas have been assigned a number and are examined in detail in the table below—see *Map 2, Environmental Justice Populations*, for correlation and location.

The primary ethnic group in Chelsea is Hispanic and therefore the language most frequently spoken aside from English is Spanish. Asian populations are also

significant, which can encompass a variety of languages. Of the 27 census block groups, only five fall below the 75% threshold for English proficiency.

**Table 3-4**  
**Environmental Justice Populations**

<i>Area Number<sup>10</sup></i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent Foreign Born</i>	<i>Median Household Income</i>	<i>Percent Minority</i>	<i>Percent Proficient in English</i>
1	1,861	48	\$25,324	83	82
2	1,391	45	\$32,083	75	73
3	1,684	23	\$32,067	61	90
4	1,051	28	\$41,563	74	87
5	1,554	47	\$33,269	86	89
6	1,269	51	\$28,906	83	68
7	1,156	51	\$21,750	90	64
8	1,495	42	\$29,375	71	80
9	677	17	\$41,544	30	91
10	1,567	20	\$34,402	26	90
11	938	52	\$29,766	71	64
12	1,833	58	\$22,829	83	67
13	1,383	13	\$30,972	40	85
14	1,374	31	\$25,321	54	90
15	1,665	39	\$26,163	61	74
16	1,293	39	\$48,839	66	75
17	759	21	\$9,752	63	79
18	1,006	56	\$24,743	85	73
19	1,927	50	\$32,379	73	73
20	849	34	\$26,976	76	79
21	794	19	\$29,053	24	97
22	778	17	\$28,088	57	90
23	1,572	24	\$30,250	53	87
24	2,266	34	\$43,125	50	82
25	1,226	28	\$35,739	50	86
26	765	17	\$29,688	25	97
27	947	23	\$27,198	16	90

Source: MassGIS, note: EJ population shapes are based from Census 2000 block groups

Chelsea is a compact community with its open space and recreation resources spread evenly throughout the City. As such, all of the environmental justice populations are well served by Chelsea's open space and recreation network, although many of these parks are smaller playgrounds and pocket parks. See *Map 2, Environmental Justice*



<sup>10</sup> The demographic data described in this table is shown on Map 2 for its corresponding location in Chelsea.

*Populations.* The north of the City is served by facilities such as Voke Park, Washington Park, and Scrivano Park. Towards the center of the City, Carter Park, Malone Park, and the Mary C. Burke Elementary School Complex are available to meet citizen's needs. Finally, in the southern portion of the City, residents can easily access Kayem Park, Mary O'Malley Waterfront Park, Polonia Park, Highland Park, and Quigley Park. As described elsewhere in the Plan, the City has added several new parks that have been well-received by city residents.

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## Growth and Development Patterns

Chelsea is a fully urbanized community in which there is little vacant land. New development occurs largely through a process of redeveloping existing land. Given its proximity to the airport, Boston Harbor, and significant roadways, the City plays an important role in providing access to a number of industries, especially along the working waterfront. The current pattern of land use is indicative of past trends and long-term future development patterns.

### ■ Neighborhoods

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North of the railroad and east of Route 1 lie the Mill Hill, Soldiers Home (or Powderhorn Hill), and Addison-Orange neighborhoods. Prattville lies west of Route 1. Washington Avenue runs through Prattville and connects it with the Addison-Orange and Soldiers Home neighborhoods and Downtown.

South of the railroad lies the Downtown/Lower Broadway neighborhood, which includes residential, downtown business, institutional and government uses. East of downtown is the large Shurtleff-Bellingham neighborhood. The Admirals Hill residential development occupies a drumlin at the south end of Chelsea.

Two major shopping centers serve Chelsea and adjacent cities. They are the Mystic Mall on Everett Avenue at Spruce Street, and Chelsea Commons at the north end of the city adjacent to Revere Beach Parkway and Mill Creek.

The Chelsea Creek waterfront is occupied by petroleum tank farms, a bulk salt storage area, airport-related trucking services, and parking for airport employees. A parking garage near Chelsea Creek serving employees at Logan Airport and several private parking lots for airline and car rental companies are located at the waterfront along Eastern Avenue and Marginal Street. Forbes Industrial Park comprises a group of older industrial buildings at the mouth of Mill Creek, which are currently under redevelopment for residential use.

The triangle that separates the Shurtleff-Bellingham and Mill Hill neighborhoods is formed by the existing MBTA commuter rail line on the north and the unused CSX railroad bed on the south. This area is zoned for and occupied by industrial uses,

primarily airport-related trucking. In 2001, a ten acre parcel was redeveloped for the MWRA office building and north shore maintenance facility.



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## Patterns and Trends

When Chelsea was established as an independent Town from Boston in 1739 its extents included all of present day Chelsea, Winthrop, Revere, and part of Saugus. In 1841, the area of Chelsea known as the panhandle was set off to the Town of Saugus. On March 19, 1846, North Chelsea (present day Revere and Winthrop) became a separate town. In 1857, Chelsea was granted a charter as a city.

Chelsea's development has been the result of water-related transportation facilities, including bridges, ferries, and Naval installations. As early as 1631, there was ferry service between Chelsea and Boston, which operated in some form for 250 years. In 1775, at the Battle of Chelsea Creek, Colonial forces captured a British schooner in the first naval battle of the American Revolution. In 1803, the first Chelsea-Charlestown bridge was built. However, Chelsea remained largely uninhabited until a new Steam Ferry was provided in 1831.

Along with greater access to the city came greater population. In 1820, Chelsea's population was only 642. When chartered as a city in 1857, its population skyrocketed to in excess of 12,000 people. In 1925, Chelsea's population peaked at 47,247 and it currently stands at 34,356.

The City is a highly urbanized, densely populated community with a significant industrial component. It is essentially built out with very little open land remaining. On the west side of Chelsea, in a sector of the city that was razed by the fire of 1973, large commercial and light industrial developments are occurring, leading to higher use of the land. In recent years much of this area has been redeveloping as a result of city efforts and the 1998 Everett Avenue Urban Revitalization and Development Plan. A new hotel opened on Everett Ave, at the corner of Maple Street in 2000, and other parcels have been cleared and are planned for new office buildings. The Massachusetts Information Technology Center (MITC, a state data processing facility) was built in this area in the early 1990s, the Chelsea Produce Market and related businesses serve a regional market. A new office building at Harbour Point Office park was recently completed in this same area. The fate of the Mystic Mall, set on a large parcel to the west of Everett Ave, remains to be seen. The 39 acre mall site was purchased by the Market Basket grocery chain and is in the process of redevelopment. In 2009, Market Basket opened a new 140,000 square foot store, the flagship outlet of the chain, and the chain is in the process of working with the City to redevelop the site for a mixed-use transit-oriented development.

## Infrastructure

### Transportation

Major highways and active rail lines traverse the City; commuter bus and train services are readily available, too. Thus, there is direct access to Boston by using multiple modes of transportation. Logan Airport is only a few minutes away and is accessed via a variety of local roadways. Chelsea's major transportation routes include Route 1 / Tobin Bridge (with several on and off ramps in Chelsea), and the MBTA North Shore Commuter Railroad, which divides the city into quadrants. The major streets are as follows; Broadway which acts as a north-south spine through the city, Revere Beach Parkway (Route 16) which parallels Route 1, Marginal Street and Eastern Avenue which are truck routes running along the waterfront to the south and west, and Everett Avenue to the west of Broadway. Access to East Boston is via the Meridian Street and Chelsea Street Bridges, which connect to Marginal Street in Chelsea.

The first stop of the Newburyport/Rockport Commuter Rail out of Boston is in Chelsea (Arlington and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets). There are no subway stops in Chelsea, although there are several Blue Line stations in nearby Revere and East Boston. Some of the bus routes connecting at these stations run into Chelsea, as well as connecting to Red and Orange Line stations that bring passengers into downtown Boston. With its dense population, it is important for Chelsea residents to have access to public transportation.

Another important component is the port facilities along the waterfront, particularly along Chelsea Creek and the Island End River. The freight traffic consists mainly of road salt, petroleum, and petroleum products, and the New England Produce Center is located nearby as well.

### Water Supply

Most development in Chelsea is serviced by a public sanitary sewer system and a public water distribution system. All of Chelsea has sanitary services available. However, older sanitary sewers, storm sewers, and water lines without modern seals are subject to infiltration/outflow problems.

### Sewer Service

Chelsea is fully sewered and supplied with water by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). Approximately 70 percent of Chelsea's sewer system is a combined system—both wastewater and stormwater are carried through the same conduit. During periods of dry weather Chelsea's wastewater is conveyed to the MWRA and onto Deer Island for treatment. During periods of heavy rain the combined wastewater and stormwater is discharged untreated via four Combined

Sewer Overflows (CSOs). This action prevents backups of flows into area homes and businesses. The four CSOs are as follows<sup>11</sup>: (1) CHE002 Located on Broadway and discharges to Boston Inner Harbor, (2) CHE003 Located on Winnisimmet Street and discharges to Chelsea River, (3) CHE004 Located on Pearl Street and discharges to Chelsea River, and (4) CHE008 Located on Eastern Avenue and discharges to Chelsea River.

Separation of combined sewers is something the City is in the process of accomplishing. This will both increase service efficiency and decrease environmental contamination via untreated discharges. Additionally, the upgrade of water mains is an ongoing concern in the City.



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## Long-term Development Patterns

Chelsea's zoning map closely reflects current land use and development efforts. A Waterfront District was established to promote water-oriented industrial uses at Forbes Industrial Park and the lower Chelsea Creek waterfront. Most of the waterfront from the Tobin Bridge to the mouth of Mill Creek is a Designated Port Area (DPA). As such, development in this area must be reviewed for consistency with water-related and port uses by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the Coastal Zone Management Program (see discussion of the DPA in Section 4). However, waterfront park access is compatible with appropriate port uses in many instances as recommended in the Chelsea Creek Waterfront Plan (see recommendations of that plan in Section 9). Therefore the Action Plan that follows proposes several places where waterfront access can be improved.

Given the built-out nature of the City, any future development will be the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized parcels. An important element of any redevelopment is the continuing effort to enhance the City's neighborhoods with road and sidewalk projects, working with local non-profits such as the Chelsea Neighborhood Developers on development projects, housing affordability, and the creation of new parks when the opportunity presents itself. The current challenge brought about by the spate of foreclosures is being addressed through local and state neighborhood revitalization programs. Additionally, the City is working to reduce the residential and industrial conflicts that have existed for a number of years.

Among the more recent developments of significance are:

- Market Basket located at 160 Everett Ave., which replaced a run-down underperforming store;
- John M. Corcoran Management residential project – 260 apartments (adjacent to Creekside Commons Park);



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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.ci.chelsea.ma.us/Public\\_Documents/ChelseaMA\\_DPW/cso.htm](http://www.ci.chelsea.ma.us/Public_Documents/ChelseaMA_DPW/cso.htm)

- Affordable housing project for developmentally delayed individuals in downtown's Till Building;
- Parkway Plaza, a 222,000 square foot retail development anchored by Home Depot, located at 1100 Revere Beach Parkway;
- The smart growth redevelopment of the Box District, a former industrial property, into affordable and market rate housing along with newly constructed streets;
- JPI development of 160 market-rate units on Admiral's Hill; and
- Chelsea Jewish Nursing Home, a 100-bed "green" nursing home.



Quigley Park

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## Surrounding Communities

Chelsea residents use regional recreational facilities in surrounding communities that are accessible via MBTA bus service, such as Revere Beach and the Downtown Boston waterfront. The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) owns land (Mary O'Malley Memorial Park – the City's largest park) and operates an ice skating rink on the Revere side of Mill Creek and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Pool. The Northeast Petroleum site in Chelsea overlooks a waterfront open space on Condor Street in East Boston. Open spaces and recreation facilities in Everett do not serve large numbers of Chelsea residents nor have major potential to do so. Although there may be some limited use of Chelsea's parks and open space by residents of other communities, the extent of this use is organized sports involving inter-

community leagues, particularly soccer. The DCR's Mary O'Malley Park is a regional passive open space that may receive wider use, but is separated from Everett's residential neighborhoods by extensive industrial land areas in both cities.

Coordination with surrounding cities is an appropriate way to increase open space opportunities and potential, given the relatively small amounts of available open space in the City. This is particularly true with regard to the improvement of the Condor Street Wilds in East Boston, and potential bicycle connections to East Boston and Revere. These opportunities are discussed in the Action Plan section of this report. Additionally, as discussed above, Chelsea is a participating community in the Lower Mystic River Corridor Strategy.



# 4

## Environmental Inventory & Analysis

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### Geology, Soils, and Topography

The topography of Chelsea consists primarily of coastal lowlands, punctuated by four drumlins formed during the last Ice Age. These drumlins are located in the southwest (Admirals Hill), southeast (Mount Bellingham), northeast (Powderhorn Hill) and northwest (Mount Washington). A smaller drumlin (Mill Hill) is located on the east side of Chelsea, adjacent to Mill Creek. Soils in the city are primarily urban fill, and there is very little undeveloped land. The U.S. Soil Conservation Service identified four other major soil classifications. Woodbridge-Urban complex, Newport-Urban Complex, and Canton-Urban Complex comprise most of the city's land area not designated as urban. The Udorthents classification of wet substratum is found along portions of the city's waterfront. Chelsea has no undeveloped areas designated as prime agricultural land.

The topography of the area provides a number of amenities for recreational development, both on the hills that provide lovely views over the city to the Harbor and Boston, and along the waterfront. Currently however, these opportunities have not been fully developed. Most of the waterfront is used for industrial purposes and much of the hilltop areas are covered with residential development.

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### Landscape Character, Scenic Resources, and Unique Environments

Chelsea is bordered on three sides by water, giving the city a unique character and a potentially high degree of access to waterfront areas. The Mystic River borders Chelsea on the southwest, the Chelsea Creek and Mill Creek on the east, and the Island End River on the west. Mill Creek is bordered by marshy wetlands between the developed portions of the city and the creek itself. Chelsea Creek has a more

abrupt shoreline, with filled areas dropping off quickly into the creek and industrial uses obscuring much of the access to the shore. The city's accessible frontage on the Mystic River is mostly in the Admiral's Hill area, which has banks gradually sloping down to the water on recreation land,

Chelsea's character is not only related to its adjacent rivers, but also to the character of its landscape. The land in Chelsea is occupied by the five glacial drumlins described above, rising 150'-200' above sea level. This sloped and hilly landscape helps to divide the city into discernible neighborhoods, each with its own character, thereby giving the city a manageable sense of scale and orientation (see Map 4). From the tops of these drumlins, there are dramatic views of Boston, Revere, and other surrounding areas. Despite the fact that in most of the city the natural landscape has been completely covered by development, Chelsea's topography and proximity to water remain dominant features.

Chelsea has no areas listed on the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's Areas of Critical Environmental Concern or Scenic Landscape Inventory.

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## Neighborhood Character



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### Admirals Hill

Admirals Hill sits atop a point of land between the Mystic River and Island End River. The slopes of the hill are covered by residential development enjoying expansive views. On the south slope of the hill is the site of the historic Naval Hospital, with several brick and granite structures that have been converted to other uses. Between the Naval Hospital and the shoreline is the DCR's Mary O'Malley Park. This park is a major resource for the City, and is composed of broad sweeping expanses of grassy areas with picnic facilities, parking areas, a pier, and a pedestrian and bicycle path.



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### Lower Broadway

The Lower Broadway neighborhood is a small area nestled at the foot of the Tobin Bridge as it completes its span of the Mystic River and merges once again with the land. This area is characterized by low and flat land, and contains mostly attached three and four-story residential brick row houses. The streets are narrow and shady with very short blocks. The views looking across to Boston from Ferry Street are among the best in Chelsea. Three small open spaces serve this neighborhood: Polonia and Ciepiella Parks and O'Neil Tot-Lot.

## **Downtown Area**

The Downtown area is an intact commercial district that also contains many of the city's municipal buildings, such as the City Hall, the Library and the Police Station. Urban redevelopment projects have occurred in past years that have provided the funding to implement streetscape improvements, including those called for in the 1994 Open Space Plan. As a result, many of the sidewalks and crosswalks are paved with brick and relatively new bollards, street trees, and street furniture have been installed, although some are in disrepair. Surrounding the Downtown area are residential neighborhoods of three and four-story apartment buildings and attached row houses, primarily constructed of brick. Two public squares serve the neighborhood – Bellingham Square and Chelsea Square. Also proximate is the Williams School, the site of the Chelsea Community Schools, and Kayem Park, a small park that was recently constructed with State funds.

## **Marginal Street**

Although Marginal Street runs along much of the city's frontage on Chelsea Creek, its potential to provide attractive views is currently limited. While Marginal Street gives access to the many industrial uses that are located along the waterfront, these views do not open up to the harbor as do those from the waterfront areas to the west. The views across Chelsea Creek to the East Boston shore include waterfront industrial sites and storage tanks, sites planned for open space and residential neighborhoods on Eagle Hill above the waterfront.

## **Shurtleff-Bellingham Neighborhood**

The land in this neighborhood slopes upward to the top of Mount Bellingham from the flats of Marginal Street. The houses in this neighborhood are primarily detached wood-frame three and four-story buildings along streets that are often treeless. The tight arrangement of these buildings and the high population in the area result in a relatively high density neighborhood. The main landscape features in this neighborhood are the Garden Cemetery, a cool but inaccessible burial ground in the middle of a residential grid of streets, and the peak of the hill at the intersection of Highland and Bellingham Streets, on which the new Bellingham Hill Park provides dramatic views, albeit somewhat limited by the residential and institutional development which encircle it. Bosson and Quigley Playgrounds and Highland Park also are located in this neighborhood. The Chelsea Early Learning Center is located in the old Shurtleff School, and the Jordan Boys and Girls Club is located on Willow Street.

## Mill Hill

The residential area that surrounds Merritt Park and the new Burke Elementary School has many pleasant characteristics. This area is largely composed of two- and three-story wood frame detached buildings. Covering the smallest of the city's drumlins, the Mill Hill neighborhood sits on a small neck of land bounded by Chelsea Creek and Mill Creek. The creeks merge and widen at this point, which provides pleasant views looking both toward the East Boston shore and back toward the city. The Revere shore across Mill Creek is lined with marshes that provide a buffer to the developed areas behind it. An old, wood-frame industrial structure on the Revere side was converted into a museum and provides an interesting visual focal point to the marshes that is unobtrusive despite being a built object in an otherwise natural environment. Dever Park is located in this neighborhood.

## Addison-Orange Neighborhood

Adjacent to the north side of downtown is the Addison-Orange neighborhood. Smaller lot sizes and a relatively flat terrain result in a residential urban density that relates to the Downtown area. Where Route 1 sweeps along the western edge of the neighborhood, residential density decreases. Use and scale at this point change from a tight arrangement of relatively small-scale residential buildings to a series of vacant parcels, which were cleared and await high-density residential development as part of the Everett Avenue Urban Renewal Area project. Limited views from within the approximately 20 square block neighborhood provide brief glimpses of the Tobin Bridge and Route 1 to the west and north. This neighborhood is located next to the new High School and Carter Park, but has only one public open space within it, Eden Street Park.

In 2009, a Revitalization Plan was prepared for this neighborhood to address housing, real estate development, and infrastructure issues in the area. Specifically, the plan focused on the following issues:

- Housing foreclosures, overcrowding and illegal rooming houses
- Infrastructure and open space needs
- Redevelopment of the urban renewal district<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Vine Associates, Addison-Orange Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, August 2009



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## Broadway

Broadway's commercial district runs like a spine through Chelsea, with the Tobin Bridge looming over the western end and views into Revere at the eastern end. This road is a major source of orientation within the city, giving visitors a clear picture of their location in relation to Chelsea's major landmarks.



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## Chelsea Commons (formerly Parkway Plaza)

Chelsea Commons sits on a low flat area near the end of Mill Creek. The plaza is comprised of big-box retail, fast-food restaurants, and large apartment building. Behind the plaza, however, the Mill Creek winds its way back to its termination at the highway. It is bordered by a strip of wetlands on both sides that are a valuable remnant of the natural landscape in this heavily developed area. A pedestrian bicycle path follows the Chelsea side of the Mill Creek. The new Chelsea Commons Park was just completed adjacent to this site.



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## Soldiers Home Neighborhood

The Soldiers Home neighborhood covers the steep slopes and the peak of Powderhorn Hill. This residential area contains some examples of Queen Anne style architecture. Soldiers Home is one of the least dense neighborhoods in the city and benefits from the presence of Malone Park, a flat open space which lies just to the west of the peak of the hill. At the peak sits the Soldiers Home, a large structure that dominates much of this area. However, there are some smaller brick structures associated with the home that are of a visually more manageable scale and command glorious views across Chelsea and East Boston to the marshes around the airport and the ocean beyond, as well as views of downtown Boston. This property is owned by the State but maintained by the City.



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## Carter Park Area

The neighborhood around Carter Park is a small enclave of mostly single-family Queen Anne style homes surrounded by heavy commercial and highly trafficked areas. The highway looms above the southeastern edge, and Revere Beach Parkway winds along the northern edge. Limited access is provided from the parkway into the tree-lined neighborhood. Although Carter Park is a sloped area, the neighborhood is not at one of the high elevations in Chelsea. The slope gives way and flattens out into Carter Park, which lies bounded by the neighborhood, the Chelsea Stadium, Chelsea High School, and the highway above. Residents of the neighborhood have both visual and physical access to the park and new high school, and the commercial area

beyond. A DCR pool (Vietnam Veterans Memorial Swimming Pool), was closed several years ago, and was recently reconstructed and has since reopened.



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## Prattville Neighborhood

The Prattville neighborhood climbs up a drumlin from Washington Park, spreading north and east toward the boundaries of Everett and Revere. Covering the top of the drumlin, this area is characterized by narrow, steep, tree-lined streets. Sporadic glimpses of the Boston skyline and Everett in the distance, as well as views of Powderhorn Hill and Washington Park can be attained at the higher elevations of the neighborhood. The lower areas rest closer to the commercial zone and have more limited views to such features as Powderhorn Hill and the highway.

Washington Park sits on the south-facing slope of one of the city's drumlins and is effectively a "town green" for the neighborhood. A relatively small commercial area on one side of the park is dominated by the three residential edges. The park is clearly identifiable, with a low stonewall and many canopy trees, and provides a well-used connection and transition from a small commercial area to the Prattville residential area beyond. Views of Powderhorn Hill can be seen from the north side of the park.

Voke Park is a multi-use sports facility that sits on the base of the north side of the Prattville drumlin (very close to Everett and Revere). Streets are wider here than in other sections of the neighborhood and a mixture of building types provides a heterogeneous character that is different from the other side of the drumlin. Adjacent to the north corner of the park is a small commercial zone where public access to the park is most available. Views are limited to the residential hills of Revere.

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## Historic and Cultural Resources

Chelsea is the site of four districts that are included in the National Register of Historic Places (see Map 5). It also contains four independent properties that are on the National Register. In 2000, the Chelsea Historic Commission, with funding from the State, completed an extensive survey of historic residences, as well as a survey of historic industrial properties in the City. Chelsea's location on the fringes of Boston as an early settlement site, and its current appeal to many of the new residents of Boston, make it a city that continues to have an evolving historical and cultural significance. A description of the National Register Districts and properties follows.

## National Register Districts

**Bellingham Square District:** Broadway, Chester, Chestnut, City Hall Ave., 4th, 5th, Grove, Hawthorne, Marlboro, Shawmut, Shurtleff and Washington Streets. Comprising over 150 structures, this district became the center of commerce and government after the 1908 fire. The cohesiveness of design is the result of community planning after the fire. The district includes City Hall, modeled after Old Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and the Public Library (opened in 1910).

**Chelsea Square Historic District:** Broadway, Medford, Tremont, Winnisimmet, Cross, Park and Beacon Streets. Notable for containing the finest and most intact grouping of mid 19th and early 20th century commercial architecture in the city, this district also includes a waterfront district (South Broadway neighborhood) with brick row houses dating to the mid to late 19th century.

**Downtown Chelsea Residential District:** Roughly bounded by Shurtleff, Marginal and Division Streets, and Bellingham Square. This district incorporates the Shurtleff School (now the Early Learning Center) and period structures around the school. The area had been completely devastated in the 1908 fire and had previously contained City Hall and a number of other community buildings. The 1909 construction of the school, which takes up an entire city block, spurred residential development in the area.

**Naval Hospital District:** (Now Admirals Hill residential neighborhood and Mary O'Malley Park). The U.S. Naval Hospital, established in the early 1800s, was one of the first in the nation. The area contains several historic properties including a hospital building designed by the 19th century architect Charles Bulfinch. Munitions for the USS Constitution were stored in a building still standing on this site. The site is currently a residential community, with some limited commercial uses and Mary O'Malley Park.

## National Register Buildings Outside Districts

**Governor Bellingham-Cary House:** 34 Parker Street. Governor Bellingham built this house in 1659, primarily for use as a hunting lodge. It was rebuilt and enlarged in 1791 by Samuel Cary, and is maintained as a museum.

**Congregation Agudath Shalom:** 145 Walnut Street. This synagogue, built in 1908-1909, is the largest Orthodox Jewish synagogue of its era in continuous use in New England. It was the first synagogue constructed after the 1908 fire and for many years the only synagogue of the eventual 14 in the city. It was designed by Harry Dustin Joll, one of the three primary architects involved in the rebuilding of Chelsea after the fire.

**The C. Henry Kimball House:** 295 Washington Street, Built in 1896, the house is one of the finest examples of the Queen Anne style in Chelsea. It was built by Charles Henry Kimball, a prominent businessman active in community affairs.

**Chelsea Garden Cemetery:** Located on Shawmut Street, the cemetery was added to the National Historic Register in 2001. It is historically significant because it represents a change in graveyard and landscape design dating back to the 1830's, which has been maintained as such since that time. It is also located in a densely populated urban area and within a short distance of the historic districts described above. It is the only surviving remnant of the Shurtleff-Bellingham neighborhood.

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## Water Resources

Chelsea is surrounded by water on three sides, with Mill Creek to the northeast, Chelsea Creek to the south and east, Mystic River to the south, and Island End River to the southwest. From the Lower Mystic Lake, the Mystic River flows through Arlington, Somerville, Medford, Everett, Chelsea, Charlestown, and East Boston before emptying into Boston Harbor. The City drains into the Island End River and Chelsea Creek sub-basins, both of which are a part of the Mystic River Basin. The watershed line dividing these basins is shown in Map 6. The shoreline consists primarily of coastal bank, coastal beach, salt marsh, upland and rocky shore. Along Mill Creek, east of Broadway, the shoreline is a narrow band of salt marsh, continuing around the mouth of the creek and south into Chelsea Creek. Along Chelsea Creek, between the Chelsea and Meridian Street Bridges, the shoreline alternates between coastal bank and coastal beach, with small patches of rocky shore. Around Admirals Hill, at the confluence of the Mystic River and the Island End River, the shoreline transitions from tidal flats to upland to coastal beach. The northern end of Island End River transitions from coastal bank to tidal flats.

Vegetated wetlands include the area around Mill Creek in northeastern Chelsea, and a small salt marsh on Chelsea Creek in eastern Chelsea at the point where the railroad tracks run along the edge of the creek.

Mary O'Malley Park at Admirals Hill serves as the only waterfront open space accessible to the public on a regular basis. Most of the remainder of the Chelsea Creek waterfront has been developed for industrial uses, with no public access except for the walkway at the former Northeast Petroleum site, now a temporary parking lot, and a small open area on Marginal Street. A public park now under construction at the head of the Island End River will provide some additional access. A walkway along the Mill Creek provides some access to that water body.

The Mystic River Watershed Association is very active in Chelsea and works toward the protection and restoration of the river, its tributaries, and watershed land. This includes resource management, water quality monitoring, and enhancement of access to the river.



## Flood Hazard Areas

There are designated flood hazard areas in Chelsea, primarily along Chelsea Creek and along a portion of the Mystic River. This includes sections depicted on Map 6a as being in the 100- or 500-year flood zones.

## Aquifer Recharge Areas

Given the highly urbanized area in which the City is located and the fact that the City and its surrounding communities are served by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, there are no aquifer recharge area that contribute to public water supply wells.

The high percentage of impermeable surface in Chelsea, both natural and human-made, results in a high rate of precipitation runoff, which reduces the amount of water available for groundwater recharge. Groundwater recharge takes place in wetlands; such as those along Mill Creek in northeastern Chelsea, on Chelsea Creek where a small salt marsh exists along the edge, and along the confluence of the Mystic River and Island End River. Chelsea lacks any Department of Environmental Protection Approved Wellhead Protection Areas (Zone II). Please see *Map 6, Water Resources*.

## Designated Port Area

Massachusetts coastal zone policy established Designated Port Areas (DPA) to accommodate water-dependent industrial uses in areas where such activity has historically occurred in an effort to minimize similar uses elsewhere along the waterfront. Several criteria must be met to obtain a DPA designation including that the waterway or waterfront area can support commercial navigation; that the adjacent land area is compatible with industrial development; and that there is an infrastructure to meet the needs of such development.

The Chelsea DPA, which extends along Chelsea Creek into Revere and East Boston, is in fact an area that has historically seen a significant amount of industrial development and commercial navigation. The industrial uses include both water dependent uses and non-water dependent uses, many of which may predate the creation of the DPA program. As a result of the industrial activity, this area is

generally not accessible to the public and is not compatible with open space and recreational opportunities seen in other waterfront areas, including Island End Park.

Recently, the City has undertaken a planning effort to examine future options for the waterfront area. The City's vision is to create a vibrant, accessible waterfront with mixed-use development. However, the realization of that vision may be hampered by the DPA regulations.<sup>13</sup>

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## Vegetation

Chelsea is a very densely developed urban area, and thus has little undeveloped open land. However, opportunities exist for reclamation of degraded salt marsh areas in both the Island End River and the Mill Creek.

Based on information in the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species (NHESP) program, updated through September 2009, there is no record of any state listed rare or endangered plant species found in Chelsea.

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## Urban Forestry

The City of Chelsea has planted 253 new trees from FY 2006 – FY 2009, earning the city recognition as a "Tree City USA" for the last four years. The City recently worked with the Urban Ecology Institute to update its street tree inventory. A tree board has been established and is meeting on a regular basis to advocate for the preservation and enhancement of the urban canopy.

▼  
<sup>13</sup> Heacock, Erin, The Complex Waterfront: A Study of the Chelsea Creek Designated Port Area in Chelsea, Massachusetts, February 2009, pp. 31-34.



Mill Creek

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## Fisheries & Wildlife

Based on information in the NHESP program, updated through September 2009, there is no record of any state listed rare or endangered animal species found in Chelsea. With improving water quality in Boston Harbor, the diversity of wildlife in these areas has increased. Sightings of harbor seals, nesting swans, hawks and egrets have been reported. The City has no woods or resource protection areas, and as a result, has no area that could be considered as an established wildlife corridor.

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## Environmental Challenges

Long-term industrial use of the waterfront, with large tank farms, indicates that much of the waterfront may be contaminated with hazardous materials. The Chelsea Creek DPA is estimated to have approximately 50 acres of contaminated land, according to the 2004 Chelsea Community Development Plan. Similarly, the freight railroad corridor running east/west through the city may be contaminated as is typical of such railroad rights of way. Contamination of some industrial sites has been confirmed, and it is suspected at others. Other industrial areas, such as those in the Everett Avenue Urban Renewal Area, have been assessed and in most cases, determined to be suitable for redevelopment.

Since 1986, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has identified 337 sites on its Reportable Release database<sup>14</sup>. Although they appear to be well distributed across the City, a number of them are located along the Chelsea waterfront as a result of the petroleum storage and distribution facilities allocated along Chelsea Creek. Many of them involve a release of oil and have been resolved, although there are a number of sites undergoing remediation efforts.

As Chelsea is a fully built-out city, the development that occurs is redevelopment, and consequently, the potential for loss of open space is negligible. In fact, new development has yielded mostly positive results in recent years. Redevelopment projects have replaced vacant or underutilized structures with new ones that have either created new economic development opportunities or new housing choices, including a number of affordable units. Moreover, in several cases, new parks have been created as a result of new development that set aside previously developed land for parks (i.e. Creekside Commons, Jefferson at Admirals Hill, Box District Park), or land or money has been donated to build new parks (i.e. Kayem Park). The City will continue to redevelop city-owned land and look for opportunities to work with developers to expand its open space and park inventory. Additionally the City of Chelsea is working with both public and private entities to increase its urban forest canopy in open spaces, sites under redevelopment and along roadways.



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<sup>14</sup> <http://db.state.ma.us/dep/cleanup/sites/search.asp>

Another environmental challenge is the need to ensure that stormwater management is adequately addressed through the development review process. The City has adopted a new stormwater ordinance as of October 2009 to address this issue. Development submissions are now referring to DEP standards for stormwater management even when they are not required to (i.e. not within a wetland resource area or buffer zone to a wetland resource area). A related issue is potential erosion and sedimentation that may temporarily become a problem as a result of construction, but again since there is little undeveloped land, and since the City has established a development review process that includes review for erosion and sedimentation, this has not been a major problem. However, sedimentation *has* been a problem is Island End River at the Admirals Hill Marina where there is an outfall that has sediment built up in front of it and also in many of our drainage conduit. Good housekeeping activities involving more frequent sweeping of parking lots as well as additional structural controls should help to control this.

According to the Metro Boston Regional Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, flooding and winter storms remain the highest hazards for Chelsea, both in frequency and severity. The majority of flooding in the City is caused by deficiencies in the drainage system rather than location within the flood plain. In addition, portions of the City lie within hurricane storm surge zones.

There are two inactive municipal solid waste landfills in Chelsea. One is in the south of the City on Marginal Street, which is not believed to be capped. The other is in the northeast section of the City on Webster Street. Its status with respect to capping is listed as “unknown” according to DEP records. Also, Wood Waste of Boston is an active waste handling/transfer station located on the Everett/Chelsea line.

# 5

## Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

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### Introduction

This section details information about open space and recreational lands in the City of Chelsea. According to the Massachusetts' Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, open space is:

*"conservation land, recreation land, agricultural land, corridor parks and amenities such as small parks, green buffers along roadways or any open area that is owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation."*

The importance of open space and recreation resources to a community cannot be understated. The protection and stewardship of these assets via past, future, and current Open Space and Recreation Plans is a crucial piece in shaping an environment where people want to live. Citizens need not only adequate services from the City day to day but also a hospitable environment—one which presents opportunities for the average citizen to relax, play, and explore. Open space and recreation resources provide all of these opportunities and are integral to life in the City of Chelsea.

For the most part, Chelsea's 53.47 acres of such open space is comprised of small pocket parks and playgrounds, mostly owned by the City. DCR owns and manages three facilities. There are a few private parcels, but no Chapter 61, 61A or 61B land.

Over the last few years, City staff performed detailed surveys of all 40 parcels of land dedicated to open space and recreational activities in Chelsea. The survey forms guided the process and ensured that each park was reviewed at the same level of detail. Surveyors recorded facilities, facility condition (including pavement, equipment, walls

and curbs, trees and, lawn/vegetation), and ADA compliance. Facilities were inventoried as well. In general, the parks and playgrounds in Chelsea are well-maintained and have high recreational potential. During the summer of 2010, the City's park and recreation facilities were reassessed for ADA compliance and the self assessment forms are included in Appendix A of this Plan.

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## Types of Open Space and Recreation Land Protection

Determining where the open space and recreation land is located in Chelsea is the beginning stage of fully understanding what resources the City has and how best to manage them. Once this land has been identified, it is important to ensure its protection and maintenance into the future to help guarantee that many more generations of residents can enjoy them. According to the Division of Conservation Services, land within a community is protected in perpetuity if it is owned by the local Conservation Commission, by Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) agencies, or by a nonprofit land trust, or if the City received state or federal monies for the improvement or purchase of the land. Typically, land owned by City agencies and the local school system should not be presumed to be permanently protected.

During the update process for this Plan, a GIS analysis was conducted to determine the amount of Chelsea's open space that is protected in perpetuity. The data for this analysis was provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts via the Office of Geographic and Environmental Information (MassGIS). The analysis results show that approximately 83 percent (44.56 acres) of the total acreage in Chelsea is protected in perpetuity as open space.

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## Inventory of Open Space and Recreation Resources

The Chelsea *Inventory of Public and Private Open Space* includes public land used for parks and recreational facilities. The inventory shows a total of 40 parcels covering 52.6 acres of conservation and recreation land owned and managed either by the City or DCR. The inventory, with details about each park, can be found in Appendix C.

All properties identified in the inventory are depicted in *Map 7, Open Space Inventory*.

The Open Space Matrix column headings are defined below

- **Name/Location** - Names the open space site and its street address, and identifies the map and lot numbers on the City assessor's maps.
- **Public Access** - Indicates if the public can access the site.

- **Acres** - Gives the site's acreage or an approximation in cases where specific information was not attainable. One acre is 43,560 square feet or 1/640 of a square mile.
- **Ownership/Management** - Indicates the owner of the property and the agency or department responsible for managing and maintaining the parcel. Usually the two are the same.
- **Protection Status/Deed Restrictions** - Indicates if the site, either by virtue of its zoning, ownership, existence of deed restrictions, or by the fact that it has received state or federal funding, is protected against conversion to some other use (see below).
- **Recreation Potential** - For land not used for recreational purposes, potential for recreational activities is identified. Conservation land is generally deemed to have limited recreation potential except for passive recreation such as hiking and walking. Cemeteries and other similar lands are presumed to have no recreational potential.
- **Current Use** - Details the main uses for the site.
- **Zoning** - Identifies the zoning district in which the parcel is located.
- **Grant Received** - Where applicable, identifies the source of funding for the acquisition of the parcel, including public grants, private donations, deed restrictions, etc.
- **ADA Accessible** - Indicates if people with disabilities can access the site or its amenities.
- **Condition** - Identifies the site condition (excellent, good, fair or poor). *City-owned open spaces and parks were surveyed to obtain a general sense of the condition of the property and any facilities located on it (parking, fields, playground equipment, etc.).*

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## Park and Open Space Equity

Map 2 depicts the Environmental Justice (EJ) populations found in Chelsea based upon Mass GIS data. The map also shows the proximity of the City's open space and recreational resources. The EJ populations cover the entire City. The map depicts census block groups and which EJ criteria each one meets. These criteria include a foreign born or minority population that exceeds 25% of the total; a population of people in which less than 75% have proficiency in English; and where the population falls below 65% of the statewide median household income. Four block groups meet the minority population criteria and three meet only the income threshold. The remaining 20 census block groups meet between two and all four of the criteria. Although the overall acreage of park and recreation facilities is relatively small, many of the City's residents have some access to a variety of open space resources.

Given the nature of Chelsea's densely developed and populated city streets, the City's best option is to try to identify vacant lots that can be easily transformed into parks or open spaces. The City has had recent success in establishing small pocket parks in several locations and while demand for such facilities will likely exceed



supply for quite some time, there has been an effort to provide recreational opportunities throughout the City to serve its diverse population.

As described in *Section 4, Environmental Inventory and Analysis* there are a number of brownfield sites throughout the City, although many of the hazardous waste site issues in Chelsea are from oil releases from gas stations or similar land uses.

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## Important Open Space and Recreational Resources

This section provides narratives describing the most important open space and recreational resources located in Chelsea. They are presented in no particular order.



Kayem Park in the summer

### Kayem Park

Located at the corner of Chestnut and Fifth Street, a new park was constructed with a \$400,000 Urban Self-Help grant and financial assistance from Kayem Foods, one of the City's largest employers. Formerly owned by Massport, the site was given to the City for the development of a park. Prior to the creation of this park, the site was undeveloped, fenced off, and isolated from the surrounding neighborhood. Since the City is built-out, opportunities for adding to the inventory of open spaces will be limited to small redeveloped infill parcels such as this one. It plays an important role in providing the surrounding neighborhood with a much needed sanctuary from the urban environment and creates a new outlet for small children to play. While small in size, it is highly valued by the immediate neighborhood.

## Mary O'Malley Park

A DCR owned park on Admiral's Hill, Mary O'Malley Park fronts on both the Mystic River and the Island End Creek, it is one of the few places in Chelsea that residents have direct access to the waterfront. Until very recently, the DCR did not maintain the park very well; the riverfront was overgrown with weeds, the limited play equipment was in poor condition, and the pier was in need of serious repairs. While the pier is still in need of repairs, the brush along the water has been removed and views to Charlestown and Boston opened up. The play equipment was repaired and additional play structures for children installed. The tennis courts have also been upgraded. Much of this renewed effort to maintain the site can be attributed to pressure put on the DCR by the City and the recently established Friends of Mary O'Malley Park non-profit organization.

## Vietnam Veterans Memorial Swimming Pool

Also a DCR facility, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Swimming Pool is heavily utilized by local children and adults, it was recently (2008) reopened after a multi-year closure and a reconstruction of the facility. The City is working with DCR to help staff lifeguard positions so that the pool can stay open longer hours several nights a week. It is significant since it is the only outdoors swimming facility in Chelsea.

## Creekside Commons



Creekside Commons during construction

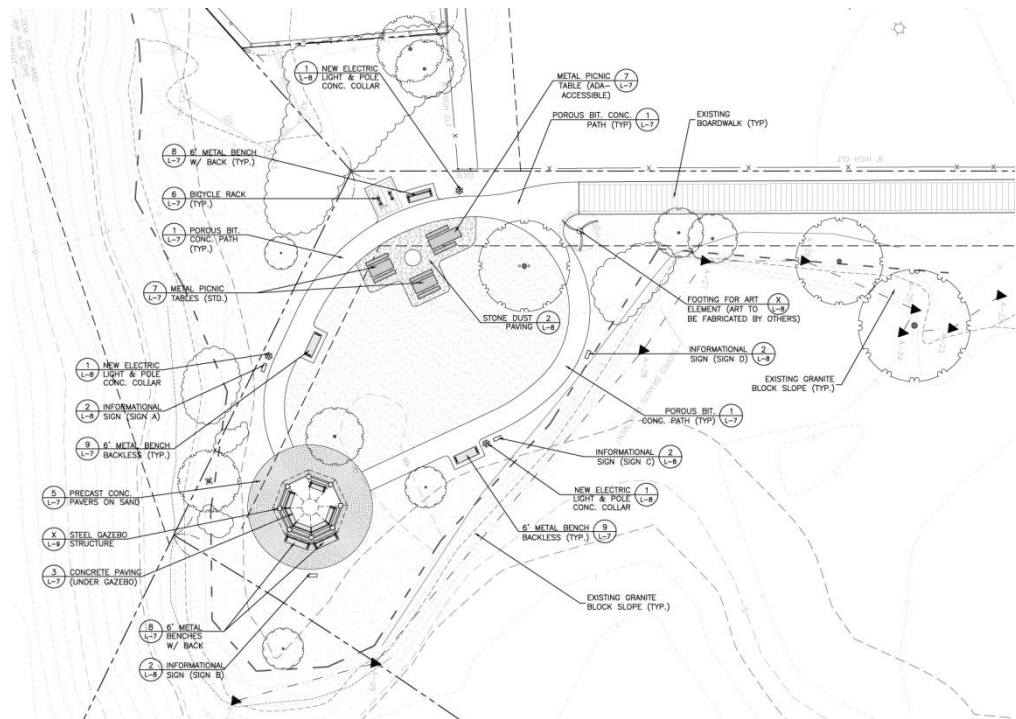
Creekside Commons is a \$1.3 million park constructed on an approximately one acre site along Mill Creek. The site was donated to the City by Corcoran Management in conjunction with the construction of a 260 unit apartment building. Opened on August 4, 2009, the facility includes: a year-round ice skating rink with artificial ice, climbing structures, whisper chairs, water play areas, a therapeutic garden, benches, walkways, musical play equipment, a parking area, and a direct connection to the walkway along Mill Creek. The park was funded with \$900,000 in private donations, and \$400,000 in Urban Self-Help funds.

## Island End Park



## The Site of Island End Park

This park is currently under construction. The city owned site is located on an upland area of approximately 7,000 sq ft overlooking Island End River. The Park will be accessed by a boardwalk constructed by a private developer of a 160 unit rental building that runs from the Admiral's Hill Marina to the site. The park will include opportunities for passive recreation and will have green features. The pathway will be constructed with a pervious surface; natural vegetation will be used in landscaping; and solar powered lighting and a solar power trash compactor will be installed. A gazebo will provide an area for viewing down-river to Charlestown and Boston. Benches, an art piece, interpretive signage, and a bike rack will also be installed. The park is being funded through a \$400K PARC Grant, and will be completed by June 1, 2010. Once complete, it will be possible to walk along the river from Broadway to Beacham Street.



## 75 percent Design Plan for Island End Park

# 6

## Community Goals

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### Description of Process

The goals of this plan were developed during the June 2009 public meeting during which the goals and objectives of the 2003 plan were reviewed and validated as to their relevancy to the 2010 update. In addition to reviewing the goals and objectives of the 2003 plan, new ideas, comments, concerns, goals and objectives were formulated by the community. This plan reflects the concerns outlined in the June 2009 public meeting. Outreach for that June 2009 public meeting included multiple outreach notices supplied in English and Spanish. These notices were distributed throughout various sources including newspaper ads, public television ads, internet, public postings at City Hall, Chelsea Public Library, and at the offices of various non-profits.

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### Statement of Open Space and Recreational Goals

In the area of open space and recreation, Chelsea faces severe constraints and problems including:

- Its extraordinarily small size, high density, and relatively limited open space.
- Its limited fiscal resources.
- The physical barriers within the city caused by the bridge, highways, and rail beds.
- A mature land use pattern – City was almost fully built out at a time when there was less emphasis and/or awareness of the value of open space.
- Its historical use of the waterfront by industry and legal limitations to public use of this potential open space resource.

- The goal of this planning process is to work within these constraints to provide the highest quality open space possible with the resources available. The goal for the open space is to maximize the opportunities created by the city's unique resources:
  - natural resources—hills and waterfront
  - rich cultural heritage, diversity, and history
  - community pride and civic commitment

Open space and recreational opportunities are not merely ends in themselves – they are a means to an end. The goal of this community is to implement an open space and recreation plan that meets the challenges, takes advantage of the opportunities, and thus helps the people of Chelsea make a reality of its vision of a stable, economically sound and socially healthy, and diverse city, with opportunities for all its citizens to enjoy high quality open space and recreational facilities.

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## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

During the June 2009 public forum, a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted.

### Strengths

- Number of parks
- New Kayem Park
  - New and clean
  - Landscaping
  - Good facilities
  - Safe
  - Quiet
- Ongoing plan for maintenance and redevelopment
- Groups that advocate for parks (i.e. Friends of Mary O'Malley Park)
- Developers willing to donate open space
- Active community gardening
- Creekside
- Community activities (i.e. kite day, etc.)
- Outdoor performances
- Different age groups are accommodated
- Administration provides for open space planning
- Parks are heavily utilized
- Nice murals
- Parks attract families
- Bellingham Hill Park – neighbors did planting

## **Weaknesses and Threats**

- People need better information on the location of parks
- Shade at the Kayem Park
- Information needs to be made available in a non-electronic format for people without computers
- Always a need for more open space
  - Organized sports
  - Dog parks
  - Skate parks
  - Larger baseball field
  - High demands in general
- Heavily utilized parks need more maintenance
- Low or no staffing levels to support programming in parks
- Conflict between development and open space priorities
- Need parks that cater to adult activities
- Need water facilities for smaller children (i.e. wading pools)

## **Opportunities**

- Federal funding
- Information on City website
- Educate people about trash, etc.
- Use flower baskets, landscaping, and other treatments to enhance areas
- Connections via streetscape
- Charles River Watershed Association – greenspace used to address runoff
- Acquire foreclosed properties for small open space parcels
- More community garden space
- Northeast Petroleum Walkway – staging area used for bridge work can be reused as parkland once project is completed
- Outreach material/displays/maps
  - City Hall
  - Market Basket
- Forbes Park development
- Adult swim at Boys and Girls Club
- Under Tobin Bridge
- Rail line along the Box District

# 7

## Analysis of Need

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### Summary of Resource Protection Needs

The resource protection needs of Chelsea concern the major natural resource areas of the city, such as the city's waterfront and scenic landscapes. The following resources have been identified for protection and/or enhancement:

**Coastline and Major Water Bodies, Rivers and Streams:** Much of this area is currently in industrial use with little public access. The plan should provide public access to as much of the waterfront as is consistent with the Designated Port Area, linking waterfront resources with each other as well as with other open spaces. As additional waterfront land becomes available, it should be considered for shared opportunities between open space and development uses. As uses along the waterfront change, opportunities for increased public access should be studied.

**Scenic Landscapes:** Because of the series of drumlins on which Chelsea is built, there are a number of open spaces with scenic views of the city, the Boston Harbor, and Downtown Boston. Areas with particularly attractive views include Bellingham/Highland, Malone Park, and Mary O'Malley Park. These views should be maintained and enhanced, and where possible, new views should be developed for public access.



Polonia Park



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## Summary of Community's Need

The Chelsea community has a strong need for all types of open space and recreation facilities, including tot lots, active recreation areas, passive parks in certain neighborhoods, and a system of linkages between these facilities. As described in Chapter 3, the low income level of a significant proportion of the population greatly limits their access to commercial entertainment or recreation facilities, as well as facilities at a distance that require travel. Also, the dense settlement pattern of the City results in very few private yards that can be enjoyed as private open spaces. Therefore, it is a priority for the City to provide for the community's open space and recreation needs.

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## Analysis of Need

Through surveys over the years, input from community groups, as well as observation and anecdotal information, the City has identified the following trends regarding the use of its open space and recreational facilities.

- Chelsea parks and open spaces have seen high levels of use, particularly ballfields and playgrounds.
- Mary O'Malley Memorial Park (Admiral's Hill) appears to be the most popular park in the City and is consistent across age groups. Highland Park and Quigley Park are the parks used the most frequently.



Garden Cemetery





Street trees in downtown Chelsea

- There is substantial interest in swimming. Other highly utilized outdoor facilities in terms of need included basketball courts and baseball fields. The need for these facilities remains high.
- There is a high level of interest among residents in helping to maintain a neighborhood park.
- The need for ongoing maintenance is a high priority for Chelsea residents.
- Police presence and oversight is still an issue that was raised at the June 30, 2009 public meeting.
- There is substantial interest in passive activities in parks, including places to sit or walk, waterfront parks, and beautification of the streetscape. Even small pocket parks with benches can provide relief from the urban environment.

Community meetings produced significant feedback about current needs. Among the most frequent comments were the following:

- There is a general need for more open space and recreation facilities.
- Chelsea needs more field/court facilities to accommodate both organized leagues and informal play. Of particular concern is the lack of soccer fields, places for skateboarding and in-line skating, tennis courts, softball/little league fields, baseball fields, and basketball courts. Soccer, in particular, is an increasingly popular sport for both children and adults, which is now accommodated mostly at Highland Park and the High School athletic field.
- People want more parks for young children to play, particularly places where older children will not interfere and compromise their safety.

- Dog parks should be provided.
- The city should establish community gathering places for fairs and other civic events.
- The city should consider acquiring vacant land and using the sites for open space.
- There is interest in bike paths along the rail rights-of-way.
- People want more access to the waterfront.
- There should be better lighting in the parks.
- There is a need for more organized recreational activities that are dedicated for young teens.
- There should be more police oversight of the parks.
- Additional victory garden locations are needed.
- Plantings in passive parks should be improved.
- Speeding traffic on residential streets is an issue because children often play in the streets in dense neighborhoods.
- There is a need for more / better maintained open space at housing projects.

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## Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

The City has developed an Administrative Code, which provides for the internal organization and administration of the city government. The Code clearly outlines each department's authority and lines of interaction with other departments. The Code is helpful in establishing each department's responsibilities and role in specific areas.

The maintenance of Chelsea's parks and open spaces was the responsibility of the Parks Department until 1992. At that point, park maintenance became the responsibility of the Department of Public Works (DPW). Currently, a combination of an understaffed DPW and private contractors maintain all city parks and the nine public buildings in the City. The DPW continues to maintain the City's parks with an established maintenance plan for each facility. During the peak season, maintenance crews visit each facility three to five times a week for trash removal and to conduct normal maintenance activities (once a week during the off-season). When a specific problem is encountered (i.e. a needed repair, vandalism, graffiti, etc.) repair crews are dispatched at least every other day to make the necessary repairs. Immediate repairs are made as needed regardless of schedule. Currently, the Department contracts out lawn maintenance, but uses City staff to address other routine maintenance and improvements. The one baseball field will be prepared in advance of league games by other DPW staff. Ideally the Department would like to have at

least two people specifically dedicated to maintenance of open space and recreational facilities during the peak season.

In addition to the DPW efforts at oversight and maintenance of Chelsea parks, the Chelsea Green Space and Recreation Committee, a community coalition interested in open space and environmental quality in the City, has established a Park Ranger program. This program assists in the monitoring, clean up, and maintenance of park and recreation facilities. In 2009, the City had park rangers in three parks (Bosson, Voke, and Mary O'Malley). Over the past several years, Park Rangers have staffed three or four parks, with Bosson always being one of the parks. Other parks participating in the program include Bellingham Hill Park and Quigley Park. In 2010, there will likely be three parks staffed with Park Rangers.

Programming at the City's recreational facilities is addressed through the licensing functions of the City Clerk's office. The City Clerk creates, coordinates and/or implements comprehensive recreational and cultural activities and programs for all residents which enhance the quality use of leisure time.

The Community Schools Program is responsible for the establishment, coordination and/or implementation of community sports programs for youth and adults, including working with the City's youth leagues (i.e. Pop Warner); the supervision and coordination of a Community Schools Program within the new public schools buildings; the planning and coordination of cultural events and any festivals or local public events in collaboration with other City departments, along with the Cultural Council; and the establishment of continuing education programs (including art, dance, and fitness) for Chelsea residents. Community Schools is based in the Williams Middle School and the Jordan Boys and Girls Club. These programs are very popular and serve to meet the needs of an urban population, especially since there is no YMCA/YWCA or other recreation facilities in Chelsea. When space is available, programs are opened to residents in neighboring cities.

The Community Schools program is open seven days a week in the winter and six days the rest of the year. In all, it serves at least 2,000 people of all ages throughout the year. There are three registration periods (fall/winter, spring, summer) and over 150 classes are offered throughout the year. Occasionally, people are turned away when a class has reached capacity. Nominal fees are required for some classes, which goes back into the program. Additionally, it is funded through Community Development Block Grant funds. It has a \$250,000 budget for a full-time director and on-site manager, along with three part-time staff and interns. Custodial and security staff is available as well.

The facilities include one large gym, but the high school gym can sometimes be made available if there is sufficient demand for space. If more staff could be provided, the Community Schools program could also use additional space.

The Boys and Girls Club on Willow Street is a private non-profit organization offering active recreation for children, and operates out of the Jordan Club. This facility includes an art room, climbing wall, Computer Clubhouse, education room, fitness center, games room, gym, music studio, performing arts center, pool, ropes course, teen center/lounge, and weight room. This program serves over 1,900 children from ages 6 – 18, and is also over-subscribed periodically, indicating the continued need to provide such services for the school-aged children in Chelsea.

The City Clerk provides administrative support to the Licensing Commission and is responsible for the issuance of all licenses and permits granted by the Licensing Commission, as well as licenses and permits granted by the City. This includes permits for fairs, cultural events and activities, and use of fields and playground facilities. Certain fees apply to the use of fields by adult leagues. The City has established permit rules and regulations for the use of Chelsea parks and public spaces for various events.

The Department of Planning and Development serves as an advocate for open space and recreation issues in the City. The Department identifies open space and recreation concerns/needs and develops plans to address the concerns and needs. The Department oversees implementation of the Open Space and Recreation Plan through, among other actions, open space, park and streetscape design, acquisition, and construction. Through the permit review process, the Department works with land use boards to assure that construction projects meet requirements for usable open space and conform to City standards for design.

The City prepares an annual Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which identifies major improvement projects, funding sources, and priorities. The CIP includes an open space and recreation facility element that helps insure that there is planning and funding for significant park improvements.

Continued coordination between these City departments is essential to the on-going development and maintenance of open space and recreation opportunities and facilities in Chelsea. While the City is small enough that informal channels of communication often suffice, it is important to maintain the institutionalized coordination between these parties and to continue the assignment of roles and responsibilities established through the Administrative Code. Without such formal and regular coordination of efforts there might be wasteful duplication of efforts, or essential activities could be neglected or overlooked. Without an evident division of responsibilities, it becomes extremely difficult for the community to access park and recreation activities or to hold the various entities accountable. This latter potential problem is important to solve so that the City can continue to incorporate community participation in park planning and maintenance and thereby improve the quality of the parks and responsiveness to community needs.

The City continues its partnership with non-profits, open space advocates and private recreation leagues to serve the City's residents by expanding and enhancing

recreation and education opportunities. The on-going program of restoration and expansion of its parks and open spaces continues to provide local residents with improved and modern facilities designed to accommodate a mix of age groups, uses and levels of ability.

The City has four citywide parks with recreational facilities, two of which were completely reconstructed as part of the school building project. The school building project also greatly expanded the number of recreational opportunities now existing locally. Eleven neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and play lots of various sizes, including a historic cemetery and several historic public squares add, to the City's inventory of parks and open space. An envisioned Chelsea waterfront open space system, parts of which already exist, is planned for future implementation through incremental design and development. Some of these parks and facilities need improvements to be brought to current safety and accessibility standards.

Historically, park funding has been derived almost exclusively from grants, which limited the City's ability to make planned improvements. In the past, an annual fund commitment in the CIP, supplemented by State funds, particularly through the State's Urban Self-Help Program, now the Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Program, provided a funding base and greatly accelerated improvements to the overall park system. Initiatives by the Massachusetts Historic Commission and the Department of Environmental Management for the preservation of historic landscapes also offered opportunities to accomplish improvements to local historic spaces.

Recognizing the constraints in the existing park system, the City advanced initiatives that resulted in the construction of an artificial turf field at the Chelsea Memorial Stadium, the construction of a new tot lot on a former brownfield, and the renovation of two Chelsea Housing Authority (CHA) tot lots. In addition to providing better quality "play" at the CHA tot lots and play opportunities at the new tot lot, the artificial field at Chelsea Memorial expanded the stadium's use by 17-times, from an estimated 250 hours per year to 4,400 hours per year. Another future consideration would be the programming of more recreational activities at Malone and Mary O'Malley Parks to help meet the recreational needs of the City.

To support additional planning and programming support, the City has updated its seven-year Open Space Plan. The new plan identifies and prioritizes action items for implementation, and makes the City eligible to apply for grants through the year 2017.

In addition to parks, the importance of open space and pleasant streetscapes to enhance the livability of local neighborhoods continues to be seen as a way of improving a neighborhood's appearance and connecting parks and open spaces to each other. The City's look and feel can be enlivened dramatically by attention to streetscapes and street trees. As indicated in the City's Open Space and Recreation

Plan Update, providing sidewalk and street tree amenities to roadway projects will continue to be a priority, as will a stand-alone program for street trees.

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## Challenges

Previous Parks and Open Space initiatives built upon the priorities set forth in the 2003 Open Space and Recreation Plan. Projects focus on maintenance and rehabilitation of existing open space facilities and the management of these facilities to maximize recreation opportunities, and also seek to improve the appearance of neighborhood open spaces and provide connections between neighborhoods. The chief priority is to integrate open space into the fabric of the city so that all new planning and development initiatives acknowledge its inclusion as a component of the activity.

Given the constraints on the City's open space and recreational resources and the limitations that the City faces in developing new parkland, the City must continue to work to manage existing facilities in order to optimize their use. To further this goal, the City includes opportunities for various age groups in all its park design. In addition, the City has hired a full-time community schools director. The director has developed programs to make the community school programs more accessible to a greater number of city residents.

The Chelsea Boys and Girls Club continue to provide quality recreation and guidance to local youth. The update to the City's Open Space and Recreation Plan provides a framework for promoting use of the City's recreation facilities and a plan for management of the City's parks. Implementation of the plan has been a priority. The City's efforts at building lines of communication to anticipate the recreational needs of local residents through more interactive planning processes has resulted in the establishment of constituencies to care for local parks and has improved the City's ability to compete for grants. The City must continue to foster this communication and to build upon it in order to involve more residents and businesses in the process. Building bridges between recreational programs in the public park system, and those offered through local non-profits and the after-school program will continue to bring age appropriate activities to everyone in the community.

The City's Park and Open Space system must continue to be an essential part of a vibrant and healthy community. Massachusetts is experiencing high childhood obesity rates (approximately 25 – 30% of children between the ages of 10 and 17), and it may be higher in Chelsea. The general lack of access to recreational opportunities may be one of the reasons for potentially elevated rates in Chelsea. The City will continue to refine open space priorities, and set new goals to realize that vision for a quality open space system to serve all the city's residents.

The City can continue to look for new opportunities in conjunction with local businesses. Eastern Mineral, which owns the land on which the road salt pile is located, has established a publically organized recreation territory (PORT) to make the site accessible to the public during the summer months when more space is available there.<sup>15</sup> In a City where land for recreation is scarce, private-public partnerships can be useful in creating additional opportunities.

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## Recent and Current Projects

In recent years, the CIP has supported an extensive system of improvements to the City's open space system, and resulted in the complete overhaul and modest additions to the system, including the:

- ◆ Renovation of Quigley Park, Polonia Park, Highland Park, Bosson Park, Voke Park, and Cipiella Park;
- ◆ Expansion of the park system with new parks at Bellingham Hill Park, Eden Park and the Mace Tot Lot;
- ◆ Installation of pedestrian walkway at the Highland Street slope;
- ◆ Reconstruction of the tot lots at the Chelsea Housing Authority's Innes and Fitzpatrick Developments;
- ◆ Construction of an artificial turf field at Chelsea Stadium, in cooperation with and through funding support of Metro Lacrosse and the National Football League;
- ◆ Completion of an historic building and site inventory, which includes residential and industrial/commercial structures;
- ◆ Renovation of Winnisimmet Square and the historic fountain;
- ◆ Work with the state to identify potential improvements to pedestrian and bicycle traffic in the downtown;
- ◆ Work with the Safe Routes to School program to improve pedestrian routes;
- ◆ Completion of the first phase of the Garden Cemetery Preservation Plan detailing the placement and names of the burial markers;
- ◆ New streetscape improvements and new street trees; and
- ◆ Completion of this Open Space and Recreation Plan 2010-2017 Update.

A new open space opportunity has been realized as a result of the redevelopment of the former Parkway Plaza site and the permitting of a new development at the former American Finish and Chemical Company facility at 1012 Broadway. That opportunity has resulted in the near completion of the RiverWalk along Mill Creek. The RiverWalk follows the contours of the Mill Creek with connections through the development to the neighborhoods. A planned connection of the RiverWalk to the



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<sup>15</sup> Heacock, Erin, *The Complex Waterfront: A Study of the Chelsea Creek Designated Port Area in Chelsea, Massachusetts*, February 2009, p. 74

adjoining property at 1012 Broadway will be installed when the site work is complete and the new building constructed, thereby creating a continuous walkway from Broadway to Locke Street.

Ongoing and recent projects include:

- ◆ The conversion of an underused lot at the corner of Chestnut Street-Fifth Street to a playground for neighborhood children; a project supported by the Massachusetts Urban Self-Help Program and Massport.
- ◆ The construction of a new one-acre park at Creekside Commons – formerly Parkway Plaza – with an innovative design concept highlighting intergenerational and environmental themes.
- ◆ Planning for the expansion of the park system into the underserved BOX-WORKS neighborhood.
- ◆ Planning for the installation of an artificial turf field to replace the overused soccer field at Highland Park.
- ◆ Planning for the completion of a waterfront viewing area at the terminus of the boardwalk at Island End River.

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## SCORP

In 2006, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts produced a document called the *Massachusetts Outdoors 2006, Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (SCORP).<sup>16</sup> The SCORP document looks at open space and recreation from a regional perspective. The purpose of the plan is to help direct the best investment of funds and effort towards protecting and enhancing recreation resources.

Chelsea is located in the Metropolitan Boston Region of the SCORP, a highly urbanized and densely populated area. Since this region is so dense, land available for open space and recreation is more limited than in other parts of Massachusetts—the per capita acreage is only .03 acres per person. The Metropolitan Boston Region is the smallest of the SCORP regions in area, but also contains the least amount of open space acreage and the highest concentration of people. However, the percentage of total land area dedicated to recreation and open space in this region is 26 percent. This ranks third among the seven SCORP regions in total land area percentage dedicated to recreation and open space. This is rather striking considering that the Metropolitan Boston Region of the SCORP contains 32 percent of the state population



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<sup>16</sup> *Massachusetts Outdoors 2006, Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*, Division of Conservation Services, 2006.



but only 4.8 percent of the state's land area. While this may be true for the region as defined by SCORP, the reality in the City of Chelsea is significantly different.

The most popular activities (listed sequentially from highest to lowest) in this region's open space areas include: walking, sightseeing, swimming, golfing, picnicking, playground activity, sunbathing, fishing, biking, tot lot activity, basketball, and baseball. The City of Chelsea provides opportunities for many of these pastimes, such as walking and sightseeing in Mary O' Malley Park, which provides handsome vistas of Charlestown and Boston to its users. Soon it will be possible to walk along the Island End and Mystic Rivers from Beacham Street to Broadway, a distance of approximately one mile, via the future Island End Park and Mary O'Malley Park. Sightseeing is also a viable option in Chelsea with the presence of four National Register Historic Properties and four National Register Historic Districts. Swimming is available from the recently reopened Vietnam Veterans Memorial Pool. There are also numerous playground, basketball, and baseball opportunities both in Chelsea and nearby within the region.

Among the more heavily used resources in the region are golf courses, neighborhood parks, playgrounds and tot lots, lakes and ponds, and historic and cultural sites. Agricultural sites and wetland resources were less frequently used and there was a high level of dissatisfaction relating to them. Additionally, high levels of dissatisfaction were associated with rivers or streams, bikeways and golf courses, neighborhood parks, playgrounds and tot lots. However, a number of these resources are not available to Chelsea residents. These resources seem to be suffering due the overall population density of the region. Overall the satisfaction levels of the Metropolitan Boston Region are much lower than other SCORP regions. Historic resources are the only asset to receive high satisfaction levels, which the region's residents travel the least distance to visit.

It was indicated that the most pressing need among the region's residents is improved access for people with disabilities. Chelsea's policy is to improve access to its parks for all of its residents, including the disabled, as the parks are rehabilitated. Additionally, all new parks are designed to meet accessibility standards. In terms of other needs the region places maintenance of facilities high on the list, this is followed by a desire to expand environmental education programs and also improve access to open space resources from public transport. In terms of facilities needs, residents from the Metropolitan Boston Region placed walking, swimming, and road biking as the highest priorities. Also this region's needs for tennis and basketball were well above the state average.

# 8

## Goals and Objectives

Goals are the most basic statement about what Chelsea's open space and recreation facilities should achieve. There are three basic goals, with a number of more specific objectives under each of them. These goals incorporate the input received during the preparation of the Open Space and Recreation Plan, as described in Chapter 6. These goals and objectives essentially mirror those of the 2003 Plan, but were reviewed and validated by participants in the public input process associated with this Plan.

### Goal 1: Provide active and passive recreational and fitness opportunities suited to Chelsea's urban population

Chelsea is one of the smallest, most densely populated, and most ethnically diverse communities in Massachusetts. Its small size and high-density place severe limitations on the availability of park and recreation space in the city. This limitation to satisfying the open space needs of Chelsea residents is compounded by the minimal private open space and relatively poor transportation and financial resources of the residents, which limit their access to other public and private recreational opportunities. *Therefore, Chelsea's public parks and recreations facilities must meet the diverse recreational needs of the population year-round.*

- Give top priority to the rehabilitation and maintenance of existing parks, playgrounds, and indoor recreation facilities.
- Provide a full range of recreational opportunities appropriate to citywide and neighborhood recreation needs and age groups. These include but are not limited to: baseball and soccer; tot lots, basketball, bocce, chess tables; indoor facilities for year round and winter use; facilities for organized leagues; family oriented facilities; bicycling, jogging, roller skating, and walking facilities.
- Provide each neighborhood with an adequate range of appropriately located parks, playgrounds and recreation facilities.
- Design facilities to serve the disabled, special needs, and elderly populations of Chelsea; remove barriers that prevent access to and use of existing parks.

- Pursue acquisition of other sites for open space and recreation development where available and appropriate.
- Provide safety and security in all parks and playgrounds through appropriate programming and design, proper upkeep, and community and police participation in planning and operation of the parks.
- Work with neighbors and park users to achieve compatible use at parks and playgrounds and to upgrade and maintain them. Encourage local park groups and the Community Schools program to be involved in programming activities.
- Provide adequate staffing to maintain parks and playgrounds and to coordinate programs in them. Programs such as a Kite Festival at Malone Park, the farmers market, and the park ranger program promote this goal.
- Assess conditions at city parks and playgrounds annually and take corrective action through routine maintenance and by budgeting capital improvements.

## Goal 2: Take advantage of Chelsea's environmental, historic, and scenic resources

- Chelsea is surrounded by water on three sides with direct access to Boston Harbor. There are five drumlins in the city with many scenic views. *New and existing parks and open space should take advantage of these opportunities to enrich the experience of city residents.*
- Take advantage of hilltop views in acquiring, designing, and maintaining hill top park sites.
- Acquire waterfront properties large enough to serve as park nodes. Develop clear connections to waterfront nodes using existing streets and improved streetscape.
- Preserve, enhance, and restore wetland areas through open space acquisition, easements, and deed restrictions.
- Provide waterfront vantage points from which marine activities can be viewed.
- Incorporate Chelsea's historic resources, including the Garden Cemetery, in the open space system.
- Work with DCR and other state agencies in planning the acquisition, programming, operation, and maintenance of the city's natural, historic, and cultural resources.

## Goal 3: Integrate the open space system into the city fabric

As an urban place, there is an intimate relationship between neighborhood open spaces and the surrounding residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Urban dwellers utilize public sidewalks and plazas in the same manner as parks. *Open space*

*should help tie city neighborhoods together, provide buffers against incompatible uses, and add value to surrounding properties.*

- Provide safe and secure pedestrian and bicycle connections to major open space and recreation opportunities, transit, and Chelsea's schools. Encourage walking and hiking for transportation and fitness.
- Facilitate access to parks through pedestrian and bicycle improvements, and thereby assist in the rehabilitation of neighborhoods and the downtown. Use traffic calming to improve the safety of city streets and integrate streets into the public open space system.
- Enhance the open space value of city streets and squares for passive use.
- Use the open space system to help tie the city together. Develop physical connections and promote events that attract residents from various neighborhoods city wide.
- Help beautify the city through appropriate open space, park, and streetscape improvements, and thereby assist in the rehabilitation of neighborhoods and the downtown. Programs such as Chelsea's Street Tree Program and the development of community gardens would further this goal.

# 9

## Seven Year Action Plan

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### Introduction

The Seven Year Action Plan is based on the goals and objectives of the previous section. To ensure the implementation on a year-to-year basis of these actions, the City of Chelsea will rely on existing City staff such as the directors of Planning and Development, Public Works, the School Department, and Health Services for overall execution of the Plan. The City will also work to ensure that public outreach and education is achieved.

The Seven Year Action Plan is often the most difficult component of an Open Space and Recreation Plan. Unlike the lofty goals and objectives of the previous sections, here is where the rubber meets the road, where the planning ideals are translated into concrete actions. An Action Plan can sometimes be difficult to commit to and be problematic to review over time. Items that have been accomplished fade from view, while the more intractable problems linger for years. Financial and political trends may change, advancing some items while leaving others untouched. For these reasons alone, many communities are hesitant to put in writing the full scope of their intentions.

The following action plan intends to deliver on the promise of the goals and objectives expressed throughout this process, with a program of tangible steps for the City to take over the next seven years. There is a high level of activity already underway on many of these steps, based upon the input received during the planning process.

These actions are targeted to address the physical as well as the organizational issues confronting the City, as described and analyzed in *Section 7, Analysis of Needs*. The seven year action plan described below works to correct these “process” problems, while still maintaining a focus on the substantive issues of open space and recreation preservation, acquisition, enhancement, management, and maintenance. In addition to the more detailed plan below, some key items are displayed on *Map 8, Action Plan and Priorities*.

Some of these actions may already be well underway; others are ongoing but need additional support. And while all actions listed are recognized as important, three areas in particular rise to the top as being absolutely essential for any future progress towards meeting the goals of this Plan:

- Obtaining support from City staff, commissions, and boards that open space and recreation is a central and lasting priority for Chelsea. While it is to be understood that there may be competing needs in the City, all groups must abide by the central tenet that these issues are extremely important to the residents of Chelsea. Essentially, this was the tone of the public comments, which reinforced the need for the City to have and maintain high quality open space and recreational resources. Where open space and recreational resources are concerned, the goals and policies of this Plan and the committee members and staff of the City must be consulted. Furthermore, groups must agree in advance on the proper decision making procedures to be followed in such matters.
- Securing additional sources of funding, staffing, and other support for park facility maintenance and enhancement. One of the City's main concerns is the need to maintain and enhance its existing parks and playing fields. Resources to achieve these goals can be scarce and the City must be creative in how funds are raised. Several recommendations are made specifically to identify the means for spreading the responsibility specifically for parks maintenance, such as creating "friends of" groups for local parks and working with Chelsea's Green Space and Recreation Committee and its Park Rangers.

It is a general policy of the City that parks and open space must be maximized to:

- ◆ Provide active and passive recreational opportunities suited to the city's urban population;
- ◆ Resolve conflicts among those competing to use open space that is available;
- ◆ Take advantage of local environmental, historic and scenic resources, and
- ◆ Integrate the open space system into the city fabric to help link neighborhoods, provide buffers against incompatible uses and add value to surrounding properties.

Moreover, the City's recreation facilities need to be assessed and updated:

- ◆ To monitor the condition of existing facilities;
- ◆ To meet code requirements, and
- ◆ To address changes in recreation demand.

The programs included in this Plan allow the City to better maintain its existing open space while also providing the resources to increase recreational opportunity to other parcels in the City. The programs also provide for the enhancement of the City's streetscape features through landscaping. Specific programs include:

- ◆ Continue to implement this Seven-Year Action Plan contained in the City's Open Space and Recreation Plan (2010-2017) to guide development of the park system;
- ◆ Adopt a more robust Comprehensive Maintenance Program for all City open space and recreation facilities, coordinated with the school playground and playfield facilities;
- ◆ Renovation of community parks and open space to improve recreation opportunities and enhance the quality of life for the City's residents, and
- Installation of street trees and other features to enhance the City's streetscape and to provide amenities for pedestrians

The Open Space Program area will focus on making the following types of enhancements over the next seven years:

- ◆ Renovations to playing fields, basketball and tennis courts, and playground areas at existing parks to address the most pressing safety concerns and community needs in the park system;
- ◆ Assessment of ongoing open space needs as they pertain to recreation and resource (passive) opportunities;
- ◆ Enhancement of existing open spaces to improve recreational opportunities;
- ◆ Acquisition and development of new parks and playgrounds, especially in neighborhoods underserved by current resources;
- ◆ Purchase and installation of street trees to improve neighborhood streets and City parks; and
- ◆ Update the Open Space and Recreation Plan, as needed, to maintain the City's eligibility for open space and recreation funding.

In addition, the City prepared the Chelsea Creek Waterfront Plan in August 2007, written by Vine Associates. This plan was prepared to examine viable water-dependent uses that could expand or locate along Chelsea Creek, identify needed infrastructure improvements, and look for ways to provide for public access to the waterfront that do not conflict with the existing uses. In the plan, several open space and recreation recommendations designed to enhance public access to the waterfront were identified that the City should pursue as it implements that plan. They are

made with the recognition that the waterfront presents a number of opportunities that need to be carefully considered given the potential conflicts with existing industrial activities. Thus, public safety and security require careful planning as these recommendations are considered for future action.

- *Environmental Restoration*  
The communities should continue to work with local community groups to seek funding and implement environmental restoration activities in and along Mill Creek.
- *Mill Street Bridge*  
A feasibility study to assess the possibility of providing a pedestrian bridge across Mill Creek to link the north and south banks should be prepared. Such a bridge would provide a much needed pedestrian connection to the Slade's Mill and DCR properties from a predominately residential section of Chelsea. The connection could also potentially link the Forbes development to Mill Creek's existing and future open space and walkway improvements at Cronin Rink and Parkway Plaza.
- *Logan PreFlight Airport Parking/Enterprise Car Rental Walkway*  
The City of Chelsea should negotiate with the owners of the Logan PreFlight parcel and work with the state to determine if it is feasible to create a walkway along the entire water's edge of the site.<sup>17</sup>

The plan also raised the possibility of recreational boating, including a community boating program for kayaking and rowing outside of the actively used shipping areas, and long-term goals to create recreational marinas and a public boat launching ramp once the industrial uses on Chelsea Creek have been substantially reduced.

The August 2009 Addison-Orange Neighborhood Revitalization Plan prepared by Vine Associates contained several recommendations pertaining to open space and recreation. In summary, the report states the following:

There is a need to provide additional open space opportunities in the neighborhood and a community desire to create a youth center and/or outdoor youth activities. Suggested open space and recreation improvements include:

- Community garden(s)
- Pocket parks
- Green space/additional landscaping
- Large, more central green space
- Recreational facilities for youth such as skateboard or bike path



<sup>17</sup> Vine Associates, Chelsea Creek Waterfront Plan, August 2007, p. 5-9



- Wider sidewalks and small plazas at Cary Square to support cafés, additional trees and seating
- A linear, green, multi-use path connecting Spruce Street to Carter
- Street along the east side of Sixth Street
- Youth Center/Programs<sup>18</sup>

Recommendations relating to the revitalization plan are included within the seven year action plan below.

Both the City's 2007 *Gerrish Avenue/Bellingham Street Neighborhood Action Plan*, and the Chelsea Neighborhood Developers' (CND) 2009 *North Bellingham Hill Revitalization Plan* planning process, in which the City was a major participant, recommend the development of open space in the Gerrish-Bellingham neighborhood. Specifically, the plans recommended:

- The development of a park on an underutilized parcel on Highland Avenue;
- The development of linear open space along the abandoned CSX right-of-way;
- Enhancement of the open space at the Highland Steps;
- Enhancement of the parking area at the top of Bellingham Hill to include landscaping; and
- Streetscape improvements to tie these green spaces together.

The City has been working to implement these recommendations. Through a Transit Oriented Development Grant, the City has rebuilt several streets in the neighborhood and has provided for improved lighting and street trees to enhance pedestrian activity. CND has purchased the underutilized site identified in the plans for the development of a park, and the City has permitted the redevelopment of the site to include 32 units of affordable rental housing and a 13,300 square foot park. The City is working to identify strategies to develop the former CSX right-of-way as a multi-use pathway/linear park.



<sup>18</sup> Vine Associates, Addison-Orange Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, August 2009, p. 39

**Table 9-1  
Seven-Year Action Plan**

Objective/Action Item	Potential Funding Source	Responsible Party	Action Year(s)							
			2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
<b>Goal 1: Provide active and passive recreational and fitness opportunities suited to Chelsea's urban population</b>										
Provide a full range of recreational opportunities appropriate to citywide and neighborhood recreation needs and age groups. These include, but are not limited to: baseball and soccer; tot lots, basketball, bocce, chess tables; indoor facilities for year round and winter use; facilities for organized leagues; family oriented facilities; bicycling, jogging, roller skating, and walking facilities.										
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Give top priority to the rehabilitation and maintenance of existing parks, playgrounds, and indoor recreation facilities.</li></ul>		DPW; Community Schools	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify regular maintenance needs and the resources necessary to achieve the maintenance schedule</li></ul>		DPW	●							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Collaborate with Community Schools and/or Jordan Boys and Girls Club to provide recreation programming for older youth at the Williams School</li></ul>		Community Schools; Jordan Boys & Girls	●	●						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Create recreation uses at the former Tudor Garage site</li></ul>	PARC	Planning & Development		●	●					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Provide each neighborhood with an adequate range of appropriately located parks, playgrounds and recreation facilities.</li></ul>		Planning & Development	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Design facilities to serve the disabled, special needs, and elderly populations of Chelsea; remove barriers that prevent access to and use of existing parks.</li></ul>	PARC	Planning & Development	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Continue City policy to build all new facilities to meet ADA standards and develop plan to upgrade existing facilities as needed to meet standards</li></ul>	PARC	Planning & Development	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Use ADA self assessment information to develop a list of the top ten safety and ADA compliance issues</li></ul>		Planning & Development	●	●						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Identify vacant or abandoned properties and assess them for opportunities to create new pocket parks and tot lots</li></ul>		Planning & Development	●	●						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Investigate potential to acquire vacant lot on south side of Washington St. near Carter for a park</li></ul>	LAND, PARC	Planning & Development	●	●						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Develop criteria for determining priority sites for acquisition; identify and prioritize sites with open space and recreation potential</li></ul>		Planning & Development	●							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Pursue acquisition of other sites for open space and recreation development where available and appropriate. This includes potential creation of 4 – 6 pocket parks in Addison-Orange neighborhood.</li></ul>	LAND, PARC	City Council; Planning & Development				●	●			

**Table 9-1  
Seven-Year Action Plan**

Objective/Action Item	Potential Funding Source	Responsible Party	Action Year(s)						
			2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a variety of new green spaces and small parks to serve a range of user groups including community gardens and passive parks for socialization and relaxation</li> </ul>	LAND, PARC	City Council; Planning & Development		●	●				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Police Department to identify park and recreation facilities where public safety needs are highest</li> </ul>		Police; Community Schools	●	●					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide safety and security in all parks and playgrounds through appropriate programming and design, proper upkeep, and community and police participation in planning and operation of the parks.</li> </ul>		Police; Community Schools	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider public safety criteria in the design of future facilities</li> </ul>	PARC	Planning & Development; Police	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with neighbors and park users to achieve compatible use at parks and playgrounds and to upgrade and maintain them. Encourage local park groups and the Community Schools program to be involved in programming activities.</li> </ul>	Private in-kind	Planning & Development; Community Schools; Chelsea Green Space	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand citizen stewardship programs to identify and rectify problems</li> </ul>	Private in-kind	Chelsea Green Space; DCR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide adequate staffing to maintain parks and playgrounds and to coordinate programs in them. Programs such as a Kite Festival at Malone Park, the farmers market, and the park ranger program promote this goal.</li> </ul>		City Council; DPW	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess conditions at city parks and playgrounds annually and take corrective action through routine maintenance and by budgeting capital improvements.</li> </ul>		DPW	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

**Goal 2: Take advantage of Chelsea's environmental, historic, and scenic resources**

Chelsea is surrounded by water on three sides with direct access to Boston Harbor. There are five drumlins in the city with many scenic views. New and existing parks and open space should take advantage of these opportunities to enrich the experience of city residents.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take advantage of hilltop views in acquiring, designing, and maintaining hill top park sites.</li> </ul>	LAND	City Council; Planning & Development					●	●	
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**Table 9-1  
Seven-Year Action Plan**

Objective/Action Item	Potential Funding Source	Responsible Party	Action Year(s)						
			2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquire waterfront properties large enough to serve as park nodes. Develop clear connections to waterfront nodes using existing streets and improved streetscape.</li> </ul>	LAND	City Council; Planning & Development				●	●		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preserve, enhance, and restore wetland areas through open space acquisition, easements, and deed restrictions.</li> </ul>	LAND	Conservation Commission			●	●			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide waterfront vantage points from which marine activities can be viewed.</li> </ul>		Planning & Development	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move toward the completion of a waterfront viewing area at the terminus of the boardwalk at Island End River</li> </ul>	PARC; Rivers and Harbors Grant	Planning & Development	●	●					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate Chelsea's historic resources, including the Garden. Cemetery, in the open space system.</li> </ul>		Planning & Development; Historical Commission			●	●			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with DCR and other state agencies in planning the acquisition, programming, operation, and maintenance of the city's natural, historic, and cultural resources.</li> </ul>	LAND, Historic tax credits	Planning & Development	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

**Goal 3: Integrate the open space system into the city fabric**

As an urban place, there is an intimate relationship between neighborhood open spaces and the surrounding residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Urban dwellers utilize public sidewalks and plazas in the same manner as parks. Open space should help tie city neighborhoods together, provide buffers against incompatible uses, and add value to surrounding properties.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide safe and secure pedestrian and bicycle connections to major open space and recreation opportunities, transit, and Chelsea's schools. Encourage walking and hiking for transportation and fitness.</li> </ul>	Recreation Trail Grants, PARC	Planning & Development; DPW	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate access to parks through pedestrian and bicycle improvements, and thereby assist in the rehabilitation of neighborhoods and the downtown. Use traffic calming to improve the safety of city streets and integrate streets into the public open space system.</li> </ul>		Planning & Development; DPW	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the open space value of city streets and squares for passive use.</li> </ul>		Planning & Development; DPW	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

**Table 9-1  
Seven-Year Action Plan**

Objective/Action Item	Potential Funding Source	Responsible Party	Action Year(s)						
			2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the open space system to help tie the city together. Develop physical connections and promote events that attract residents from various neighborhoods city wide.</li> </ul>		City Clerk; Planning & Development	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help beautify the city through appropriate open space, park, and streetscape improvements, and thereby assist in the rehabilitation of neighborhoods and the downtown. Programs such as Chelsea's Street Tree Program and the development of community gardens would further this goal.</li> </ul>		Planning & Development; DPW	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Link the Chelsea Green Space and Recreation Committee to the City website in an effort to increase outreach on important open space and recreation issues facing the City.</li> </ul>		Chelsea Green Space; Info Tech	●						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop design study for creation of linear buffer along Sixth St./Rt. 1; design should include walking/bike path</li> </ul>	Recreation Trails Grant	Planning & Development		●					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage developers to include landscaped areas along edge of Spruce St. (between Sixth and Heard)</li> </ul>		Planning & Development	●	●	●				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage streetscape improvements to improve pedestrian connections from Addison-Orange to Everett Ave. Urban Renewal District; also linking Carter St. with open space areas adjoining the high school</li> </ul>		Planning & Development		●	●				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine feasibility of an easement to extend Carmel Steps to Malone Park</li> </ul>		Planning & Development				●	●		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Temple Emmanuel to determine if City should secure an easement for lawn area at the corner of Cary and Gardner Sts.</li> </ul>	LAND	Planning & Development						●	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordination with surrounding cities to increase open space opportunities and potential, given the relatively small amounts of available open space in the City. Examples include the improvement of the Condor Street Wilds in East Boston, and potential bicycle connections to East Boston and Revere.</li> </ul>	Recreation Trails Grant, PARC	Planning & Development	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop neighborhood park on underutilized parcel on Highland Ave.</li> </ul>	CBGB; PARC	Planning & Development; Chelsea Neighborhood Developers		●	●				

**Table 9-1  
Seven-Year Action Plan**

Objective/Action Item	Potential Funding Source	Responsible Party	Action Year(s)						
			2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
• Develop a multi-use pathway/linear park on former CSX ROW		Planning & Development	●	●	●				
• Explore options for enhancing landscaping at parking area on top of Bellingham Hill	CBGB; PARC	Planning & Development		●					
• Improve landscaping at Highland Steps	CBGB; PARC	Planning & Development			●				

# 10

## Letters of Approval

1. Jay Ash, City Manager
2. City of Chelsea Planning Board
3. Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)



**Jay Ash**  
**City Manager**

## **CITY OF CHELSEA**

Executive Office  
City Hall, Room #302, 500 Broadway  
Chelsea, Massachusetts 02150  
Telephone (617) 466-4100 / Fax (617) 466-4105  
Email: [jash@chelseama.gov](mailto:jash@chelseama.gov)



June 28, 2010

Ms. Melissa Cryan  
Division of Conservation Services  
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street  
Boston, MA 02002

Re: Chelsea Open Space and Recreation Plan 2010

Dear Ms. Cryan,

I am pleased to share with you the enclosed open space and recreation plan for the City of Chelsea. As a native of the city who spent more time playing on the streets than in the limited open space options that existed in the community many decades ago, I am excited about all we have accomplished and what we have in store for the continuing expansion of open space here. However, as much as we press forward, many share my opinion that even more needs to be done to provide local residents with the access to bountiful, quality and accessible open space that meets the recreational desires of our entire community.

Having noted a weakness, I cannot help but return to our strength. It is truly remarkable that we have been able to achieve so much on our open space agenda in a community that was seemingly fully built out around the Industrial Revolution. Those achievements have come as a result of vision, persistence, creativity and partnership. Regarding the latter, it is important to emphasize the role the Commonwealth has played in helping Chelsea maintain existing and secure new parks and playgrounds around the city. Without the leadership of the State, the City's open space resources would most certainly be in less appealing shape and productive use.

Speaking of partnership, Chelsea is fortunate to also have one of the state's, if not the country's, leading open space advocacy groups doing terrific work in advocating for the greening of Chelsea. The Chelsea Green Space and Recreation Committee can be both a formidable opponent and loyal partner in its quest to provide local residents with greater open space opportunity and to provide our planet with a better environment. Green Space is not the only organization with which the City partners on open space issues, however, its level of success in the arena is truly unparalleled here and elsewhere.

Back to vision, persistence and creativity. The City has fostered an expanding embrace of open space over the past twenty years, with that energized focus leading to some early, yet substantial



gains on community's vision of open space that is more prevalent and connected. Walkways by creeks and rivers, parks in long forgotten spaces, and hopes for greater waterfront access have been abounding. Reclaiming open space does not happen overnight, so the City and its partners have had to be eager but patient. In order to accelerate the process or derive more use out of existing spaces, the City has creatively used resources to, among other outcomes, encourage businesses to relocate and utilize artificial surfaces to generate more quality play hours at existing fields. Thus is the method by which a nearly 400 year old community that long ago abandoned open spaces, like an Olmstead designed park, for "progress" during many waves of industrialization must now operate.

In a community where densely populated neighborhoods remain underserved by that which can make urban life more bearable, the charge of promoting an aggressive open space agenda is especially merited. That is, with the proviso, that we also reclaim aging, blighted, and perhaps polluting industrial sites for smart growth development, that we expand our tax base to meet the needs of our open space and other agendas, and we are mindful to not push progress to fast in places where open space and longer-standing, incompatible uses do not mix. To some, this may sound like an impossible list of goals to balance, but we here in Chelsea truly believe that we can continue to weave a community together that emphasizes the positive of each of those aspects and further limits their negatives. Open space is a great way to do so and we continue to see the benefits of doing just that.

The City remains committed to its open space and offers the attached plan as testament to our commitment and as a record against which our intentions and effectiveness should be judged. We are truly pleased at the success we have already achieved. With this document as the controlling blueprint for our even greater achievement, we look forward with great anticipation to a greener and healthier Chelsea as a result of our open space commitment advance through this open space plan.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jay Ash". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Jay Ash  
City Manager



**City of Chelsea**  
**PLANNING BOARD**  
**Chelsea City Hall**  
**500 Broadway, Room 101**  
**Chelsea, Massachusetts 02150**

Tel: (617) 889 - 8233  
Fax: (617) 889 - 8357

*Tuck Willis, Chairman*

June 28, 2010

Ms. Melissa Cryan  
Division of Conservation Services  
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street  
Boston, MA 02002

Re: Chelsea Open Space and Recreation Plan 2010

Dear Ms. Cryan,

The Planning Board has reviewed Chelsea's Open Space and Recreation Plan Update 2010–2017 and provided comments to the Department of Planning and Development. In general, the Planning Board finds the updated Plan as very important to how Chelsea should proceed in the next 7 years to acquire, develop and protect open space that our residents currently enjoy and appreciate. The City, in conjunction with the Planning Board, remains committed to the importance of open space throughout Chelsea, and the attached plan is a testament to our commitment currently and in the future. We look forward to a greener and healthier Chelsea through this Open Space and Recreation Plan Update.

Respectfully for the Planning Board,

Ryan Tully  
Planning Board Administrator  
Planning Board Staff



*Smart Growth & Regional Collaboration*

August 24, 2010

Ralph R. Willmer, FAICP  
Senior Planner/Project Manager  
Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.  
101 Walnut Street  
Watertown, MA 02472

Dear Mr. Willmer:

Thank you for submitting the Chelsea Open Space & Recreation Plan Update 210-2017 to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) for review.

The Division of Conservation Services (DCS) requires that all open space plans must be submitted to the regional planning agency for review. This review is advisory and only DCS has the power to approve a municipal open space plan. While DCS reviews open space plans for compliance with their guidelines, MAPC reviews these plans for their attention to regional issues generally and more specifically for consistency with *MetroFuture*, the regional policy plan for the Boston metropolitan area.

*MetroFuture* is the official regional plan for Greater Boston, adopted consistently with the requirements of Massachusetts General Law. The plan includes goals and objectives as well as 13 detailed implementation strategies for accomplishing these goals. We encourage all communities to become familiar with the plan by visiting the web site at <http://www.metrofuture.org/>. We are pleased to see that *MetroFuture* is discussed in the Chelsea plan, and we are also pleased to see discussion of the Lower Mystic River Corridor Strategy in which Chelsea has been an active participant. The plan also includes a very thorough discussion of regional resources in the surrounding communities.

Sincerely,

Marc D. Draisen, Executive Director

Cc: Melissa Cryan, Division of Conservation Services  
Jay Ash, MAPC Representative, City of Chelsea

60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111 • 617-451-2770 • Fax 617-482-7185 • [www.mapc.org](http://www.mapc.org)

Jay Ash, *President* • Michelle Ciccolo, *Vice-President* • Marilyn Contreas, *Secretary* • Grace S. Shepard, *Treasurer* • Marc Draisen, *Executive Director*

# 11

## References

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### References

City of Chelsea, 2003 Salem Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2003

City of Chelsea, Gerrish Avenue/Bellingham Street Neighborhood Action Plan, 2007

Chelsea Neighborhood Developers (CND) North Bellingham Hill Revitalization Plan, 2009

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Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program [Online] <http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhsp/nhsp.htm>

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Metropolitan Area Planning Council, The Lower Mystic River Corridor Strategy: Working Together to Achieve the Full Potential of the Lower Mystic, June 2009.

United States Census [Online] <http://www.census.gov>

Vine Associates, Addison-Orange Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, August 2009

Vine Associates, Chelsea Creek Waterfront Plan, August 2007

---

## Individuals and Agencies

Jay Ash, City Manager

John DePriest, AICP – Director of Planning and Development

Ryan Tully and DJ Forbes, staff at the Department of Planning and Development

Chelsea Boys and Girls Club

Chelsea City Clerk's Office

Chelsea Community Schools Program

Chelsea Department of Public Works

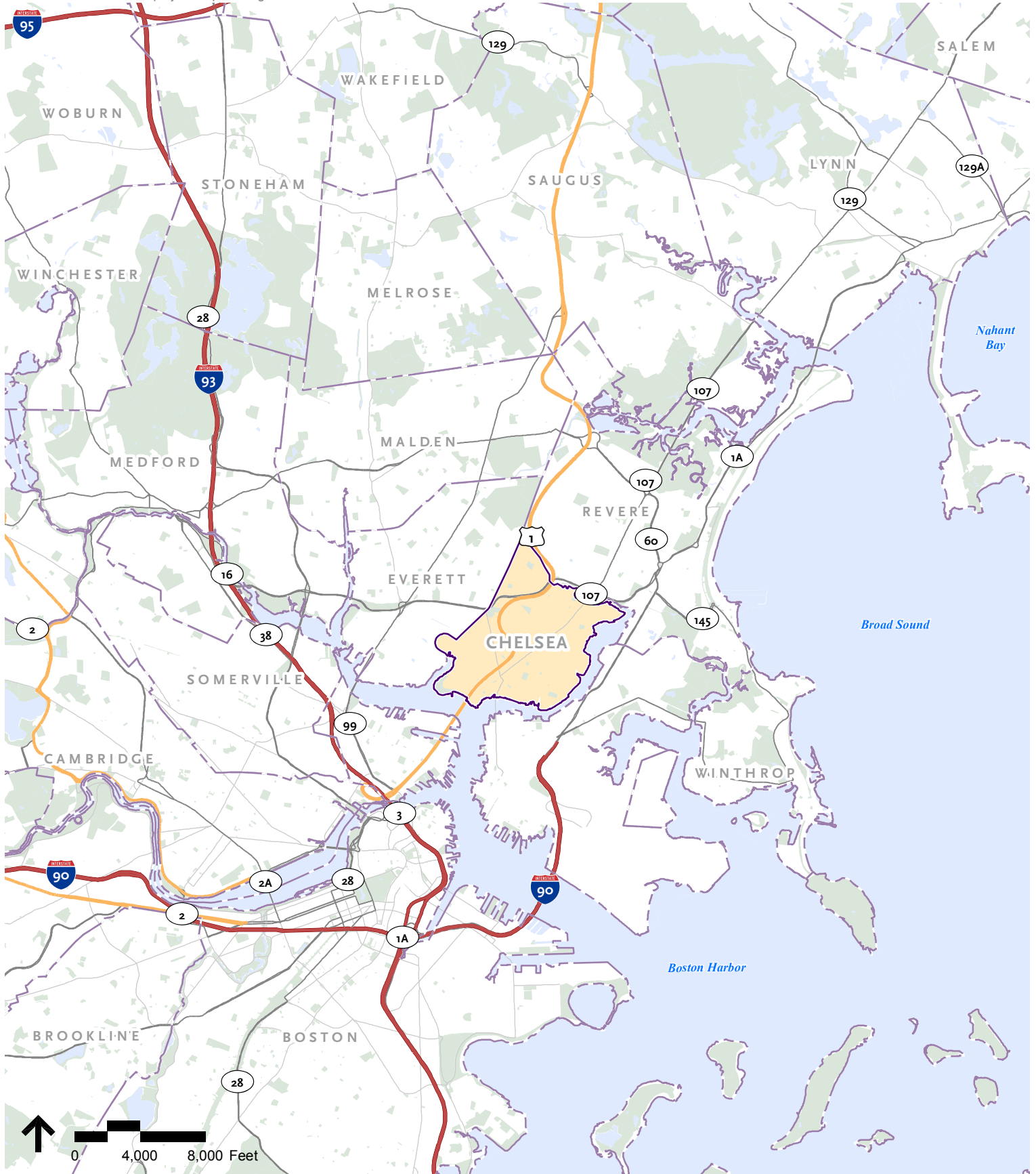
Chelsea Green Space and Recreation Committee

Chelsea Housing Authority

Chelsea School Department

# Maps

1. Regional Context Map
2. Environmental Justice Populations
3. Zoning
4. Soils and Geologic Features
5. Unique Features
6. Water Resources
- 6a. Flood Hazard Areas
7. Open Space Inventory
8. Action Plan

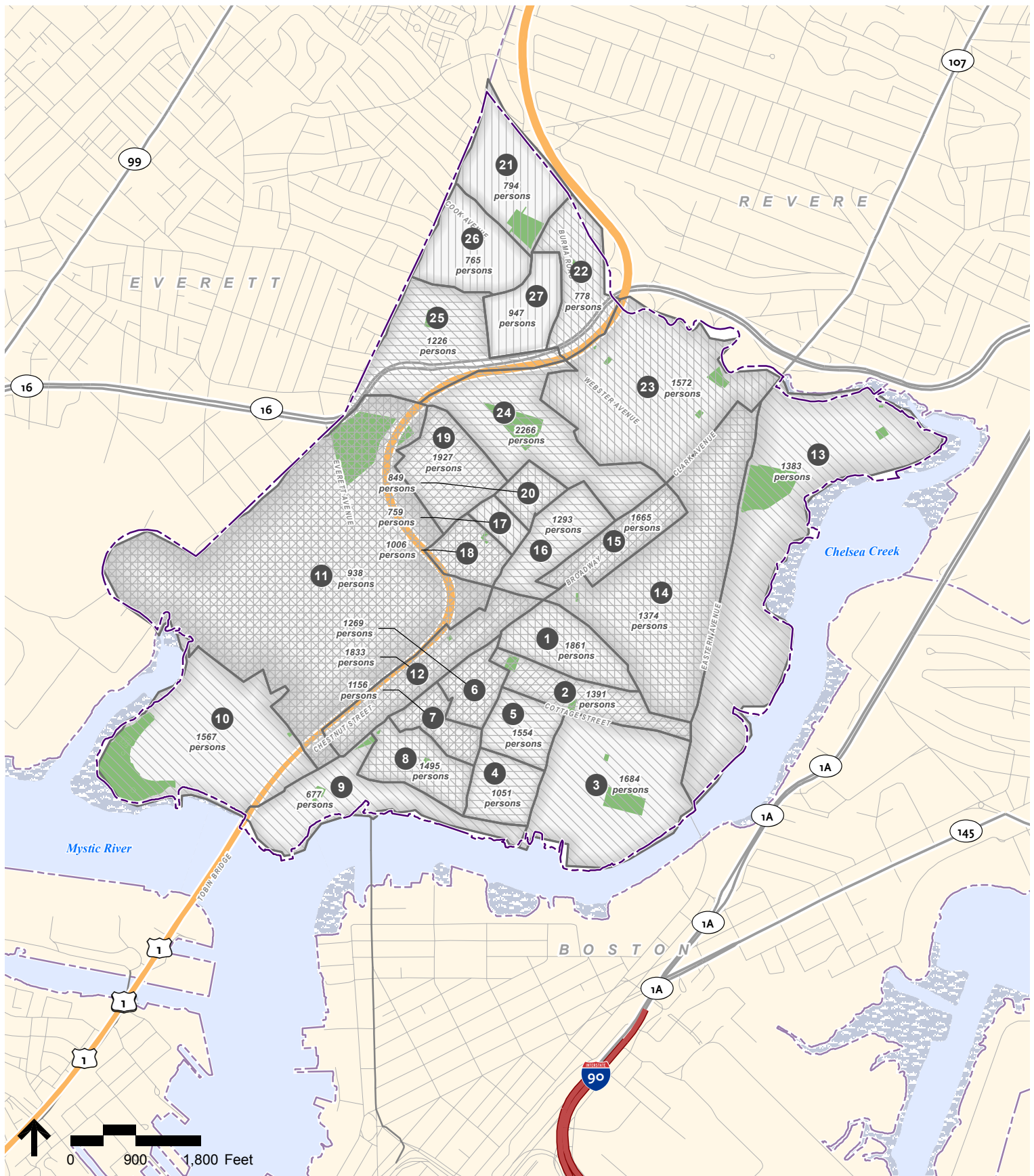


Source(s): MassGIS, City of Chelsea

**VHB** Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

## Map 1

### Regional Context Map



Source(s): MassGIS, City of Chelsea

### Legend

- Environmental Justice Population with:
- Foreign-Born Population  $\geq$  25%
- $\leq$  65% 1999 Statewide Median Household Income
- Minority Population  $\geq$  25%
- $\leq$  75% English Proficiency

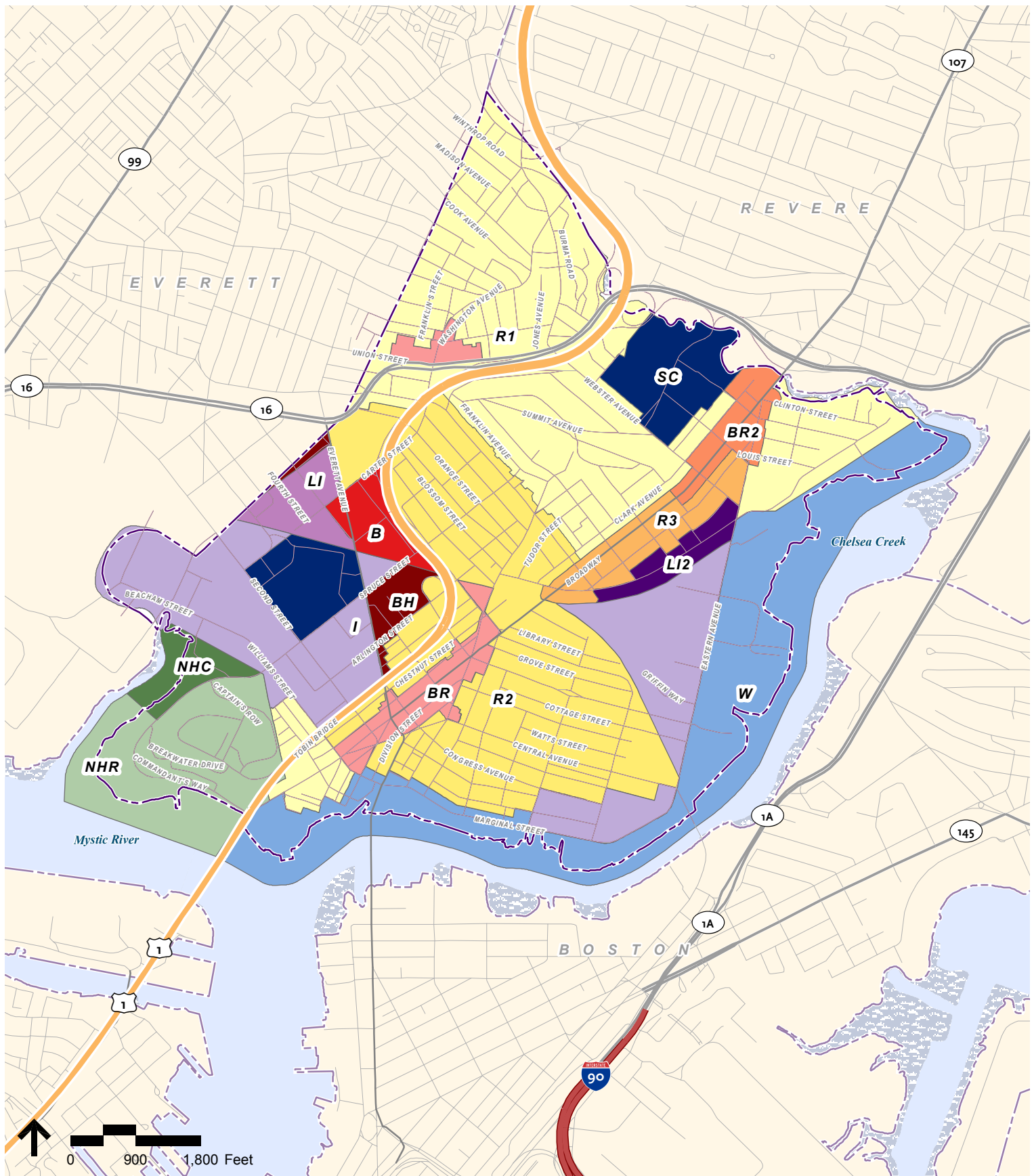
City Park

Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

### Map 2

### Environmental Justice Populations





Source(s): MassGIS, City of Chelsea

## Legend

### Zoning

<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:blue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Business (B)	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:purple; border:1px solid black;"></span> Lt Industrial 2 (LI2)	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightcoral; border:1px solid black;"></span> Retail Business (BR)
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:darkred; border:1px solid black;"></span> Highway Business (BH)	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:green; border:1px solid black;"></span> Naval Hospt Com	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span> Retail Business 2 (BR2)
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Industrial (I)	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightgreen; border:1px solid black;"></span> Naval Hospt Res	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:darkblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Shopping Center (SC)
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightpurple; border:1px solid black;"></span> Light Industrial (LI)	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Residence 3 (R3)	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightblue; border:1px solid black;"></span> Waterfront (W)
	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightyellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Residential 1 (R1)	
	<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:gold; border:1px solid black;"></span> Residential 2 (R2)	

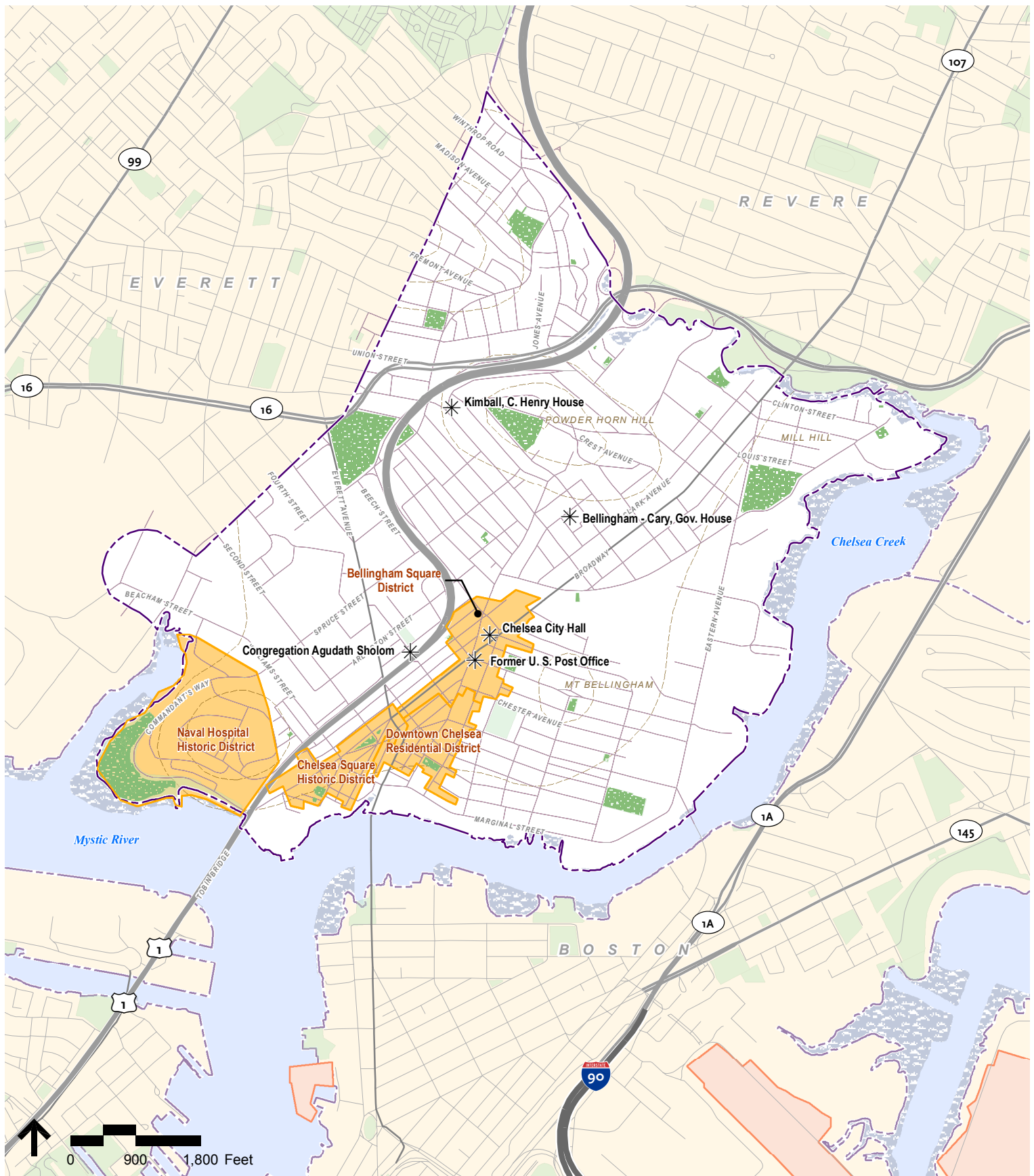
**VHB** Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

## Map 3

## Zoning

Chelsea Open Space and Recreation Plan Update 2010





Source(s): MassGIS, City of Chelsea

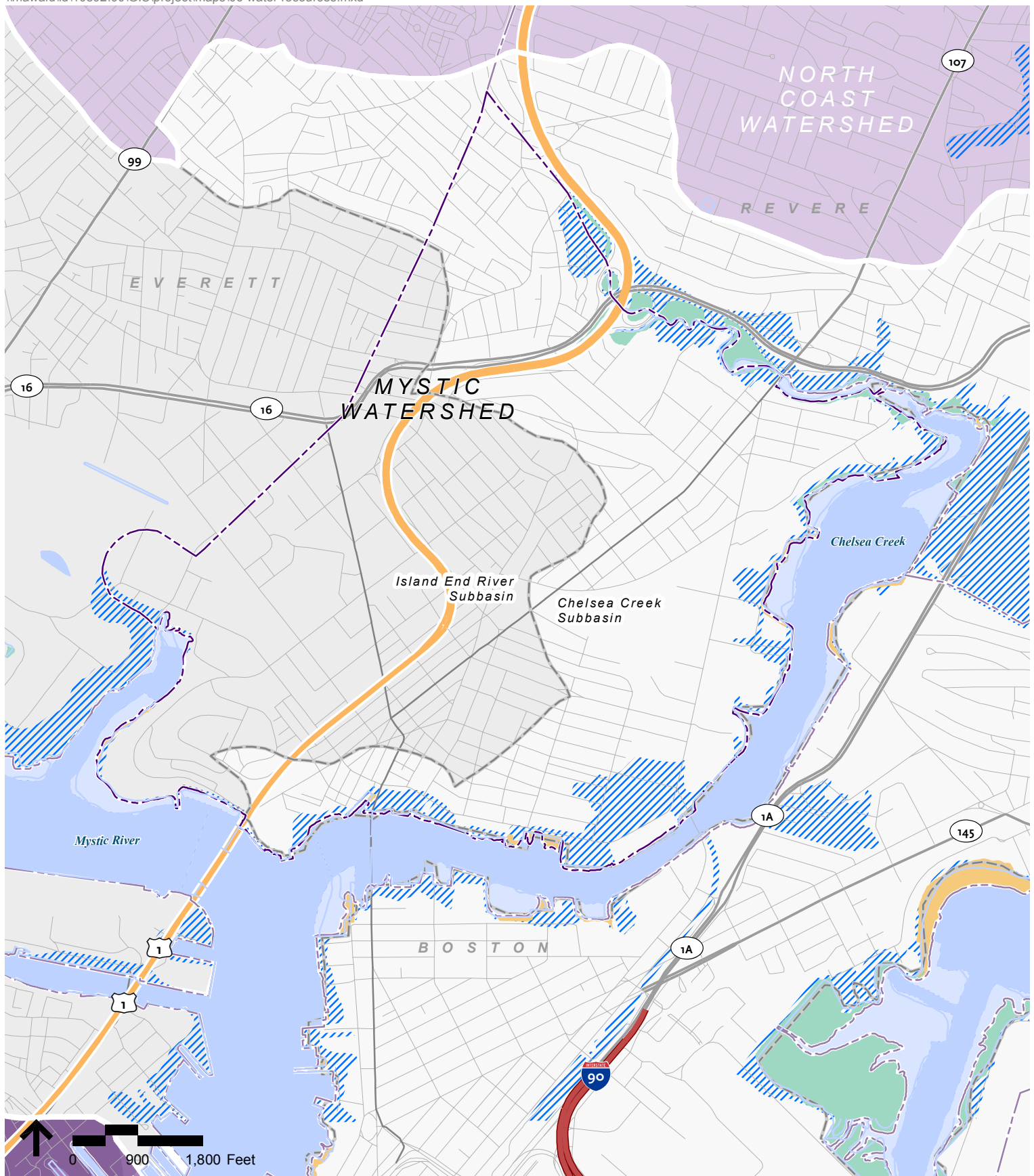
## Legend

- City Park
- Statewide Protected and Recreational Open Space
- Mass DEP Wetlands
- 30 Foot Contours
- NHESP Priority Habitats of Rare Species
- State Register of Historic Places District
- State Register of Historic Places Site

**VHB** Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

## Map 5

### Unique Features

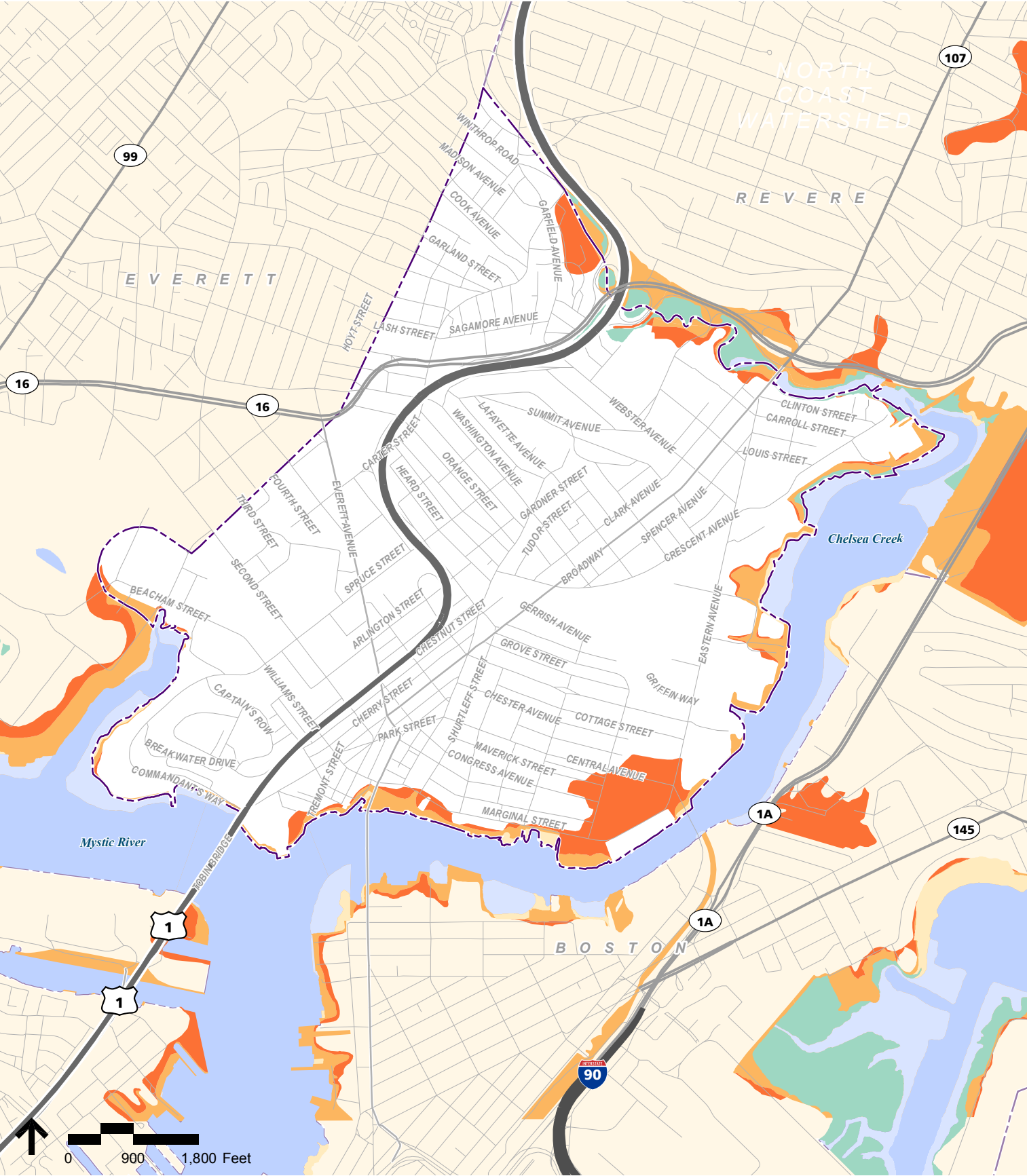


### Legend

	Subbasin Boundary		Open Water		Major Watersheds
	Bog		Tidal Flats		Charles
	Beaches		Wetland		Mystic
	Marshes		Flood Hazard Zones		North Coast

Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

### Map 6 Water Resources



Source(s): MassGIS, City of Chelsea

- Legend**
- |         |             |                         |
|---------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Bog     | Open Water  | <b>FEMA Flood Zones</b> |
| Beaches | Tidal Flats | 100 Year Flood          |
| Marshes | Wetland     | 500 Year Flood          |

**VHB** Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

**Map 6a**  
Flood Hazard Areas





Source(s): MassGIS, City of Chelsea

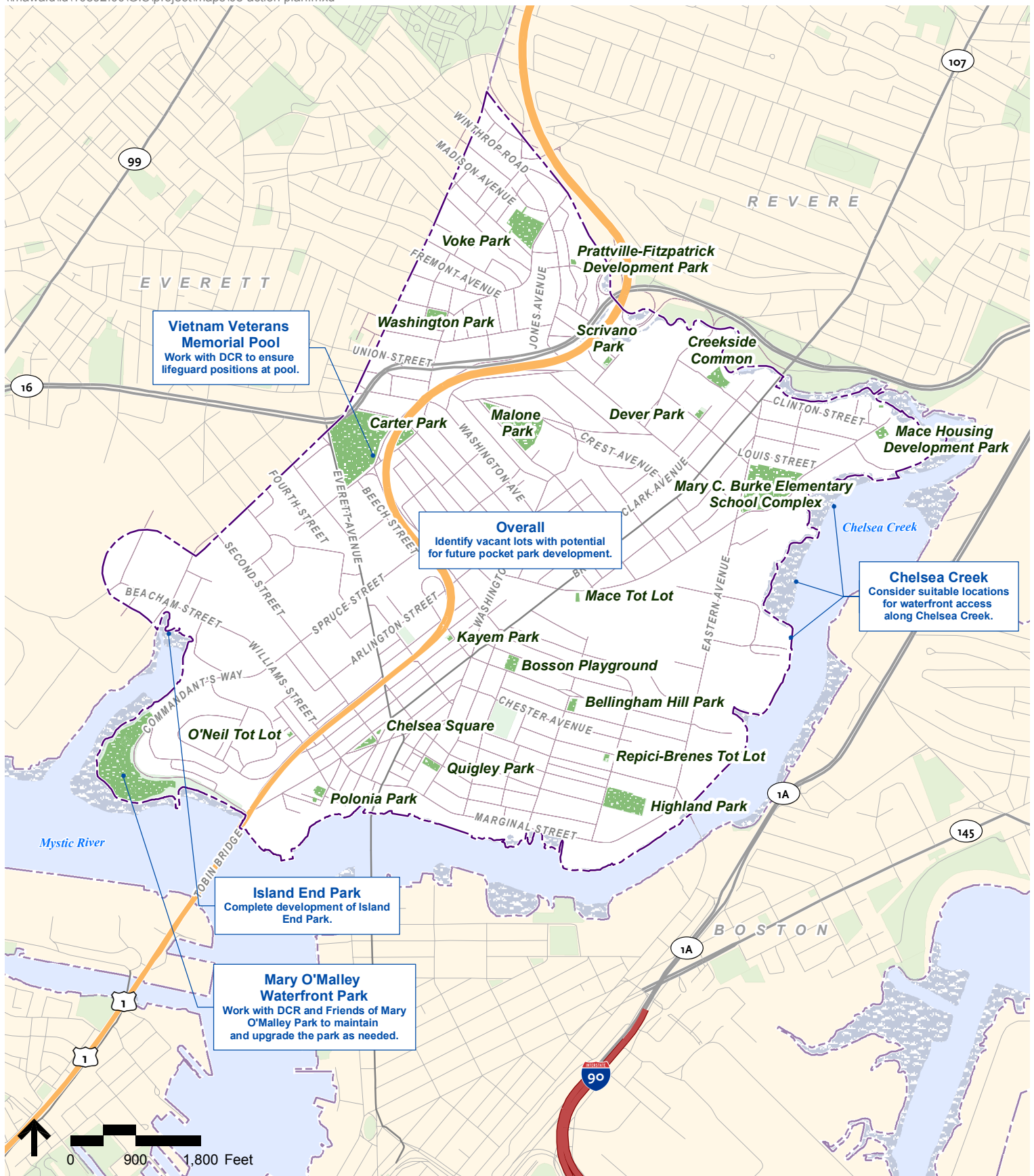
## Legend

- City Park
- Statewide Protected and Recreational Open Space
- Mass DEP Wetlands

**VHB** Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

## Map 7

## Open Space Inventory



Source(s): MassGIS, City of Chelsea

## Legend

- City Park
- Statewide Protected and Recreational Open Space
- Mass DEP Wetlands

**VHB** Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

## Map 8

## Action Plan

# Appendices

Appendix A: Section 504/ADA Compliance

Appendix B: Public Participation Notes

Appendix C: Inventory of Public and Private Open Space

Appendix D: Letters of Approval



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# Appendix A:

## Section 504/ADA Compliance

The City of Chelsea has done extensive work to meet its obligations under Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As new parks are built and existing parks are rehabilitated they are brought into compliance with ADA. As part of this Open Space and Recreation Plan Update each park was surveyed by a Landscape Architect and compliance on for each item was recorded.

---

### Part I: Administrative Requirements

#### 1. Designation of the 504 Coordinator

The city has designated the Director of the Chelsea Department of Health, Mr. Louis Prado as 504 Coordinator.

#### 2. Grievance Procedures

The 504 Coordinator has developed a Grievance Procedure. The procedure is based on the model procedure provided in the ADA Title II Guide for State and Local Governments, a handbook which has been reviewed for accuracy the U.S. Department of Justice. To date, no grievances have been filed.

#### 3. Public Notification Requirements

The 504 Coordinator has complied with requirements for public notice. Standard procedures for notice will be based on the model provided in the ADA Title II Guide for State and Local Governments.

#### 4. Participation

Chelsea established a 504/ADA Committee which included people with disabilities and organizations representing the interests of people with disabilities. The Committee worked with the city to perform the required self-evaluation. The Open Space and Recreation Plan emphasizes the involvement of neighborhood residents and park users in the design, construction, operation and maintenance of parks. Accessibility issues were discussed in public forums with all participating groups.

---

## Part II: Program Accessibility

Chelsea has surveyed all parks under its jurisdiction and identified necessary improvements in site conditions, access, and equipment to comply with Section 504 and ADA. Based on this input, the city continues to develop methods for creating programmatic and/or physical access to ensure people with disabilities have equal opportunity to participate in recreation programs and to fully utilize and enjoy public parks and open space. The city continuously works on its strategy for accessibility, which includes priorities for improving and upgrading accessibility at facilities such that the system in its entirety will have sufficient and appropriate access for all. Once project specific methods have been decided upon, the city will draft a plan which includes all of the 504/ADA required components for parks and open space. Chelsea will incorporate these measures in each action plan item for new parks, park improvements, management, maintenance and programming.

At present, many city parks and playgrounds have level, barrier-free access in at least one direction, but nearly all require replacement or upgrading of equipment to comply fully with Section 504 and ADA. To be fully accessible, several would also need access improvements in some places and accessible paving around play structures. New indoor and outdoor recreation facilities developed in conjunction with Chelsea Schools construction comply, and represent an important first step toward full compliance. Other municipal buildings, including City Hall and the Chelsea Public Library, have been made accessible with ramps and elevators.

---

## Part III: Employment Practices

The city departments with responsibilities for open space, parks and recreation are municipal entities which adhere to Chelsea's employment practices. The access consultants assisting the city with 504/ADA compliance are in the process of reviewing city employment policies and practices for compliance with the regulations.

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## ADA Survey Forms

*Under Separate Cover*

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# Appendix B: Public Participation

The Chelsea Open Space and Recreation Plan was updated in 2010. Public input was primarily obtained through public meetings.

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## Public Meetings

The first public meeting for Open Space and Recreation Plan Update was held on June 30, 2009. Notes from this meeting are included in this appendix.

June 30, 2009

### Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

#### Strengths

Number of parks

New 5<sup>th</sup> St. park

- New and clean
- Landscaping
- Good facilities
- Safe
- Quiet

Ongoing plan for maintenance and redevelopment

Groups that advocate for parks (i.e. Friends of Mary O'Malley Park)

Developers willing to donate open space

Active community gardening

Creekside

Community activities (i.e. kite day, etc.)

Outdoor performances

Different age groups are accommodated

Administration provides for open space planning

Parks are heavily utilized

Nice murals

Parks attract families

Bellingham Hill Park – neighbors did planting

### Weaknesses and Threats

People need better information on the location of parks

Shade at the 5<sup>th</sup> St. park

Information needs to be made available in a non-electronic format for people without computers

Always a need for more open space

- Organized sports
- High demands in general

Heavily utilized parks need more maintenance

Need parks that don't attract families

Need water facilities for smaller children (i.e. wading pools)

### Opportunities

Federal Funding

Information on City website

Educate people about trash, etc.

Use flower baskets, landscaping, and other treatments to enhance areas

Connections via streetscape

Charles River Watershed Association – greenspace used to address runoff

Acquire foreclosed properties for small open space parcels

More community garden space

Northeast Petroleum Walkway – staging area used for bridge work can be reused as parkland once project is completed

Outreach material/displays/maps

- City Hall
- Market Basket

Forbes Park development

Adult swim at Boys and Girls Club

Additionally, the attendees were asked to discuss the goals and objectives of the plan using those from the 2003 as a starting point. The participants agreed that those goals and objectives were still valid and accurately reflected how the City should continue to address open space and recreational needs for the next five years. A dot voting exercise was undertaken to allow the participants to prioritize the specific objectives. The objectives that received the most votes were as follows:

Provide a full range of recreational opportunities appropriate to citywide and neighborhood recreation needs and age groups. These include: baseball and soccer; tot lots, basketball, bocce, chess tables; indoor facilities for year round and winter use; facilities for organized leagues; family oriented facilities; bicycling, jogging, roller skating, and walking facilities.

Help beautify the city through appropriate open space, park, and streetscape improvements, and thereby assist in the rehabilitation of neighborhoods and the

downtown. Programs such as Chelsea's Street Tree Program and the development of victory gardens would further this goal.

Provide adequate staffing to maintain parks and playgrounds and to coordinate programs in them. Programs such as a Kite Festival at Malone Park, the farmers market, and the park ranger program promote this goal.

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## **Appendix C: Inventory of Public and Private Open Space**

## Inventory of Public and Private Open Space

Park Name	General Info										Condition				
	Public Access	Area (acres)	Ownership	Management Agency	Protected?	Recreation Potential	Current Use	Zoning District	Public Grant Type	ADA	Pavement	Equipment	Walls/Curbs	Trees	Lawns
91 Marginal Street	N	0.55	MWRA	MWRA	N	Low	Passive	W		N	n/a	n/a	n/a	Good	Good
Basset Square	Y	n/a	City	DPW	Y	Low	Passive	R2			Fair	n/a	good	Good	n/a
Bellingham Hill Park	Y	4.1	City	DPW	Y	High	Active/Passive	R2		Y	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Bellingham Square	Y	0.062	City	DPW	N	Low	Passive	BR			Good	Good	n/a	Good	n/a
Bosson Playground	Y	0.73	City	DPW	Y	High	Active	R2	Urban Self-Help	Y	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Carter Park Athletic Fields	Y	2.58	City	DPW	Y	High	Active	R2		Y	n/a	Good	Good	Good	Good
Carter Park Playground	Y	0.377	City	DPW	N	High	Active	R2		Y	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Good
Chelsea Square	Y	0.48	City	DPW	N	Low	Passive	BR			Fair	Poor	Good	Good	Good
Ciepiela Park	Y	0.04	City	DPW	N	Low	Passive	R1	Urban Self-Help	Some	Poor	Fair	n/a	Good	Fair
City Hall Lawn	Y	0.128	City	DPW	Y	Low	Passive	BR			Fair	Fair	Good	Good	Good
Cordero Park	Y	0.185	CHA	CHA	Y	High	Active	R1			Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Creekside Common	Y	±1	City	DPW	Y	High	Active	SC	Urban Self-Help		Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Dever Park	Y	0.28	City	DPW	Y	High	Active	R1		Y	Fair	Fair	n/a	Good	Poor
Early Learning Center Playground (East)	Limited	0.238	City	School Dept	Y	High	Active	R2			Good	Good	Good	Good	n/a
Early Learning Center Playground (West)	Limited	0.226	City	School Dept	Y	High	Active	R2			Good	Good	Good	Good	Poor
Early Learning Center Lawn	Y	0.052	City	School Dept	N	Fair	Passive	R2			n/a	Good	Good	Good	Good
Eden Street Garden	Y	0.22	City	DPW	Y	High	Passive	R2		Y	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Garden Cemetery	Locked	3	City	DPW	Y	High	Passive	R2		N	Fair to Poor	Fair	Fair	Good	Good

## Inventory of Public and Private Open Space

Park Name	General Info											Condition				
	Public Access	Area (acres)	Ownership	Management Agency	Protected?	Recreation Potential	Current Use	Zoning District	Public Grant Type	ADA		Pavement	Equipment	Walls/Curbs	Trees	Lawns
High School/Memorial Stadium	Y	5.04	City	School Dept	Y	High	Active	R2		Y		Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Highland Park	Y	1.74	City	DPW	Y	High	Active	I/AROD	Urban Self-Help	Y		Good	Good	Good	Good	Poor
Island End Park	Y	0.16	City	DPW	Y	Low	Passive	I	PARC	Y		to open mid 2010				
Island End Waterfront Parkway	Y	0.17	Private/City	Private/DPW	N	High	Active	NHD/NH C/I				Good	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Kayem Park	Y	0.11	City	DPW	Y	High	Active	R2	Urban Self-Help	Y		Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Library Lawn	No	0.155	City	DPW	Y	Low	Passive	R2		N		Good	Fair	Good	Good	Good
Mace Housing Development Court	Y	0.11	CHA	CHA	N	High	Active	R1				Fair	Fair	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mace Tot-Lot	Y	0.137	City	DPW	N	High	Active	R3	Urban Self-Help			Good	Good	Good	Good	Fair
Malone Park	Y	5.426	State	DCR	N	High	Passive	4				Poor	n/a	n/a	Good	n/a
Mary C. Burke Athletic Fields	Y	2.214	School Dept	School Dept	Y	High	Active	R1				Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Mary C. Burke Playground	Y	1.137	City	School Dept	Y	High	Active	R1				Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Mary O'Malley Memorial Park	Y	15.335	State	DCR	Y	High	Active/Passive	NHR				Fair	n/a	n/a	Good	Good
Mill Creek Riverwalk	Y	0.554	Private	Private	N	High	Active/Passive	SC/BR2				Good	Good	n/a	Good	n/a
O'Neil Tot Lot	Y	0.08	City	DPW	N	High	Active	R1	Urban Self-Help	Y		Fair	Good	Fair	Fair	Good
Polonia Park	Y	0.39	City	DPW	Y	High	Active	R1	Urban Self-Help	Y		Fair	Good	Good	Good	Fair
Prattville-Fitzpatrick Development Park	Y	0.1	CHA	CHA	Y	High	Active	R1				Fair	Good	Good	Poor	Fair



## Inventory of Public and Private Open Space

Park Name	General Info										Condition				
	Public Access	Area (acres)	Ownership	Management Agency	Protected?	Recreation Potential	Current Use	Zoning District	Public Grant Type	ADA	Pavement	Equipment	Walls/Curbs	Trees	Lawns
Quigly Park	Y	0.55	City	DPW	Y	High	Active	R2	Urban Self-Help	Y	Good	Fair	Fair	Good	Fair
Recipi-Brenes Tot-Lot	Y	0.126	CHA	CHA	Y	High	Active	R2			Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Roche Park	Y	0.182	CHA	CHA	Y	High	Active	R2			Good	Good	Good	Good	Good
Scrivano Court	Y	0.166	CHA	CHA	N	High	Active	R2			Poor	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Vietn/am Veterans Memorial Pool	Y	0.579	State	DCR	Y	High	Active	R2			Good	Good	Good	Fair	n/a
Voke Park	Y	3.338	City	DPW	Y	High	Active	R1	Urban Self-Help	Y	Fair to Poor	Good	Good	Good	Good
Washington Park	Y	1.7	City	DPW	N	High	Active	R1		Y	Good	Fair	Good	Good	Good
Williams School	Y	0.719	City	School Dept	Y	High	Active	R2		Y	Good	Fair	Good	Good	Good
Total Open Space		53.47 acres													