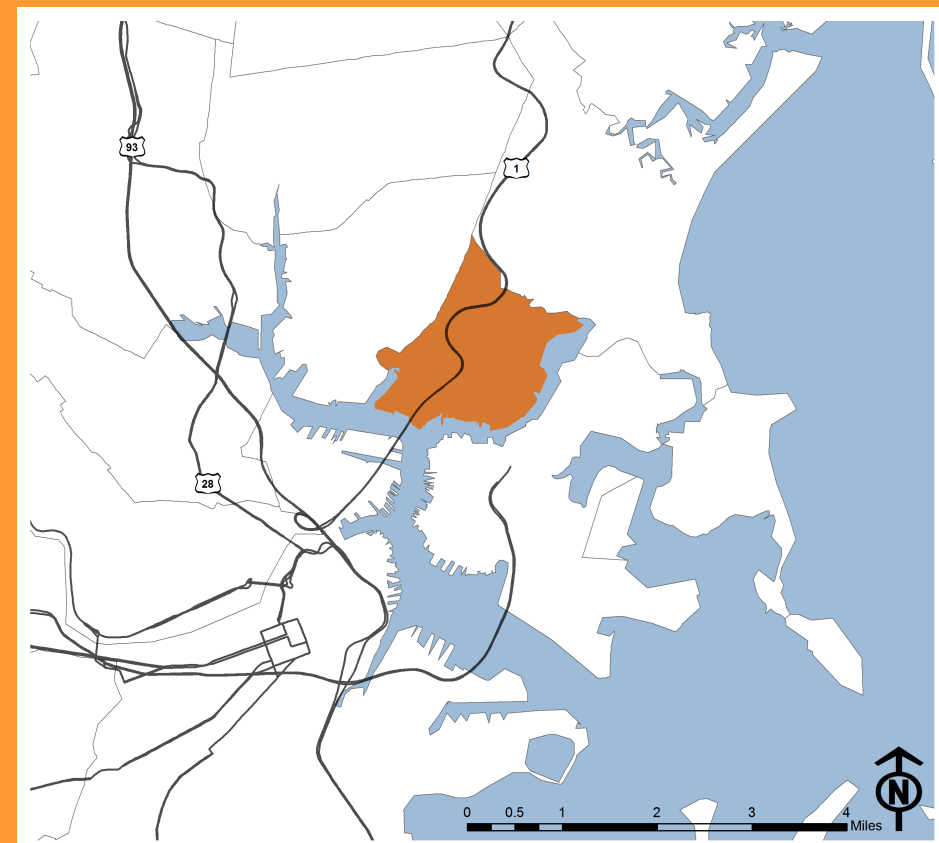


Open Space in Chelsea, MA: Exploring Accessibility & Use by Age

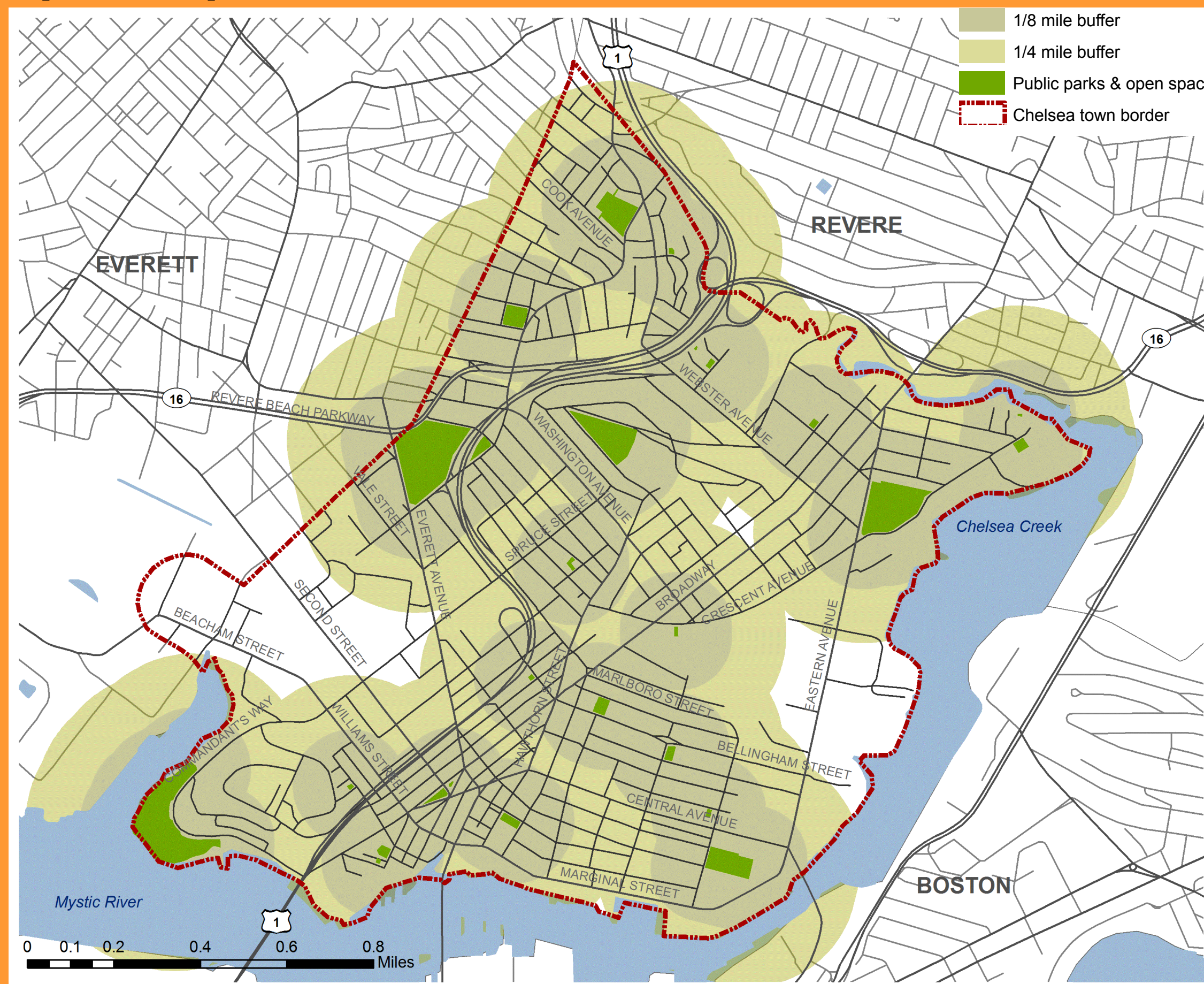
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 Urban and Environmental Policy & Planning



Map 1. Boston Metropolitan Region

The city of Chelsea, Massachusetts lies in the inner urban ring around Boston, in Suffolk county (Map 1). With a high population density and a strong industrial presence, the city's residents have expressed concern about inequitable access to public parks and open space. Understanding which neighborhoods have the least access to open space and the types of spaces that are available is an important first step to combating issues of environmental justice.

Map 2. Quarter & eighth mile buffer around public parks

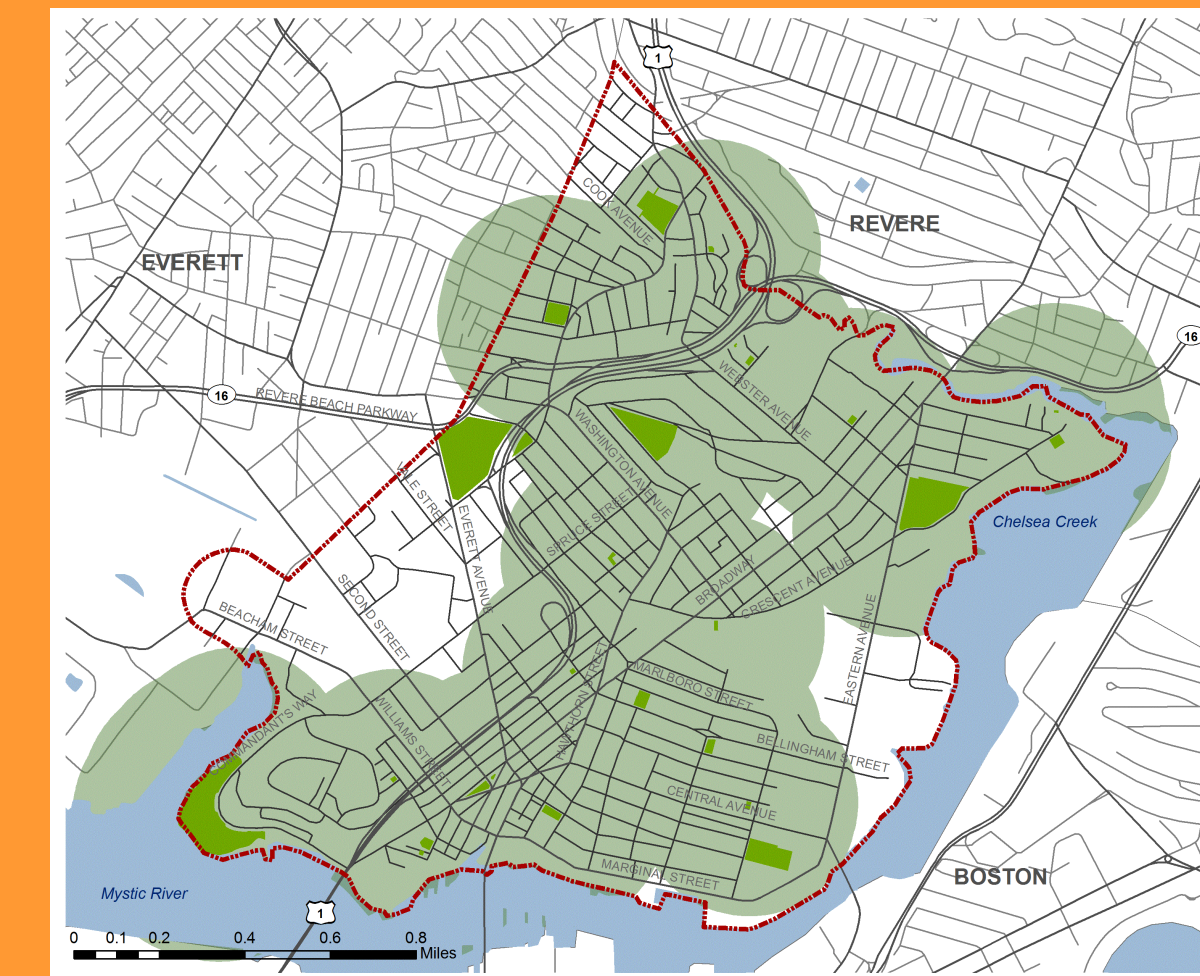


Chelsea currently has 27 public parks and recreational areas, many of which are small pocket parks. Public open space totals 53.5 acres. Park amenities range from tot lots and playgrounds, to basketball courts and playing fields. A large number of parks additionally provide space for "passive uses," such as viewing nature, walking, picnicking and community events. Table 1 details the amenities and assets for each park, as well as the range of ages appropriate for that use. Overlaying 1/4 mile and 1/8 mile buffers around each park represents the areas that have the easiest access to open space (Map 2). Overall, the majority of the city's area is within a quarter mile of at least one park.

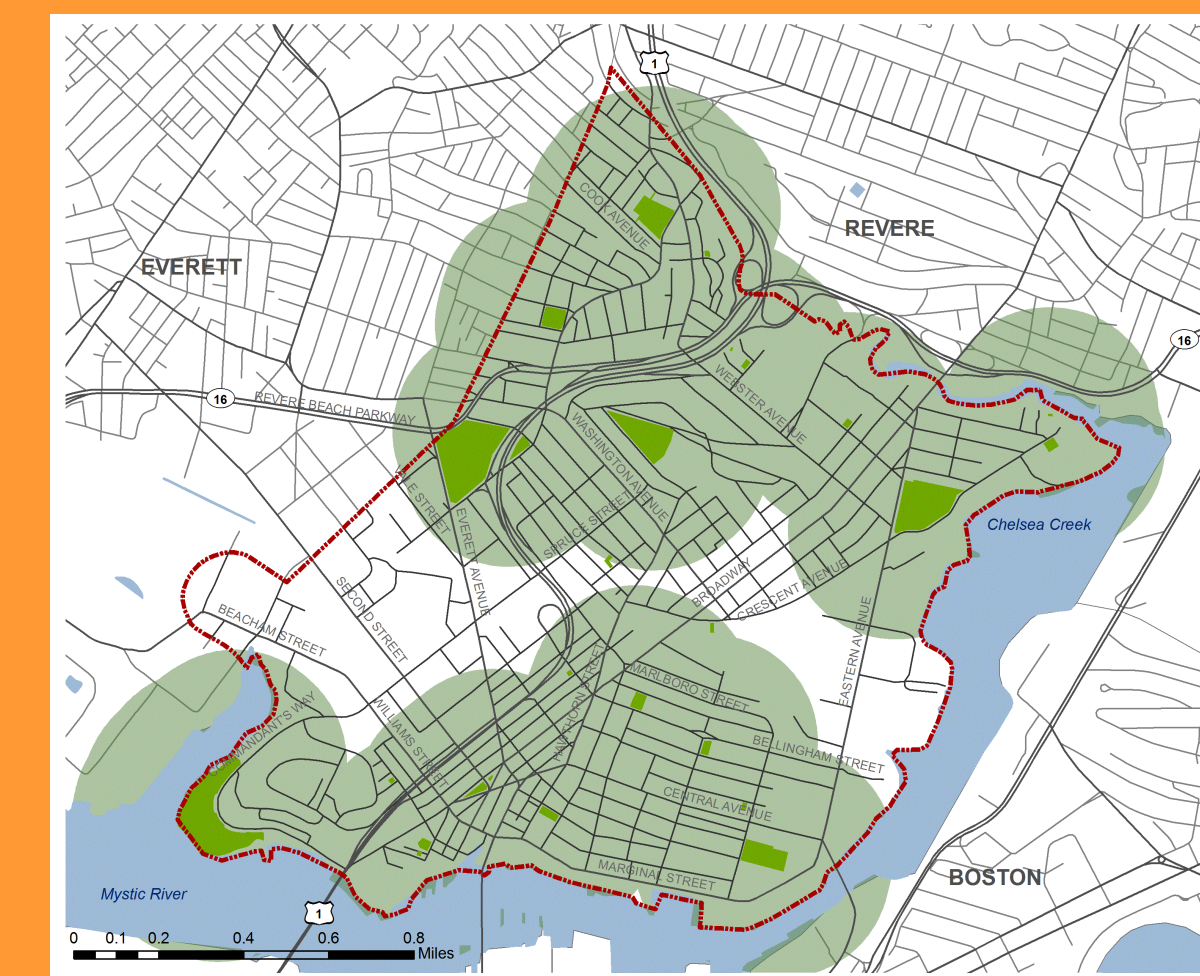
Table 1. Inventory of public open space

Park Name	Park assets	Age category
Adamski Park	Tot Lot	0-5
Bellingham Hill Park	Playground, chess table	0-12
Bosson Playground	Playground, black top areas	All ages
Carter Park	Football stadium, baseball diamond, outdoor swimming pool, playground	5+
Chelsea Square	Passive use, location for events	All ages
Ciepiela Park	Playground	0-12
Creekside Commons Park	Outdoor ice skating rink, playground, whisper chairs, therapeutic garden, and waterfront trail	All ages
Dever Park	Basketball/blacktop, playground	All ages
Eden Street Garden	Tot lot	0-5
Garden Cemetery	Passive use	All ages
Highland Park	Playground, basketball courts, soccer field	5+
Kayem Park	Tot lot	0-5
Mace Housing Development Park	Playground, basketball	All ages
Mace Tot Lot	Tot lot	0-5
Malone Park	Passive use	All ages
Mary C. Burke Elementary School Complex	School playground	0-12
Mary O'Malley Waterfront Park	Waterfront, boat dock, tennis court, play equipment, passive use	All ages
Mill Creek River Walk	Passive use, walkway	All ages
O'Neil Tot Lot	Tot lot	0-5
Polonia Park	Playground	0-12
Prattville-Fitzpatrick Development Park	Tot lot	0-5
Quigley Park	Hopscotch, four square, race track, baseball/kickball field, water sprinkler	All ages
Repici-Brenes Tot Lot	Tot lot	0-5
Roche Park	Playground	0-12
Scrivano Park	Playground, basketball court	All ages
Voke Park	Baseball, basketball, blacktop	5+
Washington Park	Passive use	All ages

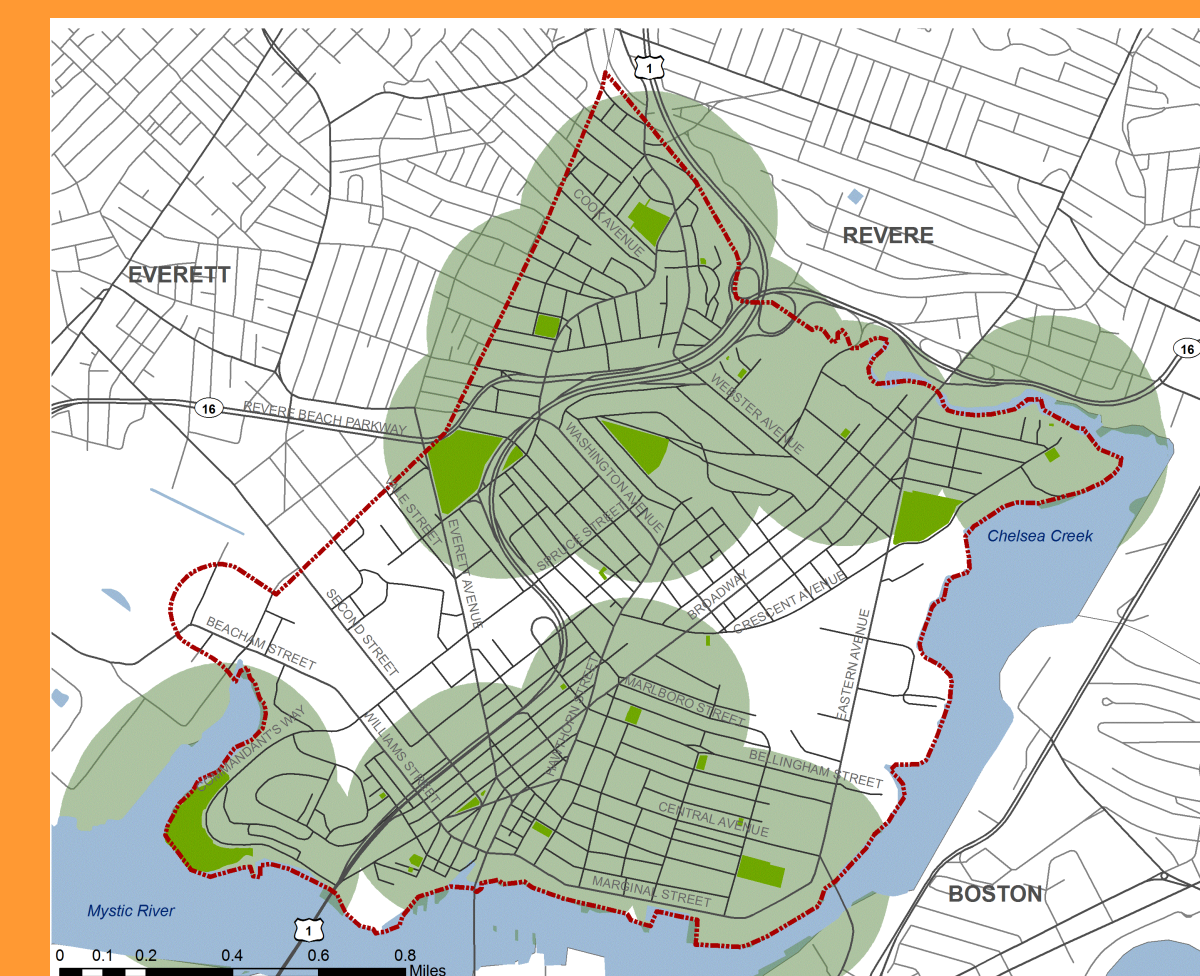
Although parks are distributed generally equally through the city, finding an age-appropriate park for certain age groups is not so easy. Maps 3, 4 & 5 show accessibility to open space for age three age groups. Children aged 0-5 years old have the greatest access to age-appropriate spaces, while parts of the center of the city lay outside the quarter mile buffer for residents 5 years and older.



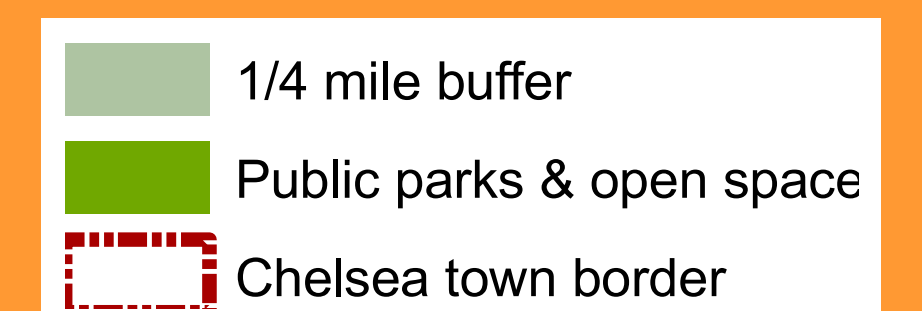
Map 3. Quarter mile buffer around public parks suited for children 0-5 years old



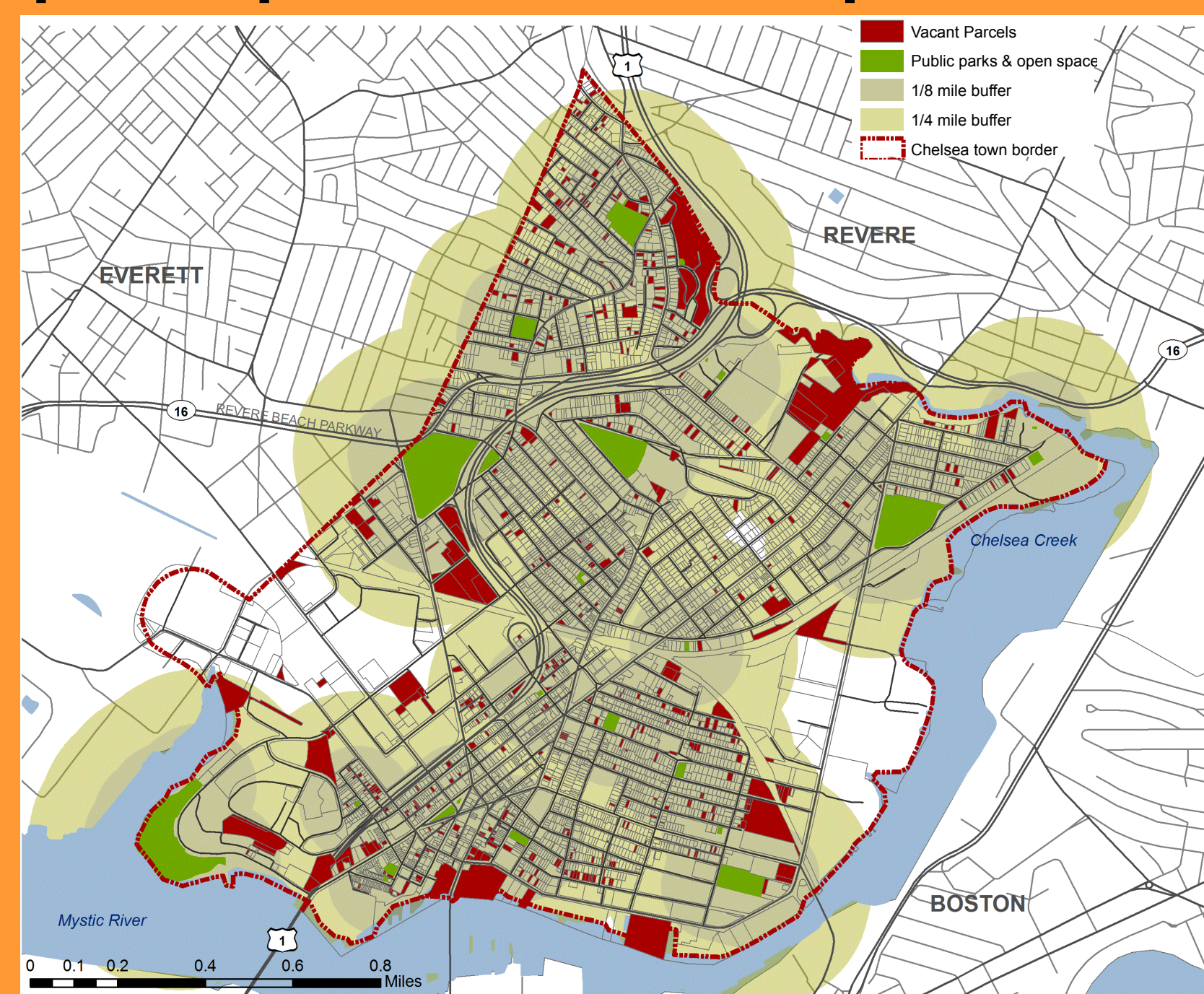
Map 4. Quarter mile buffer around public parks suited for children 5-12 years old



Map 5. Quarter mile buffer around public parks suited for residents 12+ years old



Map 6. Accessibility buffers around public parks and vacant parcels



The creation of new public parks located outside of the quarter mile or one eighth mile buffers would increase the accessibility for neighborhoods that currently have limited access to open and recreation space. This has the potential to improve overall health outcomes for Chelsea residents, as it provides opportunities for exercise and recreation. Due to the city's high levels of development, vacant or abandoned properties are likely the best option for citing new park developments. Map 6 shows the location of vacant parcels (as identified by the city of Chelsea Assessor's Database) in relation to the quarter mile and eighth mile open space accessibility buffers.

Interestingly, very few vacant parcels lay outside of the quarter mile buffer, although several are outside of the one eighth mile buffer. This brings up questions about whether vacant property has historically played a role in determining park location in Chelsea.

