



HEALTH OF BOSTON 2023

COMMUNITY ASSETS REPORT

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the Boston Public Health Commission's (BPHC) Health of Boston 2023: The Community Assets Report. This is one of a series of reports on the latest health status of the city of Boston residents.

Community assets are aspects of the local environment that positively impact quality of life and well-being. These can include resources in the physical environment, such as recreational parks and bikeways, as well as elements of community cohesion and engagement, such as having active community groups. These resources are often measured by their proximity and accessibility to a neighborhood immediately around where people reside. Community assets are important social determinants of health¹.

This report documents community assets by Boston neighborhood to help guide public health officials, community leaders, and Boston residents on their availability. Understanding neighborhood differences in assets is important for improving and maintaining public health across Boston.



SUMMARY

This chapter describes the distribution of community assets related to civic engagement and the built environment among Boston residents, many of which vary at the neighborhood level. Boston neighborhoods are described in Table 1.

Civic Engagement

City-wide voter turnout for the presidential election in 2020 (68%) was similar to that of 2016 (67%). Rates for the two most recent elections were 33% in November 2021 for the mayoral and city council elections, and 40% in November 2022 for statewide offices. Precincts with lower voter turnout for the general election were concentrated in the neighborhoods of Dorchester (zip codes 02121, 02125), Fenway, and Roxbury.

Boston residents initiated over 276,721 non-emergency service requests to Boston's 311 service in 2022. The highest rates of these service requests were in the neighborhoods of Dorchester (02122, 02124), Roxbury and Back Bay/Beacon Hill/Downtown/North End/West End.

Built Environment

Boston's protected and recreational open space provides residents with access to parks and greenery for leisure and exercise. Approximately 80% of Boston's open space is publicly accessible, with the largest open space locations in the central and southwestern areas. Hyde Park and Jamaica Plain have the most open space of all the neighborhoods in Boston, while South End and Roxbury have the least. Along with this, Boston has over 55 miles of bicycle trails available for public use.

In 2010, 25% of Boston residents were over the age of 50 and 13% were over the age of 60. Projections show that by 2030, Boston's 60+ population will grow faster than the population as a whole and reach over 130,000 people². Boston has a large amount of "Age-friendly" outdoor spaces that are accessible, well-lit and well-marked public spaces.

While Boston offers a diverse network of food resources for its local communities, including community gardens, farmer's markets, local grocery stores, and other licensed food venues, the majority of these resources are located in the Fenway and Downtown areas. Nutritional assistance programs are available around Boston for communities that may struggle to meet



their nutritional needs including low-income households, seniors, women and children. Roxbury, South End and Dorchester (02121, 02125) have the highest number of food pantries in Boston.

The median assessed value of residential properties in Boston increased 26.7% in the last 5 years, with the largest increases in East Boston (02128), Dorchester (02121), Roxbury (02120) and South Boston (02210).

Although Boston is known to be a hub for higher education, the universities are concentrated in the neighborhoods of Fenway, Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Downtown, North End, and West End.





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INTRODUCTION

Broadly speaking, community assets are critical social, cultural, and physical resources that make it easier for people to make healthy choices³. Boston's neighborhoods offer a rich landscape of assets that contribute to the well-being of its residents. This report examines the distribution of these community-level determinants within neighborhoods across Boston. It is essential to acknowledge that while some neighborhoods may thrive with abundant resources, others do not. Through this lens, we seek to offer a comprehensive view of Boston's strengths, areas for improvement, and a blueprint to ensure that every resident has the opportunity to lead a healthy life.

What are community assets?

Community assets are the resources that improve the quality of community life and provide a healthier environment for residents⁴ creating opportunities to engage in activities that improve health and well-being⁵. Community assets include access to healthy food, active living environments, having a voice in the political process, and good municipal services⁶⁻¹¹.

Although all communities have assets that contribute to health, their distribution varies considerably. Research demonstrates that communities of color and low-income populations are less likely to have resources that promote health such as grocery stores, parks, and recreational programs^{8,9,12}. Examples of community assets in Boston include:

- Community programs such as community gardens and farmer's markets
- Local businesses such as grocery stores and restaurants
- Natural resources such as rivers, trees, and public green spaces
- Built environment such as parks, playgrounds, and shared use paths
- Neighborhood groups such as community advisory and crime watch groups
- Municipal services such as police, fire, and recreation services
- Public institutions such as schools, libraries, and places of worship
- Resources promoting civic engagement, such as the Boston 311 service for reporting non-emergency issues

Since community assets play a significant role in the health and well-being of residents, recognizing and building upon existing community assets is an essential factor in promoting health equity.



Neighborhoods in Boston and Associated Zip Codes

Neighborhood	Abbreviation	Zip codes	Population	Median Income
Allston/Brighton	A/B	02134, 02135, 02163	70,677	Allston: \$52,040 Brighton: \$65,655
Back Bay/Beacon Hill/ Downtown/North End/West End	BB/BH/DT/NE/WE	02108, 02109, 02110, 02113, 02114, 02116, 02199, 02222	58,476	Back Bay: \$97,763 Beacon Hill: \$102,168 Downtown: \$168,638 North End: \$98,524 West End: \$83,811
Charlestown	CH	02129	19,407	\$94,580
Dorchester (02121, 02125)	DOR (02121, 02125)	02121, 02125	64,134	\$57,912
Dorchester (02122, 02124)	DOR (02122, 02124)	02122, 02124	75,770	\$62,156
East Boston	EB	02128	43,327	\$54,855
Fenway/Kenmore	FW	02115, 02215	58,908	Fenway: \$37,863 Kenmore: \$38,467
Hyde Park	HP	02136	35,345	\$64,903
Jamaica Plain	JP	02130	38,573	\$84,036
Mattapan	MT	02126	22,922	\$43,484
Roslindale	RS	02131	30,620	\$77,945
Roxbury	RX	02119, 02120	47,376	\$32,296
South Boston	SB	02127, 02210	44,734	\$89,070
South End (includes Chinatown)	SE	02111, 02118	39,294	\$69,855
West Roxbury	WR	02132	27,265	\$90,484



SECTION 1. BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The built environment includes the physical makeup of where a person lives, works, and plays. It refers to land use, transportation systems, buildings, parks, traffic systems, trails, housing, and more^{13,14}. From a public health perspective, the built environment refers to the interaction of the physical environment with inhabitants' opportunities for health and wellness. Public health research has suggested that the way neighborhoods are created can affect both the physical and mental health of the residents living in a community¹⁵.

Built environments that are designed to enhance physical activity may lead to higher rates of physical activity, which in turn, positively affects health of the population in that community¹⁶. Lack of these community assets can contribute to a rise in sedentary habits, which may further lead to poorer health outcomes such as chronic disease^{17,18}. The addition of parks, recreation centers, and bike lanes support increased physical activity by providing places for residents to engage in exercise. There are various resources around Boston to encourage outdoor activity, including those designed specifically for older residents such as age-friendly walkways that feature age-friendly benches and public restrooms. Community programs and the presence of local businesses such as grocery stores, community gardens, farmer's markets, and food banks can support healthy eating by providing easy access to fresh and affordable food. When such assets are missing from a community, the residents are less likely to eat nutritious foods, be physically active, and engage in community activities, leading to an overall decline in community health¹⁹⁻²².

Housing prices can also affect residents' physical and mental health. The greatest adverse effects of increasing housing prices were found amongst those who did not own property, including increased prevalence of depression²³. In contrast, a sharp decline in housing was associated with an increase in psychological distress for those who own property²⁴. Housing is related closely to a sense of belonging, security, and schooling. Historically, marginalized communities were denied control over housing when redlining, exclusionary zoning, and involuntary displacement policies were enforced²⁵. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) was originally established to provide affordable, long-term loans to eligible buyers to purchase property during the Great Depression. However, their initial zoning policies reflected prevailing attitudes of racial discrimination at the time; redlining was used to guarantee that any residential areas housing non-White individuals would be designated low property value and unstable community investments²⁶. Home ownership is an important form of wealth accumulation; this practice therefore created a barrier to accumulation of wealth for people of color. In turn, these racist policies affected the socioeconomic status of multiple generations of Black Americans. Housing is therefore an important element to account for when viewing the impact of housing on health equity to gain a holistic understanding of how the built

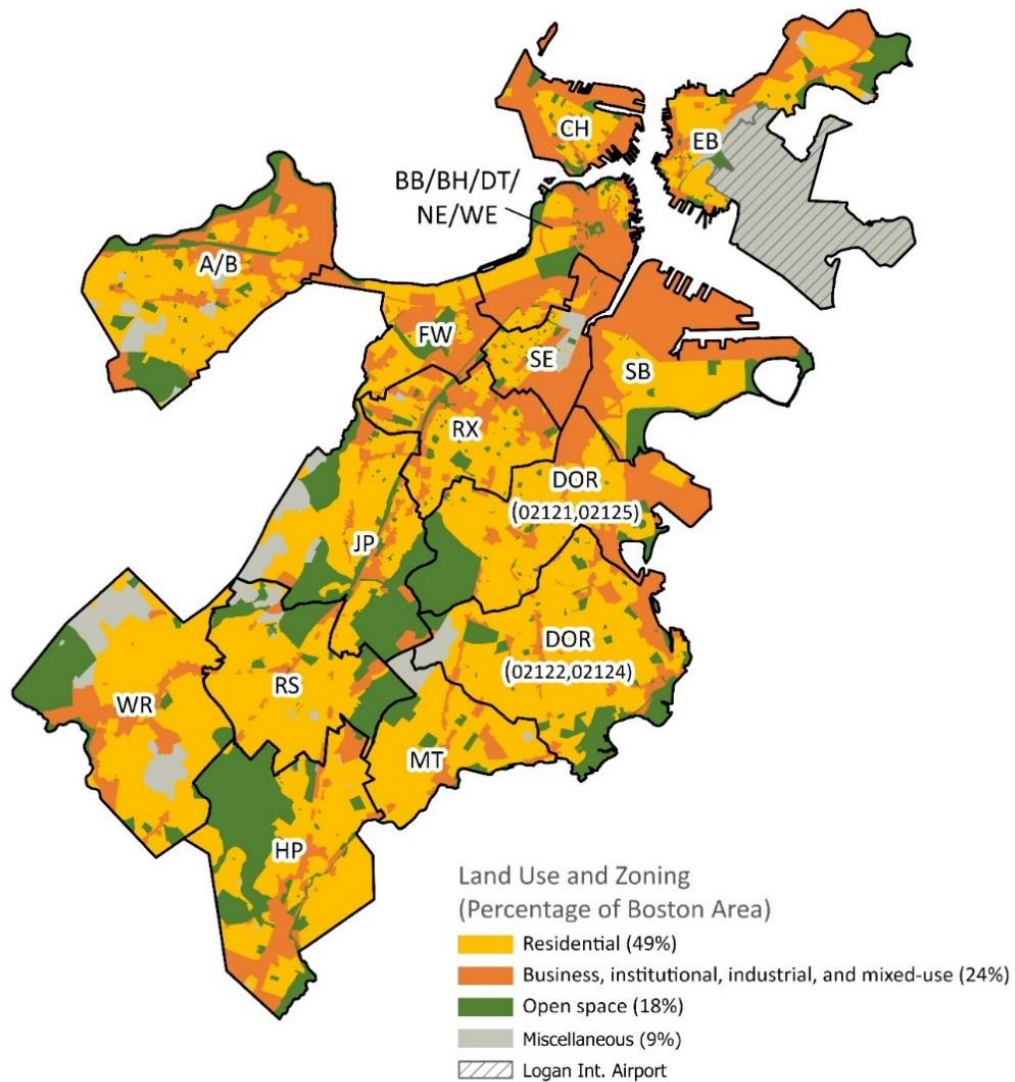
environment impacts public health and assists the communities that have been historically discriminated against.

In this section of the report, we summarize indicators of the built environment including land use and zoning; residential property values; protected and recreational open space and bicycle trails; walkability; activity centers; landmarks, historic districts, and main street districts; food resources; and schools, colleges, and universities.



Land Resources

Figure 1. Land Use and Zoning, 2023



NOTE: “SE” includes the South End and Chinatown. Mixed-use zones (which may contain residential units) were excluded from residential area calculations, and the Harbor Islands were excluded from all calculations.

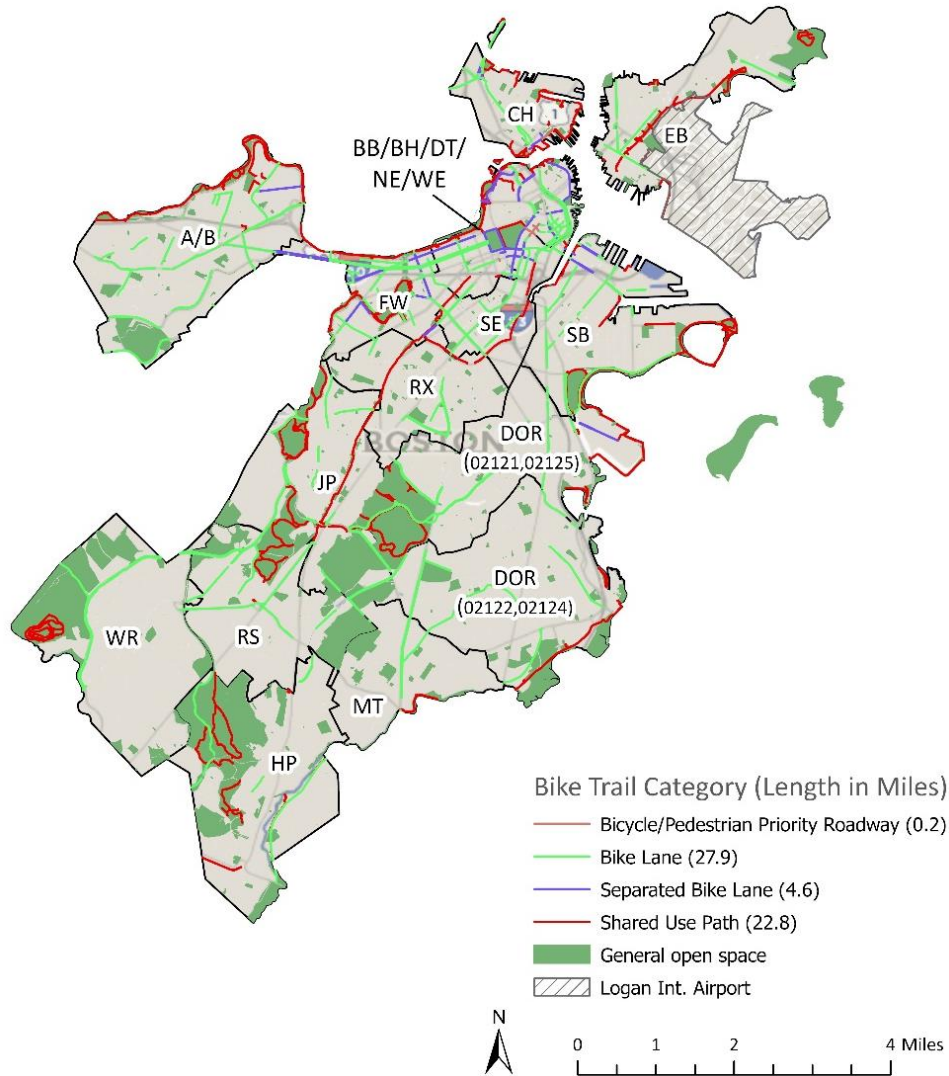
DATA SOURCE: City of Boston, Boston Zoning Subdistricts, Analyze Boston

Land use in Boston is regulated through zoning. Approximately 49% of Boston’s 47.7 square miles (excluding Harbor Islands) are zoned for residential use, while approximately 24% are zoned for business, institutional, industrial, or mixed-use. The remaining 27% consists mostly of open space and miscellaneous uses.

While residential areas span the city, most business and mixed-use zones lie in the northern regions, including Charlestown, Dorchester, and Back Bay, as well as South Boston. The largest open spaces are in central and southwestern Boston neighborhoods including Dorchester (Franklin Park and Neponset River Reservation), Jamaica Plain (The Arboretum and Jamaica Pond), and Hyde Park (Stony Brook Reservation). Logan International Airport, categorized as miscellaneous, occupies about half of East Boston.



Figure 2. General Open Space and Bicycle Trails by Neighborhood, 2023



NOTE: "SE" includes the South End and Chinatown. This map includes Thompson and Spectacle Islands.
DATA SOURCE: Bicycle Trails, Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS); Boston Zoning Subdistricts, Analyze Boston

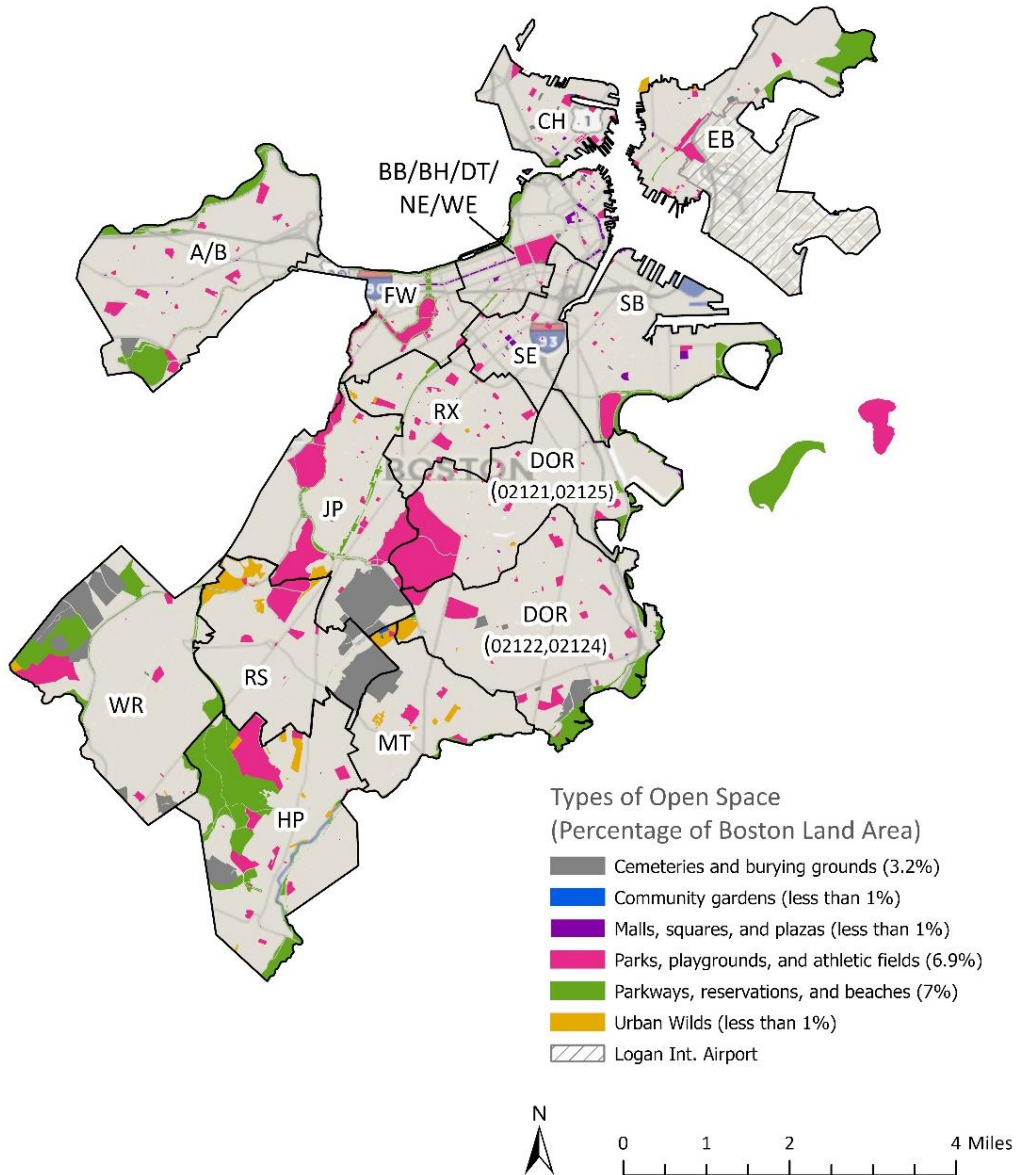
Boston's protected and recreational open space provides residents with access to parks and greenery for leisure and exercise. There are approximately 8.4 square miles of open space and about 55.5 miles of bicycle trails in Boston. The Bicycle/Pedestrian Priority Roadway spans approximately 0.2 miles and bike lanes cover about 27.9 miles. Boston also boasts separated bike lanes measuring around 4.6 miles and shared-use paths extending for about 22.8 miles.

Separated bike lanes refer to areas where there is a vertical separation between bikes and cars, while bike lanes have no physical separation between the two. Examples of physical separation between bikes and cars include flex posts, parking-protected lanes and permanent curbs that create barriers between the bikes and cars.



*Separated bike lane with flex posts
Location: Boylston Street, Fenway*

Figure 3. General Open Space by Type and Neighborhood, 2023

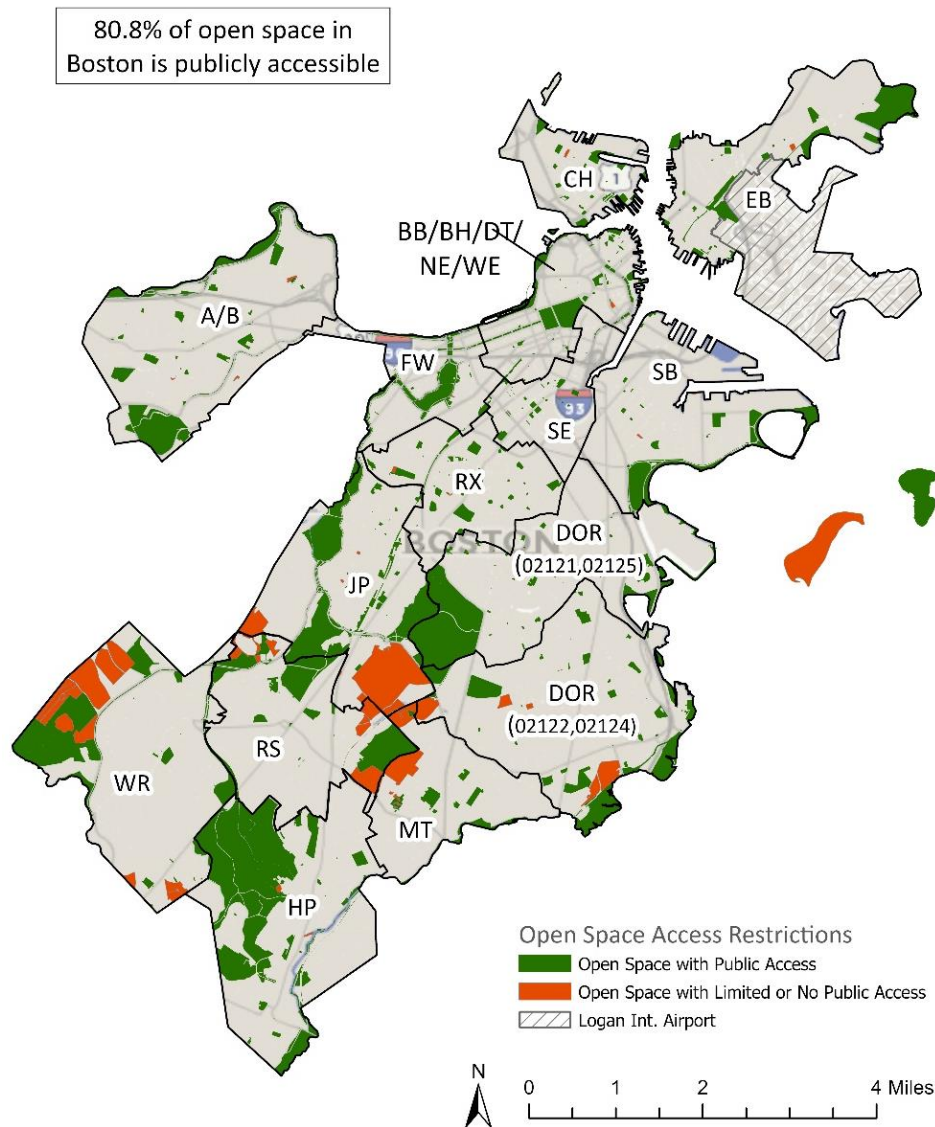


NOTE: "SE" includes the South End and Chinatown. This map includes Thompson and Spectacle Islands.

DATA SOURCE: Open Space, Analyze Boston

Approximately 8.4 square miles of Boston's 47.7 square miles is open space. Boston's open space consists of cemeteries and burying grounds (3.2%); community gardens (less than 1%); malls, squares, and plazas (less than 1%); parks, playgrounds, and athletic fields (6.9%); parkway, reservations, and beaches (7%); and urban wilds (less than 1%).

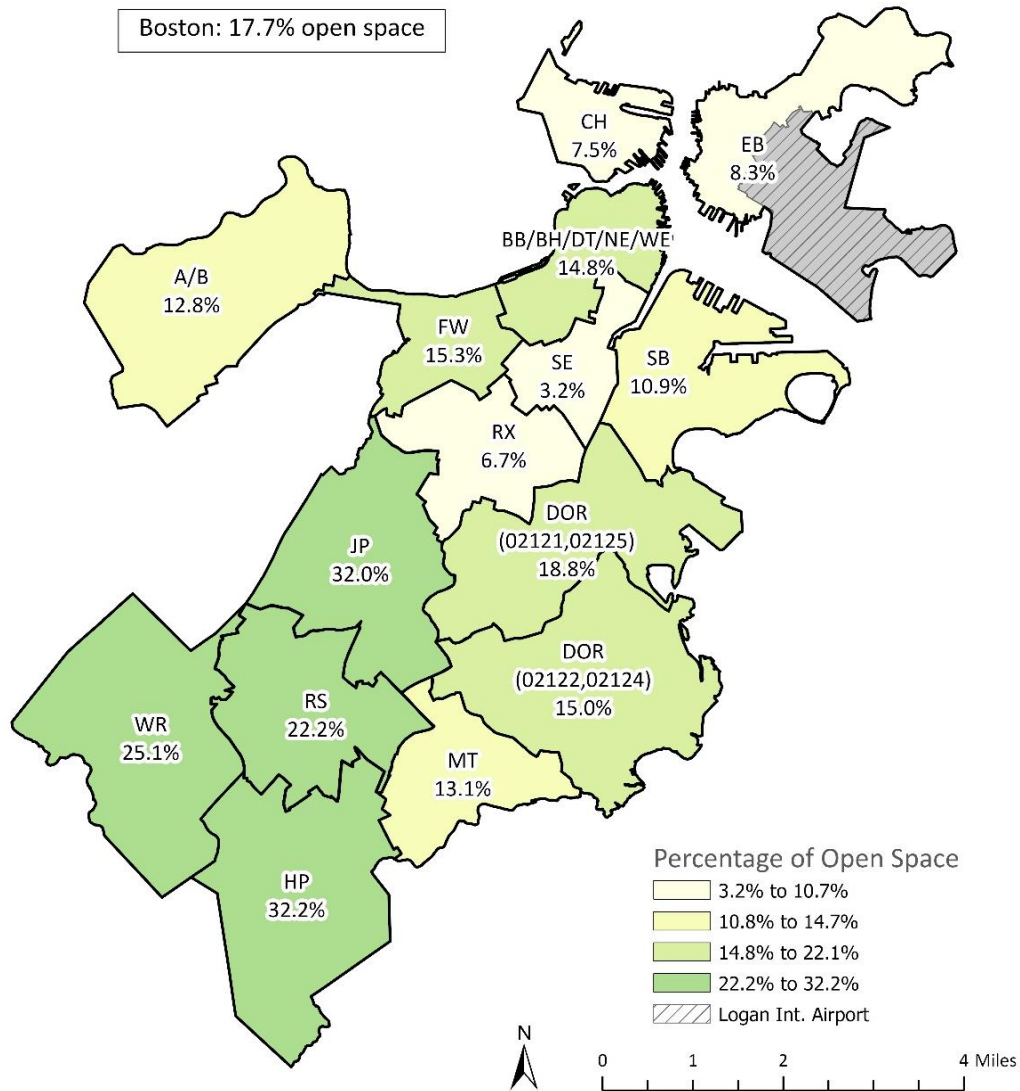
Figure 4. General Open Space by Public Access and Neighborhood, 2023



NOTE: "SE" includes the South End and Chinatown. This map includes Thompson and Spectacle Islands.
DATA SOURCE: Open Space, Analyze Boston

Approximately 80.8% (6.8 square miles) of Boston's open space is publicly accessible. Public access to some of the open space may be limited, depending on location and ownership. There are 58 locations within the open space with limited access, with the majority being cemeteries, private parks, farms, or harbor walks. Open space areas with public access include public parks, plazas, or facilities, like UMass' Harbor Walk, comprising a total of 474 accessible open space locations.

Figure 5. Percentage of General Open Space by Neighborhood, 2023

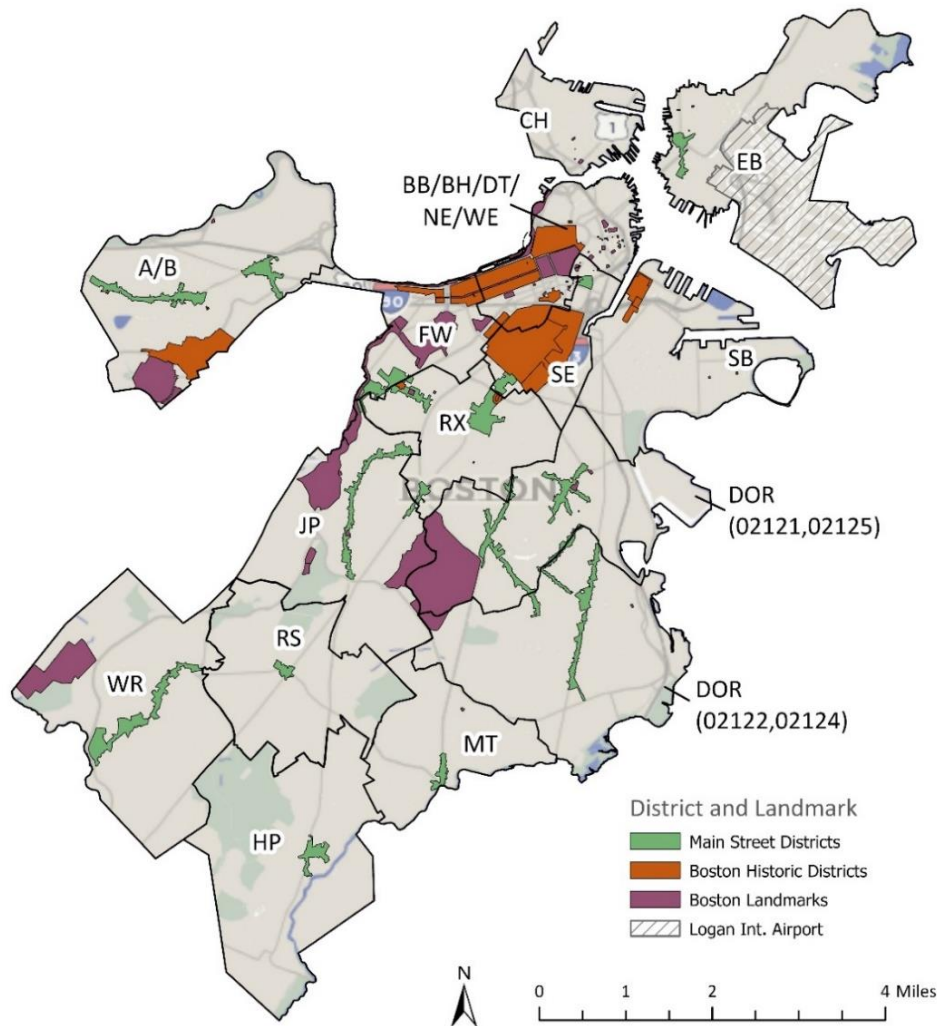


NOTE: "SE" includes the South End and Chinatown. Logan International Airport was included as part of East Boston when determining the percentage of the neighborhood that is open space.

DATA SOURCE: Open Space, Analyze Boston

Approximately 17.7% percent of Boston neighborhoods, excluding the Harbor Islands, are open space. Hyde Park (32.2%) and Jamaica Plain (32%) have the highest percentages of land consisting of open space, while the South End (3.2%), and Roxbury (6.7%) have the lowest.

Figure 6. Landmarks, Historic Districts, and Main Street Districts by Neighborhood, 2023

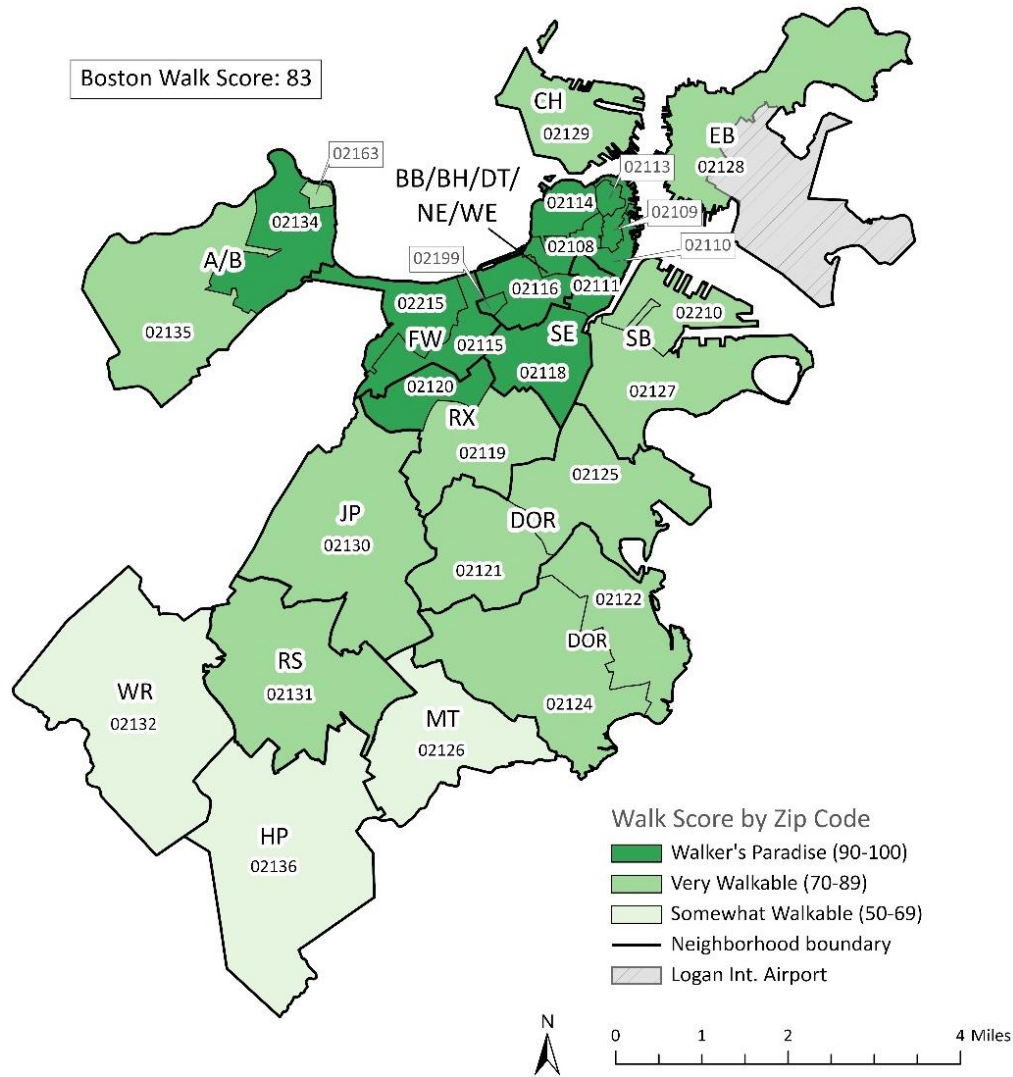


NOTE: “SE” includes the South End and Chinatown. Landmarks and historic districts are designated by the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC). Main Streets are commercial districts sustained by a network of Main Streets Organizations.

DATA SOURCE: Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) Historic Districts, Analyze Boston

Several city and community organizations have been established to preserve Boston’s rich cultural heritage by protecting historic buildings, places, and neighborhoods. Boston Main Streets, comprised of 20 Main Streets organizations, works to sustain healthy commercial districts through creative revitalization. The Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) aims to preserve Boston’s historical neighborhoods through official designation of landmarks and historical districts and architectural design review. Nine local Historic District Commissions review property proposals within each Historic District.

Figure 7. Walk Score® by Zip Code, 2023



NOTE: "SE" includes the South End and Chinatown. Walk Score®(walkscore.com) ranking is an index of pedestrian friendliness that measures walkability on a scale from 0 to 100. Data for the portion of Chestnut Hill (ZIP code 02467) that is in Boston were unavailable and therefore not mapped.

DATA SOURCE: Redfin Real Estate in Boston, <https://www.redfin.com/city/1826/MA/Boston>

Boston is the third most walkable large city in the United States and Canada, with a Walk Score® (www.walkscore.com) ranking of 83. The Walk Score walkability index, published by www.walkscore.com, ranges from 0 to 100 and is based on walking routes to local destinations such as grocery stores, parks, schools, and store outlets. Walk Score index also measures pedestrian friendliness by analyzing population density and road metrics such as block length and intersection density.

The data in the map are grouped using categories established by the creators of the Walk Score index. Most areas in Boston are categorized as either a “Walker’s Paradise” (daily errands do not require a car) or “Very Walkable” (most errands can be accomplished on foot). Walk Score rankings are highest downtown (99) and in the North End (99) and decrease farther away from those areas. The lowest Walk Score rankings are in Mattapan (69), West Roxbury (63), and Hyde Park (58).

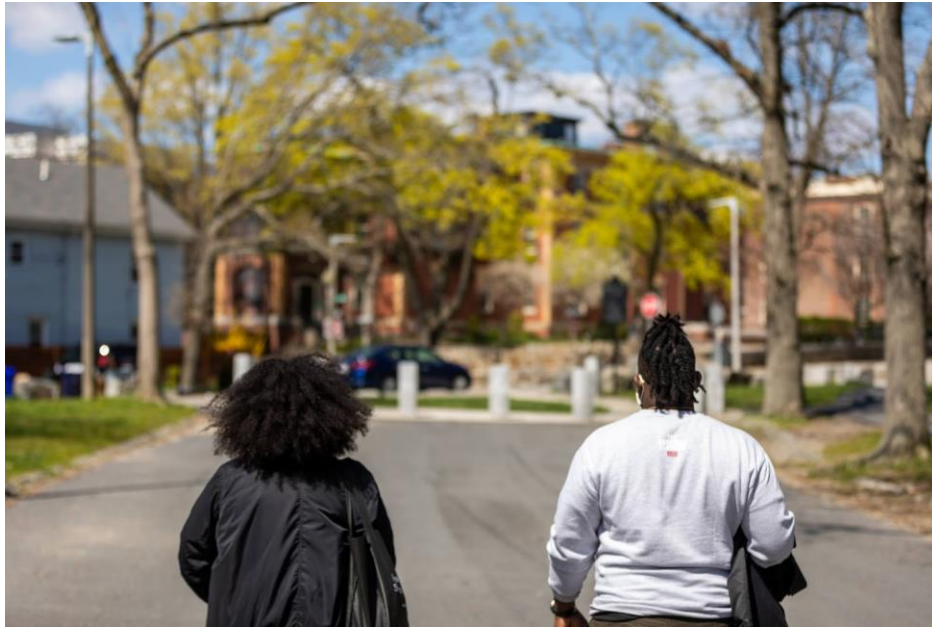
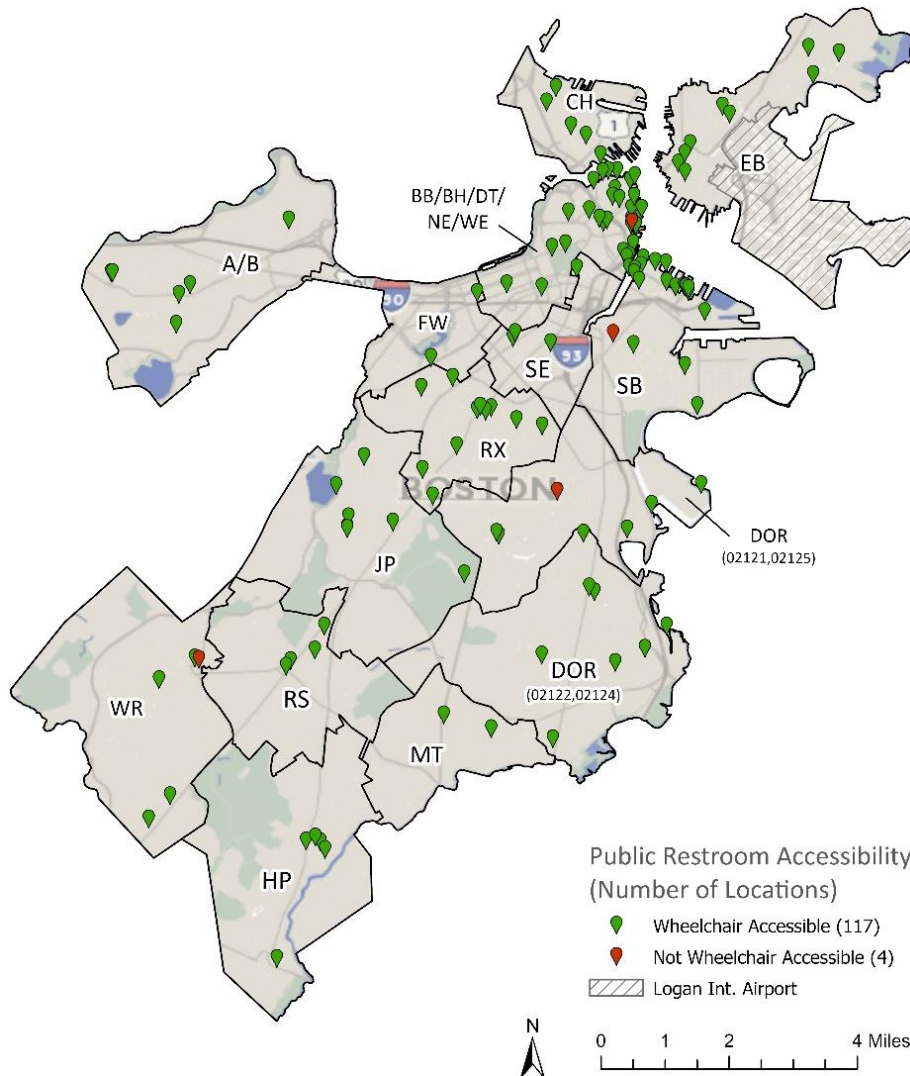


Figure 8. Public Restrooms by Neighborhood, 2023



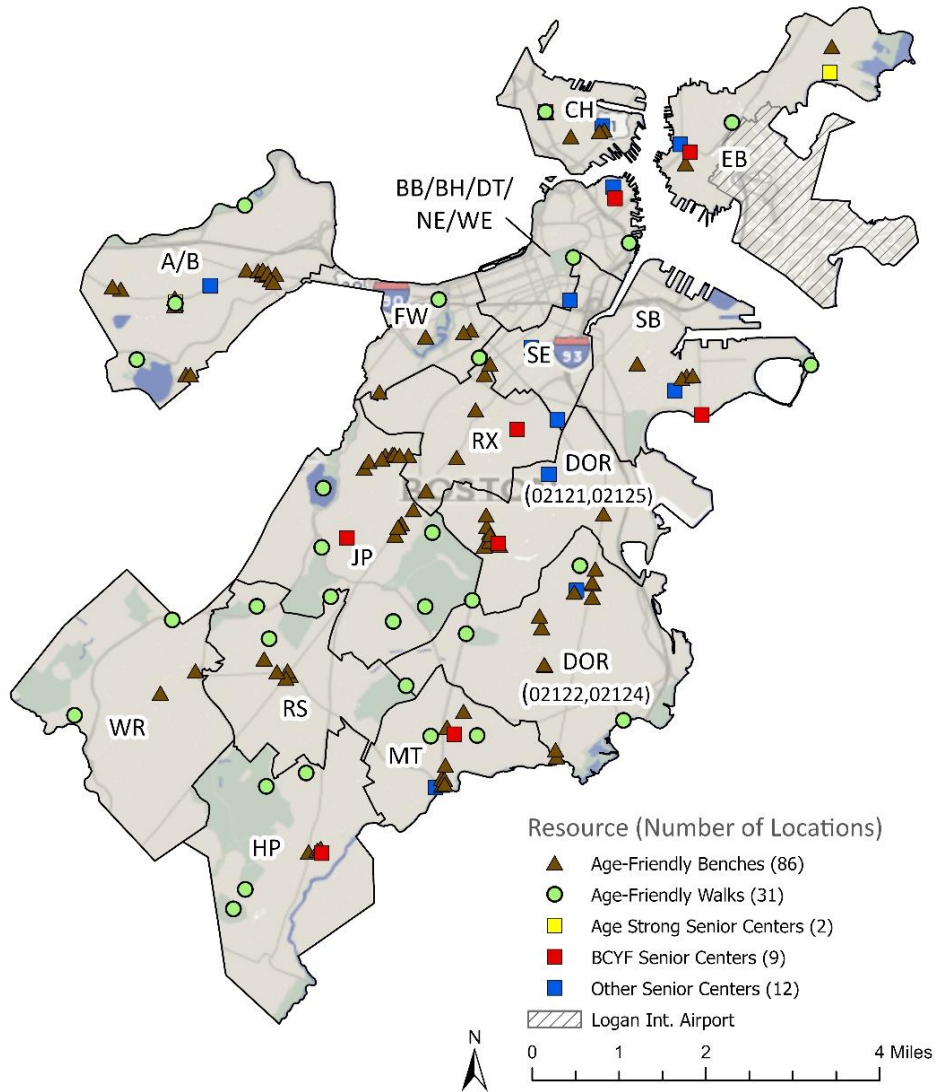
NOTE: "SE" includes the South End and Chinatown.

DATA SOURCE: Age Strong Commission, City of Boston

There are 121 restrooms available for the public within Boston. The majority of the restrooms (117) include wheelchair accessible stalls and do not require stairs for access.

The downtown areas have the highest number of public restrooms (29), followed by South Boston (19), while South End (3), Mattapan (2), and Fenway (1) have the lowest.

Figure 9. Age-Friendly Resources by Neighborhood, 2023



NOTE: “SE” includes the South End and Chinatown. This map does not reflect all benches in Boston, only benches that are age-friendly. DATA SOURCE: Age Strong Commission, City of Boston; Boston Centers for Youth and Families (BCYF)

In 2010, 25% of Boston residents were over the age of 50 and 13% were over the age of 60. Projections show that by 2030, Boston’s 60+ population will grow faster than the population as a whole and reach over 130,000 people². The Age-Friendly Boston project within the Boston Age Strong Commission works with Boston’s public agencies, businesses, cultural, educational, and religious institutions, and community groups with the intention of enhancing the quality of

life for residents. The project’s aim is to address the needs of older adults by creating an environment that is more conducive to an aging population²⁷.

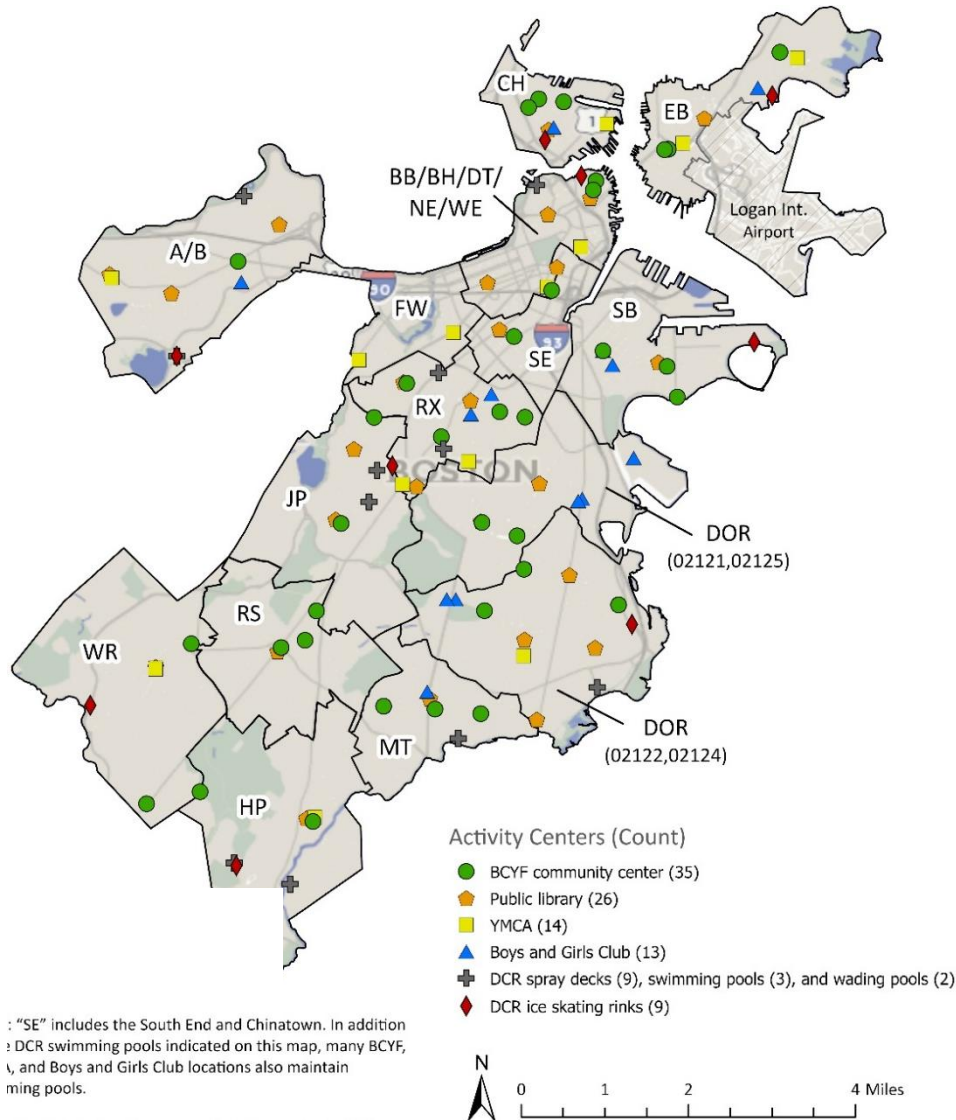
In 2018, West Roxbury had the highest percentage of older residents (aged 60+), making up 25.6% of the neighborhood population. This was followed closely by Hyde Park at 20.5% of the neighborhood population. Neighborhoods with high percentages of young adults had the lowest shares of older residents, including Longwood (0.7%), Allston (4.5%), and Fenway (6.2%)²⁸.

Age-friendly outdoor spaces are accessible, well-lit and well-marked public spaces²⁹. Outdoor walks are considered age-friendly if the paths are smooth, free of stairs, and there is parking nearby, and the City of Boston plows them in the winter. Age-friendly benches have raised armrests on the end and center of the bench, raised seats and backs for easy support, and are temperature-resistant.



Community and Nutritional Resources

Figure 10. Activity Centers by Neighborhood, 2023



: "SE" includes the South End and Chinatown. In addition to the DCR swimming pools indicated on this map, many BCYF, YMCA, and Boys and Girls Club locations also maintain swimming pools.

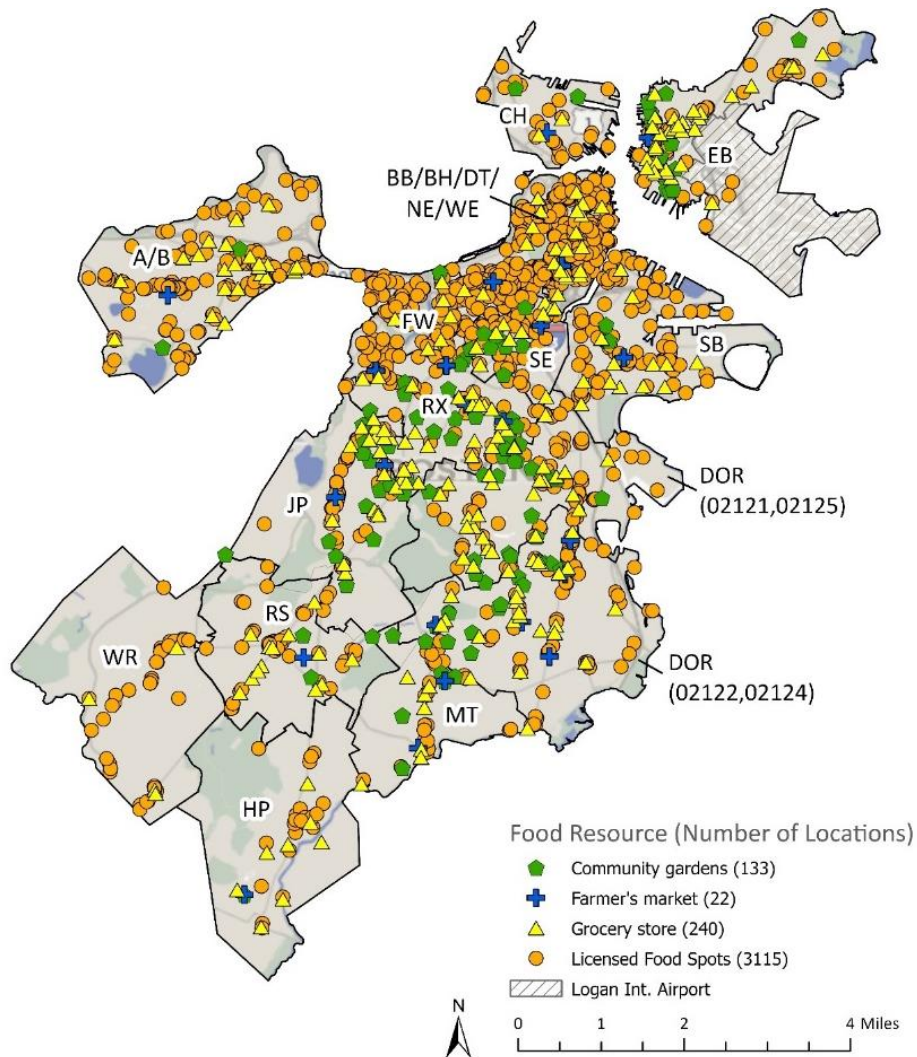
NOTE: "SE" includes the South End and Chinatown. In addition to the DCR swimming pools indicated on this map, many BCYF, YMCA, and Boys and Girls Club locations also maintain swimming pools.

DATA SOURCE: Boston Centers for Youth & Families (BCYF); YMCA of Greater Boston; Boys & Girls Clubs of America; Boston Public Library; Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Commonwealth of Massachusetts

There are a variety of activity centers offering affordable individual and group-based extracurricular activities for youth and adults in Boston. The city maintains 35 Boston Centers for Youth and Families (BCYF) locations. There were 482,014 visits to BCYF locations between September 1, 2022, and August 31, 2023. There are 26 Boston Public Library branches in Boston. The YMCA has 14 facilities, and Boys and Girls Clubs of America has 13 locations in Boston. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) also maintains 9 spray decks, 3 swimming pools, 2 wading pools, and 9 ice skating rinks in Boston. (In addition to these DCR swimming pools, many BCYF, YMCA, and Boys and Girls Club locations also maintain swimming pools.)



Figure 11. Food Resources by Neighborhood, 2023

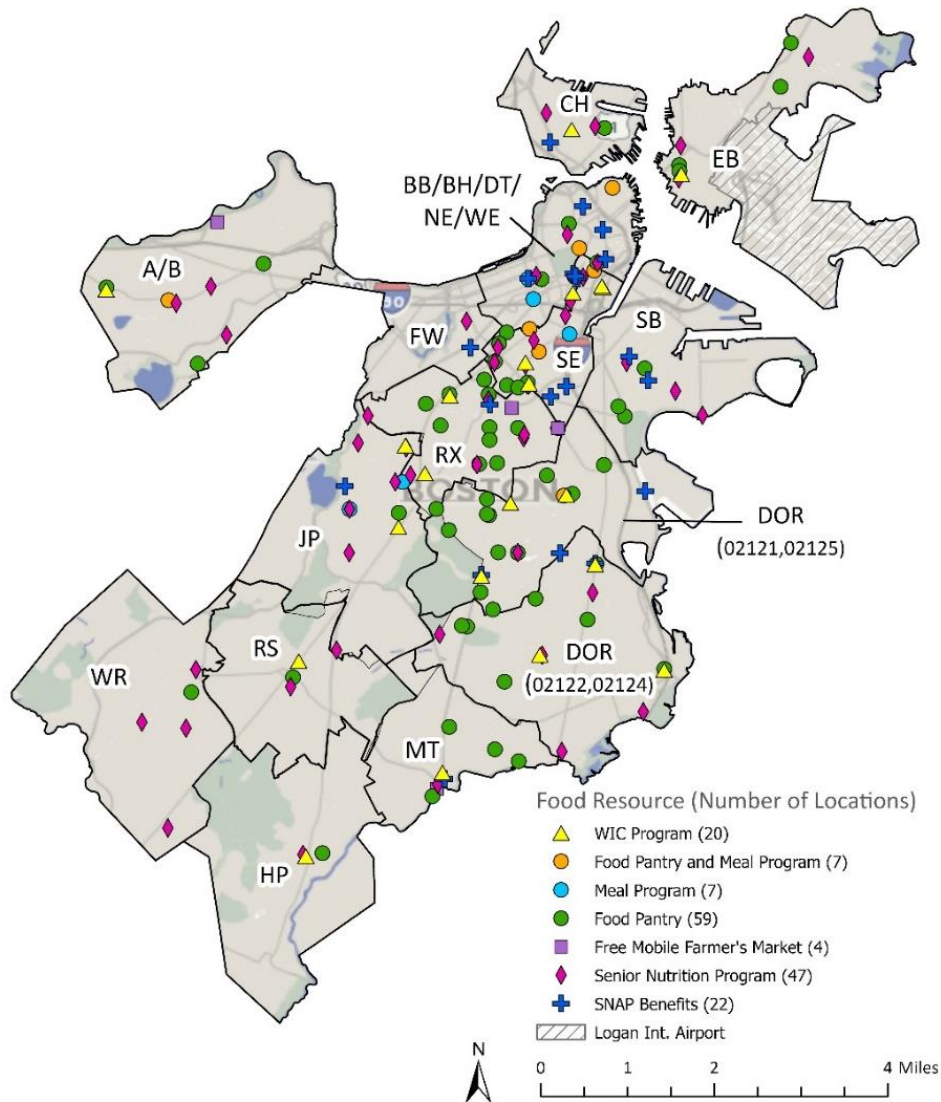


NOTE: “SE” includes the South End and Chinatown.

DATA SOURCE: Community Garden and Urban Farm Directory, City of Boston; Boston Farmers Market, City of Boston; InfoUSA Business Database, Boston Planning & Development Agency Research Division Analysis; Active Food Establishment Licenses, Analyze Boston

Boston offers a diverse network of food resources for its local communities, including community gardens, farmer’s markets, local grocery stores, and other licensed food venues. As of 2023, Boston residents have access to 133 community gardens, 22 farmer’s markets, 240 grocery stores and 3,115 licensed food spots within city boundaries. Neighborhoods including the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Downtown, the North End, the West End and Fenway exhibit a dense distribution of licensed food spots.

Figure 12. Nutritional Assistance Programs by Neighborhood, 2023



NOTE: "SE" includes the South End and Chinatown.

DATA SOURCE: SNAP Department of Transitional Assistance Locations, Mass.gov; SNAP Outreach Partners, Mass.gov; WIC Information for Participants Locations, Mass.gov; The Greater Boston Food Bank; Nutrition Services, City of Boston.

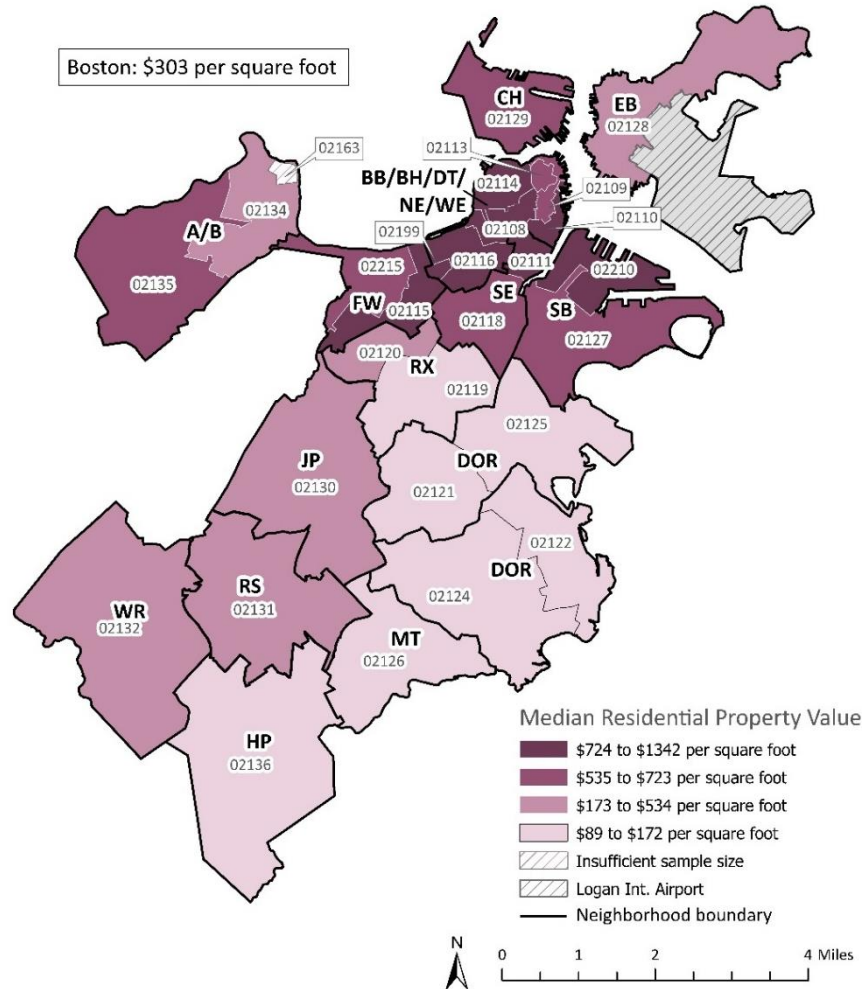
There are a variety of nutrition assistance programs and resources in Boston, from local food pantries and meal programs to federally-funded programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

WIC is designed to support low-income women during pregnancy, post-partum and breastfeeding, and infants and children up to age 5 years who are at nutritional risk. Mobile Markets are free farmers markets serving low-income populations including seniors, veterans, community health center patients, and students in underserved communities. The Senior Nutrition Program serves people aged 60 years or older and their spouses. This includes programs like Meals on Wheels to help elders maintain independence so they can continue to live in their homes. SNAP is a nutrition program that allows participants to purchase food using the program’s electronic system at authorized retailers. Program participants are typically older adults, persons with severe disabilities, and families struggling with temporary unemployment or under employment.



Residential Property Values

Figure 13. Median Residential Property Value by Zip Code, 2023

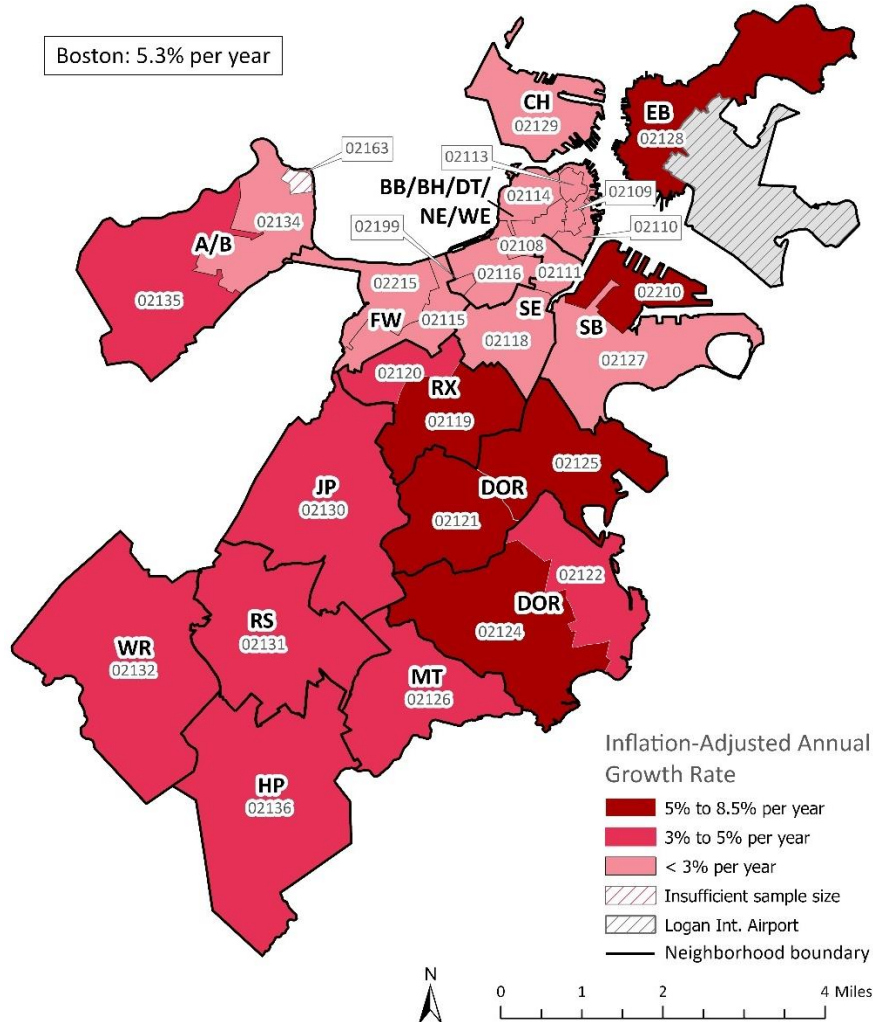


NOTE: “SE” includes the South End and Chinatown. Restricted to residential or mixed-use properties with assessed values and living space; Data for the portion of zip code 02467 in Boston are not presented.

DATA SOURCE: Property Assessment, Analyze Boston

The median assessed value of residential properties in Boston nominally increased 50.7% from \$201 per square feet in 2018 to \$303 per square feet in 2023. When adjusted for inflation, the increase in value was much less, at 26.7% with an overall inflation rate of 19% during the same period (according to the Consumer Price Index). The highest median assessed value was found in Back Bay, 02199 (\$1,342 per square foot) and Beacon Hill, 02108 (\$898 per square foot). In contrast, the most modest median assessed values were found in Hyde Park, 02136 (\$89 per square foot) and Mattapan, 02126 (\$105 per square foot).

Figure 14. Inflation-Adjusted Annual Growth Rate in Median Residential Property Value by Zip Code, 2018 to 2023



NOTE: “SE” includes the South End and Chinatown. Restricted to residential or mixed-use properties with assessed values and living space.

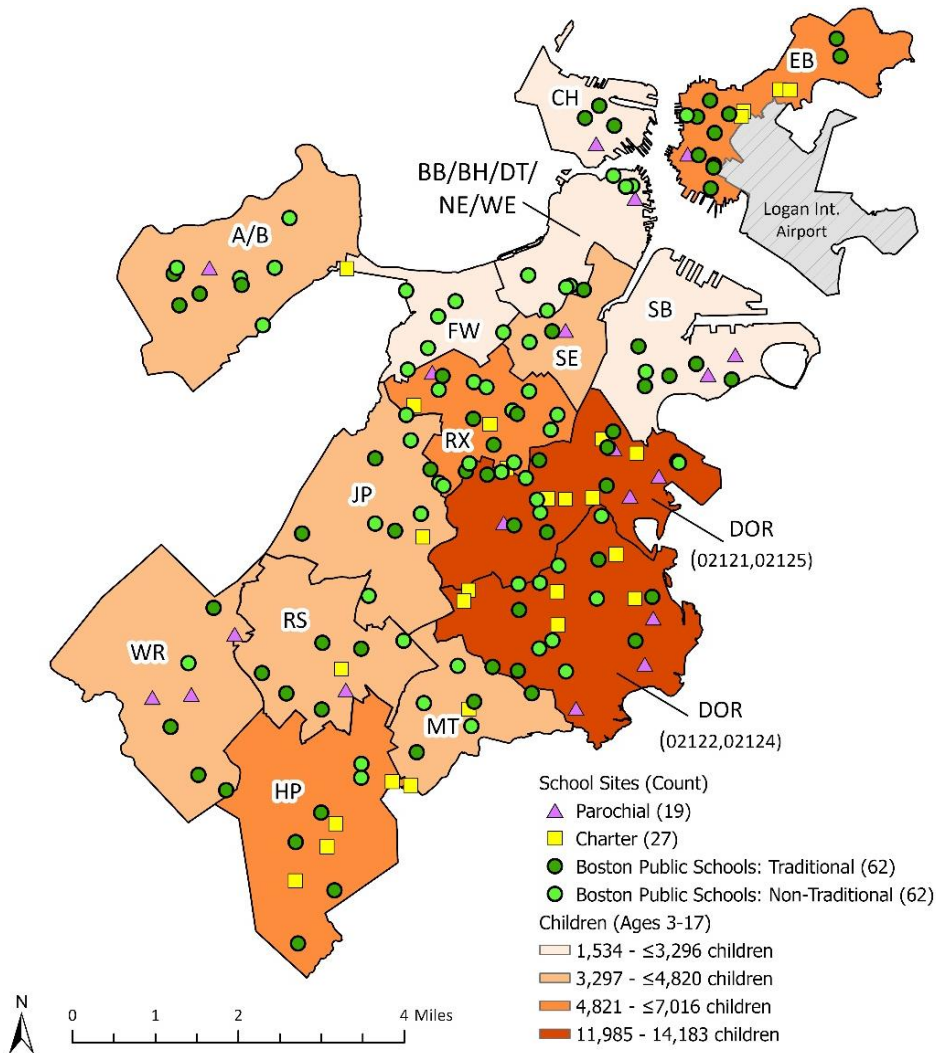
Data was adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index. Data for the portion of zip code 02467 in Boston are not presented.

DATA SOURCE: Property Assessment, Analyze Boston

The median per square foot assessed value of residential properties in Boston increased 26.7% in five years between 2018 and 2023, or 5.3% per year, after adjusting for inflation. The largest increases in the median per square foot assessed value within a zip code were observed in the zip codes associated with East Boston (8.4% per year in 02128), Dorchester 02121 (6% per year) and Roxbury (5.8% per year in 02119). These neighborhoods historically have the lowest income, and the vast increases seen in the last 5 years suggests a gentrification of these neighborhoods.

Educational Resources

Figure 15. Public, Charter, and Parochial Schools by Neighborhood, 2023



NOTE: If a school has more than one site (e.g., a lower school and upper school), each site has its own point on the map; Two different schools share the same site at three different sites; "Boston Public Schools: Non-Traditional" includes the following types of schools (number of sites and types are not mutually exclusive): Alternative (3), Dual Language (8), Early Education Center (4), Exam (3), Horace Mann Charter (7), Inclusion (2), Innovation (9), International Baccalaureate (2), Pilot (20), Receivership (1), Special Education (1 school spread across 4 sites), and Specialized (1). "SE" includes the South End and Chinatown.

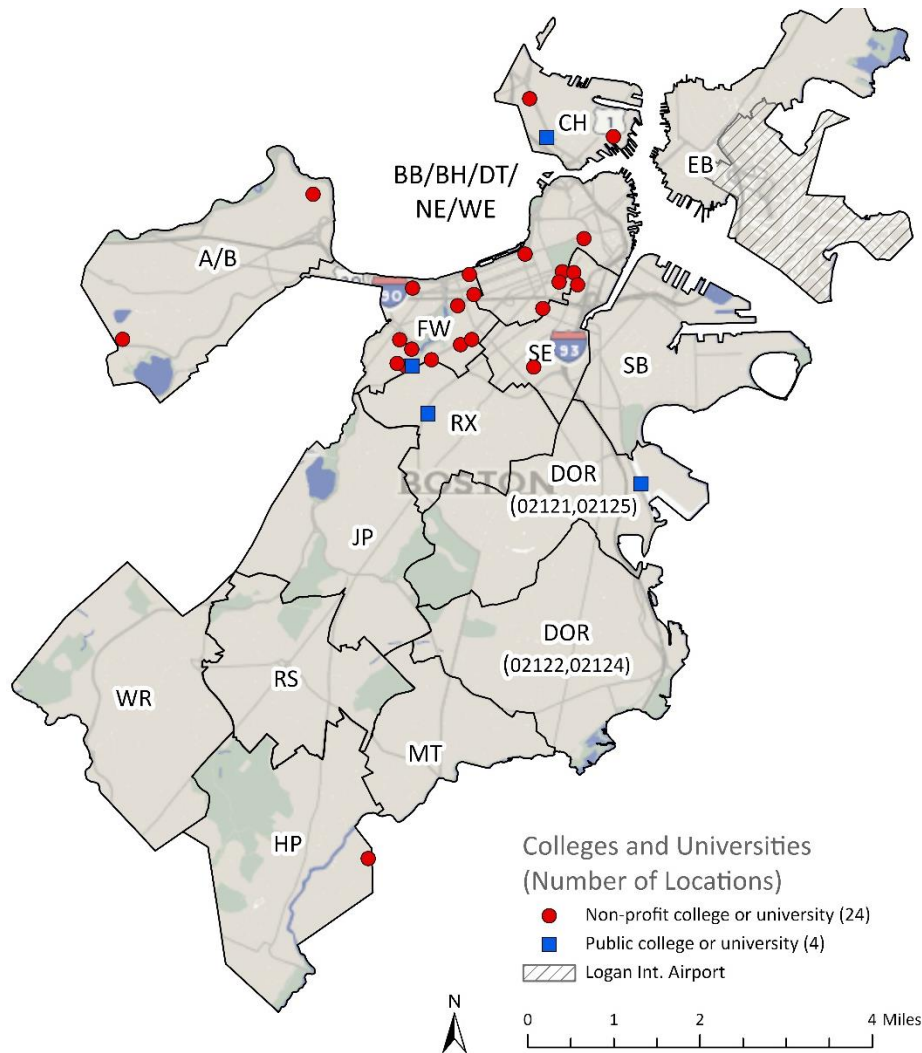
DATA SOURCE: Boston Public Schools, School List; Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, "Find a Charter Public School" online tool; Archdiocese of Boston, Boston Catholic Directory; and U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census. School data was retrieved in August 2023.

Boston Public Schools (BPS) and a network of independent schools provide Boston residents with access to education for grades K-12. Of the 170 public, charter, or parochial school sites, 62 were traditional public schools (operated by BPS), 62 were non-traditional public schools (also operated by BPS), 27 were charter schools, and 19 were parochial schools.

The 62 non-traditional public schools operated by BPS include the following types of schools (number of sites and types are not mutually exclusive): Alternative (3), Dual Language (8), Early Education Center (4), Exam (3), Horace Mann Charter (7), Inclusion (2), Innovation (9), International Baccalaureate (2), Pilot (20), Receivership (1), Special Education (1 school spread across 4 sites), and Specialized (1).



Figure 16. Colleges and Universities by Neighborhood, 2023



NOTE: "SE" includes the South End and Chinatown; Boston College located in Chestnut Hill is not represented on this map.

DATA SOURCE: College Navigator, National Center for Educational Statistics

Boston residents have access to a variety of local centers of higher education. In addition to four public colleges and universities within the city boundary, there are 20 private non-profit colleges and universities. Although Boston is known to be a hub for higher education, the colleges and universities are concentrated in the neighborhoods of Fenway, Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Downtown, North End, and West End. There are no colleges or universities in the neighborhoods of West Roxbury, Hyde Park, Mattapan, Roslindale, and Jamaica Plain.



SECTION 2. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

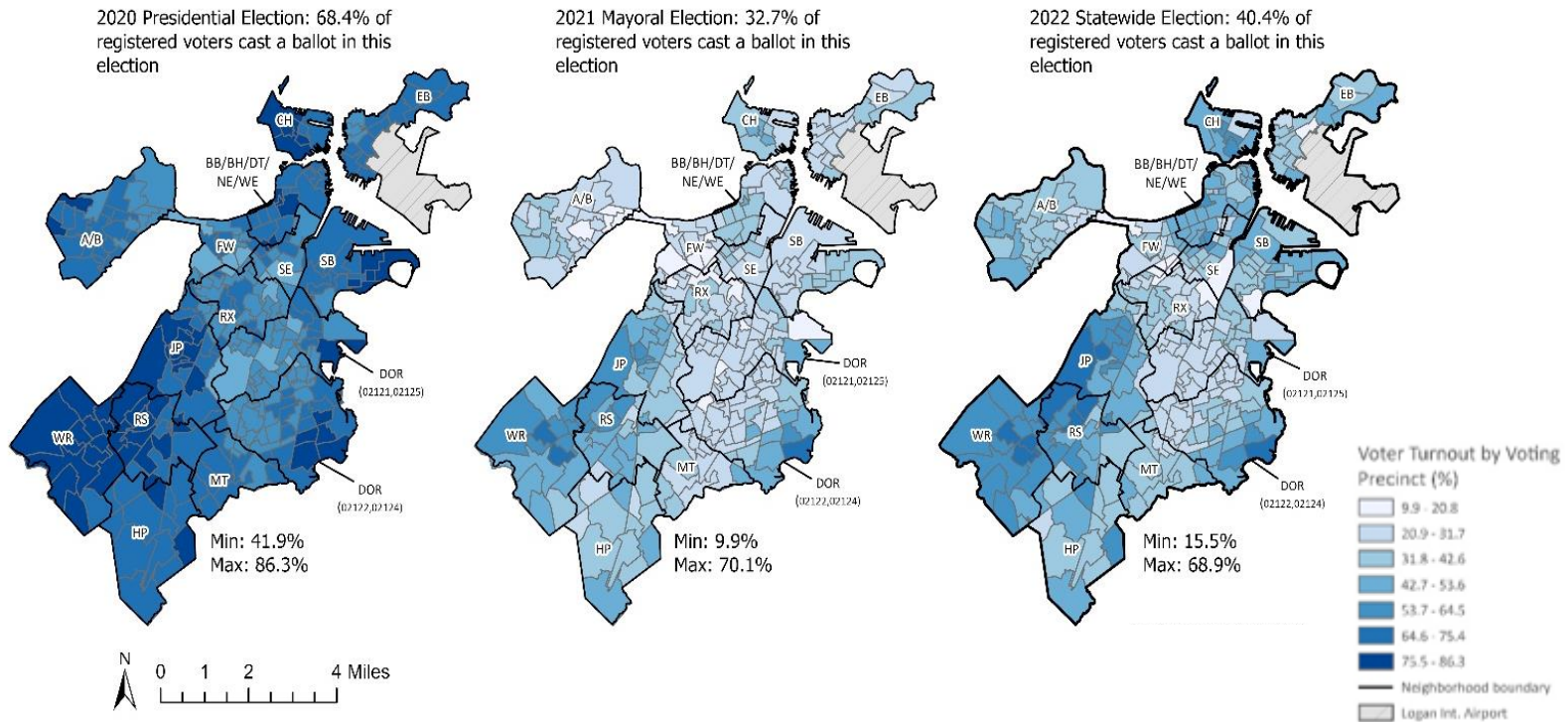
Civic engagement creates healthier communities through community activities including volunteering and voting³⁰⁻³⁶. These actions enhance involvement and responsibility by residents in their communities and demonstrate that residents care about outcomes and desire to cultivate positive change³⁷. Active engagement in one's community has been associated with various positive health outcomes including improved physical and mental health, increased psychosocial well-being, and reduced mortality rates³⁴⁻³⁶. As an example, voting and voluntary participation in community-based associations has been correlated with better self-reported health³¹⁻³³.

Organizations like Main Street Districts and Community Development Corporations provide opportunities for residents to help shape and design neighborhoods. Municipal governments can stimulate community involvement by listening to residents and responding swiftly to community concerns. Boston 311 is a city service provided to residents for reporting of non-emergency issues (e.g., reporting potholes, graffiti, or if a streetlamp is out) and requesting information. Residents can access 311 services via phone, an online self-service form, X (Twitter), or a mobile application. Electronic reporting systems such as Boston 311 increase civic engagement by providing an accessible way for residents to hold government accountable for delivering non-emergency services like street cleaning, snow plowing, and pothole repair³⁰.

In this section of the report, we summarize indicators of civic engagement including Boston 311 service requests and voter turnout rates.

Voter Participation

Figure 17. Voter Turnout by Election Type and Voting Precinct, 2020, 2021, 2022



NOTE: “SE” includes the South End and Chinatown. Percentages are determined by dividing the total number of ballots cast by the total number of registered voters in each precinct.

DATA SOURCE: City of Boston, Election Department

In the 2020 presidential general election, 68.4% of registered voters in Boston cast a ballot.

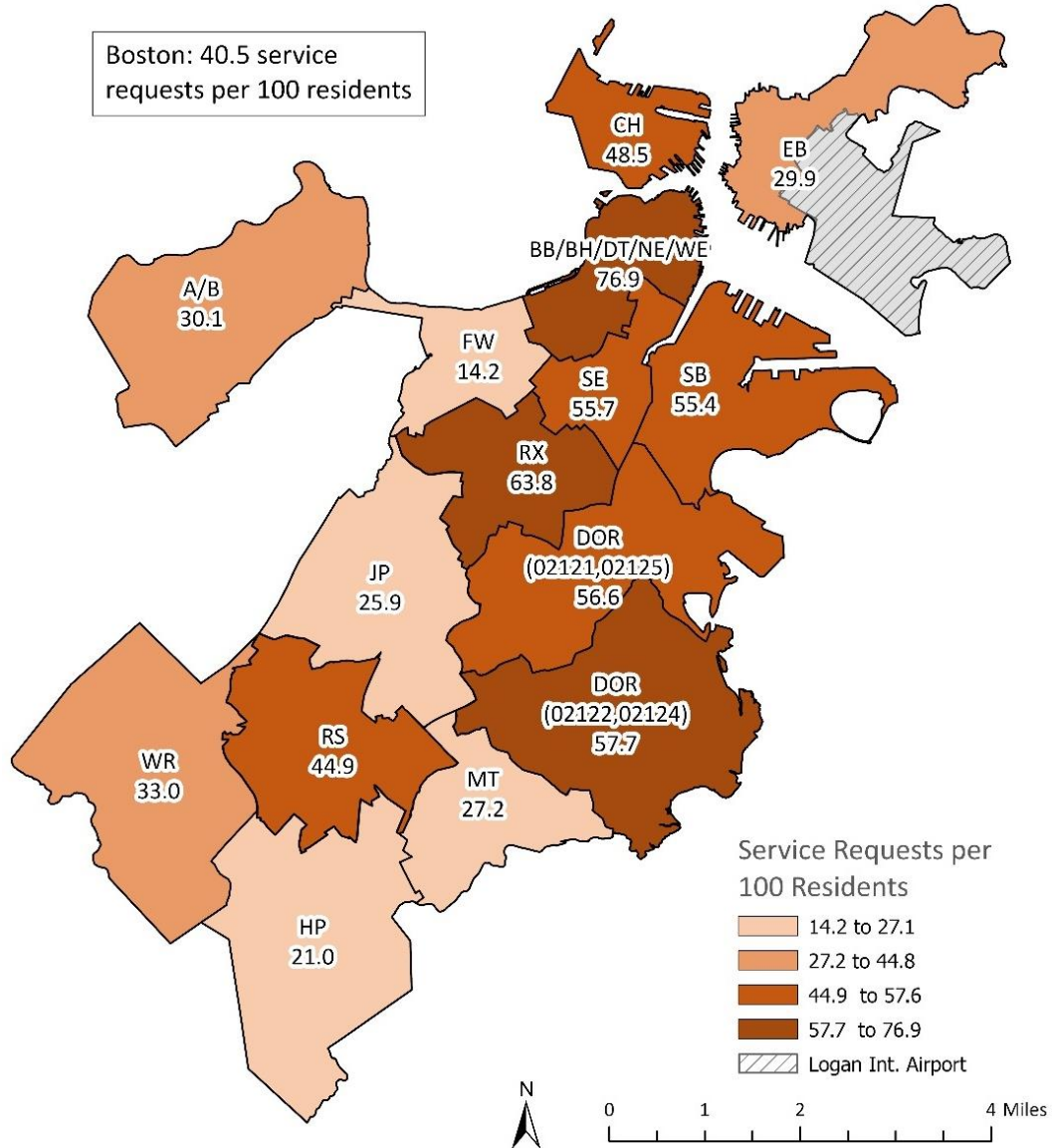
Voter turnout is the percentage of registered voters who cast a ballot in an election. The voter turnout rates in Boston for the three most recent general elections were 68% in November 2020 for the presidential election, 33% in November 2021 for the mayoral and city council elections, and 40% in November 2022 for statewide offices.

The turnout rate differed across precincts. Precincts in West Roxbury, Roslindale, Jamaica Plain, and eastern Dorchester consistently had the highest voter turnout rates, while precincts in western Dorchester, Roxbury, and Fenway had the lowest voter turnout rates.



Boston 311 Service Requests

Figure 18. Constituent-Initiated Boston 311 Service Requests by Neighborhood, 2022



NOTE: "SE" includes the South End and Chinatown. Data includes 311 service requests by phone, online, and through the mobile application; When a precinct was split across neighborhoods, the number of service requests was allocated proportionally by area size; Density calculations were based on the 2021 Boston Population Estimate Project.

DATA SOURCE: City of Boston, 311 Service Requests; Boston Public Health Commission, Boston Population Estimate Project.



Table 1. Leading Types of Boston 311 Service Requests, 2022

Types of Calls	Number of Calls
Parking Enforcement	57,662
Requests for Street Cleaning	19,276
Improper Storage of Trash (Barrels)	15,920
Missed Trash/Recycling/Yard Waste/Bulk Item	13,792
Code Enforcement Collection	13,162

NOTE: Data includes 311 reports and service requests by phone, online, and through the mobile application.
DATA SOURCE: City of Boston, 311 Service Requests

In 2022, Boston residents made more than 276,721 reports and service requests to Boston 311. Of those, the highest number of requests were for parking enforcement (parking violations) with 57,662 requests. Other leading types of service requests included requests for street cleaning, improper trash storage, scheduling a bulk item pickup for garbage or recycling, missed trash or recycling items, and code enforcement collection (illegal dumping).

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