Neighborhood Schools and Neighborhood Inequality in Boston, Massachusetts: Key Questions and Issues for Community Organizing

James Jennings, PhD
Tufts University
Medford, Massachusetts

December 2012

Presentation

1) Key queries for community organizing?

2) What kinds of new developments are molding the policy context for neighborhood schools?

3) How does demography impact planning or implementation of neighborhood schools?

4) How do neighborhood inequalities impact planning or implementation of quality neighborhood schools for everyone?

5) -- What are the challenges for ensuring that public schools – currently unequal in terms of positive academic characteristics – provide all children, regardless of where they live, with the tools necessary for academic excellence and achievement?

6) What ideas have been offered by community-based voices for effective strategies in linking public schools and communities?

1) Key queries for community organizing?

-- Can excellent public schools for *all* children co-exist in a context of neighborhood inequality?

-- What should be the balance between neighborhood schools and goal/value of 'diversity' ?

-- What are implications of changing Boston demography for neighborhood schools and community organizing?

-- What are the challenges for ensuring that public schools provide all children, regardless of where they live, with the tools necessary for academic excellence and achievement?

-- How can leaders and staff of public schools and community-based organizations work and partner with each other on behalf of the academic well-being of children?

2) What kinds of new developments are molding the policy context for neighborhood schools?

- increasing proposals and parental popularity for neighborhood schools could lead re-segregation

- racial diversity in public schools not a 'compelling interest', necessarily

Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District (2007)

- policy/paradigm shift in how education reform is currently framed

- renaissance of *place-based* policies for improving the quality of life in neighborhoods, and improving low-performing public schools

Promise Neighborhoods / U.S. Department of Education

Choice Neighborhoods / HUD

3) How does demography impact planning or implementation of neighborhood schools?

School demography (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2011)

- Average enrollment, not including high schools: **378**

- Approximately 55,000 students:

    37% African Americans

    40.8% Latino/a

    3.7% Asian

    14.4% White

- **28.8%** Limited English proficiency

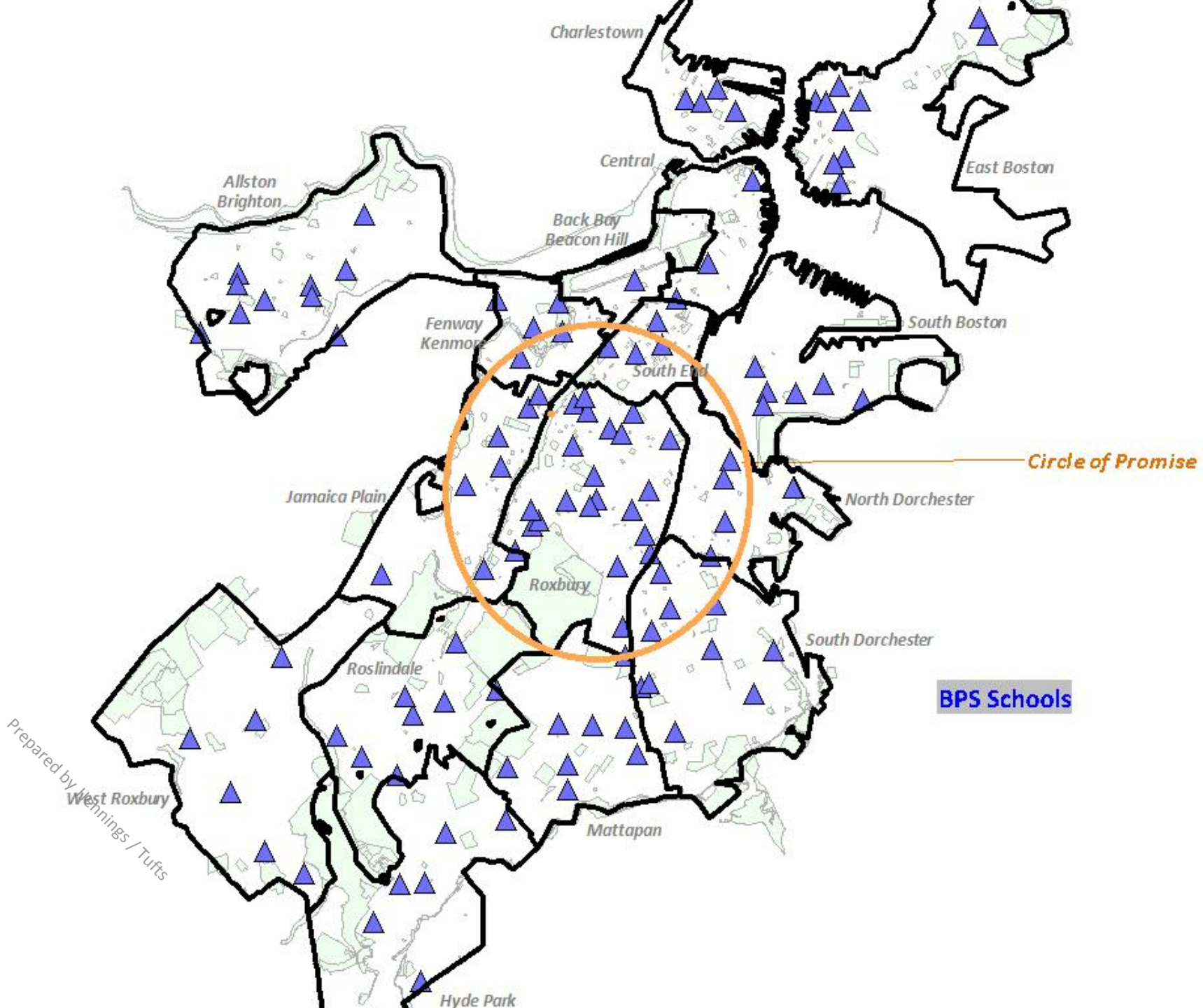- **68%** Reduced free lunch and additional 6.8% Reduced free lunch

- Relatively low proportion of students who score Proficiency or Advanced in state tests
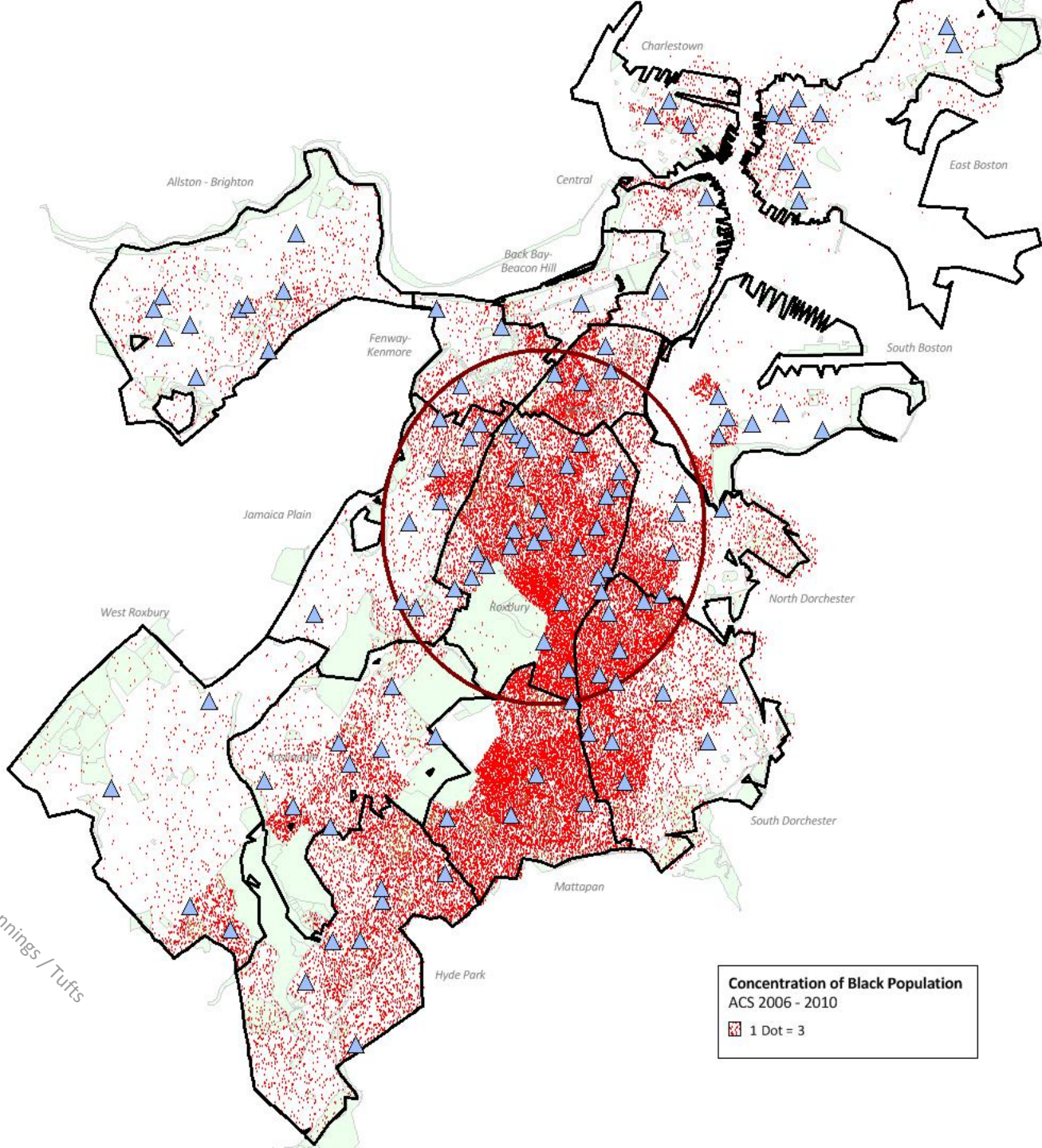
    47.3% in All Grades in English and Language Arts

    42.3% in All Grades in Math

Boston demography…next series of maps show:

- geographic distribution of public schools and circle of promise

- concentration of Black population and location of public schools

- concentration of Latino/a population and location of public schools

- concentration of Asian population and location of public schools

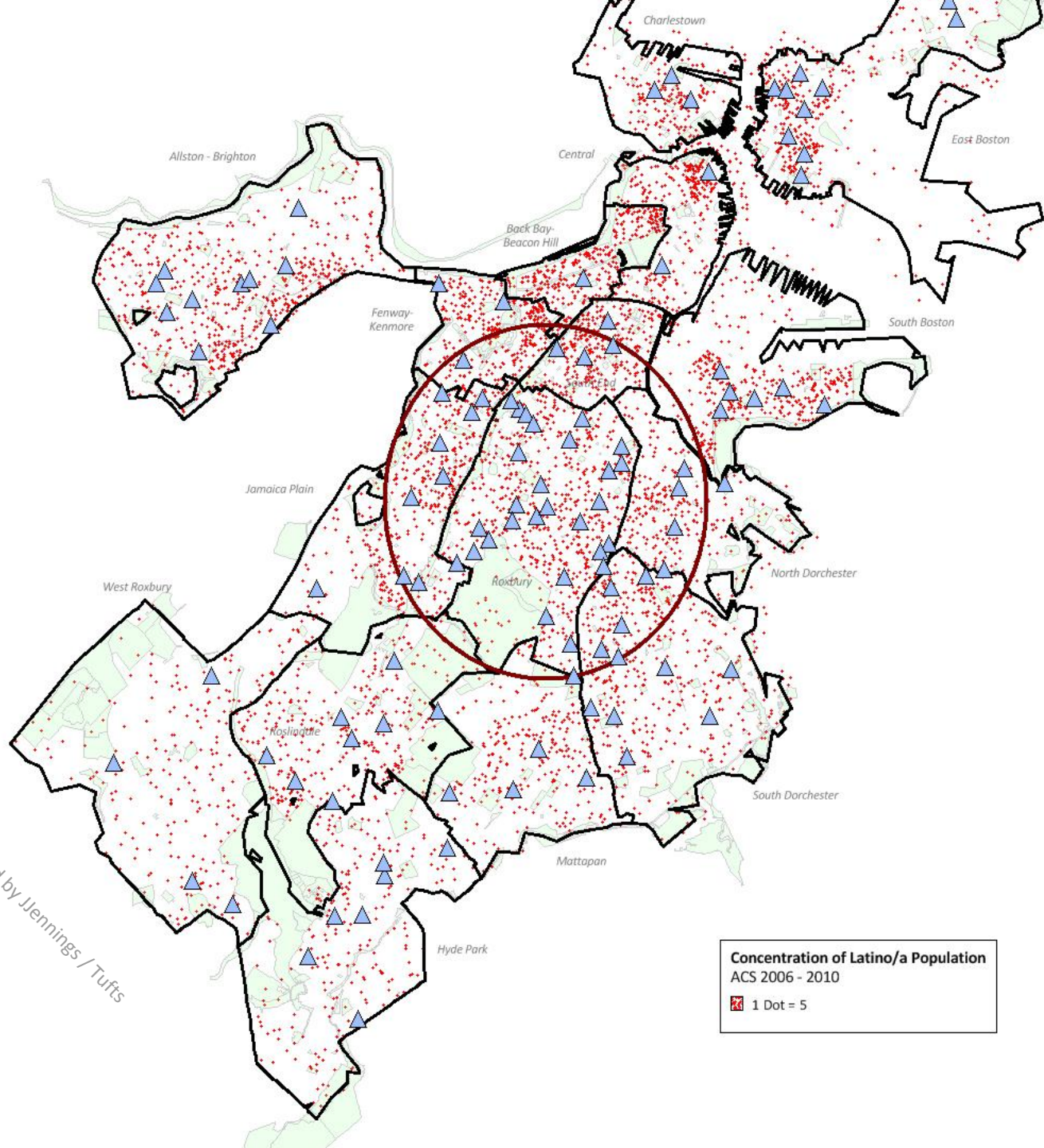- concentration of White population and location of public schools

Charlestown

Central

East Boston

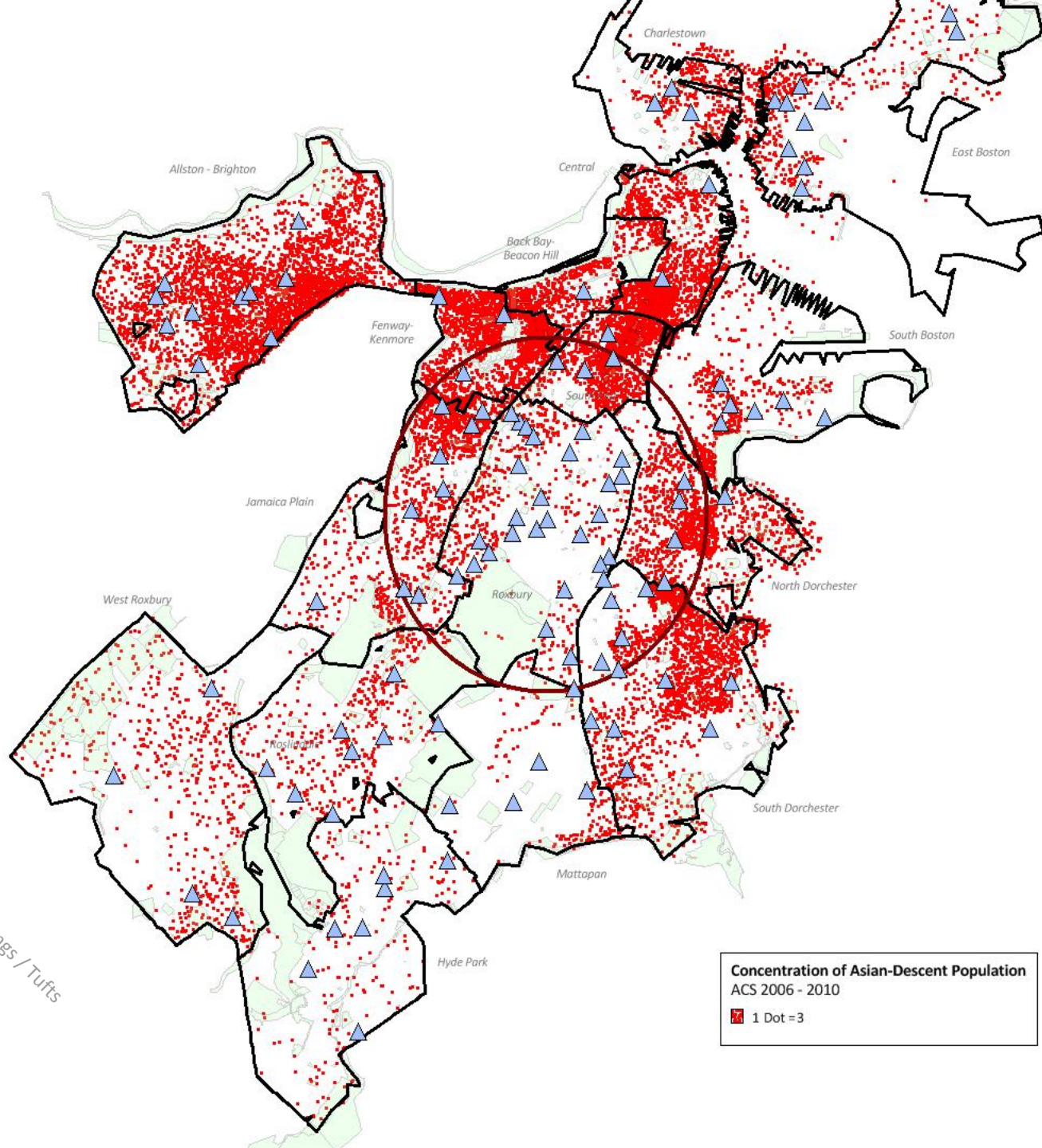Allston
Brighton

Back Bay
Beacon Hill

South Boston

Fenway
Kenmore

South End

Circle of Promise

Jamaica Plain

North Dorchester

Roxbury

BPS Schools

South Dorchester

Roslindale

West Roxbury

Mattapan

Hyde Park

Prepared by Wennings / Tufts

Charlestown

East Boston

Allston - Brighton

Central

Back Bay-
Beacon Hill

South Boston

Fenway-
Kenmore

Jamaica Plain

Roxbury

North Dorchester

West Roxbury

Roslindale

South Dorchester

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

Mattapan

Hyde Park

Concentration of Black Population
ACS 2006 - 2010

1 Dot = 3

Charlestown

East Boston

Allston - Brighton

Central

Back Bay-
Beacon Hill

South Boston

Fenway-
Kenmore

Jamaica Plain

North Dorchester

West Roxbury

Roxbury
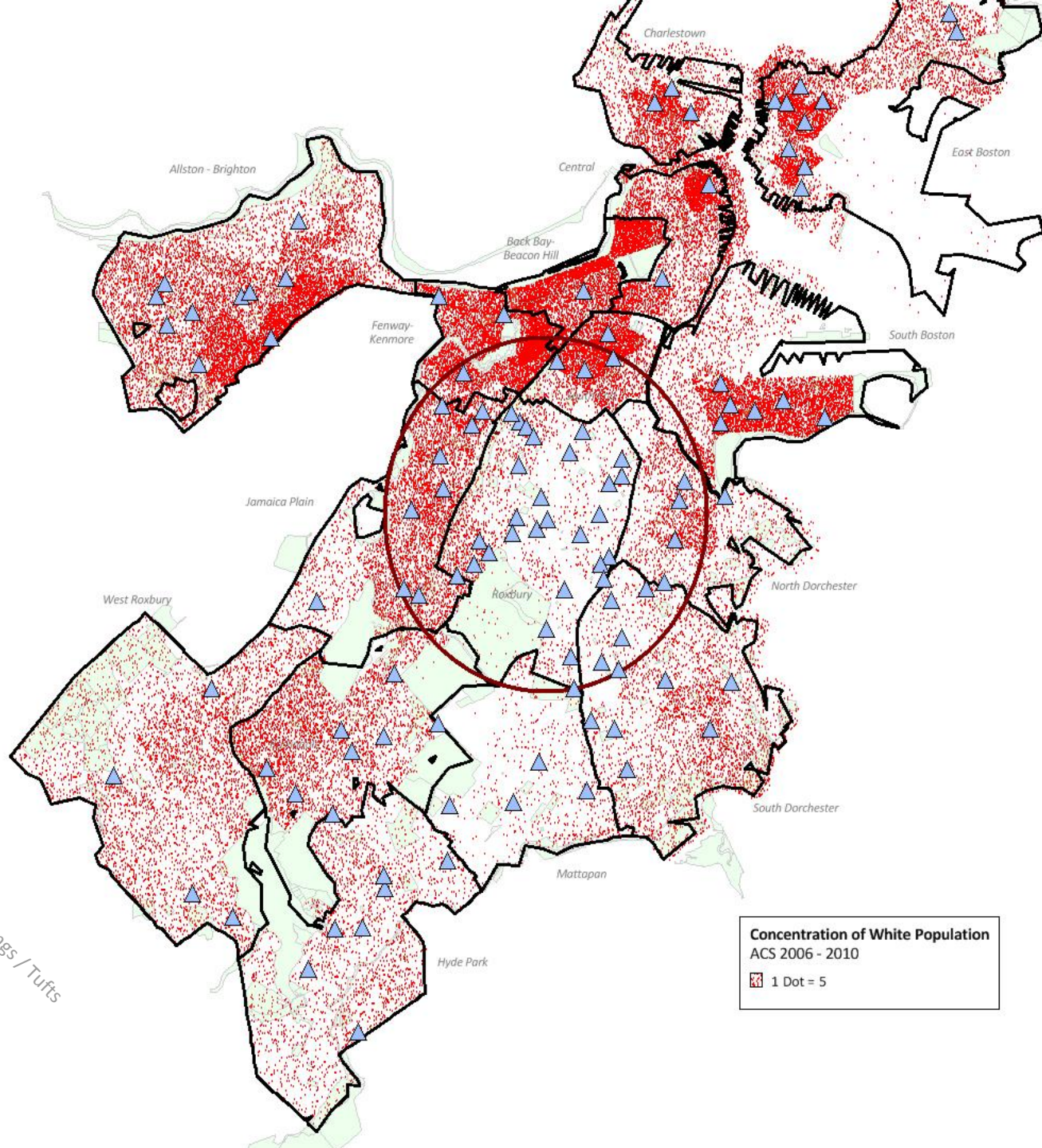
South Dorchester

Roslindale

Mattapan

Hyde Park

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

Concentration of Latino/a Population
ACS 2006 - 2010

1 Dot = 5

Concentration of Asian-Descent Population
ACS 2006 - 2010

1 Dot = 3

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

Charlestown
East Boston
Allston - Brighton
Central
Back Bay-
Beacon Hill
South Boston
Fenway-
Kenmore
South
Jamaica Plain
Roxbury
North Dorchester
West Roxbury
Roslindale
South Dorchester
Mattapan
Hyde Park

Charlestown

Central

East Boston

Allston - Brighton

Back Bay-
Beacon Hill

South Boston

Fenway-
Kenmore

Jamaica Plain

Roxbury

North Dorchester

West Roxbury

South Dorchester

Mattapan

Hyde Park

Concentration of White Population
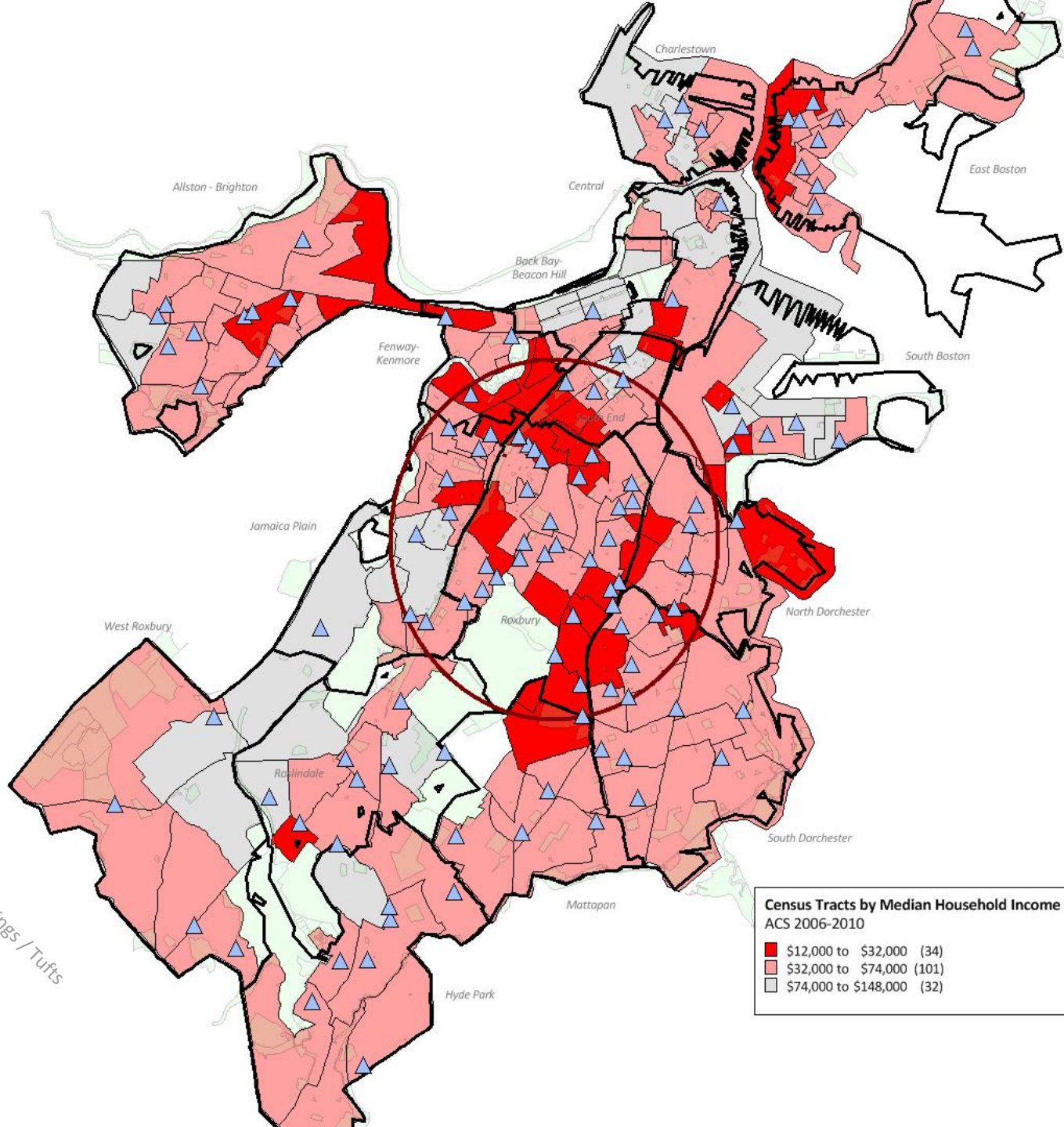ACS 2006 - 2010

1 Dot = 5

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

4) How do neighborhood inequalities impact planning or implementation of quality neighborhood schools for everyone?

Neighborhood inequality; next series of maps illustrate the geographic dimensions of inequality in Boston along several dimensions:

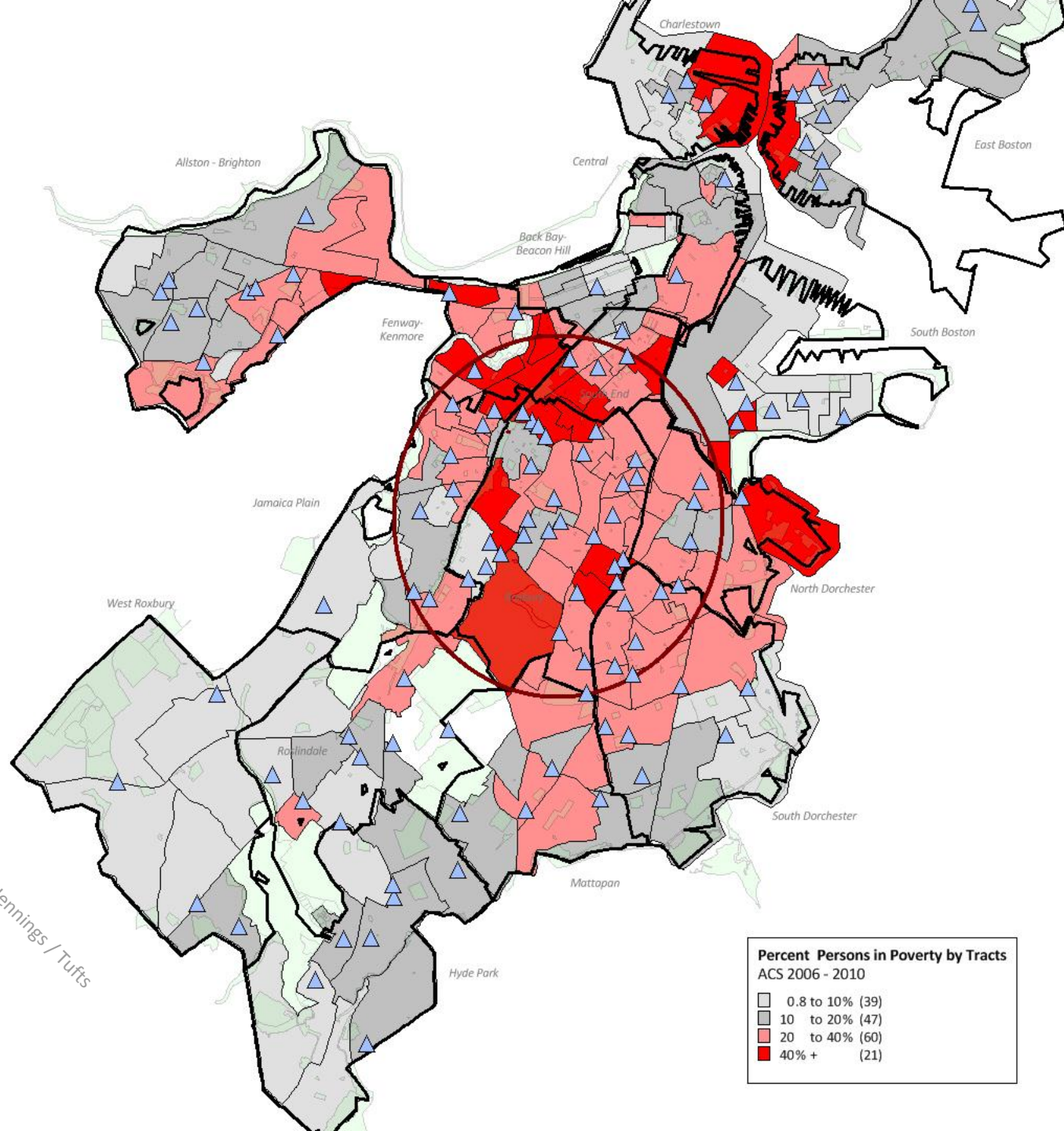*Income / Poverty*

Health disparities / food insecurity

Housing instability

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

Charlestown

East Boston

Allston - Brighton

Central

Back Bay-
Beacon Hill

Fenway-
Kenmore

South Boston

South End

Jamaica Plain

Roxbury

North Dorchester

West Roxbury

Roslindale

South Dorchester

Mattapan

Hyde Park

Census Tracts by Median Household Income
ACS 2006-2010

■	$12,000 to $32,000 (34)
■	$32,000 to $74,000 (101)
☐	$74,000 to $148,000 (32)

Charlestown

East Boston

Allston - Brighton

Central

Back Bay-
Beacon Hill

South Boston

Fenway-
Kenmore

South End

Jamaica Plain

North Dorchester

West Roxbury

Roxbury

Roslindale

South Dorchester

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

Mattapan

Hyde Park

Percent Persons in Poverty by Tracts
ACS 2006 - 2010

☐ 0.8 to 10% (39)
☐ 10 to 20% (47)
☐ 20 to 40% (60)
■ 40% +   (21)

Charlestown

East Boston

Allston - Brighton

Central

Back Bay-
Beacon Hill

South Boston

Fenway-
Kenmore

South End

Jamaica Plain

North Dorchester

West Roxbury

Roxbury

South Dorchester

Roslindale

Mattapan

Hyde Park

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

 # Households Receiving SNAP (Food Stamps)
ACS 2006 - 2010

	0 to 50 (35)	
	50 to 200 (49)	
■	200 to 1,090 (75)	
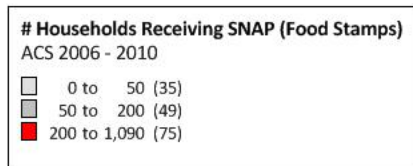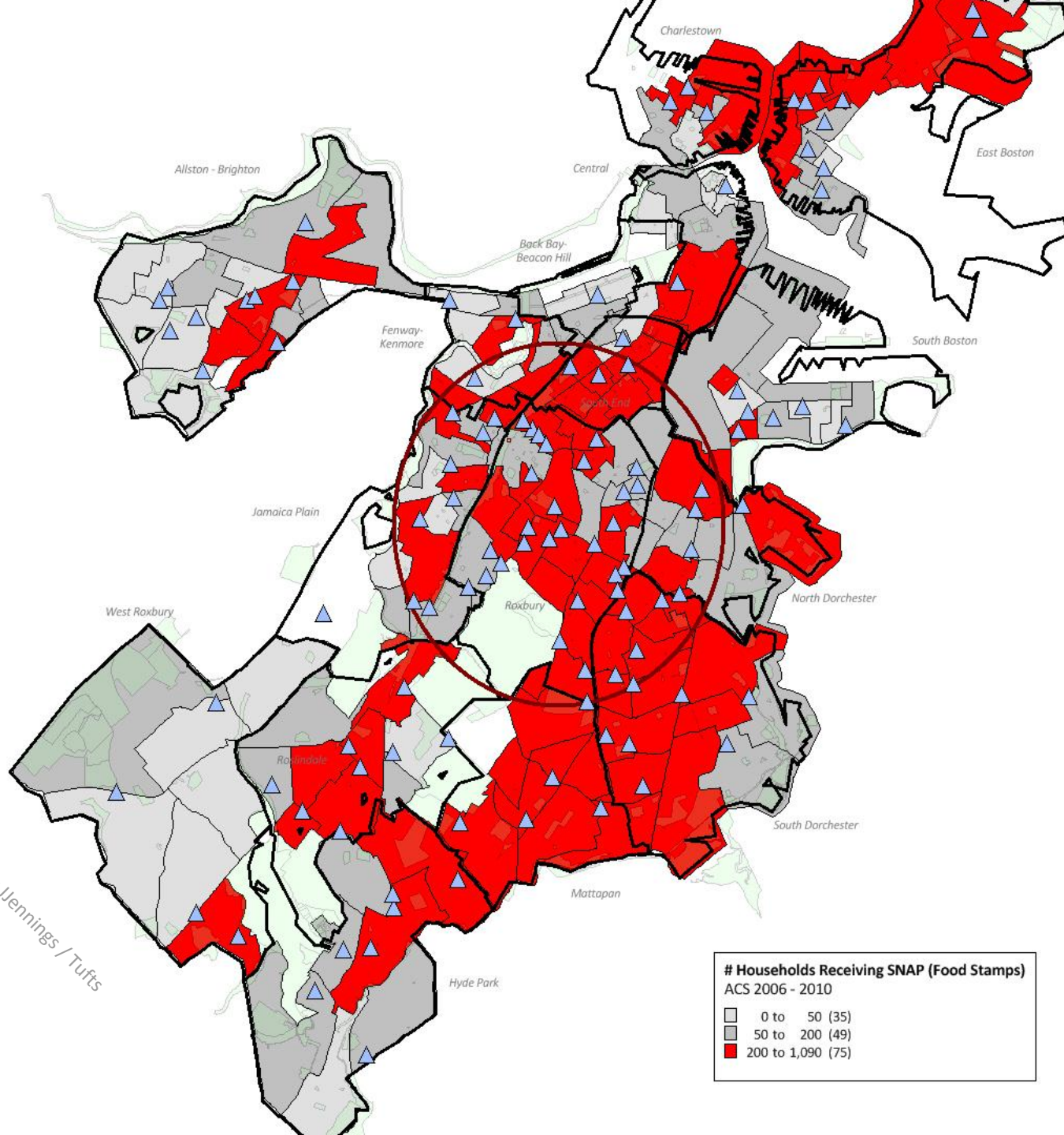
Health disparities impact strategies for academic excellence

See: **Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Atlanta, Georgia)**

"The academic success of America's youth is strongly linked with their health. Health-related factors such as hunger, physical and emotional abuse, and chronic illness can lead to poor school performance…In turn, academic success is an excellent indicator for the overall well-being of youth and a primary predictor and determinant of adult health outcomes"   http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth
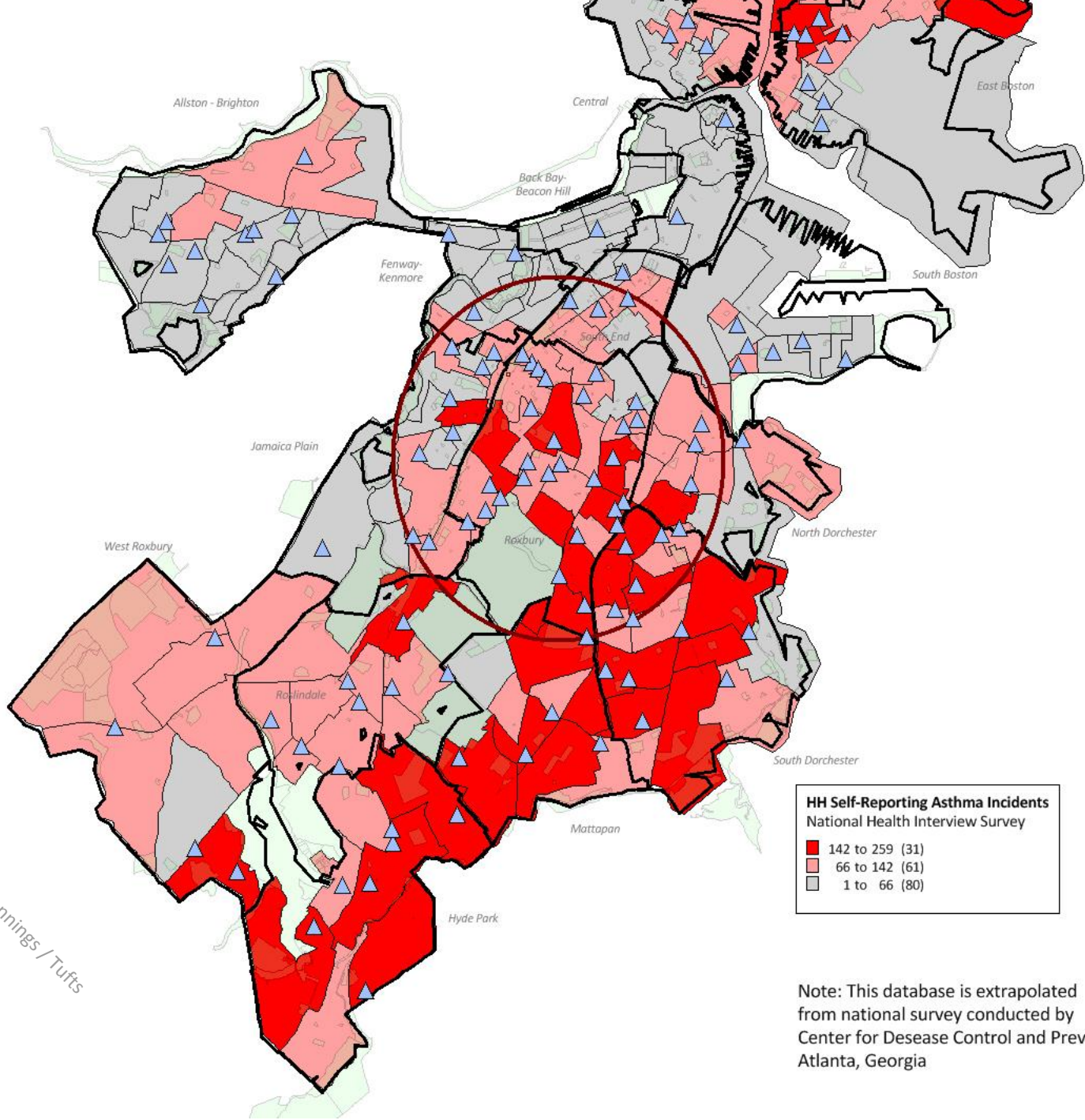
Boston Health Report (2010):

"In 2008, the asthma hospitalization rate for Boston's Black and Latino children under age five was more than three times the rate for Asian children and four times the rate for White children" (p.157)

Allston - Brighton

Central

East Boston

Back Bay-
Beacon Hill

South Boston

Fenway-
Kenmore

Jamaica Plain

Roxbury

North Dorchester

West Roxbury

Roslindale

South Dorchester

Mattapan

Hyde Park

HH Self-Reporting Asthma Incidents
National Health Interview Survey 2011

1 Dot = 2

Note: This database is extrapolated
from national survey conducted by
Center for Desease Control and Prevention
Atlanta, Georgia

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

Allston - Brighton

Central

East Boston

Back Bay-
Beacon Hill

South Boston

Fenway-
Kenmore

South End

Jamaica Plain

Roxbury

North Dorchester

West Roxbury

Roslindale

South Dorchester

Mattapan

HH Self-Reporting Asthma Incidents
National Health Interview Survey

- 142 to 259 (31)
- 66 to 142 (61)
- 1 to 66 (80)

Hyde Park

Note: This database is extrapolated
from national survey conducted by
Center for Desease Control and Prevention
Atlanta, Georgia

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

Housing instability and homelessness impacts academic achievement

See: Jennifer Comey and Michael Grosz, *Where Kids Go: The Foreclosure Crisis and Mobility in Washington D.C.*, The Urban Institute (2010)

        Mathew Kachura, *Children and Foreclosures: Baltimore City, 2003-2008,* Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Project (Winter 2011)
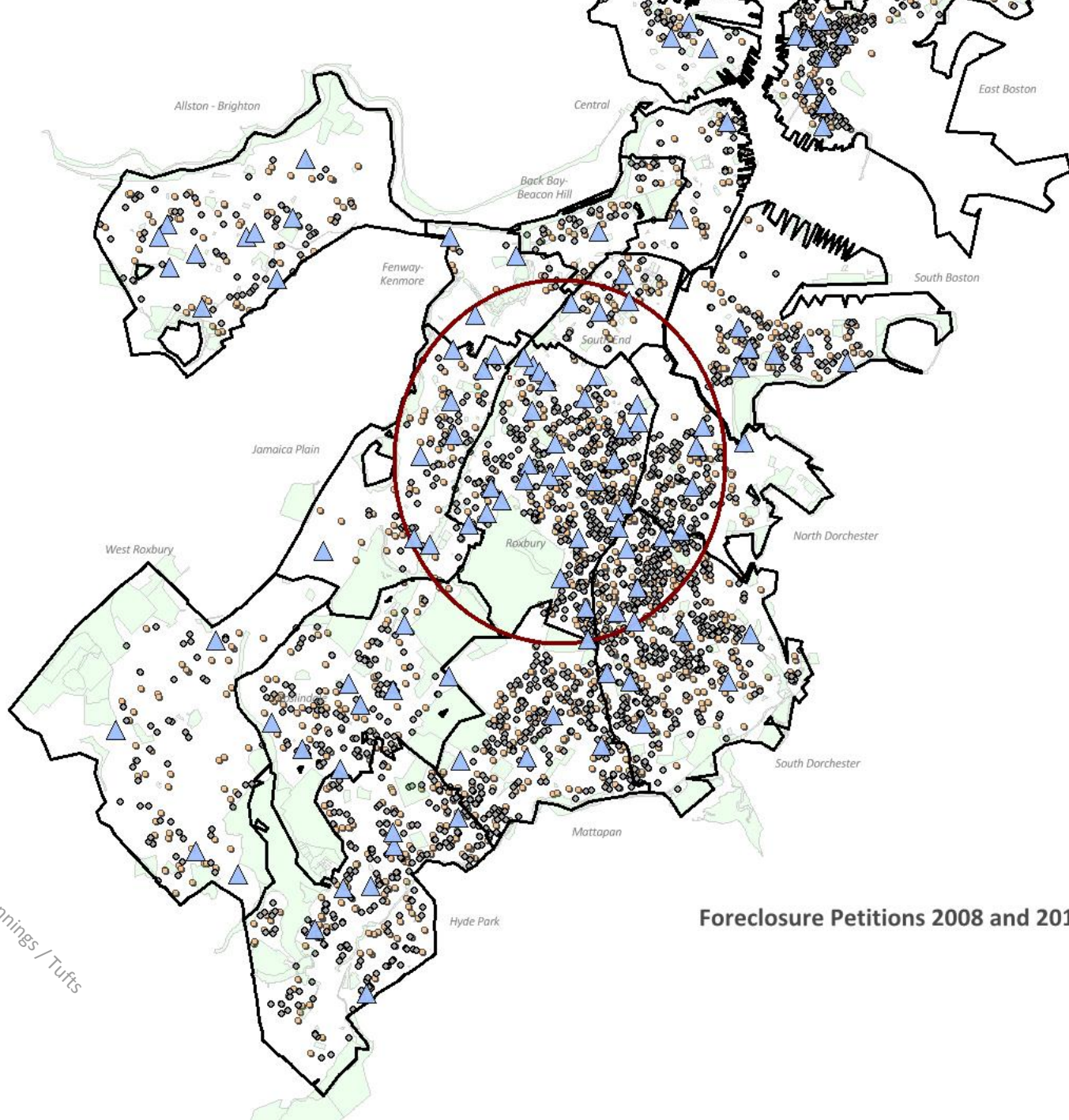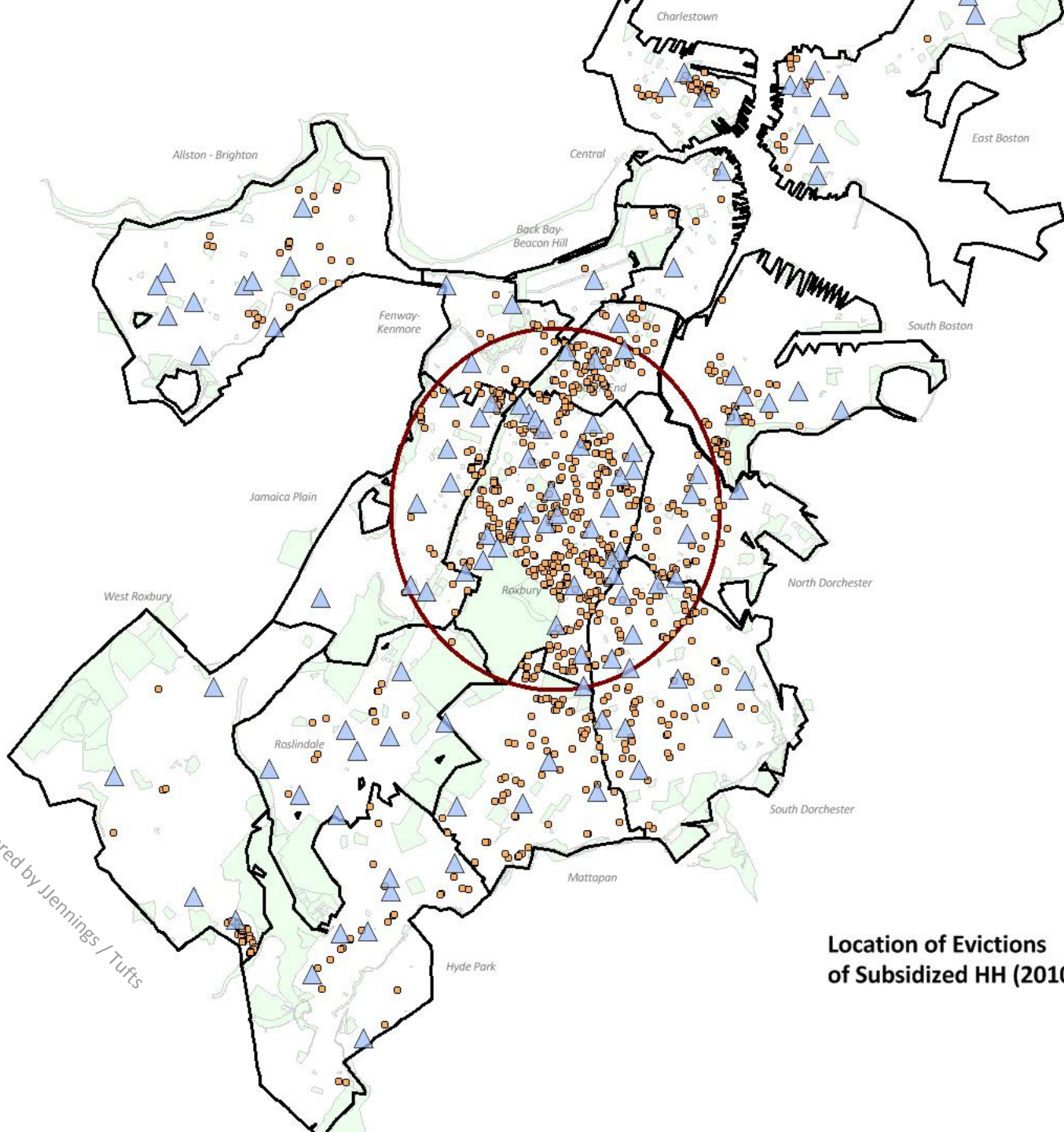
Foreclosure Petitions 2008 and 2010

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts
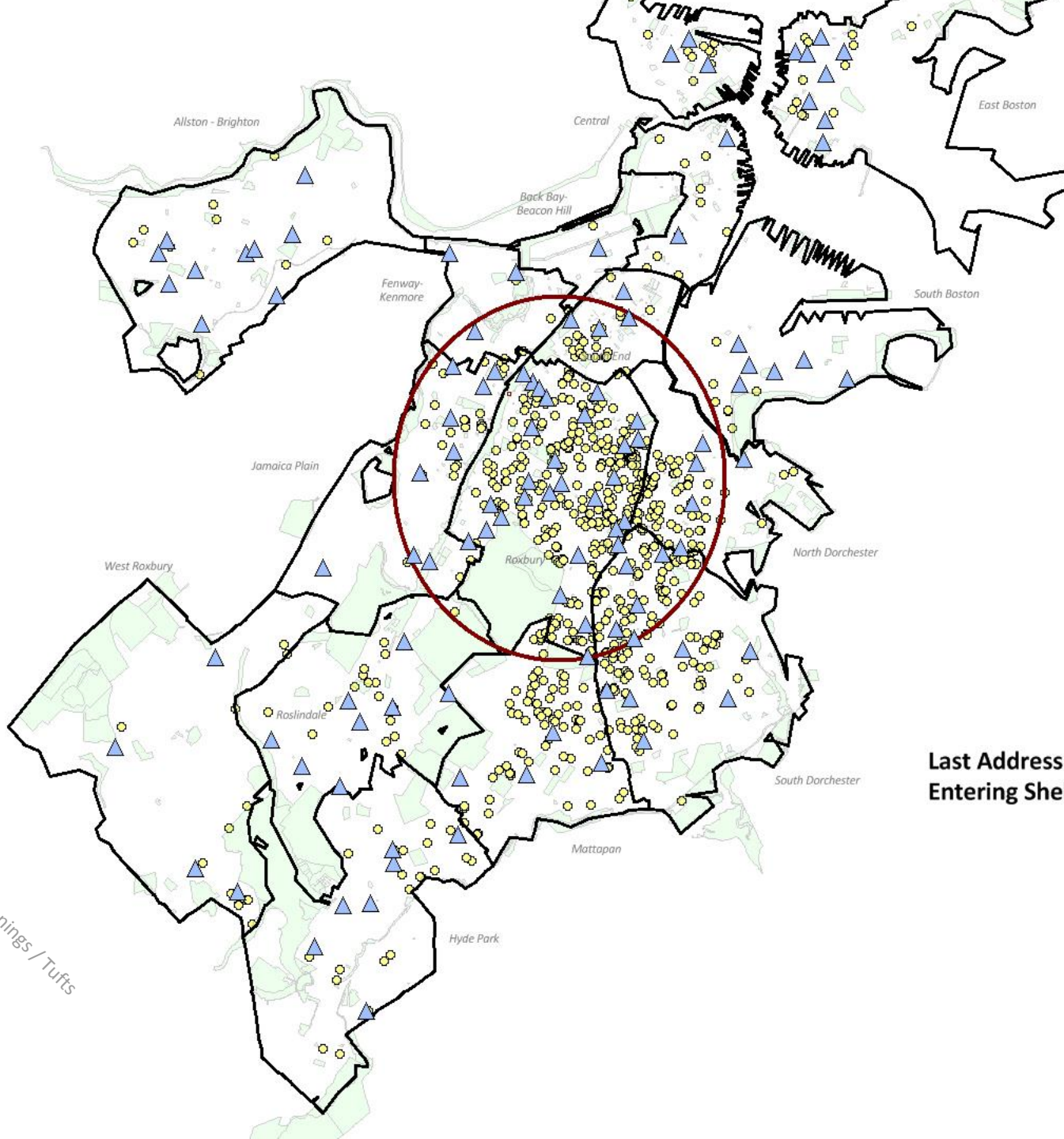
Last Address of Persons
Entering Shelters in 2011

**Location of Evictions
of Subsidized HH (2010)**

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

4) What are the challenges for ensuring that public schools provide all children – regardless of where they live -- with the tools necessary for academic excellence and achievement?
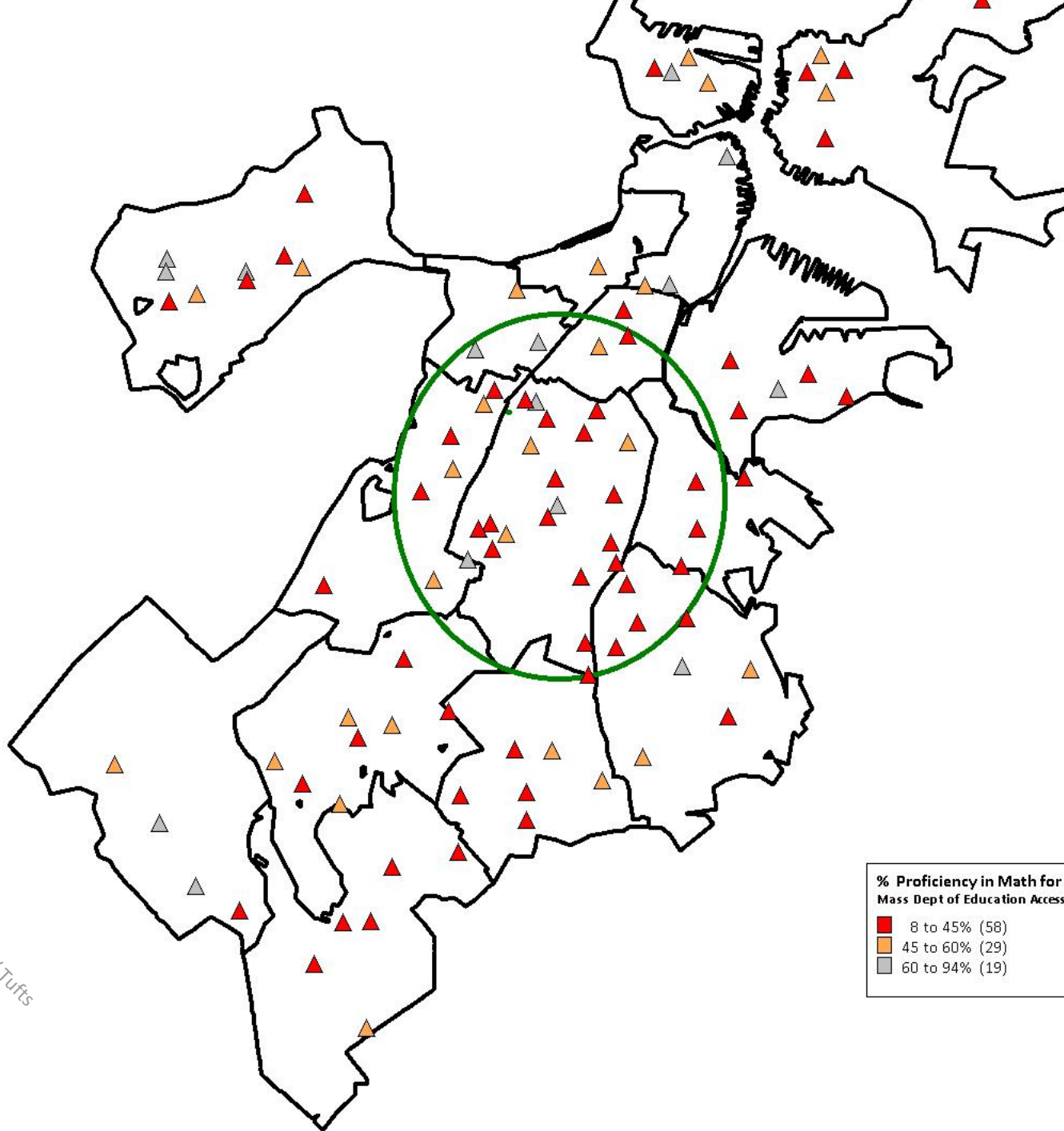
.... next series of maps illustrate how public schools are unequal in terms of standardized testing, but also dimensions of school quality such as retention and mobility rates
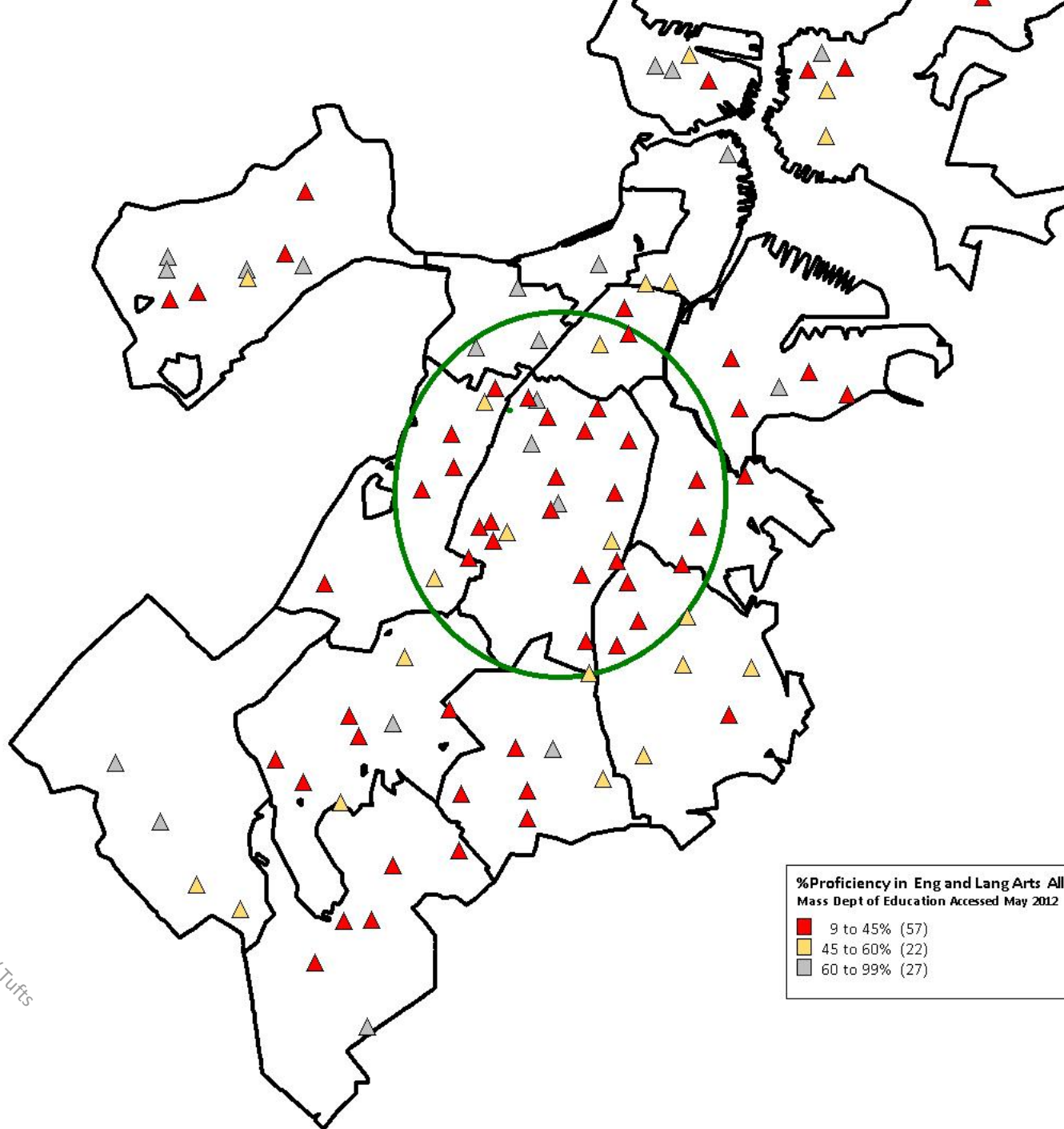
%Proficiency in Eng and Lang Arts All Grades 2011
Mass Dept of Education Accessed May 2012

■ 9 to 45% (57)
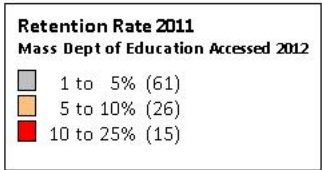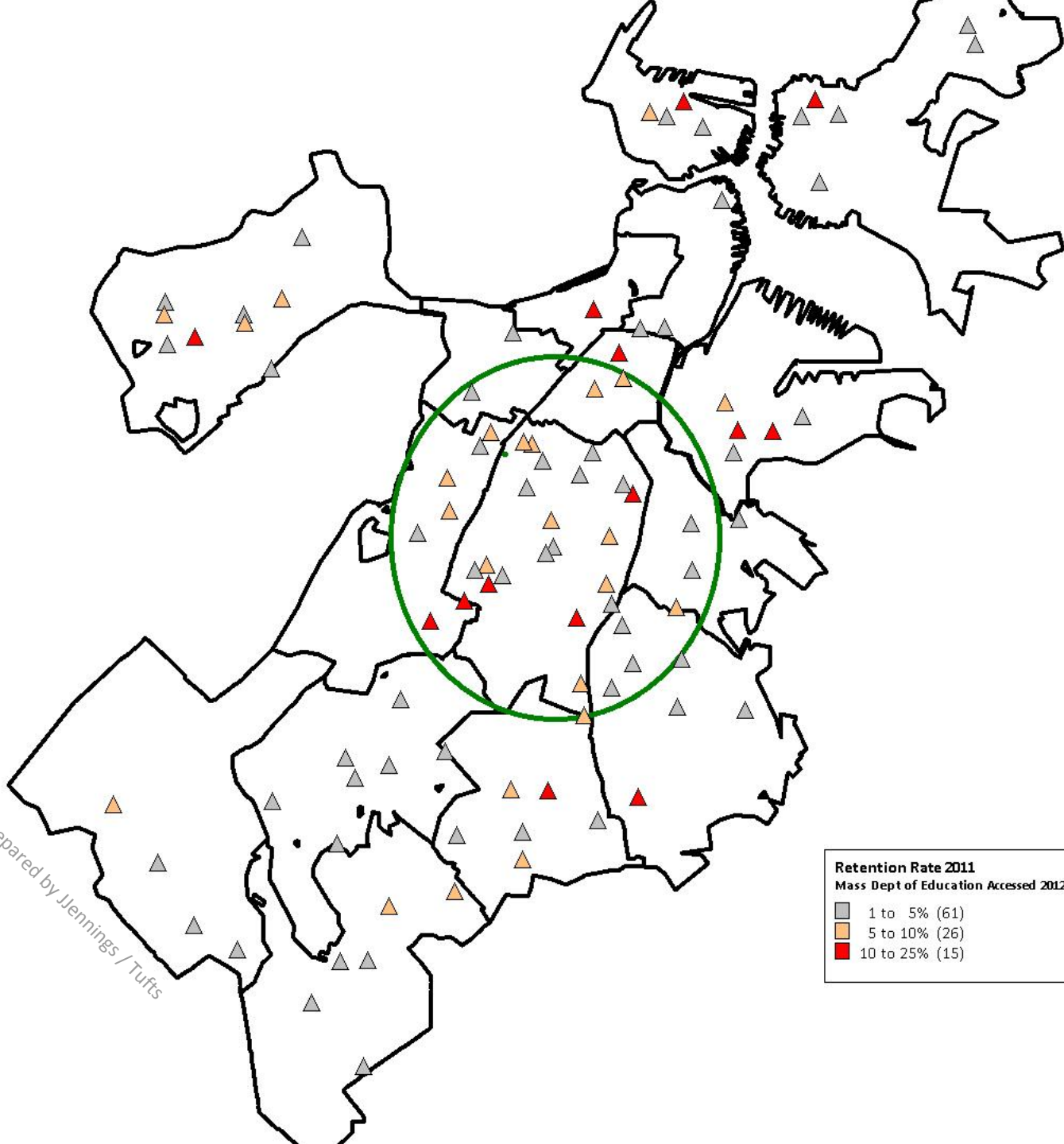■ 45 to 60% (22)
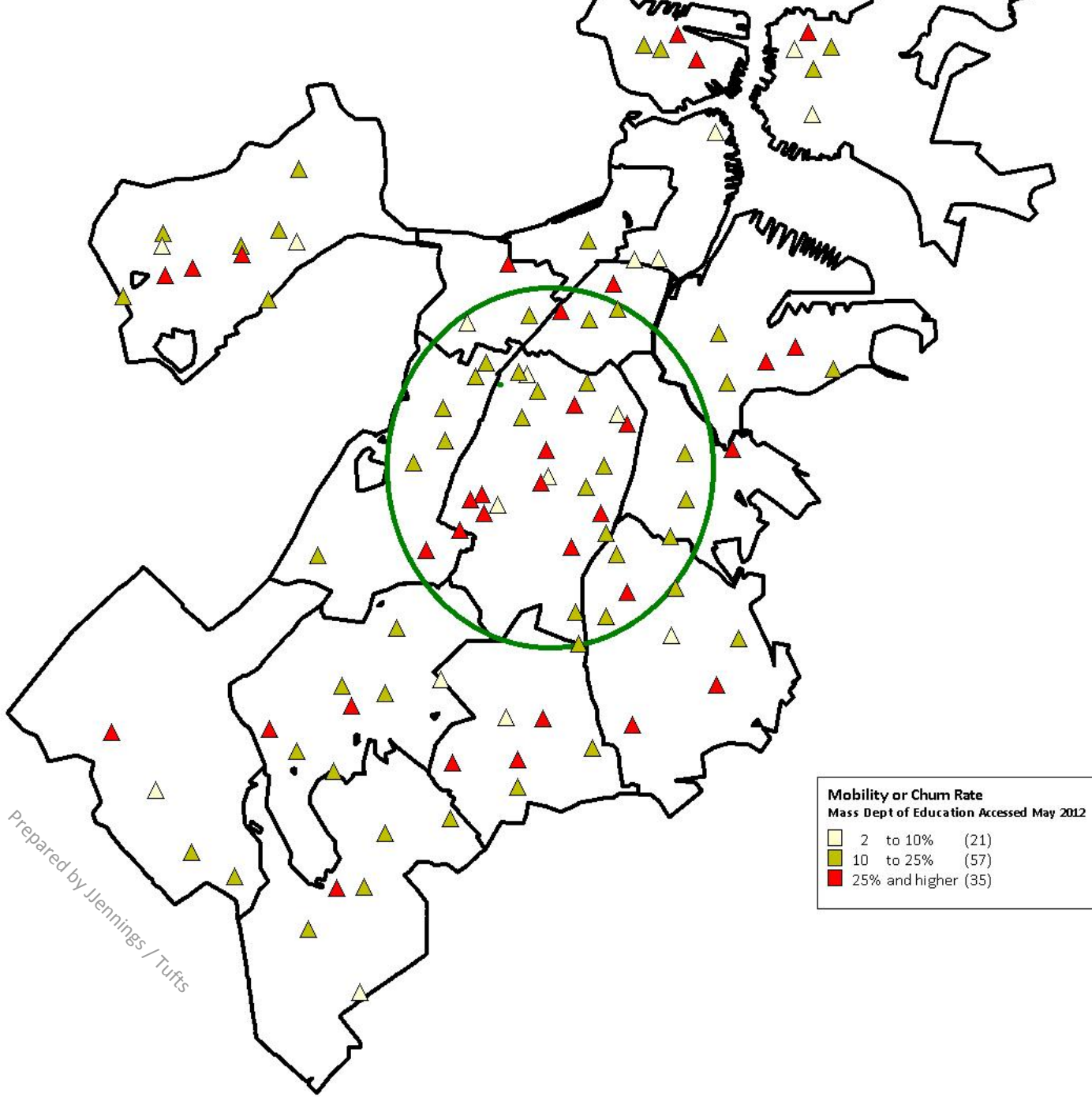■ 60 to 99% (27)

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

% Proficiency in Math for ALL Grades 2011
Mass Dept of Education Accessed May 2012

■ 8 to 45% (58)
■ 45 to 60% (29)
■ 60 to 94% (19)

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

Retention Rate 2011
Mass Dept of Education Accessed 2012

- ☐ 1 to 5% (61)
- ☐ 5 to 10% (26)
- ■ 10 to 25% (15)

Mobility or Churn Rate
Mass Dept of Education Accessed May 2012

☐	2 to 10%	(21)
☐	10 to 25%	(57)
■	25% and higher	(35)

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

6) What ideas have been offered by community-based voices for effective strategies in linking public schools and communities?

See: J. Jennings, *Place-based Service Delivery & Strategic Collaboration in Boston's Distressed Neighborhoods: Framework for Planning and Action* (June 2009); this study is based on interviews with civic leaders; focus groups; and community meetings

Respondents discussed:

1) Concerns about lack of bridges between public schools and communities in some places;

2) Strategies for building bridges between public schools and communities

Concerns or perceptions illustrating disconnection
between public schools and neighborhoods in some places

- Public school leadership limited in capacity for **helping children outside the school building,** or just don't see this as a responsibility

- **Lack of coordination around service needs for public school children**;

- **parent savvy-ness** drives how effectively children are helped to navigate different and silo-ed service delivery systems;

- Lack of **administrative linkages between public schools and other civic/human service organizations** in the neighborhood

- Lack of **information about jobs,** and **job training opportunities,** for parents and adult residents living near the school

- Inadequate attention to **preventive (versus reactive) health care** services

- Insensitivity to **schedules –and work obligations - of working-class parents**

- Some public schools look like **empty fortresses after mid-afternoon**

Strategies for building bridges
between public schools and neighborhoods

One, adopt and support, and mobilize, around a theory of change for improving low performing public schools and the raising of the academic achievement of children and youth *which acknowledges inequality, and the history of racial inequality*

Two, move the measure of academic excellence from "pockets of excellence" towards a *place-Based* or *cluster* approach

why not…collaboration among public schools, and between public schools and charter schools, to enhance academic and achievements of all students in a particular neighborhood cluster?

See, *Washington D.C.: Quality Schools: Every Child, Every School, Every Neighborhood: An analysis of school location and performance,* Commissioned by Mayor's Office, 2012

Prepared by JJennings / Tufts

Three, provide public support and funding for school leadership to design and implement programmatic partnerships with a range of community-based organizations; incorporate such into the evaluation of school leadership

Family and Child Services

Youth and Community Centers

Community Health Centers

Faith-based Organizations

also (!)

Housing agencies and other nonprofits

Community Development Corporations

Local businesses

<u>Four</u>, emphasize greater school and classroom attention to the history and cultures of local places and residents

...partnerships between public schools and local ethnic and cultural organizations, for example, might be effective for linking schools and neighborhoods, and actually bringing new and older residents together generating and sustaining neighborhood social capital

Five, utilize school buildings as *community spaces*; schools should not close in the afternoon; public schools can be spaces for critical place-based education and services:

- popular education and 'worker-friendly' continuing education;

- workshops focusing on parenting skills and civic engagement;

- location of community-based nonprofits

rental income for schools?

savings for community-based nonprofits?

bringing support services closer to students and families, and
in an educational setting!

Six, build management and participatory information systems with linkages among sectors that serve the *same* children in public schools:

public schools and subsidized housing in Boston;

See: J.Jennings and N. Gaeta Coletta, *Boston Housing Authority and Boston Public Schools: Exploring Academic Collaboration* (BHA, October 2012)

public health;

human services;