



Forest Park Neighborhood Investment Plan 2025–2035

City of Springfield and the Forest Park Civic Association, Residents, local Businesses, Organizations, and other Stakeholders

Forest Park Neighborhood Investment Plan 2025–2035



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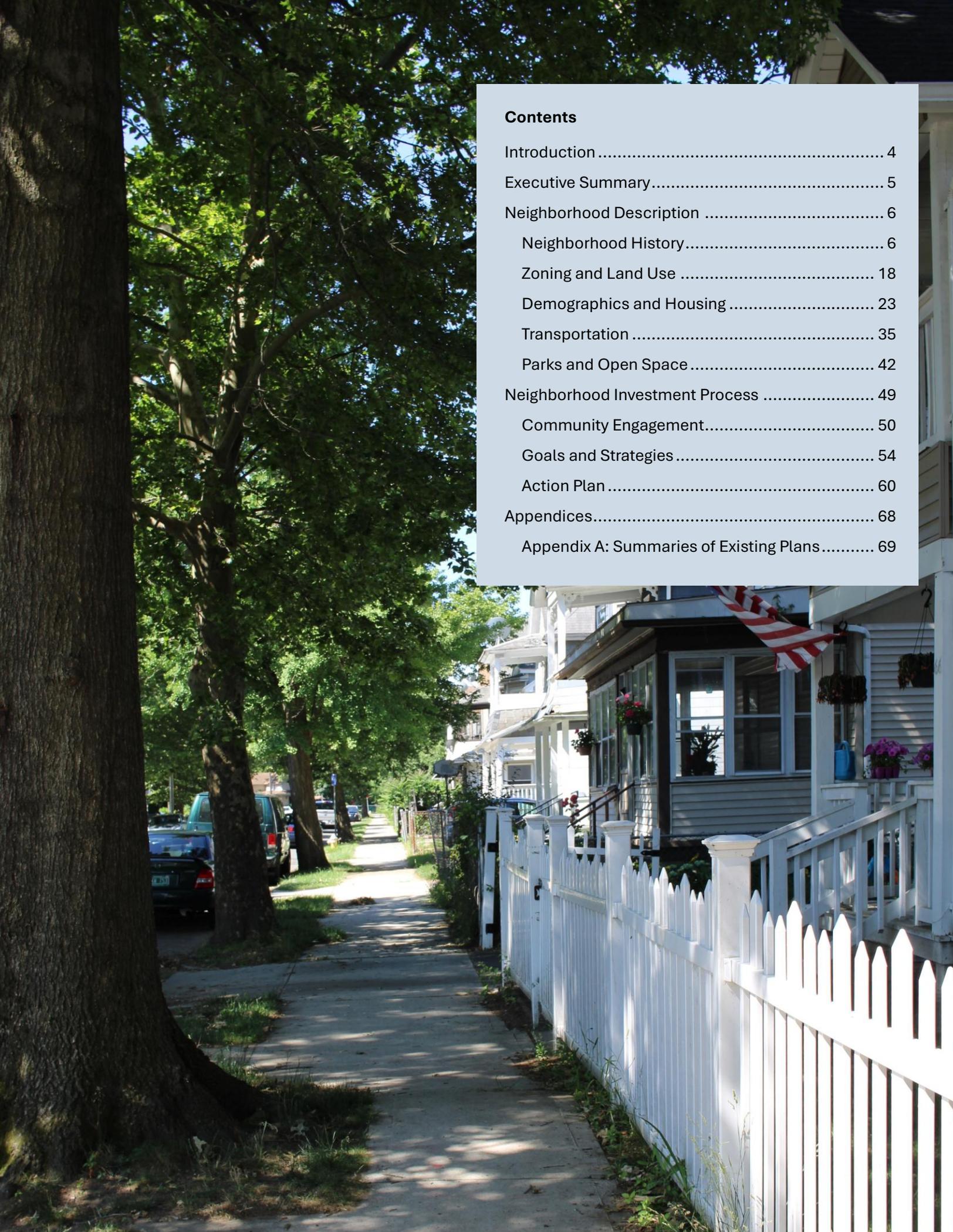
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Goal: *To enhance and inform the delivery of municipal services and the investment of municipal, state, federal, and private funding, and other resources in the Forest Park neighborhood through collaborative planning and implementation between residents, including resident businesses and organizations, and other stakeholders and city departments.*

Introduction

Welcome to the Forest Park Neighborhood Investment Plan 2025.

This plan begins with a brief history of how the neighborhood developed over time. We want everyone who is reading the plans to know that, just as your neighborhood was created by people who came before you, so too can you influence the way your neighborhood develops into the future.

In 2022, as the city and the nation emerged from the COVID 19 pandemic, the city of Springfield allocated \$746,340 of [American Rescue Plan Act](#) funds to update the city’s [Neighborhood Data Atlas](#) and facilitate development of [Neighborhood Investment Plans](#) in twelve neighborhoods where residents experienced disproportionately high rates of COVID infection, hospitalization, and death, including the Forest Park neighborhood. The city engaged the [Pioneer Valley Planning Commission](#) (PVPC) to complete this work, and PVPC subsequently engaged [Way Finders Community Building and Engagement](#) team via a competitive procurement process to lead engagement focusing on residents, local businesses, and community-based organizations.

The goal of this neighborhood plan and the planning process that led to its development is to establish and agree on shared priorities for investment in the neighborhood and to strengthen the connection between the neighborhood—its residents, small businesses, institutions, and community-based organizations, along with the [Neighborhood Council](#) and the city’s many departments. The city of Springfield works with residents through the city’s neighborhood councils, and the city relies on them to share information with their residents. Residents who want to get involved in their neighborhoods can start with the neighborhood council. Recognizing that the city’s neighborhood councils needed financial support and technical assistance, the city invested [\\$1.7 million in the form of \\$100,000 grants to each neighborhood council](#) in 2022-2024 and developed a neighborhood council handbook.

This planning process was initiated by the city [Office of Planning and Economic Development](#) (OPED) [Division of Neighborhood Services](#), and this city office is working to ensure integration and acceptance of these prioritized projects by all city departments, boards, and commissions. Through this plan, the city and the neighborhood are proclaiming their shared commitment to work collaboratively on behalf of their residents to implement these priority investments over the next ten years, through 2035.

Cover image: *Houses on Spruceland Avenue*

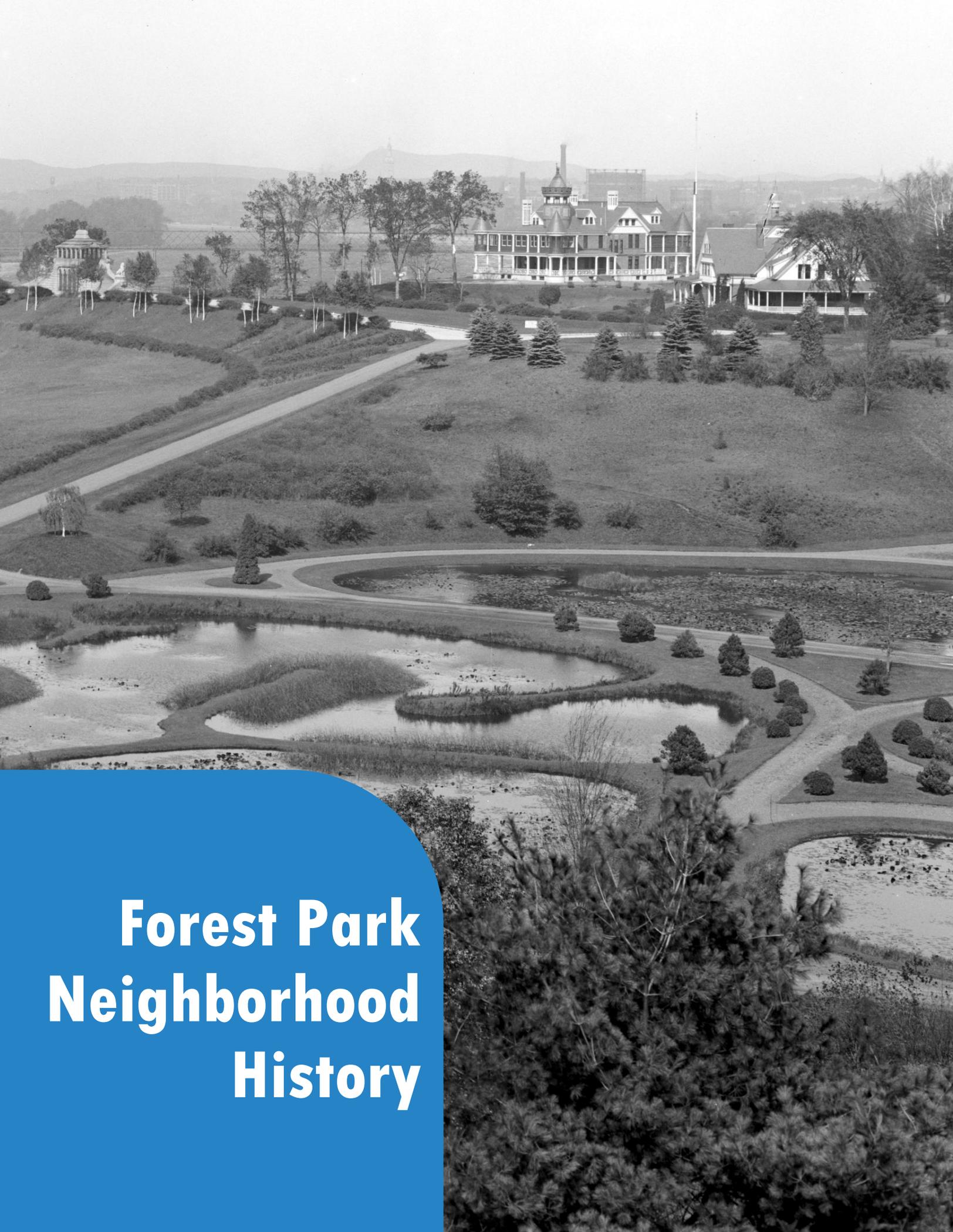
Previous page: *Tree-lined sidewalk on Hall Street.*

Executive Summary

The Forest Park neighborhood stands as Springfield’s largest and most architecturally diverse community, defined by its historic charm, extraordinary cultural vitality, and a long tradition of civic engagement. Residents have consistently demonstrated a deep commitment to improving their neighborhood, organizing community cleanups, supporting local schools and businesses, and participating in planning initiatives that reflect the community’s vision for an inclusive and thriving future. This plan builds on that strong foundation, recognizing that the neighborhood’s greatest strength lies in its people, their resilience, creativity and unwavering belief that Forest Park’s best days are still ahead.

At the heart of the neighborhood lies its namesake—Forest Park, one of New England’s most remarkable urban parks and an anchor of community life. The plan celebrates the park as both a natural and cultural treasure, offering recreation, beauty, and connection across generations and backgrounds. At the same time, residents have called for expanding opportunities for smaller green spaces and pocket parks throughout the neighborhood, ensuring that every resident—especially those living farther from the main park—has easy access to nature, recreation, and community gathering spots.

The Forest Park Neighborhood Investment Plan envisions a future where safe, multimodal streets connect residents to jobs, schools, shops, and parks; where local businesses thrive and reflect the community’s diversity; and where housing is well-maintained, affordable, and climate resilient. The plan prioritizes strategies to improve healthy food access, strengthen neighborhood retail corridors, and promote energy-efficient homes that reduce costs and carbon emissions. Above all, it aims to reinforce the sense of belonging and shared purpose that defines Forest Park—building a neighborhood that is inclusive, sustainable, economically vibrant, and truly welcoming to all.



**Forest Park
Neighborhood
History**

Indigenous History

The land that would become the Forest Park neighborhood was part of the ancestral homelands of the Agawam people, an Algonquian-speaking tribe who lived in the area around modern-day Springfield. Prior to the start of the colonial period, the Agawam primarily lived on the west side of the river, which was a factor in the choice by English colonists to settle on the east side of the river.

The two groups coexisted and regularly interacted with each other throughout the mid-17th century, but this relationship began to deteriorate by the 1660s, as an increase in colonial settlers led to greater demand for the land on the west side of the river. As a result, in 1666 the Agawam people sold their land on the west side, and in return the English colonists gave them land and a palisaded fort on Long Hill, in the modern-day Forest Park neighborhood. This decision seems to have been motivated by a desire of the English to keep

a watchful eye on the Agawam, and it seems unclear whether this relocation was voluntary, or whether it involved coercion. Either way, it is perhaps one of the first Native American reservations in the modern-day United States, and it was the home of the Agawam for the next decade.

During King Philip's War, the fort was used as a staging area for the Native Americans who raided and burned Springfield on October 5, 1675. The Agawam people subsequently abandoned the fort after the raid, and the town government asserted its claim to the property. By the early 18th century, the land was divided into house lots and granted to colonial settlers.

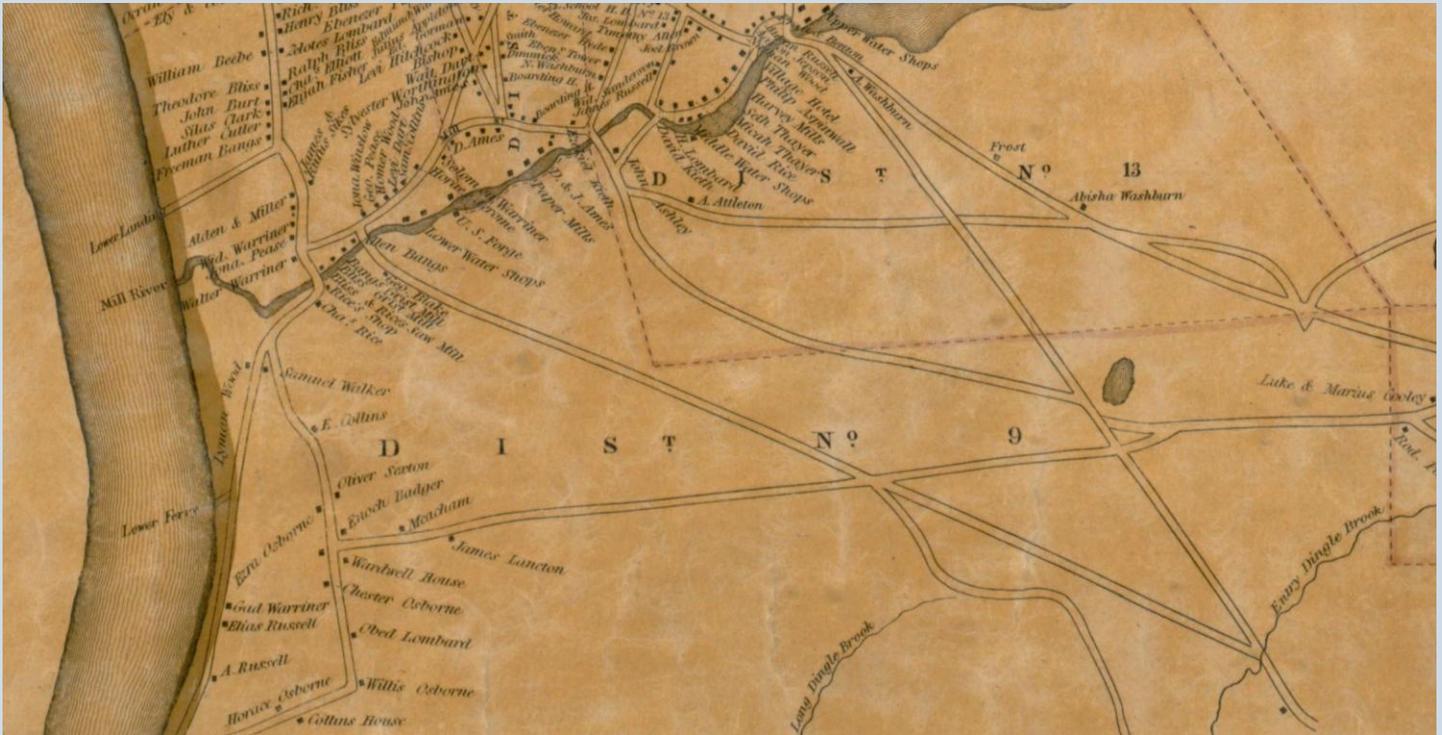
Over the years, the site of the fort was variously known as Fort Hill, Fort Pleasant, and Long Hill, but the exact details of the fort and its location fell into obscurity until 1895, when historian Harry Andrew Wright conducted an archaeological dig of the site, on the west side of Longhill Street just south of the intersection

of Sumner Avenue. Wright discovered the remnants of the wooden stockade that formed the perimeter of the fort, and he also found 26 fire holes, which indicated the sites of houses. Based on this evidence, Wright surmised that several hundred people likely lived here. He also found a mix of artifacts of both indigenous and European origins, indicating the extent of trade between the two groups during the first few decades of the colonial period. The dig also uncovered the remains of at least 13 people, who were presumed to have been Native American.



The historical marker on Longhill Street, indicating the site of the Native American fort

Previous page: *Pecousic Villa and Laurel Hill in Forest Park, around 1910-1920. Library of Congress, Detroit Publishing Company Collection.*



Detail from Plan of Springfield (1835) by George Colton, showing the area that would later become the Forest Park neighborhood. Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.

19th Century Development

In the meantime, development in the Forest Park neighborhood progressed slowly compared to parts of the city farther to the north. The 1835 map of Springfield, for example, shows only about 30 buildings in modern-day Forest Park, most of which were clustered along Longhill Street or on the southern banks of the Mill River. Otherwise, the rest of the neighborhood was largely undeveloped, although most of the major modern-day streets were already laid out, including Sumner Avenue, Belmont Avenue, Dickinson Street, White Street, Orange Street, and Allen Street.

By 1870, two distinct areas of development had emerged in the neighborhood. On the western side of the neighborhood, near the intersection of Longhill Street and Sumner Avenue, was a small settlement with a few dozen houses, a school, a cemetery, and several brick yards. The other area of development was in the

northeastern part of the neighborhood, in the triangle of land between White and Allen Streets. This area is directly south of the U.S. Armory Watershops, and many of its 19th century residents were employed at the facility.

Creating an Urban Park

During the late 19th century, as the city experienced rapid population growth following the Civil War, many city leaders expressed a need for a large public park. Several potential locations were identified, including along the banks of the Connecticut River and the area around the Watershops Pond, but ultimately one of the city's park commissioners, Orrick H. Greenleaf, offered to donate 65 acres of land on the south side of Sumner Avenue. The city accepted this offer in 1884, and soon allocated funding for acquiring additional land adjacent to this property. This marked the start of Forest Park, which would steadily grow with further donations and land acquisitions throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



A baseball game at Forest Park, around 1905. Image from Springfield Present and Prospective (1905).

These donations and land purchases meant that, by the early 1890s, most of the core of the modern-day Forest Park was owned by the city. Contrary to an often-repeated claim, the park was not designed by prominent landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. Rather, the early land acquisitions, including Greenleaf's donation, were landscaped by the local firm of Sackett & Reynolds, while much of the Barney donation was landscaped by Everett Barney himself.

The single largest addition came in 1890, when ice skate manufacturer Everett H. Barney donated his property to the city, forming the western portion of Forest Park. Barney had constructed his house, known as Pecousic Villa, several years earlier in 1885, on a bluff overlooking the Connecticut River. He intended to build another house nearby on Laurel Hill for his only child, George M. Barney, but George died in 1889 at the age of 26, and Laurel Hill became his gravesite rather than his home. With no surviving heir, Everett decided to gift the land, including the house and its adjacent carriage house, to the city. His donation included stipulations that he and his wife Eliza would be allowed to live in the house for the rest of their lives, and that they would be buried on Laurel Hill.

Large-Scale Development

With the establishment of Forest Park, the surrounding land became desirable for residential development. This was also encouraged by the completion of an electric trolley line to the park in 1890. The trolley line ran southward from the city center and made a



An early 20th century postcard view of Everett and Eliza Barney's house, Pecousic Villa, viewed from the west from what is now Interstate 91. Private collection.



The western edge of Forest Park, showing the South End Bridge and the city center in the distance, around 1900-1910. Library of Congress, Detroit Publishing Company Collection.

triangular-shaped loop through the neighborhood, along Fort Pleasant, Sumner, and Belmont Avenues.

This combination of public transportation, a public park, and demand for new single-family houses in the “City of Homes” led to large-scale development of the Forest Park neighborhood

starting in the 1890s. By the turn of the 20th century, most of the land north of Sumner Avenue had been subdivided into new streets and home lots, as was the land on the south side of Sumner Avenue in the western part of the neighborhood. The construction of new houses generally followed the trolley lines, with the initial development located on or near Sumner, Belmont, and Fort Pleasant Avenues.



Looking east on Sumner Avenue near Washington Road, around 1900-1910. Library of Congress, Detroit Publishing Company Collection.

One of the first areas in the neighborhood to be developed was the westernmost section, in the area that now comprises the Forest Park Heights Historic District. The homes here were generally intended to attract upper middle class families, including business executives, managers, and other professional occupations. Many of the streets were laid out with landscaped medians in the

center, including on Riverview Terrace, Maplewood Terrace, Magnolia Terrace, and Washington Boulevard. Other similar features included Floral Park at the northern end of Florentine Gardens, and Marengo Park. Many of the streets were given tree-themed names to reflect their proximity to Forest Park, including Spruceland, Firglade, Cherryvale, and Pineywoods Avenues.

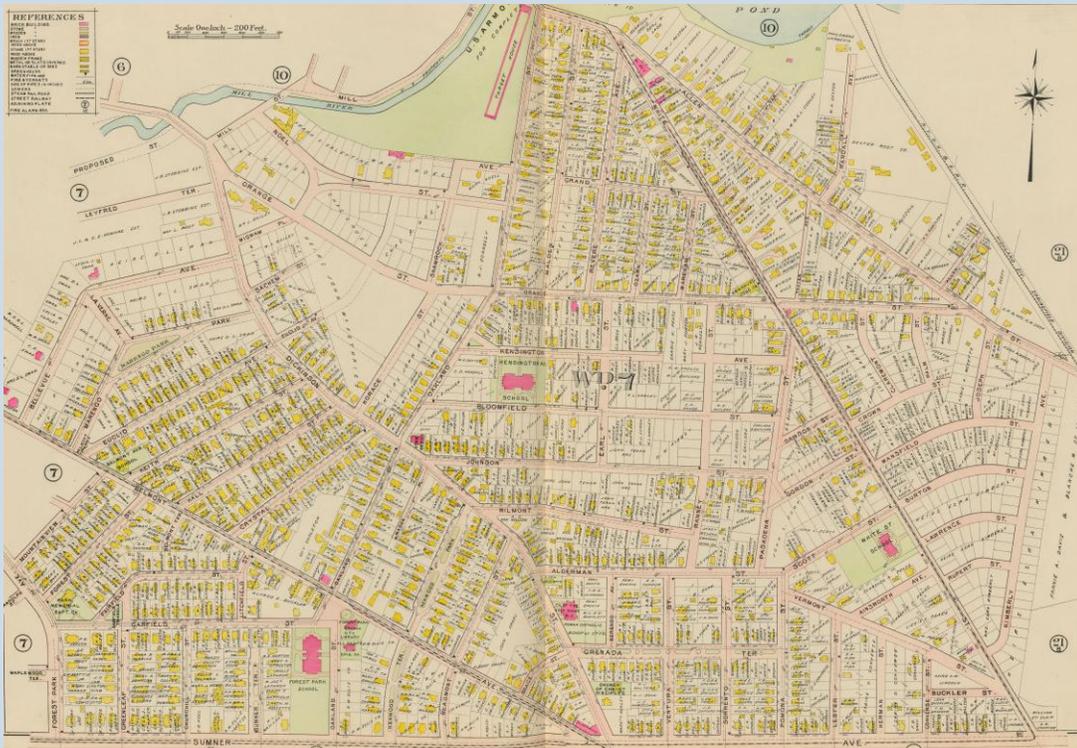
The houses in this part of the neighborhood were primarily built in the 1890s and in the first few decades of the 20th century. The early homes had Queen Anne style architecture, which was popular in the late 19th century, but most of the homes in the neighborhood were designed in the Colonial Revival style. Many were the work of prominent local architects, including Guy Kirkham, Louis F. Newman, and G. Wood Taylor. Few homes were completely identical to each other, creating a streetscape that featured subtle differences between each house.

In the meantime, the western part of the neighborhood was steadily developed throughout the early 20th century. New housing construction generally consisted of a mix of single-family and two-family homes, and this development was accompanied by the establishment of new schools, churches, and a branch library in the neighborhood. Many of the neighborhood's existing schools date to these early years of development, including Forest Park Middle School (1896), White Street School (1904), Kensington Avenue School (1908), and Sumner Avenue School (1911). The neighborhood also included a parochial school, Holy Name School on Dickinson Street, which was built in 1910 and later expanded with a second building on Alderman Street in 1924.

The neighborhood was well served by public transportation during the early 20th century, and most homes were within just a block or two of a trolley line. By the 1910s, trolleys ran on Sumner Avenue as far east as White Street, on Longhill Street south of Sumner Avenue, on White Street north of Sumner Avenue, on Fort Pleasant Avenue, and on the entire length of Belmont Avenue. These streets saw frequent trolley service, with a 1912 newspaper article indicating that the corner of White Street and Sumner Avenue had trolleys arriving every 7.5 minutes.

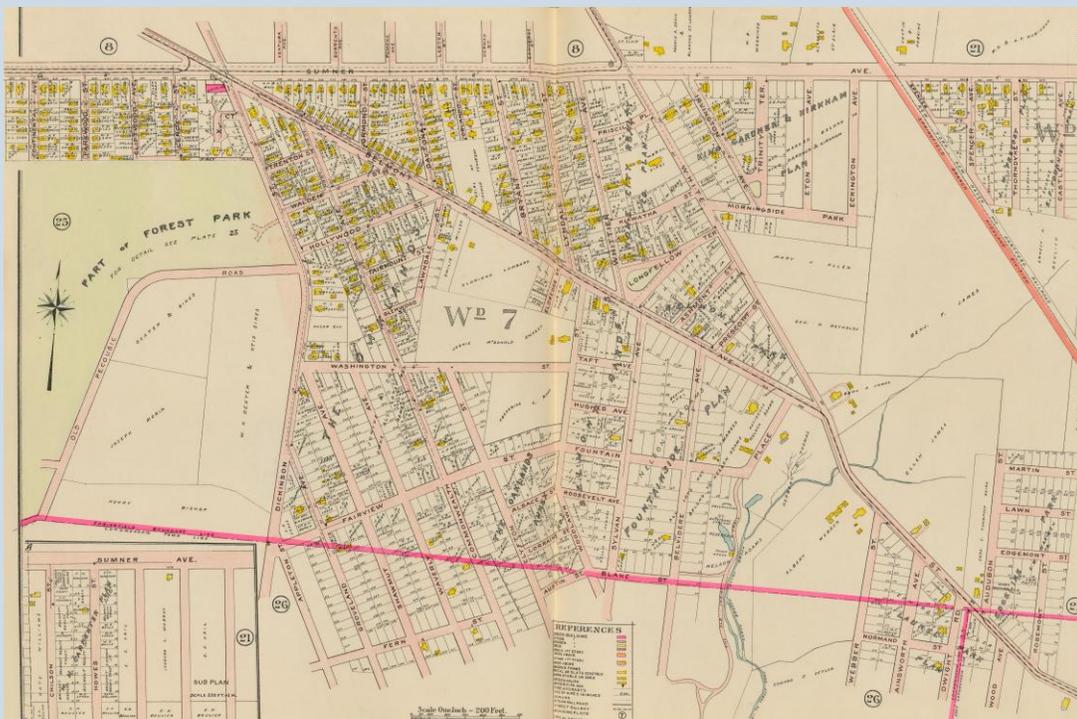


The western part of the Forest Park neighborhood, shown in Plate 7 of Atlas of the City of Springfield and the Town of Longmeadow, Massachusetts by L.J. Richards (1910). Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.



The northeastern part of the Forest Park neighborhood, shown in Plate 8 of Atlas of the City of Springfield and the Town of Longmeadow, Massachusetts by L.J. Richards (1910). Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.

During this time, the Forest Park neighborhood also saw a limited amount of commercial development. This primarily consisted of small businesses that were typically located at major street corners. Over time, the “X” – the six-way intersection of Sumner Avenue, Belmont Avenue, and Dickinson Street, became the commercial hub of the neighborhood, with rows of storefronts lining the streets that radiated outward from the intersection.



The southeastern part of the Forest Park neighborhood, shown in Plate 8 of Atlas of the City of Springfield and the Town of Longmeadow, Massachusetts by L.J. Richards (1910). The pink line marks the old city boundary, before Longmeadow ceded the land south of it to Springfield in 1914. Boston Public Library, Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.

In addition, though, other neighborhood-oriented commercial development emerged at other major intersections. This included small shops, grocery stores, convenience stores, and similar business, many of which were owned by neighborhood residents. This pattern of development is still evident in Forest Park today, with small-scale commercial activity scattered throughout the neighborhood.



An early 20th century postcard view of Sumner Avenue at the X, showing trolleys operating on Sumner Avenue on the left and Belmont Avenue in the background to the right. Private collection.

Industrial Development

Overall, Forest Park developed into a predominantly residential neighborhood, with scattered pockets of small businesses. However, the Mill River, which forms the northern border of the neighborhood, was the scene of industrial development during the late 19th and early 20th century. Major industries included the U.S. Armory's Watershops facility, which was partially located in Forest Park. Farther downstream was the Bemis & Call Hardware and Tool Company, located near the southern end of Main Street. Founded in the 1830s, this company held the patent for the original monkey wrench, and over the years it specialized in producing wrenches, pliers, calipers, and similar hand tools, until it closed in 1988.

Changing Borders

The growth and development in the Forest Park neighborhood also led to the expansion of the city's borders. Springfield's southern border had previously run in a straight line from the modern-day border of East Longmeadow all the way west to the Connecticut River. This was the border that



The Bemis & Call Hardware and Tool Company on Main Street at the northern edge of the Forest Park neighborhood, around 1938-1939. Springfield Preservation Trust.

was established when Longmeadow was incorporated as a separate town in 1783, and it remained in place for over a century. However, the border changed in 1890 with Everett Barney's donation of land to the city. A portion of his estate was, at the time, located in Longmeadow, so his donation carried a stipulation that the land in Longmeadow be annexed to Springfield. The state legislature approved this change, resulting in a triangular-shaped dip in the southwestern corner of Springfield.

An even more significant boundary change occurred in 1914, during the development of the Franconia section of the Forest Park neighborhood. This area, which includes Commonwealth Avenue, Draper Street, Shawmut Street, and the other surrounding streets, was bisected by the city border. The houses and streets in the southern part of the development were in Longmeadow, but they were geographically isolated from the rest of the town, which made it difficult to provide municipal services. The proposed annexation of this land led to contentious debate in the state legislature, with Longmeadow hoping for some form of compensation for the lost land. The bill was ultimately passed by the legislature in 1914 following a compromise amendment proposed by state senate president – and later U.S.



The childhood home of Dr. Seuss, at 74 Fairfield Street in Forest Park, around 1938-1939. Springfield Preservation Trust.



A row of neighborhood shops on White Street near Allen Street, around 1938-1939. Springfield Preservation Trust.

president – Calvin Coolidge. The amendment called for the construction of a road that would connect Longmeadow to Springfield. That road would later become the southern part of Dickinson Street, and it remains one of the few direct road connections between the two communities.

20th Century Demographics

By 1920, the Forest Park neighborhood was located entirely within Ward 7. This ward also included the sparsely-developed area to the east, which would later become the East Forest Park neighborhood. At the time, Ward 7 had a population of 14,714, which was equivalent to about 11% of the city's total population.



A multi-family home at the corner of Orange and Revere Streets, around 1938-1939. Springfield Preservation Trust.



Mixed-use apartment buildings with storefronts, at the corner of Belmont Avenue and Kenwood Terrace, around 1938-1939. Springfield Preservation Trust.

The 1920 census provides ward-level data about race, ethnicity, and other population characteristics, which gives insight into how the Forest Park neighborhood compared to the other wards in the city. Out of the city's 8 wards, Ward 7 had the lowest percentage of nonwhite residents (0.17%), foreign-born residents (14.5%), and children of foreign-born residents (30.5%). The census also indicated the birthplaces of foreign-born residents in each ward, and in Ward 7 the most common foreign birthplaces were English-speaking Canada (357 residents, 2.4% of population), Ireland (323 residents, 2.2% of population), England (259 residents, 1.8% of population), Russia (243 residents, 1.7% of population), and French Canada (211 residents, 1.4% of population).

The 1920 census also indicates that the Forest Park neighborhood had higher educational levels than the rest of the city. Compared to the other city wards, it had the highest literacy rate (99.1%), the highest school enrollment rate for children aged 7 to 13 (97.4%), and the highest school enrollment rate for children aged 14 to 17 (76.9%). Ward 7 also had the second-lowest ratio of families per dwelling, with 1.37 families per dwelling, compared to the citywide average of 1.60.

The 1950 census was the first to provide population data for Springfield at the census tract

level. By this point, the Forest Park neighborhood had grown considerably in population, nearly doubling in size to 28,027 residents, or 17.3% of the citywide population. About 13.3% of residents were immigrants, which was only slightly lower than the citywide average of 14.4%. The largest immigrant group in Forest Park was from the U.S.S.R. (730 residents, 2.6% of population), which reflects the high number of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who moved to Forest Park in the first half of the 20th century. Other foreign birthplaces in the neighborhood included Italy (592 residents, 2.1% of population), Canada–French (354 residents, 1.3% of population), Canada–Other (344 residents, 1.2% of population), and Ireland (337 residents, 1.2% of population).

Despite this ethnic diversity, though, the neighborhood was almost entirely White. Redlining and other discriminatory housing practices had limited the ability of Black residents to move into the city’s suburban neighborhoods, and as a result the 1950 census shows just 20 Black residents in Forest Park, comprising just 0.08% of the neighborhood’s population.

Late 20th Century Changes

By the mid 20th century, most of the developable land in the Forest Park neighborhood had been built out, and there have not been significant changes in population since then. Over the years, the neighborhood has seen only small fluctuations in population, consistent with citywide trends. From a peak of 28,175 residents in 1960, the neighborhood subsequently dropped to 24,500 by 1990, before increasing to 26,176 as of 2020. During this time, the neighborhood has consistently comprised between about 16% and 17% of the city’s population.

Forest Park Population, 1950-2020		
Year	Population	% Change
1950	28,027	
1960	28,175	0.53%
1970	27,985	-0.67%
1980	24,717	-11.68%
1990	24,500	-0.88%
2000	24,733	0.95%
2010	25,161	1.73%
2020	26,176	4.03%

While the total population numbers of Forest Park have seen few changes, the neighborhood has steadily become a more diverse community since the mid 20th century. Stronger laws against housing discrimination helped to expand opportunities for people of color throughout the city, and the percentage of Black residents in Forest Park steadily grew from 0.08% in 1950, to 4.5% in 1990, to 19.5% in 2020.

Likewise, the Hispanic population in Forest Park has grown significantly in recent decades, due to migration from Puerto Rico and other parts of Latin America. In 1980, Hispanic residents of any race comprised 1.8% of the neighborhood’s population, but this increased to 20.9% in 2000 and 45.3% in 2020.

In addition, since the 1990s Forest Park has been the home to a growing number of Asian residents, particularly from Vietnam. As of 2020, a total of 2,006 residents identified as Asian, with more than half (1,057) identifying as Vietnamese. Overall, Asian residents comprise 7.7% of the neighborhood’s population, and a total of 43.9% of all Springfield residents of Asian descent live in Forest Park.

Historic Districts in Forest Park

Because the majority of the existing development in Forest Park dates to the early 20th century or earlier, the neighborhood includes many well-preserved streetscapes. The neighborhood has four local historic districts, including two single-building districts. Within these districts, the Springfield Historical Commission regulates exterior changes to buildings and new construction on vacant lots.

The largest and oldest of these historic districts is the 204-acre Forest Park Heights Historic District. This district, which is also on the National Register of Historic Places, encompasses the older portion of the neighborhood, which was developed starting in the late 19th century. It includes the western part of Sumner Avenue and the side streets to the north and the south, along with most of Longhill Street. The northern part of the historic district also includes the Belmont Heights section of the neighborhood, comprised of Marengo Park and Bellevue Avenue.

The Forest Park Heights Historic District includes many architecturally significant homes, including examples of Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Tudor Revival styles. It also includes the homes of some of Springfield's most famous residents, including Theodor Seuss Geisel, who was better known by his pen name Dr. Seuss. His childhood home still stands at 74 Fairfield Street, and it was recently purchased and restored by the Springfield Museums.

Another historic district in the Forest Park neighborhood is Colony Hills, which encompasses Park Drive, Colony Road, and Normandy Road. This area, which is surrounded by parkland on three sides, was developed in the early 20th century. It is

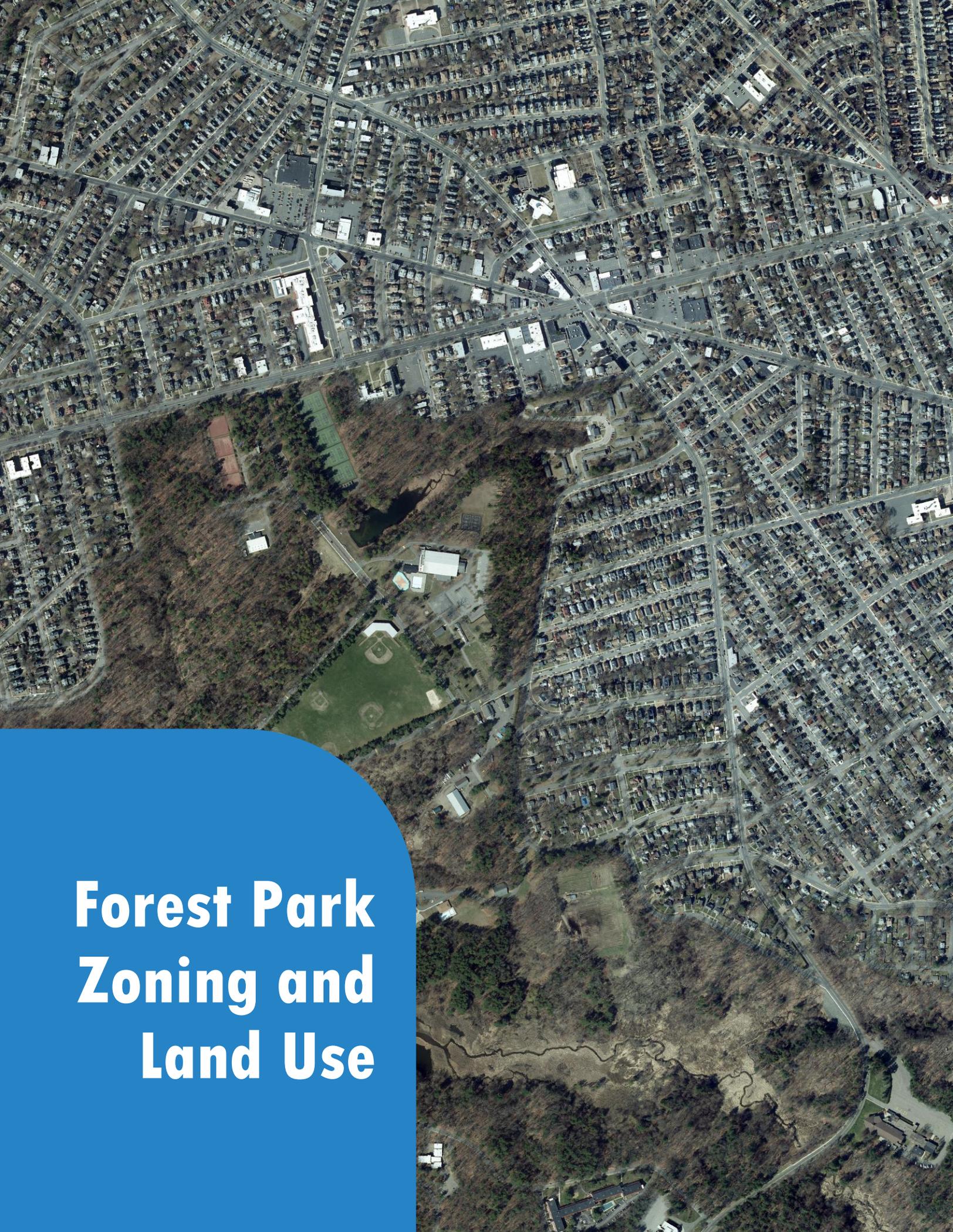


Map of local historic districts in the Forest Park neighborhood.

Source: MassGIS.

isolated from the rest of Springfield, and can only be accessed by road via Longmeadow.

The Forest Park neighborhood also includes two single-building local historic districts: the Forest Park Trolley Pavillion at the Sumner Avenue entrance to Forest Park, and All Saints Church on Oakland Street. Both structures were restored in part through Community Preservation Act funds, and as a result are now protected as local historic districts.



Forest Park Zoning and Land Use

Neighborhood Boundaries

The Forest Park neighborhood is located in the southwestern corner of Springfield. Covering more than 2,500 acres, it is the second-largest neighborhood in the city by land area, and it is the site of Forest Park, the city's largest park.

The boundaries of the Forest Park neighborhood are defined by the Connecticut River to the west, the Mill River and the Watershops Pond to the north, the former railroad right-of-way to the northeast, and the city boundaries to the south and southeast.

Zoning Overview

The zoning in Forest Park is primarily residential. Not counting open space, the zoned land in the neighborhood is approximately 91% residential, with a variety of densities that range from single-family homes to large apartment complexes. About 7% of the zoned land in the neighborhood is business or commercial, and it is primarily found along major avenues and at major intersections. The remaining 2% of zoned land is industrial, all of which is located on the northern edge of the neighborhood along the Mill River and Watershops Pond.

Residential Zoning

About 46% of the zoned land in Forest Park is Residence A, which is primarily low-density detached single-family houses. It is most prevalent in the southeastern part of the neighborhood, particularly in the area south of Sumner Avenue and east of Dickinson Street. In

Previous page: 2021 aerial image of the Forest Park neighborhood. Source: MassGIS



Residence A zoning on Bronson Terrace



Medium-density Residence B zoning on White St. near Longfellow Terr.



Residence C apartments on Fort Pleasant Avenue



Residence C-1 apartments on Porter Lake Drive



Business development on the north side of Sumner Avenue at the “X”



Business development at the corner of Oakland and Orange Streets

addition, much of the Forest Park Heights Historic District in the western part of the neighborhood is zoned Residence A, as is the Colony Hills Historic District.

Most of the remaining residential land in the neighborhood zoned Residence B. This district covers 36% of the zoned land in Forest Park, and it primarily allows for medium-density development in the form of single-family and two-family houses. It is most common in the northern and eastern parts of the neighborhood, particularly on the side streets near the “X” at the intersection of Sumner Avenue, Belmont Avenue, and Dickinson Street.

Other portions of the neighborhood are zoned for high-density Residence C, which allows for multi-family apartment buildings. The largest concentration of Residence C land is in the northwestern corner of the neighborhood, particularly on Fort Pleasant Avenue and Belmont Avenue. Other areas include most of Kensington Avenue, along with the area immediately to the south of the X.

There are also several parcels on the southern edge of the neighborhood that are zoned Residence C-1, which allows for large apartment and condominium complexes.

Business and Industrial Zoning

Collectively, almost 7% of the neighborhood is zone for business or commercial purposes, most of which is Business A. This zoning district focuses primarily on promoting pedestrian-oriented development, and it includes the land around the X and on Belmont Avenue to the northwest of the X. Elsewhere in the neighborhood, clusters

of Business A zoning are located at major intersections, including the corners of Sumner Avenue and White Street; Orange and White Streets; Orange and Allen Streets; Oakland and Orange Streets; Dickinson and Orange Streets; and Belmont Avenue and White Street.

Several parcels are zoned for Business B, which allows for automobile-oriented business development. These are scattered throughout the northern part of the neighborhood. Other parcels are zoned for Commercial A, which

focuses on small-scale neighborhood retail establishments such as convenience stores.

The Forest Park neighborhood has very limited industrial zoning, all of which is located on the northern edge of the neighborhood. This includes two parcels at the southern end of Main Street in northwestern corner of the neighborhood, along with a group of industrial parcels adjacent to the former Armory Watershops facility at the northern end of Allen Street.

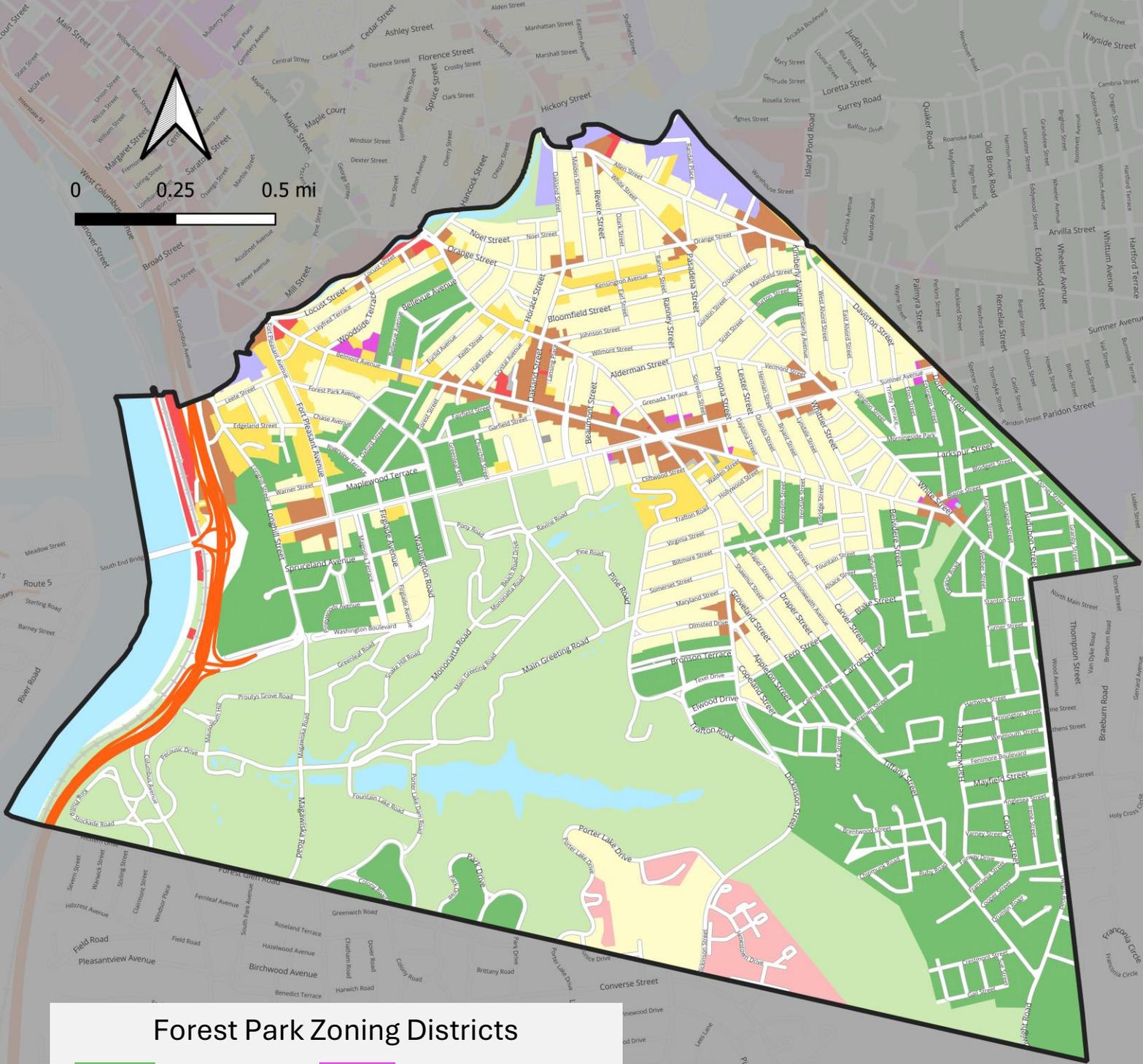


Business B zoning on Belmont Avenue

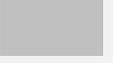
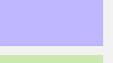
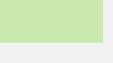


Industrial zoning on Randall Pl. in the northern part of the neighborhood

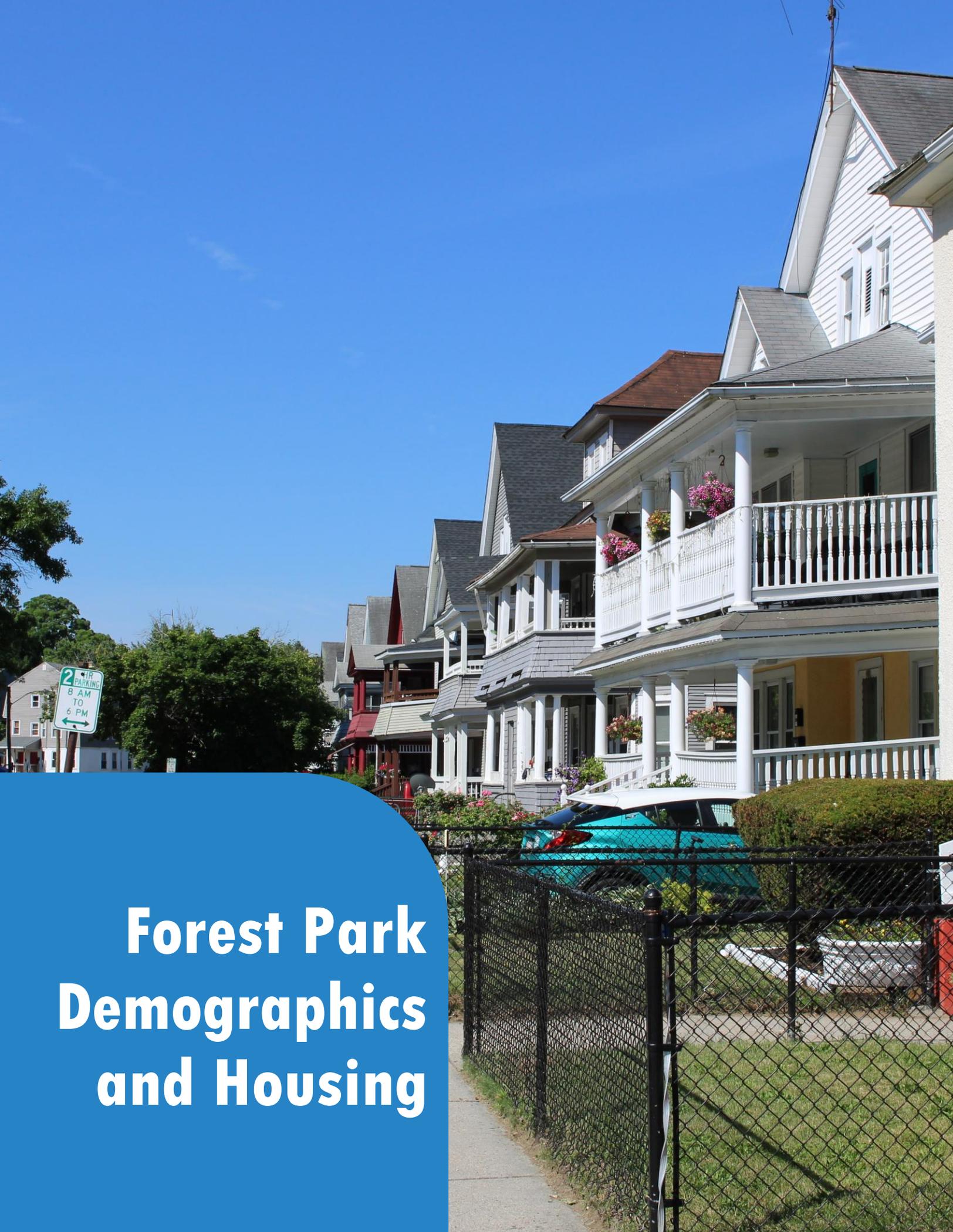
Summary of Forest Park Zoning Districts	
District	Description
Residence A	Low density residential, primarily single-family detached
Residence B	Medium density residential, primarily single-family and two-family
Residence C	Single-family dwellings, two-family dwellings and multi-family dwellings
Residence C-1	Multi-family dwellings within a clustered development with open space and common facilities
Commercial A	Small scale retail and service convenience type commercial establishments.
Business A	Main Street and pedestrian oriented shopping districts with residential allowed.
Business B	Highway-oriented automotive and service business activities.
Industrial A	Full range of industrial and business uses compatible with a major urban center.



Forest Park Zoning Districts

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
|  | Residence A |  | Commercial A |
|  | Residence B |  | Commercial Parking |
|  | Residence C |  | Office A |
|  | Residence C1 |  | Industrial A |
|  | Business A |  | Open Space |
|  | Business B | | |

Source: MassGIS, Springfield WebGIS



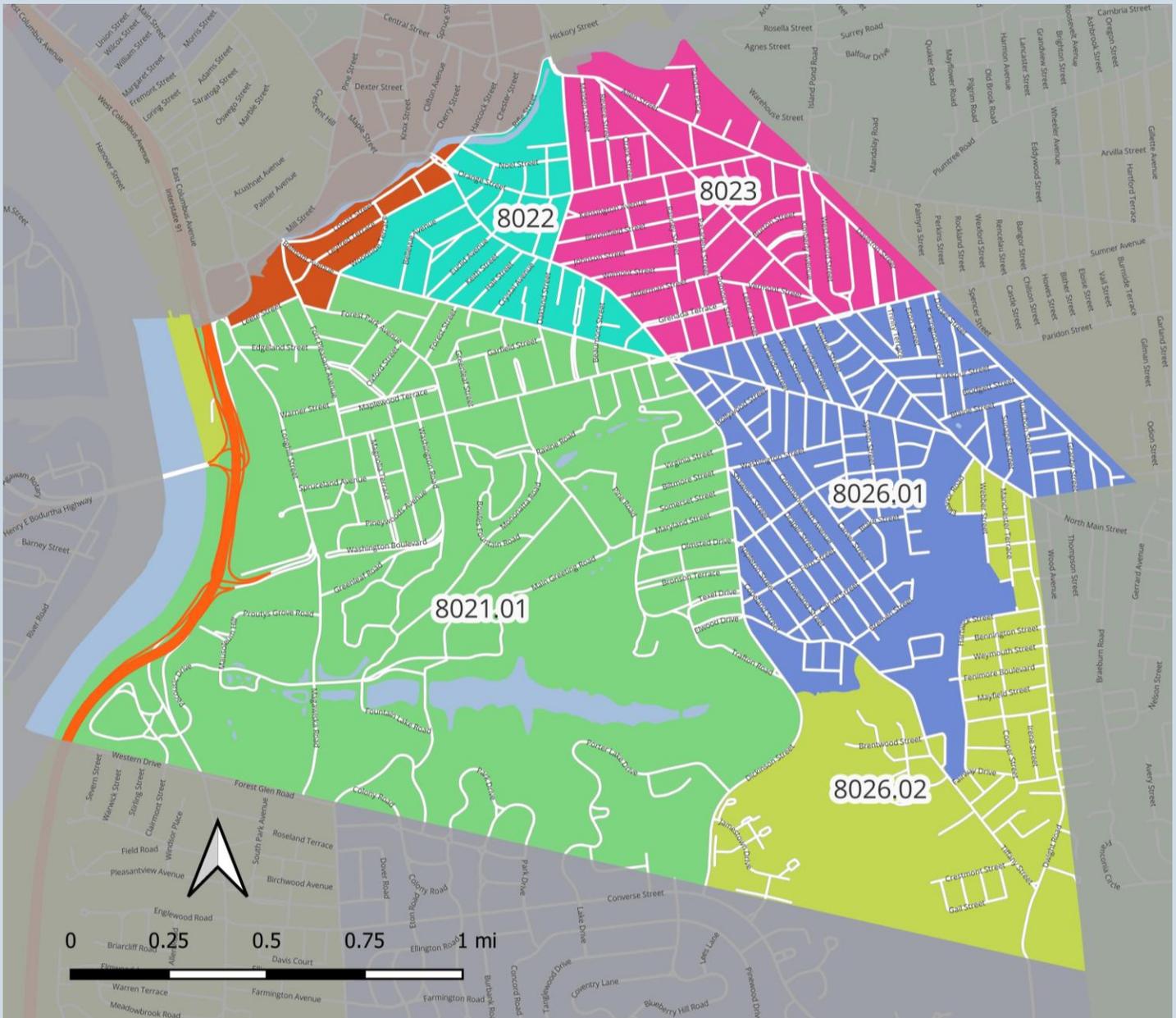
**Forest Park
Demographics
and Housing**

2 HR PARKING
8 AM
TO
6 PM
← →

Demographic Overview

Forest Park is a large neighborhood, both in terms of its land area and its population. With 26,176 residents as of the 2020 U.S. Census, it is the most populous neighborhood in Springfield, comprising about 17% of the city’s total population. Because of its size and its large population, Forest Park is a highly diverse neighborhood with different socioeconomic

characteristics in different parts of the neighborhood. Forest Park includes five different census tracts, so the following demographic data will examine not only the neighborhood collectively, but also the five individual census tracts, each of which has its own individual strengths, challenges, and opportunities.



Forest Park Census Tracts. Source: MassGIS

Previous page: Houses on Scott Street from the corner of White Street

Forest Park Neighborhood, Compared to City, Regional, and Statewide Data (2020)					
		Forest Park	Springfield	Pioneer Valley	Mass.
Children and youth	Babies born with low birth weight	11.1%	10.3%	9.1%	7.6%
	Child poverty	36.0%	36.2%	20.8%	12.2%
Education	Preschool enrollment	51.1%	60.1%	53.6%	58.0%
	Attainment of higher education	20.4%	19.0%	32.6%	44.5%
Health	Premature mortality (per 1,000)	3.5	4.0	3.3	2.7
Economic security	Median household income	\$55,136	\$41,571	\$61,569	\$84,385
	Income inequality (Gini index)	0.46	0.48	0.47	0.48
	Poverty	21.2%	19.9%	9.9%	6.6%
	Elderly poverty	14.6%	13.7%	10.1%	8.9%
	Unemployment	21.5%	10.5%	6.7%	5.7%
	Labor force participation	62.6%	57.6%	61.4%	67.2%
Housing	Housing cost burden	45.4%	45.4%	34.9%	34.5%
	Homeownership rates	43.9%	47.4%	63.2%	62.5%
Transportation	Low-carbon commuters	17.4%	17.6%	14.1%	22.4%
	Average commute time (minutes)	21.9	21.1	23.1	30.0

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
 Much more information is available in the [Springfield Data Atlas](#)

Census Tract 8021

In terms of land area, the largest census tract in the Forest Park neighborhood is 8021, which includes most of the land to the south of Belmont Avenue and west of Dickinson Street.

The park itself is located within this census tract, as is most of the Forest Park Heights Local Historic District. This census tract also includes the Colony Hills Local Historic District, a residential area that is geographically isolated from the rest of the city and is accessible by road only by traveling through Longmeadow.

Aside from the parkland, this census tract is predominantly residential. Single-family and two-family homes comprise the majority of the housing stock here, but the census tract also has a significant number of large apartment

buildings. According to the 2024 city assessor’s data, there are 20 properties in the tract with 10 or more units, which is more than the other four Forest Park census tracts combined.



Houses on Florentine Gardens in Census Tract 8021

Forest Park Data by Census Tract (2020)							
		8021	8022	8023	8026.01	8026.02	Forest Park Total
Children and youth	Babies born with low birth weight						11.1%
	Child poverty	28.8%	61.7%	52.9%	20.4%	10.9%	36.0%
Education	Preschool enrollment	64.8%	60.9%	42.6%	40.8%	100.0%	51.1%
	Attainment of higher education	33.8%	12.2%	8.2%	18.3%	36.5%	20.4%
Health	Premature mortality (per 1,000)						3.5
Economic security	Median household income	\$51,900	\$33,934	\$32,844	\$53,058	\$58,947	\$55,136
	Income inequality (Gini index)	0.47	0.46	0.48	0.39	0.42	0.46
	Poverty	15.4%	24.6%	28.7%	21.5%	5.2%	21.2%
	Elderly poverty	27.8%	8.8%	3.2%	3.1%	14.9%	14.6%
	Unemployment	5.3%	11.2%	13.0%	5.4%	6.5%	8.4%
	Labor force participation	53.5%	66.2%	66.4%	65.8%	61.3%	62.6%
Housing	Housing cost burden	47.8%	59.3%	42.7%	45.5%	27.2%	45.4%
	Homeownership rates	46.0%	34.9%	29.3%	49.8%	72.7%	43.9%
Transportation	Low-carbon commuters	16.5%	26.4%	16.7%	18.2%	4.6%	17.4%
	Average commute time (min.)	23.6	21.3	20.2	22	23.6	21.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Tract 8021 has significantly higher median household incomes and educational attainment rates, and lower poverty rates, when compared to citywide averages. The homeownership rate (46%) is slightly higher than the neighborhood

average but is slightly lower than the citywide average.

As of 2020 there were 6,176 people living in this census tract. The racial composition is 41.2% White, 20.0% Black, 4.4% Asian, 1.0% American Indian/Alaska Native, 0.2% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 21.3% people of another race, and 11.9% people of two or more races. Hispanic/Latino residents of any race comprise 40.5% of the population.

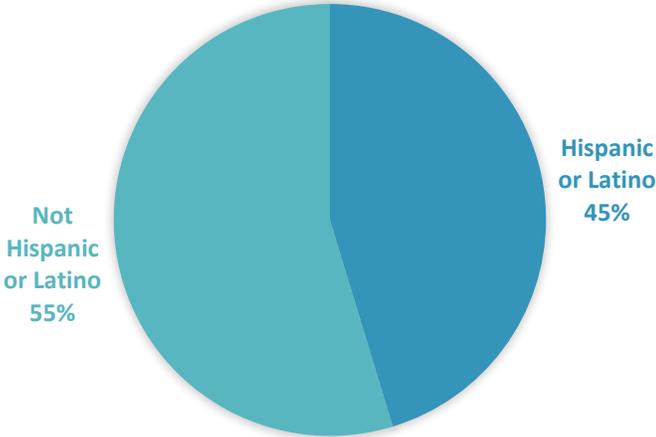
Census Tract 8022

This census tract is geographically the smallest in the neighborhood, and it has the second-lowest population. It is roughly triangular shaped, and it is located to the north of Belmont Avenue and west of Oakland and Dickinson Streets.

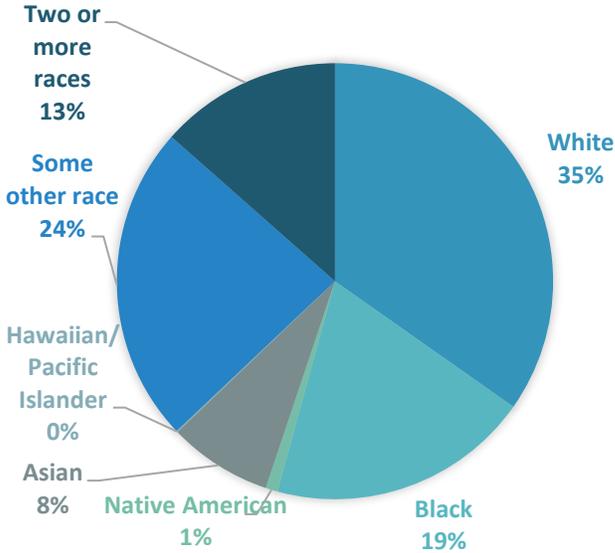


Apartments at the corner of Sumner Avenue and Longhill Street in Census Tract 8021

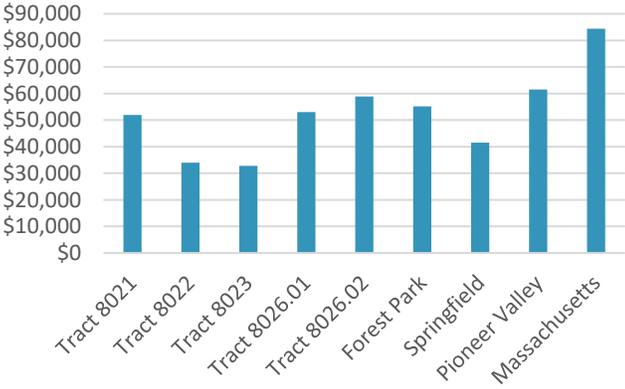
FOREST PARK HISPANIC/LATINO ETHNICITY



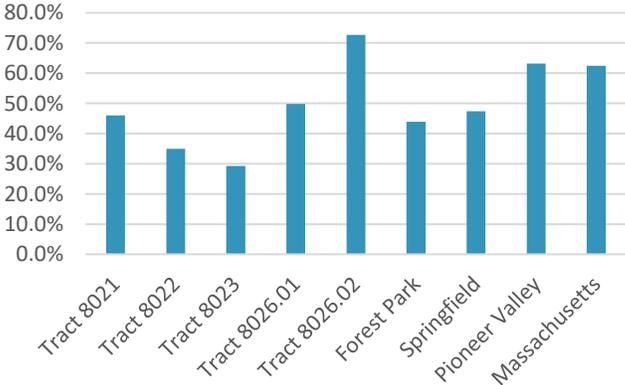
FOREST PARK RACIAL COMPOSITION



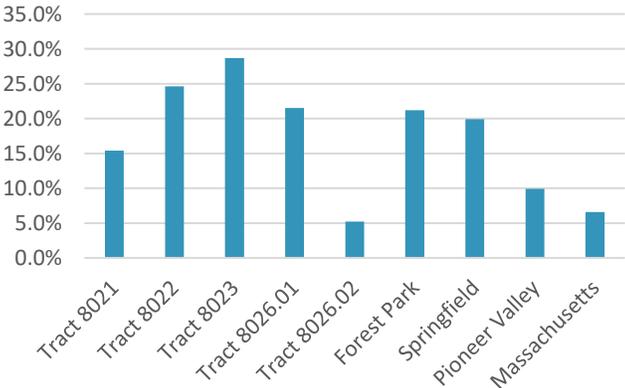
Median Household Income (2020)



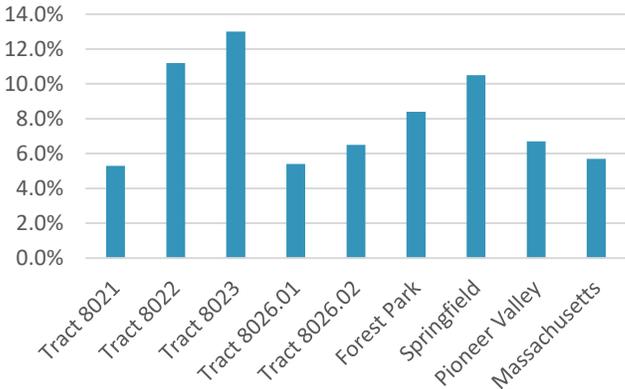
Homeownership Rate (2020)



Poverty Rate (2020)



Unemployment Rate (2020)



Aside from portions of Belmont Avenue near the “X,” the neighborhood is primarily residential. Most of the housing stock is in the form of one-family, two-family, and three-family homes. Only 30% of the housing units in the tract are in buildings with four or more units.

Tract 8022 has the second-lowest homeownership rate, median household income, and educational attainment rates out of the five tracts in Forest Park. These rates are also all substantially lower than the citywide averages. The tract also has the second-highest poverty rate in the neighborhood, and the highest rate of housing cost burden, with 59.3% of residents spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs.

As of 2020 there were 3,594 people living in this census tract. The racial composition is 24.5% White, 19.8% Black, 7.9% Asian, 1.6% American Indian/Alaska Native, 0.0% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 32.1% people of another race, and 14.1% people of two or more races. Hispanic/Latino residents of any race comprise 59.6% of the population.

Census Tract 8023

This census tract is located in the northeastern part of the Forest Park neighborhood. It is directly to the east of tract 8022, and its boundaries are defined by the Mill River and Watershops Pond on the north, the former railroad tracks to the east, Sumner Avenue to the south, and Dickinson and Oakland Streets to the west.

Much of the commercial development in this census tract is along the north side of Sumner Avenue, particularly near the “X” at Dickinson Street, and at the intersection of White Street. The tract also has small-scale commercial development at major intersections, including



Houses on Orange St. at the corner of Dow Street in Census Tract 8022



Business and residential development on Dickinson Street at the corner of Oakland Street in Census Tract 8022

at the corners of Orange and Oakland Streets and Orange and White Streets. The tract also has a limited amount of industrial development in the northern part of the neighborhood, including a portion of the former Armory Watershops facility, which is located on the border of the Forest Park and Old Hill neighborhoods.

By most metrics, tract 8023 has the weakest economic security out of the five census tracts in the Forest Park neighborhood. It has the lowest homeownership rate, lowest median household income, and lowest educational

Forest Park Race and Ethnicity by Census Tract (2020)						
	8021	8022	8023	8026.01	8026.02	Forest Park Total
Total Population	6,176	3,594	7,033	7,351	2,022	26,176
White	2,546	881	1,647	2,629	1,403	9,106
Black or African American	1,235	713	1,556	1,438	156	5,098
American Indian and Alaska Native	64	57	65	43	0	229
Asian	269	283	571	734	149	2,006
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	10	0	6	2	0	18
Some Other Race	1,318	1,155	2,091	1,492	129	6,185
Hispanic or Latino of Any Race	2,501	2,142	3,937	2,918	350	11,848
Two or More Races	734	505	1,097	1,013	185	3,534
Percent White	41.2%	24.5%	23.4%	35.8%	69.4%	34.8%
Percent Black or African American	20.0%	19.8%	22.1%	19.6%	7.7%	19.5%
Percent American Indian and Alaska Native	1.0%	1.6%	0.9%	0.6%	0.0%	0.9%
Percent Asian	4.4%	7.9%	8.1%	10.0%	7.4%	7.7%
Percent Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%
Percent Some Other Race	21.3%	32.1%	29.7%	20.3%	6.4%	23.6%
Percent Two or More Races	11.9%	14.1%	15.6%	13.8%	9.1%	13.5%
Percent Hispanic or Latino of Any Race	40.5%	59.6%	56.0%	39.7%	17.3%	45.3%

Source: 2020 U.S. Census



White Street near the corner of Scott Street in Census Tract 8023

attainment rates, and the highest unemployment rate and second-highest poverty rate.

As of 2020 there were 7,033 people living in this census tract. The racial composition is 23.4% White, 22.1% Black, 8.1% Asian, 0.9% American Indian/Alaska Native, 0.1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 29.7% people of another race, and 15.6% people of two or more races. Hispanic/Latino residents of any race comprise 56.0% of the population.

Census Tract 8026.01

This census tract has the largest population of the five in Forest Park, with 7,351 residents as of the 2020 U.S. Census. It is located to the south of Sumner Avenue and east of Dickinson Street, and its eastern boundary is defined by the railroad right-of-way that runs parallel to Dorset Street. The southern boundary of the tract follows a complicated route that includes Hartwick Street and Tiffany Street.

The census tract has limited commercial development on the south side of Sumner Avenue and at the intersection of White Street and Belmont Avenue. Otherwise, it is predominantly residential, and most of the housing development consists of one-family and two-family homes. Approximately 46% of the existing units are in 1-unit buildings, and 43% are in 2-unit buildings. Most of the other units are in 3-unit or 4-unit buildings, and these are primarily in the northern part of the tract, on or near Belmont Avenue.

Compared to the census tracts in the northern part of the neighborhood, this census tract has stronger economic security. Its median income of \$53,058 is the second-highest in the neighborhood and the ninth-highest of the 37 census tracts in Springfield. Compared to the rest of the city, the census tract also has an above-average homeownership rate of 49.8%

As of 2020, the racial composition of this census tract is 35.8% White, 19.6% Black, 10.0% Asian, 0.6% American Indian/Alaska Native, 0.0% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 20.3% people of another race, and 13.8% people of two



Grenada Terrace at the corner of Sorrento Street in Census Tract 8023



Eckington Street in Census Tract 8026.01



Commonwealth Avenue in Census Tract 8026.01

or more races. Hispanic/Latino residents of any race comprise 39.7% of the population. This census tract has the highest Asian population in the city, both in terms of total number and percentage of the total population.

Census Tract 8026.02

Compared to the other four census tracts in Forest Park, this one has by far the smallest population, and it is the most suburban in its development. Its boundaries are defined by Tract 8021 to the west, Tract 8026.01 to the north, the Longmeadow town line to the south, and East Longmeadow to the east.



Mayfield Street in Census Tract 8026.02



Looking north on Dwight Road, in the southeastern corner of the Forest Park neighborhood in Census Tract 8026.02

The tract's zoning is entirely residential, most of which is low-density Residence A. The only exception is a condominium complex in the southwestern corner of the tract, which is zoned for Residence C-1. In total, 87% of the housing units in this census tract are in single-family homes.

By most economic metrics, this census tract has high rates of economic security. Of the five Forest Park census tracts, it has the highest median income, highest homeownership rate, highest educational attainment rates, lowest poverty rates, and lowest housing cost burden rates.

As of 2020, the racial composition of this census tract is 69.4% White, 7.7% Black, 7.4% Asian, 0.0% American Indian/Alaska Native, 0.0% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 6.4% people of another race, and 9.1% people of two or more races. Hispanic/Latino residents of any race comprise 17.3% of the population.

Neighborhood-Wide Housing Stock

Overall, according to the 2024 city assessor's data, there are 10,021 housing units in Forest Park. The vast majority of this is in the form of low- and medium-density housing development. Approximately 31% of the housing units in Forest Park are in single-family homes, and 37% are in two-family homes. Another 11% are in three-family homes, 7% are in buildings with 4 to 9 units, 4% are in buildings with 10 to 19 units, and 10% are in buildings with 20 or more units. The single largest residential complex is the Springfield Housing Authority's Forest Park Manor, a 116-unit, multi-building site that is located on Dickinson Street just south of the "X."

Most of the existing housing stock dates to the large-scale development of the neighborhood during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The median construction year for units in Forest Park is 1919, and over 88% of units are in buildings that were constructed in 1939 or earlier. A total of 177 units have been built since 1990, which account for less than 2% of the neighborhood’s total housing stock.

Homeowner Support

The many historic houses in Forest Park are a strong asset to the neighborhood, but aging buildings can also pose challenges for residents and homeowners. Nearly half of Forest Park residents are considered to be burdened by housing costs, with 45.4% reporting that they pay more than 30% of their income towards either rent or homeownership. These housing costs include maintenance, which can be a considerable expense for owners of historic properties.

Older homes in general tend to require more upkeep than newer construction, and there are often added expenses related to health and safety hazards such as lead paint, asbestos, and outdated electrical systems. In addition, residents in local historic districts must obtain approval from the Historical Commission for exterior changes. Historic district guidelines generally require historically appropriate windows, doors, porches, and clapboards/shingles, all of which tend to be more expensive to purchase, install, and maintain than modern materials such as vinyl.

Residents throughout the city have indicated that housing is a high priority, in particular assistance for the maintenance of existing owner-occupied homes. There are currently a number of

different housing programs and initiatives that are available to Springfield residents. However, because this has consistently been identified as an area of need, the city has been examining to what extent these programs are being utilized and which neighborhoods primarily benefit from them. Part of the motivation for the city’s decision to invest ARPA funds in the Targeted Neighborhood Investment planning process is to build capacity of residents and their neighborhood councils to make use of these resources.



This house on Eleanor Road is the oldest surviving building in Forest Park and among the oldest in the city, dating to around the 1820s



Early 20th century homes on Marengo Park in the Forest Park Heights Local Historic District

Vacant Land

The Forest Park neighborhood has very little vacant land. Most of the neighborhood is either developed or is protected as open space. According to the city assessor’s data, there are 70 residential parcels in Forest Park that are classified as vacant and developable, totaling 14.1 acres. Few of these parcels are contiguous, and they are scattered throughout the neighborhood. Most are under a quarter acre in size. Because of the small size of these parcels, they would be good candidates for infill development of new single-family and two-family homes.



The Springfield Housing Authority’s Forest Park Manor apartment complex on Dickinson Street just south of the X



Apartment buildings on Locust Street near the northern edge of the Forest Park neighborhood

Existing Housing Programs and Initiatives

Homeowner Emergency Repair Program

This program provides funding for income-eligible owner-occupants for a single item emergency repair. Homeowners are eligible to apply if there is an immediate threat to the health and safety of the occupants, or to the structural integrity of the building. This can include emergency repairs to the roof, porch, electrical/mechanical systems, plumbing, and foundation, along with other urgent code-related issues. Applicants can be from any neighborhood in the city, and those who are selected for this program receive a 0% interest, deferred-payment loan. This is forgiven over the course of five years, provided that the homeowner continues to reside at the property.

City of Springfield Exterior Home Repair Program

This program is available to income-eligible homeowners in any city neighborhood. It funds up to \$40,000 in exterior repairs, such as roofs, windows, porches, siding, and painting. As with the Emergency Repair Program, the city will provide recipients with a 0% interest, deferred-payment loan that will be forgiven over five years.

City of Springfield Healthy Homes Program

This program provides funding for remediating health issues such as lead paint and asthma triggers. Eligibility is determined based on income, and also based on census tract. Most of Forest Park is within a qualified census tract, with the exception of tracts 8026.01 and 8026.02 (the part of the neighborhood to the south of Sumner Avenue and east of Dickinson Street). As with the other two city programs, funding is provided in the form of a 0% interest, deferred-payment loan that is forgiven after five years.

Heating Emergency Assistance Retrofit Tasks Weatherization Assistance Program (HEARTWAP)

HEARTWAP is coordinated by the Valley Opportunity Council (VOC) and the Office of Housing, and it provides emergency repairs and replacements of heating systems for income-eligible renters and homeowners in the city. VOC also provides heating assistance to income-eligible residents.

Historic Home Restoration Program

This program administered by the Springfield Community Preservation Committee. Homeowners in many of the city's local historic districts may apply for up to \$30,000 in grant money to fund exterior restoration work. This program was piloted in McKnight in 2020, and expanded to include other historic districts in 2022, resulting in a large number of applicants. Grant recipients were selected by lottery in 2022; out of 197 applicants, seven were selected in the lottery.

The large pool of applicants indicates that there is significant demand for such programs in the city. However, as of right now the Historic Home Restoration Program is limited in its

funding and also in its scope of who is eligible. Because applicants must live in owner-occupied homes in a local historic district, it means that only a portion of the neighborhood's residents can access these funds.

City of Springfield Down Payment Assistance Program

Most of these programs are only open to homeowners, which means that only a limited number of neighborhood residents are able to access these funding sources. In an effort to expand homeownership rates citywide, there are several programs that are available to first-time homebuyers, including the City of Springfield Down Payment Assistance Program.

This is available to first-time homebuyers in Springfield who meet income eligibility and other program requirements, and it provides up to \$4,000 towards a down payment and closing costs. As with the city's other programs, homebuyers receive this as an interest-free loan, which is forgiven over the course of five years, provided that the house remains their primary residence.

Buy Springfield Now

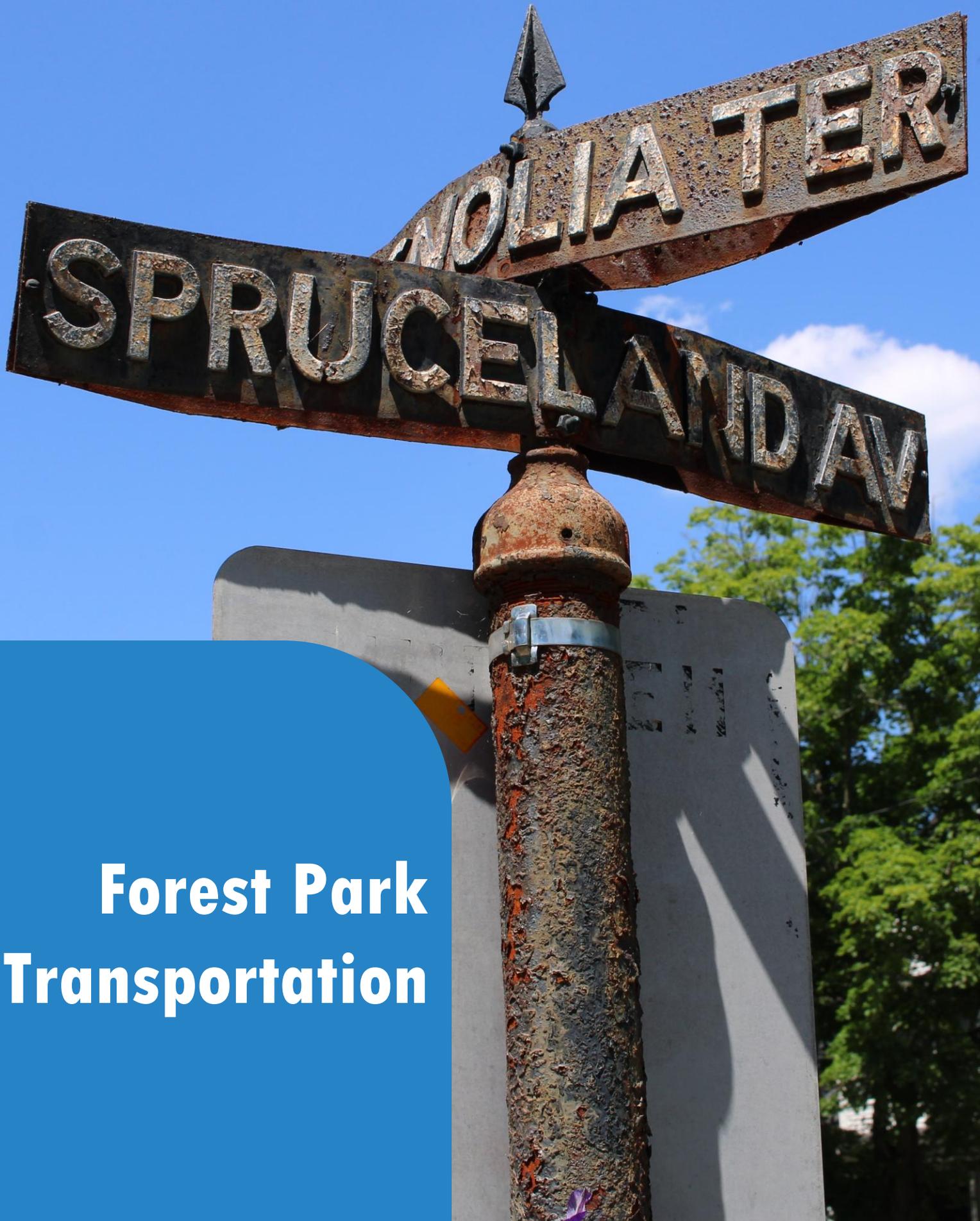
This ongoing initiative is a collaboration between the city, nonprofits, and private sector partners. Participants in this program receive discounts from lenders, realtors, attorneys, and home inspectors as part of their homebuying process.

Other Housing Partners

Aside from these city-managed programs, there are a number of community development corporations and community-based organizations that provide housing support and assistance throughout Springfield. These include Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services, Revitalize CDC, and Way Finders.

Energy Efficiency

In addition to the challenges of simply maintaining and rehabilitating the older homes in the Forest Park neighborhood, homeowners may also be challenged by the added cost of the need to transition away from fossil fuel-based energy sources. This is part of a broader effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as the city of Springfield and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are committed to net zero energy by 2050. The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center and the MA Department of Energy Resources, along with the federal government, recognize the importance of incentivizing homeowners to invest in energy-efficient upgrades and incorporate renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions. Collaboration among residents, local organizations, and city, state, and federal resources will be important as the neighborhood implements comprehensive strategies that foster a greener, more resilient Forest Park community for generations to come.



Forest Park Transportation

Forest Park Transportation

Most Forest Park residents use cars for commuting and other transportation needs. Overall, only 17.4% of neighborhood residents use environmentally friendly transportation options such as walking, biking, or taking public transportation, although this varies within different parts of the neighborhood. In Census Tract 8022, for example, 26.4% of commuters use environmentally friendly transportation options.

Although cars are the predominant means of transportation, the neighborhood is well served by a variety of bus routes that connect Forest Park to the center of Springfield and also to surrounding communities. Sidewalks are prevalent throughout the neighborhood, although there are many opportunities for improvements to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, in order to make it safer and easier for residents to utilize these forms of transportation.



The “X” looking northwest across Sumner Avenue

Major Streets

Sumner Avenue is the main east-west route through Forest Park. It has two travel lanes in each direction, and it connects Forest Park and the eastern suburban neighborhoods of Springfield to Interstate 91 and other points to the south and west. Sumner Avenue passes through the “X,” where it intersects with two other major streets: Belmont Avenue, which runs northwest to southeast, and Dickinson Street, which runs north to south.



Sumner Avenue is the main east-west route through the Forest Park neighborhood. It is shown here looking east from near Magnolia Terrace

Previous page: *Historic street signage at the corner of Magnolia Terrace and Spruceland Avenue*

Other major north-south streets include Longhill Street in the western part of the neighborhood, White Street in the eastern part, and Dwight Road in the southeast. Other major east-west streets include Orange Street and Allen Street, both in the northeastern part of the neighborhood.

Interstate Highways

Interstate 91 passes north to south along the Connecticut River on the western edge of the neighborhood. This section of the highway is known as the Longmeadow Curve, and it includes a complex interchange with U.S. Route 5, Longhill Street, and Columbus Avenue. Interstate 91 drops from 3 to 2 lanes in



2023 aerial view of the Longmeadow Curve. Source: MassGIS

each direction at the Longmeadow Curve, and this, combined with many on-ramps and off-ramps, causes heavy traffic and frequent delays during peak hours. The presence of the interstate also blocks access to the Connecticut River, and it is also a barrier to direct pedestrian and bicycle access from Forest Park to the South End Bridge and to Route 5 in Longmeadow.

Public Transportation

The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) provides public bus routes and paratransit services for the region.

Within Forest Park, most major streets have bus service, including Sumner Avenue, Belmont Avenue, Dickinson Street, White Street, Orange Street, Longhill Street, and Dwight Road. Because of this, most residential parts of the neighborhood are within a quarter mile of at least one bus route.

Bus service in Forest Park includes the G1, which runs along Fort Pleasant and Sumner Avenues on its way from Chicopee to Sixteen Acres. The G2 runs along Belmont Avenue and Dwight Road, connecting East Springfield to East Longmeadow, and the G5 runs along Dickinson Street from Union Station to Longmeadow and into the northern part of Enfield, Connecticut.

Two crosstown bus routes also serve Forest Park. The X90 runs along White Street to East Longmeadow, and the X92 runs along Orange Street in the northern part of the neighborhood.

Pedestrian Infrastructure

Most of the streets in the Forest Park neighborhood have sidewalks, but most of the major streets have only a limited number of crosswalks, generally only at major intersections. This can make it difficult for



PVTA bus shelter at the corner of Sumner Avenue and White Street



2023 aerial view of the X. Source: MassGIS

pedestrians, especially those with disabilities, to travel through the neighborhood due to the many high-volume streets that pass through Forest Park.

This need for improved pedestrian safety measures is evident in MassDOT crash data, which indicates that several streets in Forest Park are in the top 5% Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) clusters for pedestrian crashes. This includes the portion of Belmont Avenue between Leyfred Terrace and Kenwood Terrace; Oakland Street between Garfield Street and Kensington Avenue; and Dickinson Street between Keith Street and Alderman Street. Collectively, these areas had 48 pedestrian crashes between 2012 and 2021, including 3 that involved a fatality or serious injury.

Bicycle Infrastructure

Fort Pleasant Avenue has bicycle lanes between Forest Park Avenue and Sumner Avenue. In addition, the southern terminus of the Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway is located within the Forest Park neighborhood, although there is no outlet there and no direct access to the riverwalk from the neighborhood. Otherwise, Forest Park has minimal

bicycle infrastructure, and it currently does not have any ValleyBike bikeshare hubs.

Many of the major streets in Forest Park are not well suited for bicyclists. The city's 2014 *Pedestrian and Bicycle Complete Streets Plan* rated the major streets in Springfield based on bicycle compatibility, and large portions of both Sumner Avenue and Belmont Avenue were rated as "Very Low," particularly the parts of Sumner Avenue west of the X, and Belmont Avenue between Locust and Oakland Streets. East of the X, Sumner Avenue rated "Moderately Low" for bicycle compatibility. Other low-rated streets included Longhill Street, which was "Moderately Low" north of Sumner Avenue, and "Very Low" to the south of Sumner.

According to MassDOT crash data, several major intersections in Forest Park are top 5% HISP clusters for bicycle crashes. This includes the intersections of Locust Streets and Belmont Avenue; Dickinson and Orange Streets; Oakland, Allen, and White Streets; Belmont Avenue and Oakland Street; and the X at the intersection of Sumner Avenue, Belmont



Recent roadway improvements on Fort Pleasant Avenue, including the installation of bicycle lanes and a center turn lane

Avenue, and Dickinson Street. Collectively, these locations had 52 bicycle crashes between 2012 and 2021, including 6 that involved a fatality or serious injury.

Planned Transportation Investments

One of the major planned transportation investments in Forest Park is the reconstruction of the X. This 6-way intersection has been identified as an area of need due to high traffic volumes, congestion, cut-through traffic, and lack of safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

The planned work includes

reconstructing a 0.6-mile section of Sumner Avenue, extending from Forest Park Main Greeting Road to Daytona Street. It also involves portions of Belmont Avenue, Dickinson Street, and other side streets near the X. Proposed changes include new traffic signals, additional turn lanes, traffic flow changes, sidewalk and pedestrian crossing improvements, and bicycle lanes/shared-use paths.

Aside from the X project, another long-term proposed transportation improvement is the



The southern end of the Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway, showing the South End Bridge in the distance beyond the trees.

reconstruction of the Longmeadow Curve on Interstate 91. This work will include adding collector-distributor roads alongside the highway and a peanut-shaped roundabout at the interchange with US Route 5 at the South End Bridge. Other proposed features of this plan will include pedestrian and bicycle improvements, such as connecting the South End Bridge and the Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway to Forest Park.

Other potential future investments include the establishment of a multi-use trail on the former Highland Branch railroad right-of-way. This is located on the boundary between the Forest Park and East Forest Park neighborhoods, and the railroad grade extends southward into East Longmeadow, where it has the potential to connect with the existing Redstone Trail. To the north, the railroad grade crosses the Watershops Pond and through the Mason Square neighborhoods. As such, it could provide an important cross-city transportation route for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Complete Streets Plan

In 2014, the city of Springfield prepared its Pedestrian and Bicycle Complete



The southern part of the Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway is in the Forest Park neighborhood, but it does not have any direct connection to the rest of the neighborhood.

Streets Plan. This document has subsequently been updated several times, and it identifies long-term priorities for creating an interconnected network of pedestrian-friendly and bicycle-friendly streets throughout the city. The priority streets within this network are designated based on the intended road types as outlined in the NACTO Urban Streets Design Guide.

In Forest Park, the streets that are identified in the plan include:

- Sumner Avenue
- Belmont Avenue southeast of the X
- Dickinson Street
- Trafton Road
- Olmsted Drive
- Fountain Street
- Fort Pleasant Avenue
- Alderman Street
- Ranney Street
- Bloomfield Street
- Locust Street
- Off-road multi-use trail along former railroad right-of-way
- Off-road multi-use trail connecting Forest Park to the South End Bridge and Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway.

The creation of the full Complete Streets network is a long-term goal, but over the past ten years the city has implemented many projects relating to the Complete Streets Plan. In Forest Park, this has included:

- Reconstruction of Fort Pleasant Avenue between Forest Park Avenue and Sumner Avenue, including reducing to two travel lanes with a center turn lane, and the addition of bike lanes.

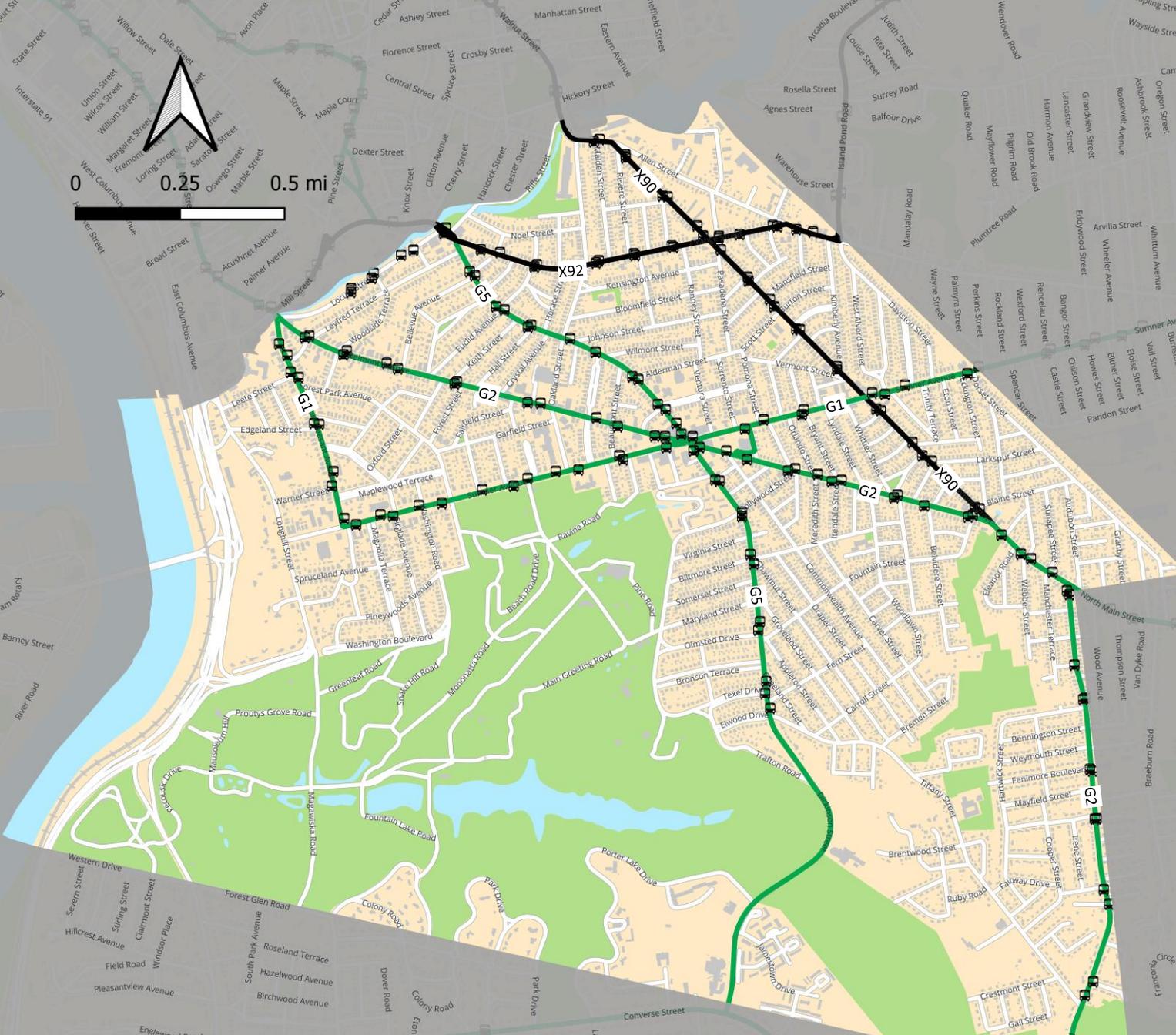
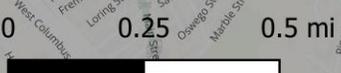


Many of the residential side streets in Forest Park feature landscaped terraces in the median, including Morningside Park, as shown here

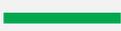
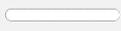


The former Highland Branch railroad right-of-way on the eastern edge of the neighborhood, looking northwest from the corner of Allen Street and Island Pond Road.

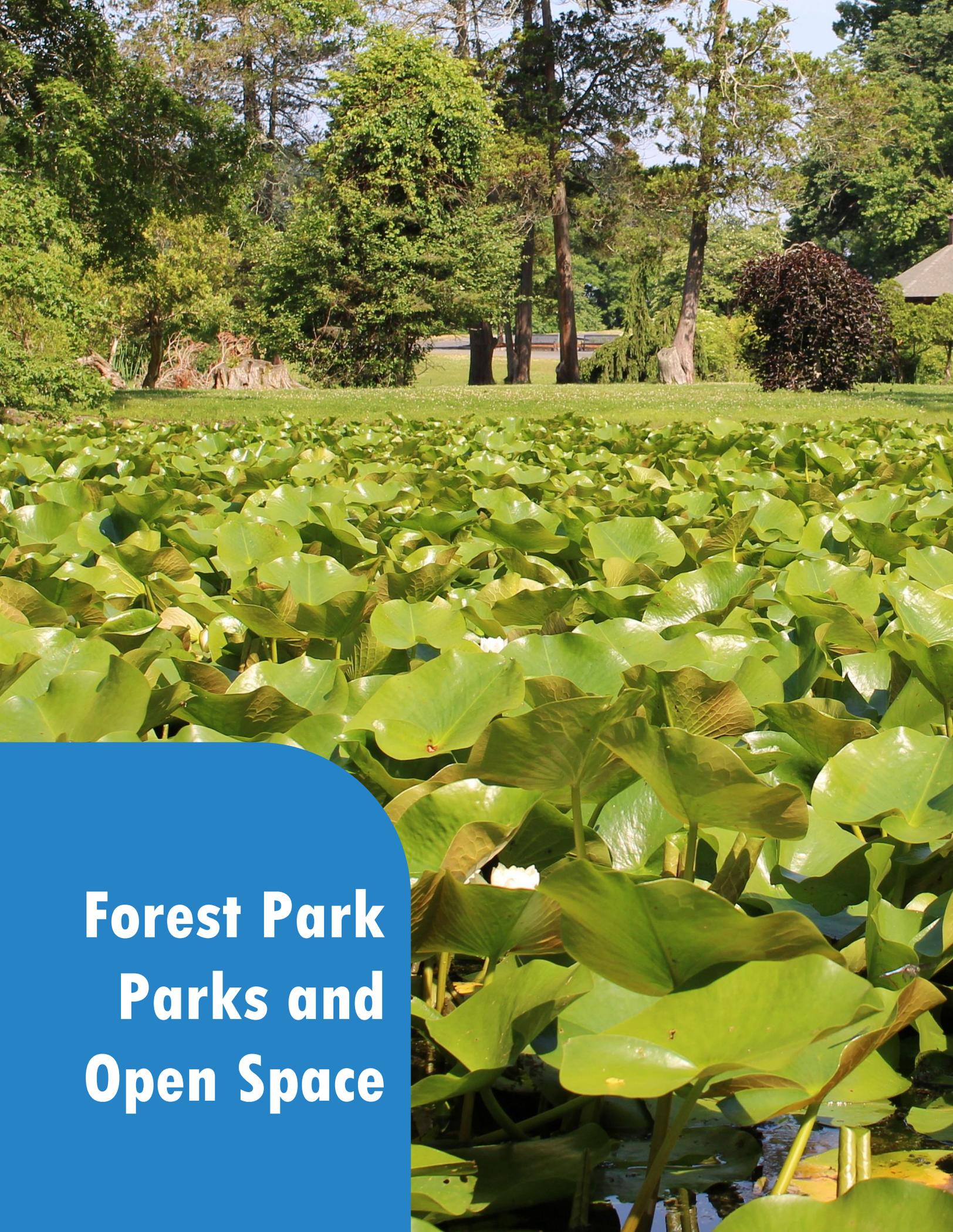
- Retrofitting warning strips on wheelchair ramps in 24 locations throughout the neighborhood.
- Pedestrian improvements on Main Street, Longhill Street, and Columbus Ave.



Forest Park Public Transportation

-  G1, G2, G5 PVT Routes
-  X90, X92 PVT Routes
-  Bus Stops
-  Streets
-  Buildings

Source: Pioneer Valley Transit Authority, MassGIS



**Forest Park
Parks and
Open Space**

Neighborhood Parks

The Forest Park neighborhood has a total of 806 acres of parkland, which comprises 32% of the total area in the neighborhood. This is the second-highest amount of parkland in any of the city's 17 neighborhoods, both in terms of total acres and percent of the neighborhood area. This acreage includes recreational parkland as well as protected conservation

areas. When only recreational land is counted, Forest Park has the highest total acreage and the highest percentage of any neighborhood. However, this parkland is not distributed evenly throughout the neighborhood.

At the census tract level, about 81% of the open space, and 95% of the recreational open space in the Forest Park neighborhood is located in

Census Tract 8021. More than 50% of this census tract is recreational open space, which is by far the highest percentage of any of the 37 census tracts in the city. By contrast, the two census tracts in the northern part of the neighborhood, Tracts 8022 and 8023, have by far the lowest amount of recreational open space out of the city's census tracts. Only 0.4% (1.1 acre) of the land in Tract 8023, and 0.3% (0.5 acre) of the land in Tract 8022 is classified as recreational open space.

As noted in the Demographics & Housing section, these two census tracts have the highest poverty rates and the lowest household incomes and homeownership rates of all the census tracts in the Forest Park neighborhood. This indicates that the poorest parts of the neighborhood are also the ones that have the least access to recreational area. In addition, Tracts 8022 and 8023 have high numbers of young children. In 2020, children under the age of 5 comprised 7.2% of the population in Census Tract 8022, and 7.4% of Census Tract 8023. Only five of the city's 37 census tracts have higher percentages of children under the age of 5.



The Carriage House in Forest Park



The Aquatic Gardens, seen from the top of the amphitheater

Previous page: a lily pond in the Aquatic Gardens

Forest Park

The namesake of the neighborhood is Forest Park, which is the centerpiece of the city’s park system. As described in the Neighborhood History section, it was developed during the late 19th and early 20th centuries through a series of donations and land acquisitions. Over the years it has offered a wide variety of recreational opportunities to people across the city and the surrounding region.

The main portion of Forest Park consists of about 630 acres in Springfield, along with an adjacent 8.7-acre parcel that extends south into Longmeadow. The park has active recreational facilities such as playgrounds, tennis courts, and baseball fields, and most of these are located in the northern part of the park, near the Sumner Avenue entrance. In addition, the park is home to the Cyr Arena, which is the city’s public ice skating facility.

Forest Park also has many passive recreational opportunities, including walking trails, ponds, picnic areas, and formal gardens. These are primarily located in the western part of the park, and include many of the landscape features that Everett Barney had created in the late 19th century.

Other educational and cultural facilities at Forest Park include the Environmental Center of Springfield (ECOS), the Forest Park Zoo, and the historic Carriage House, which is now used as an event venue. Forest Park is also home to Camp STAR Angelina, a day camp facility that focuses on programs for young people with disabilities.

Forest Park also includes the 26-acre King Philip’s Stockade, which is located across Route



Athletic fields at Forest Park



The Environmental Center of Springfield (ECOS) at Forest Park.

5 from the main portion of the park. It features walking paths and two pavilion areas, which are available for group rental.

To the east of Forest Park, on the east side of Dickinson Street, is Forest Park Extension. This consists of about 77 acres in Springfield and 43 acres in Longmeadow, along the banks of the Pecousic Brook. Unlike the rest of Forest Park, it does not have any established trails or other amenities. Instead, is undeveloped woodland and wetlands, and it primarily serves as conservation land.



Athletic fields at Alice Beal School



Playground at Washington Street School



Playground at Kensington International School

Other Neighborhood Parks

Aside from Forest Park itself, the neighborhood also includes smaller parks that are used for active recreation, passive recreation, and for conservation purposes. The neighborhood schools have playground equipment, including Alice Beal School, Kensington International School, Washington Street School, and White Street School. Along with the schools, Johnny Appleseed Park also has playground equipment, along with a basketball court. None of these parks and schools have athletic fields, with the exception of the Alice Beal School, which has baseball fields.

The Forest Park neighborhood also includes a portion of the city-owned Franconia Golf Course. It is located in the southeastern corner of the neighborhood, and it extends into Longmeadow and East Longmeadow.

Throughout the neighborhood, there are many small open space areas for passive recreation. These are interspersed throughout the residential parts of the neighborhood, including Garfield Triangle, Marengo Park, Mary Shea Park, along with many terraces and triangles in the medians of residential side streets.

The parkland in the Forest Park neighborhood also consists of undeveloped conservation land. This includes Shamrock Park in the northern part of the neighborhood along the banks of the Mill River, along with parks in the southeastern part of the neighborhood, including Entry Dingle Brook Park, Forest Park Extension, and Valentine Park.

Open Space and Recreation Plan

The city’s 2022 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) identifies a number of potential investments in parks throughout the city, including in the Forest Park neighborhood. Most of these investments focus on Forest Park itself, and generally involve maintaining and restoring existing features in the park.

The action items from the OSRP include continuing the renovation of Camp STAR Angelina, the restoration and stabilization of the Aquatic Gardens, trail restoration, system upgrades to the Cyr Arena and Carriage House, and renovations to the old zoo building to create classroom and public gathering space. The OSRP also identifies other projects, including restoring the historic Meadowbrook Ravine and Bowles Fountain, and the construction of a new conservatory building to replace the existing greenhouse.

The OSRP does not identify specific goals for the other parks in the Forest Park neighborhood, but it does include broad action items that apply to parks throughout the city. These include replacement of playground equipment, ensuring universal accessibility of public parks, basketball and tennis court improvements, and restoration of triangles and terraces.

In addition, one of the objectives in the OSRP is to “provide additional open space in areas which demonstrate the greatest need.” One of the action steps under this objective is to “[i]dentify and acquire small parcels to create neighborhood parks and playgrounds in areas with a high number of children and limited open space.” Because the northern part of the Forest Park neighborhood has very few recreational open space areas, and because



Shamrock Park, at the corner of Oakland Avenue and Shamrock Street



Marengo Park

these census tracts had among the highest percentage of young children in the city during the 2020 census, this area would likely benefit from additional parks and playgrounds.

Environmental Justice

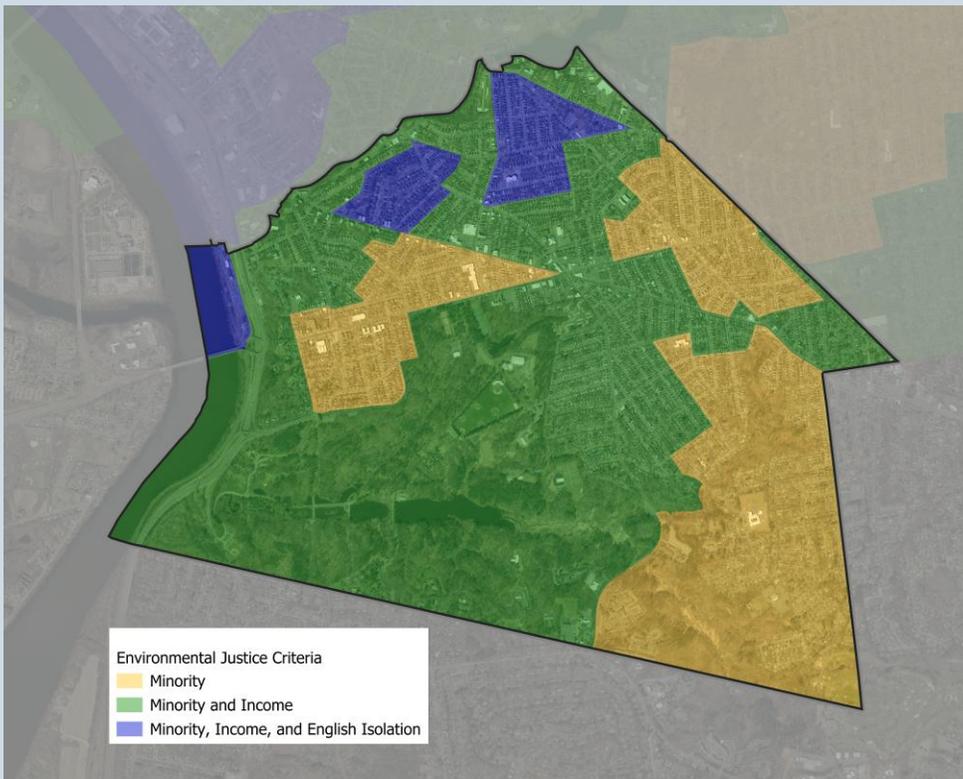
Based on the 2020 census, the Forest Park neighborhood is considered to be an environmental justice population, as defined by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). The EEA defines an environmental justice population as a census block group that meets at least one of four criteria relating to median household income, minority population, and limited English proficiency. The EEA considers such groups to be most at risk of being unaware of or unable to participate in environmental decision-making, or to benefit from environmental resources. Of the 22 census

three criteria for minority population, income level, and limited English proficiency.

Justice40 Initiative

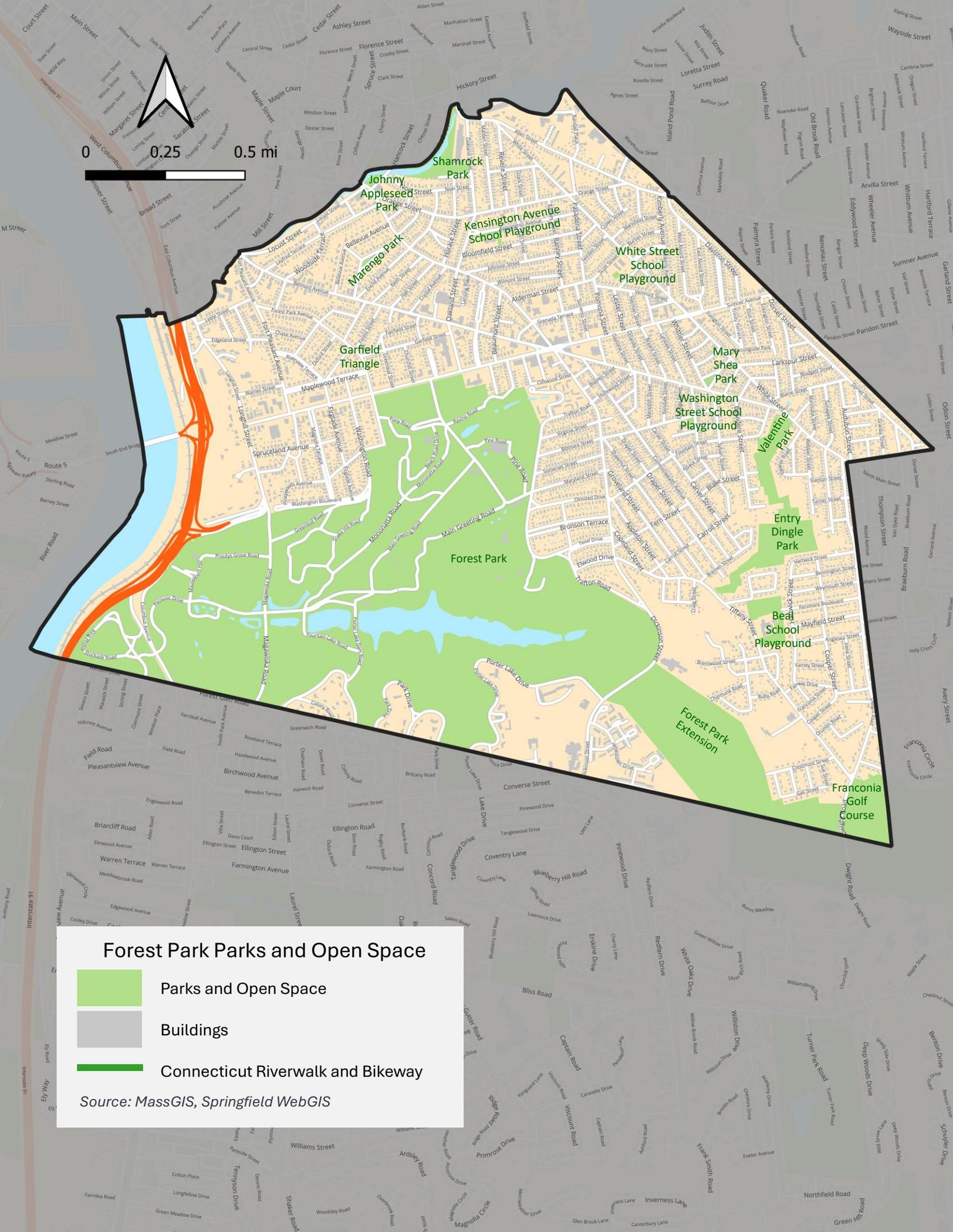
Because Forest Park is an environmental justice population, it could benefit from federal programs through the Justice40 Initiative, which seeks to support disadvantaged communities that have historically been marginalized and underserved. Under this initiative, environmental justice communities are eligible for federal funding to support investments in any of the following areas: climate change, clean energy and energy efficiency, clean transit, affordable and sustainable housing, training and workforce

development, remediation and reduction of legacy pollution, and the development of critical clean water and wastewater infrastructure. As this is a new initiative, it is important for both the Forest Park Civic Association and the city to assess ways in which the neighborhood could benefit from such investments.

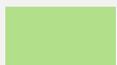


Environmental justice populations in Forest Park, 2020. Source: MassGIS.

block groups that are located within Forest Park, all are considered to be environmental justice populations. A total of 7 block groups meet the criteria based on minority population, 13 meet the criteria for both minority population and income levels, and 2 meet all



Forest Park Parks and Open Space



Parks and Open Space



Buildings



Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway

Source: MassGIS, Springfield WebGIS



Neighborhood Investment Plan Process

Agenda

Neighborhood Investment Plan
Forest Park

PYPIC
wofunders

February

Community Engagement

Outreach in the Forest Park neighborhood started with the understanding that building trust and mobilizing residents requires sustained effort over time. The primary objective was to provide residents with multiple opportunities to participate in the Forest Park neighborhood investment planning process.

Engagement strategies included community meetings, informal coffee-hour gatherings, survey collection, and one-on-one connections at local events. The planning process was intentionally iterative, with phases building on and occasionally overlapping with one another. This approach allowed for continuous refinement of ideas and goals based on input from residents and other stakeholders

The engagement process began with a broad assessment of neighborhood characteristics and demographics. Forest Park is primarily residential, with approximately 91 percent of land designated for housing, ranging from single-family homes to larger apartment buildings. Nearly half of the neighborhood consists of lower-density residential areas such as Forest Park Heights and Colony Hills, both noted for their historic housing stock.

Forest Park has an estimated population of 24,000 residents across five census tracts (8021, 8022, 8023, 8026.01, and 8026.02). The neighborhood is among the most diverse in Springfield, with no single racial or ethnic group comprising a majority.

- **Racial Diversity:** Across the census tracts, the White population ranges from 23–69 percent, Black residents from 8–22 percent, and Asian residents from 4–10 percent. Tract 8026.01 contains the highest percentage and number of Asian residents in Springfield.

- **Hispanic/Latino Population:** Hispanic/Latino residents account for 17 percent (Tract 8026.02) to nearly 60 percent of the population, with the highest concentrations in Tracts 8022 and 8023.
- **Population Size:** Census tract populations range from approximately 3,600 to over 7,000 residents, contributing to a dynamic and diverse community composition.

A central priority of the engagement process was ensuring participation from the broad cross-section of residents who live in the Forest Park neighborhood, as well as business owners and other stakeholders, particularly historically underrepresented groups.

As part of the planning process, the Forest Park Civic Association (FPCA) partnered with PVPC and Way Finders to shape outreach and engagement strategies. Recognizing the need for broader representation beyond FPCA membership, Way Finders staff collaborated with a diverse group of residents and small business owners who served as community connectors. These individuals distributed flyers, offered input, and invited neighbors to participate in conversations regarding the future of Forest Park.

Key community leaders included:

- **Residents:** FPCA President Beate Bolen, longtime resident Sheila McElwaine, who conducted neighborhood walks with staff; Wayne Nelson, who supported outreach through flyer distribution at C3 meetings; and Trinh Roblinski of the Vietnamese Civic Association, who helped organize a focus group involving more than 15 Vietnamese residents.
- **Small Businesses:** Contributions were made by local business owners including

Jose Curvas (Forest Park Farmers' Market), Lena Phommatham (Pho Saigon), Juanita Bachelor (Darryl Lee J. Jenkins Jr. Research Center), and Vanessa Hall (Beaute Within).

These contributions reflect the strong civic commitment and leadership within Forest Park.

Engagement Phases

Following initial planning meetings, the engagement process was structured into two phases, each designed to ensure broad resident and stakeholder participation.

Phase 1: Initial Engagement and Data Collection

Activities included:

- Community meetings and prioritization workshops
- Outreach at neighborhood events through tabling, flyering, bulk emails, and social media
- Resident surveys collected through multiple formats (297 completed)
- Social media and targeted email engagement

Phase 2: Plan Refinement and Targeted Outreach

Activities included:

- A virtual small business meeting to engage local entrepreneurs
- One-on-one meetings with community-based organizations to ensure diverse perspectives
- A focus group with underrepresented Asian community members
- Draft plan review and feedback sessions with Neighborhood Councils
- Collection of 88 prioritization surveys



Group discussion at the Forest Park neighborhood mapping workshop on February 8, 2025

Engagement Outcomes

Between October 2024 (when planning meetings with FPCA began) and July 2025 (when outreach concluded with a stakeholder meeting for Forest Park small business owners), we successfully engaged nearly 300 residents and more than 14 businesses through canvassing, civic meetings, workshops, cultural events, and focus groups.

Recognizing the importance of accessibility, the team selected locations familiar to residents, including community spaces, local restaurants, small businesses, the Forest Park Farmers' Market, and centrally located residential buildings. In person community meetings were two hours in duration to allow for robust discussion. Live Spanish interpretation was available if needed at all in-person meetings,

and food was offered to ensure inclusivity and hospitality.

In total, we organized or participated in 15 engagement opportunities, investing significant time in direct community interaction with residents.

To ensure broad geographic coverage, Forest Park was divided into six areas for outreach. Flyers, in both English and Spanish, were distributed at more than 14 neighborhood locations such as barber shops, convenience stores, restaurants, and libraries. Flyers were also delivered to property managers at 6 Kenwood Park and 413–415 Belmont Avenue, directly reaching 61 households.

Digital tools supplemented in-person outreach. Way Finders' Marketing Director distributed a targeted email to more than 2,100 Way Finders residents in Forest Park, identified by zip code.

The campaign achieved a 41 percent open rate, with a follow-up email sent to non-openers. Social media platforms were also utilized to increase visibility and promote engagement.

Community events further expanded outreach. Seasonal gatherings such as the Harvest Festival and the Forest Park Farmers' Market provided informal engagement opportunities, while workshops at the John Shea Building and the Vietnamese Community Focus Group facilitated deeper dialogue. These events included incentives such as food from neighborhood restaurants

(e.g., Family Pizzeria Europa and the Farmers House) and raffle prizes to encourage participation.

Engagement strategies evolved over time, beginning with awareness-building activities such as canvassing and flyer distribution and progressing toward deeper resident participation. Later workshops and focus

groups attracted larger numbers of participants, including over 20 attendees at single events and increased participation among underrepresented groups.

By June 2025, these efforts established a strong foundation for continued collaboration in Forest Park. The combination of consistent outreach, relationship-based engagement, and strategic use of in-person and digital tools broadened participation, built trust, and positioned the project for deeper co-creation and implementation.

Engagement Highlights: October 2024 – June 2025

Impact at a Glance

- 347 residents engaged in face-to-face interactions
- 297 surveys collected
- 14 meetings and events
- 2,100+ residents reached via targeted email (41% open rate)
- 14+ local businesses and libraries sharing bilingual flyers
- 61 residential units reached through property manager distribution

Engagement Activities

- FPCA meetings and city project meetings
- Neighborhood canvassing across six areas of Forest Park - Flyers distributed at barber shops, convenience stores, restaurants, libraries, and other locations
- Seasonal events (Harvest Festival, Forest Park Farmers' Market)
- Community workshops and focus group
- Tabling at community events
- Food and raffle incentives to encourage participation

- Press releases distributed to local media (print, online, and social)
- Social media posts through Way Finders' page, with public sharing and partner tagging
- Flyers with QR codes linking to PVPC's Springfield Neighborhood Plans website and community-wide surveys
- Email invitations sent via Constant Contact to more than 2,100 Way Finders clients in the targeted neighborhood
- Targeted invitations distributed to stakeholders, community partners, businesses, and local organizations
- SMS, email listservs, and the PVPC website used for project updates and engagement opportunities

Continual Engagement and Review with the Forest Park Civic Association

Throughout the planning process, PVPC maintained regular and ongoing communication with the FPCA. This included preparing draft documents for review by FPCA, along with attending all FPCA monthly meetings to provide plan updates and address any questions or concerns. Draft plans were posted on the PVPC website, and printed copies were made available for residents. These engagement efforts provided opportunities for further revision prior to the FPCA's vote to accept the plans.

Goals and Strategies



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Show a
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a little
LOVE
and watch
a miracle
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*Come in and
see our collection*

City Goals

The Springfield Neighborhood Investment Planning process is built upon years of planning efforts across the city. Over the past decade, city-wide planning efforts have engaged residents and stakeholders in planning for a more resilient and equitable future, often in direct response to crises such as the 2011 tornado and COVID-19 global pandemic. Within these many plans, goals for neighborhood-specific projects and programs have been integrated with broader city goals.

City Goal #1: Improve transparency, trust, and communication between the city and the Forest Park neighborhood.

One of the keys to fostering a strong neighborhood is to ensure that there is active and ongoing communication and collaboration between the neighborhood residents, the Forest Park Civic Association (FPCA), and the city government. As such, it is vital to ensure that residents feel empowered to bring concerns and ideas to their local government, and also to participate in the decision-making process.

Strategies:

- City, FPCA, and residents collaborate to design, create, and implement an equitable and inclusive neighborhood planning process in Forest Park, ensuring consistency with city's values of climate resilience and sustainability.
- City communicates all aspects of the planning process and implementation by posting all materials on the city website-or linked to it-and providing paper copies at City Hall, FPCA offices and other locations as determined by residents and representatives, and to people who request them, including calendar of meetings scheduled, plan template, access to the Data Atlas and expanded GIS maps website, zoning regulations, related city plans, draft products, deliverables, notes from meetings and any other draft and final work products.
- Build the capacity of residents and the city staff to understand how each other 'works' and the forces limiting, constraining, and facilitating each group's ability to act.

City Goal # 2: Identify, prioritize, and implement investments in the Forest Park neighborhood.

In creating this neighborhood plan, the goal is to not only involve residents in the process of identifying and prioritizing needs in the neighborhood, but also to ensure ongoing collaboration as the city works to implement this plan over the next ten years.

Strategies:

- City, Forest Park Civic Association, and residents identify long-term (8+ years), short-term (6 months to 3 years), and mid-term (4 to 8 years) priority projects for neighborhood stabilization, equity, sustainability, and resiliency.
- City and Forest Park Civic Association collaborate to conduct work on a neighborhood level that is reflective of larger city-wide planning practices, such as ReBuild Springfield, the Urban Renewal Plan, the Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP), the Complete Streets Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan, the Economic Development Plan, the Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Hazard Mitigation Plan, and any other relevant plans.

Neighborhood Goals

As part of this neighborhood investment process, a number of goals and strategies emerged for the Forest Park neighborhood. These were based on resident and stakeholder engagement, along with a review of existing neighborhood and city plans and an evaluation of current neighborhood conditions.

Goal: Improve and expand parkland and recreational open space areas

Strategies:

- Work with the city to create “pocket parks” on municipally owned vacant lots (where feasible and sensible given need for housing) to address a lack of activated parkland in many parts of the neighborhood—with structures to facilitate activity such as a basketball court, or swings for younger children, or benches for older adults.
- Work with the city to advance completion of the Forest Park Horticultural Center in Forest Park
- Work with the city Bureau of Parks Recreation and Maintenance (BPRM) to create a better connection between the neighborhood and King Philip’s Stockade
- Work with the city BPRM to advance planned park improvements at the Franconia club house, Garfield Street Triangle, and new picnic tables at Forest Park

Goal: Support new and existing local businesses in the Forest Park neighborhood.

Strategies:

- Work with the Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED) to bring a café and/or other “third space” type business that will meet the needs of Forest Park residents
- Work with the city to understand and better publicize to existing business owners the myriad resources available to existing small business owners

Goal: Expand transportation opportunities and ensure that the streets are safe for all forms of transportation.

Strategies:

- Support and advocate for traffic calming measures on streets throughout the neighborhood to slow cars down and improve safety and comfort for pedestrians and bicyclists. This can include efforts funded via Springfield’s Safe Streets For All (SS4A) funding, focusing on Forest Park Avenue to install stop signs and a mini roundabout/traffic circle
- Improve pedestrian access and safety, including ongoing Neighborhood Enhancement funded sidewalk repairs in the historic district and Belmont Avenue
- Develop a multi-use trail on the former railroad right-of-way on eastern edge of neighborhood
- Connect the Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway to Forest Park neighborhood—via an on-street route which would require striping and signage
- Address issues of on-street parking, when it obstructs vehicle traffic and lines of sight at intersections

Goal: Increase cultural and community events in the Forest Park neighborhood

Strategies:

- Establish a community center, possibly new and/or building on/modifying/upgrading existing community spaces, with an emphasis on serving youth and older adults and research and document existing initiatives and help publicize them to the neighborhood
- Work together to bring more outdoor concerts and theatre events to the neighborhood
- Work together to facilitate more community celebrations
- Improve communication with Forest Park residents to keep them informed of opportunities and issues in the neighborhood
- Continue neighborhood beautification, including planting street trees, improving storefronts, installing historic streetlights, and reducing litter

Goal: Maintain and expand the neighborhood's housing stock

Strategies:

- Support existing homeowners with maintenance and rehabilitation of their homes
- Support first-time home buyers

Goal: Ensure the long-term sustainability and climate resilience of the Forest Park neighborhood

Strategies:

- Support community solar initiatives
- Support electric vehicle charging station access for people who live in multi-family buildings

Goal: Improve access to affordable, healthy food in the Forest Park neighborhood

Strategies:

- Support the growth and expansion of the Farmer's Market in Forest Park
- Advocate with elected officials to maintain and expand the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) which provides financial assistance to purchase healthy food
- Work with the city and other organizations to expand community and school-based gardens to enable people without yards to grow their own food and introduce children to healthy food
- Work with the city Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED) to recruit another full-line grocery store to the neighborhood



Action Plan

Category	Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline
Parks/Open Space/ Natural Environment	Work with the city to create “pocket parks” on municipally owned vacant lots (where feasible and sensible given need for housing) to address a lack of activated parkland in many parts of the neighborhood—with structures to facilitate activity such as a basketball court, or swings for younger children, or benches for older adults.	Forest Park Civic Association (FPCA),	Jodi Manning of Farmers Market at Forest Park	Each park could take up to a year (or more) to:1) identify municipally owned space suitable for the proposed use; 2) secure funds, 3) engage consultant or assign task to city staff, 4) build/implement.
	Work with the city to advance completion of the Forest Park Horticultural Center in Forest Park	FPCA		Ongoing
	Work with the city Bureau of Parks Recreation and Maintenance (BPRM) to create a better connection between the neighborhood and King Philip’s Stockade	FPCA	An organized group of neighbors	Ongoing
	Work with the city BPRM to advance planned park improvements at the Franconia club house, Garfield Street Triangle, and new picnic tables at Forest Park	FPCA	An organized group of neighbors	Short Term
Economic Development	Work with the Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED) to bring a café and/or other “third space” type business that will meet the needs of Forest Park residents	FPCA	An organized group of neighbors	Short Term
	Work with the city to understand and better publicize to existing business owners the myriad resources available to existing small business owners	FPCA		Short Term

Forest Park Neighborhood Investment Plan 2025–2035

Category	Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline
Transportation/ Mobility	Support and advocate for traffic calming measures on streets throughout the neighborhood to slow cars down and improve safety and comfort for pedestrians and bicyclists. This can include efforts funded via Springfield’s Safe Streets For All (SS4A) funding, focusing on Forest Park Avenue to install stop signs and a mini roundabout/traffic circle	City Department of Public Works (DPW) with FPCA		Ongoing
	Improve pedestrian access and safety, including ongoing Neighborhood Enhancement funded sidewalk repairs in the historic district and Belmont Avenue	DPW	FPCA	Ongoing
	Develop a multi-use trail on the former railroad right-of-way on eastern edge of neighborhood	DPW	FPCA	Long Term
	Connect the Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway to Forest Park neighborhood—via an on-street route which would require striping and signage	DPW	FPCA, Walk Bike Springfield	Long Term
	Address issues of on-street parking, when it obstructs vehicle traffic and lines of sight at intersections	DPW	FPCA	Medium Term
Community/ Culture	Establish a community center, possibly new and/or building on/modifying/upgrading existing community spaces, with an emphasis on serving youth and older adults and research and document existing initiatives and help publicize them to the neighborhood	FPCA	City OPED, Williams Center	Long Term
	Work together to bring more outdoor concerts and theatre events to the neighborhood			Ongoing
	Work together to facilitate more community celebrations			Ongoing

Category	Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline
	Improve communication with Forest Park residents to keep them informed of opportunities and issues in the neighborhood	FPCA		Short Term
	Continue neighborhood beautification, including planting street trees, improving storefronts, installing historic streetlights, and reducing litter	FPCA		Ongoing
Housing	Support existing homeowners with maintenance and rehabilitation of their homes	City OPED, Office of Housing, City Council to appropriate additional funds	FPCA, Concerned Citizens of Springfield, WayFinders	Ongoing
	Support first-time home buyers	City OPED, Office of Housing, City Council to appropriate additional funds	FPCA, Concerned Citizens of Springfield, WayFinders	Ongoing
Energy	Support community solar initiatives	FPCA		Medium Term
	Support electric vehicle charging station access for people who live in multi-family buildings	Revitalize CDC, City OPED, MA CEC	FPCA	Ongoing

Forest Park Neighborhood Investment Plan 2025–2035

Category	Action	Lead Implementer	Collaborators	Timeline
Food Access	Support the growth and expansion of the Farmer's Market in Forest Park	Jodi Manning of Farmers Market at Forest Park	FPCA	
	Advocate with elected officials to maintain and expand the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) which provides financial assistance to purchase healthy food	SFPC	Voices of the People Community Advocates	Ongoing
	Work with the city and other organizations to expand community and school-based gardens to enable people without yards to grow their own food and introduce children to healthy food	FPCA	SFPC	Medium Term
	Work with the city Office of Planning and Economic Development (OPED) to recruit another full-line grocery store to the neighborhood	OPED	FPCA, Jodi Manning of Farmers Market at Forest Park	Long Term

Examples of Potential Funding Sources

Arts & Culture

Cultural Facilities Fund	This program provides funding for public and non-profit cultural facilities such as museums, historic sites, theaters, exhibition spaces, and classrooms. These funds can be used for planning, acquiring, designing, constructing, and rehabilitating eligible facilities.
Local Cultural Council (LCC)	The LCC provides funding for a wide range of cultural activities, including festivals, lectures, performances, and other events that have a public benefit. Eligible applicants include municipalities, organizations, and even private individuals.
Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program	This program provides funding for historic preservation planning, including inventorying historic properties and other cultural resources. Such inventories are valuable tools in identifying and prioritizing historic properties, while also highlighting the history of structurally disadvantaged groups whose stories are often overlooked.

Clean Energy

Community Clean Energy Resiliency Initiative (CCERI)	This state program provides funding for clean energy projects that improve municipal resilience and prevent service disruptions caused by climate change.
Green Communities Program	Municipalities in Massachusetts that are designated as Green Communities, including Springfield, are eligible to apply for competitive grants under this program. These grants can be used for projects that reduce municipal carbon footprints. In Springfield, this would not only result in energy savings, but it would also help to reduce the city's high air pollution rates.

Economic Development

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	CDBG funds may be used for a variety of economic development-related projects. These include commercial or industrial improvements and assistance, microenterprise assistance, and planning/capacity building projects.
Community One Stop for Growth	One Stop is a single application process that includes a number of different state grant programs relating to economic development and housing. Funding is available for a variety of projects, including community activation & placemaking; planning & zoning; site preparation; buildings; and infrastructure.

Food Security

Urban Agriculture Program	This program provides funding for the development of urban agriculture, in order to improve access to fresh, local produce in low- and moderate-income areas. Eligible applicants include municipalities, non-profit organizations, educational and public health institutions, and private individuals with commercial urban agriculture experience.
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Examples of Potential Funding Sources	
Housing & Historic Preservation	
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	CDBG funds can be used for a wide range of housing-related initiatives. These include homeowner assistance programs, first-time homebuyer programs, housing rehabilitation, and code enforcement.
Community Preservation Act (CPA)	The CPA is funded by city taxpayers, with matching contributions by the state. These funds are administered by the city’s Community Preservation Committee, and can be used to for development of affordable housing along with historic preservation.
Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP)	The HDIP involves tax incentives for the development of market-rate housing in Gateway Cities in Massachusetts, including Springfield. Eligible projects may involve new construction or substantial rehabilitation of existing buildings, and must be within the city’s designated HD Zone. However, only a small portion of northwestern Forest Park is within the designated HD Zone.
Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF)	This state-funded program provides funding for acquisition and/or rehabilitation of rental properties, or construction of new properties. Eligible applicants include non-profit and for-profit developers, along with municipalities. All properties that receive HSF assistance must be occupied by low- and moderate-income residents.
Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF)	The MPPF provides funding support for preservation work on buildings that are listed on the State Register of Historic Places. Applicants include municipal governments and non-profit organizations. Within the Forest Park neighborhood, there are a number of eligible historic buildings, and this number could likely be expanded with additional historic resource surveys.
Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program	This program provides funding for historic preservation planning, including inventorying historic properties. Because many of the historic homes in Forest Park have not yet been inventoried, especially those in the northern and eastern parts of the neighborhood, this would be an important step in prioritizing residential properties for rehabilitation and making them eligible for additional grant opportunities.
National Housing Trust Fund Program (HTF)	Funding from this program can be used to acquire, rehabilitate, or construct new rental properties for residents with incomes at or below 50% of the median area income. Eligible applicants include non-profit developers, along with for-profit developers who are partnered with non-profits that receive support service funds.

Examples of Potential Funding Sources

Parks & Open Space

Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)	CDBG funds may be used for a variety of public facilities and improvements. These include projects relating to the acquisition, construction, or rehabilitation of open space-related amenities such as parks, playgrounds, public trees, sculptures, and fountains.
Community Preservation Act (CPA)	Along with affordable housing and historic preservation, CPA funds can also be used for projects relating to parks and open space areas in Springfield.
Gateway City Parks Program	This program provides funding for Gateway Cities in Massachusetts, including Springfield, to create or improve parks and other recreational spaces in the city.

Transportation

Chapter 90 Program	This state-funded program provides reimbursement for expenses relating to a wide range of eligible projects. This includes analysis, design, and construction work for roadway improvements, traffic calming measures, bike lanes, sidewalks, and other transportation-related work.
Complete Streets Funding Program	This program provides funding for Massachusetts communities, including Springfield, that have a Complete Streets policy. It provides funding for projects that are identified in the city's Prioritization Plan, which can include intersection redesigns, traffic calming measures, and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements.
MassTrails Grants	This program provides matching reimbursements for projects that involve recreational and shared-use trails. Eligible expenses include the development, design, construction, and maintenance of these trails.
Safe Routes to School Program	This program seeks to make walking and bicycling safer for students traveling to school. Such initiatives not only help to improve student health, but they also improve traffic congestion and air quality.
Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program	This program provides funding for municipalities and public transit authorities to improve safety and accessibility for all roadway users. Eligible projects include bikeshare programs, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and transit infrastructure.



Appendices



Summaries of Recent City-wide Planning Efforts

Prior to the Neighborhood Investment Planning process, the City of Springfield has included neighborhood-level planning objectives as a part of several city-wide plans, projects, and programs.

Rebuild Springfield (2012)

The Rebuild Springfield initiative was created in response to the June 1, 2011 tornado that struck the City of Springfield and produced a four-part comprehensive planning response to the natural disaster. The Rebuild Springfield plan includes a city-wide overview and three district plans for neighborhoods directly impacted by the tornado. The Citywide planning process is organized according to the six Nexus Domains of a healthy and vibrant community. These domains include the physical, cultural, social, organizational, educational, and economic components of a community while listing twenty-one total recommendations. More neighborhood-specific recommendations and strategies are outlined in the district plans: District One (Metro Center and South End), District Two (Maple High-Six Corners, Upper Hill, Old Hill, and Forest Park), and District Three (Sixteen Acres and East Forest Park).

Local Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (2023)

The City of Springfield's latest hazard mitigation plan presents a thorough summary of community features and risks posed by natural hazards. The planning document identifies and prioritizes forty-four total mitigation actions for the city to implement. While many of the included strategies are city-wide in scope, several features are identified as priorities within specific neighborhoods.

Strong, Healthy, and Just: Climate Action and Resilience Plan (2017)

Springfield's first climate action and resilience plan in name, "Strong, Healthy, and Just: Climate Action and Resilience Plan" (SHJ) was developed in 2017 to provide a path for the City of Springfield to reduce overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to enhance urban resilience. The SHJ plan builds upon over 15 years of climate action by the City and first recommends the City to conduct an analysis of the progress that had been made on previous plans and their climate-related strategies. A second priority recommendation presented is for the city to better communicate the ongoing and planned climate action and resilience work, especially in neighborhoods with high concentrations of chronically stressed residents. Additionally, the plan expands on ten recommended Action Categories with goals and strategies to reduce GHG emissions and enhance resilience.

Springfield Complete Streets Prioritization Plan – 2020 Update

Expanding on the 2017 Springfield Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, the latest update provides an examination of more recent data and a list of projects developed through various engagement efforts. The updated plan identifies previous priority projects that have been completed both city-wide and within individual neighborhoods.

Local Rapid Recovery Plan (2021)

Springfield’s Local Rapid Recovery Plan was the result of the Commonwealth’s Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program intended to provide every municipality in Massachusetts the opportunity to develop actionable, project-based recovery plans tailored to the unique economic challenges and COVID-19 related impacts to downtowns, town centers, and commercial areas. The LRRP focuses on Springfield’s Main Street Convention Center District (MSCC) in the Metro Center neighborhood. Through the LRRP process, fifteen projects were identified as priority opportunities for investing the city’s initial American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.

Open Space and Recreation Plan (2022)

The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) developed in 2022 outlines a comprehensive park and conservation land improvement program and establishes a framework for guiding city expenditures through Fiscal Year 2027. The plan establishes six broad goals that were developed through input from each City department involved in managing open space.

Safety Action Plan (2022)

Collaborating with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the City created the Safety Action Plan to provide information and direction on strategies and treatments most likely to improve roadway safety performance within the city. The plan addresses citywide crash patterns and trends and systemic treatments that can be used to address those trends. The content of the plan establishes a vision and goals specific to roadway safety performance and establishes a basis for informing roadway safety performance improvements over the next three to five years. Strategies for addressing roadway safety improvements are separated into “engineering” and “non-engineering” countermeasures. Specific countermeasure locations are identified for intersections, signalized and unsignalized, along with corridors throughout the city.

Capital Improvement Plan, FY 2024–2028 (2023)

The City of Springfield’s annual update of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) acts as a roadmap for the acquisition, renovation, or construction of new or existing facilities and infrastructure. As part of the City of Springfield’s continuing efforts to develop robust long-term strategic planning initiatives, the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for Fiscal Years 2024–2028 lists all capital improvement needs throughout the city, and the estimated cost associated with those projects. The estimated cost for all 477 projects totals \$1.3 billion, with the highest priority projects totaling \$182 million. These 18 “Grade A” projects include investments in public safety, upgrades to schools and municipal buildings, road resurfacing, city-wide systemic safety interventions and numerous projects aimed at driving economic development, while improving the safety, mobility, and the quality of life of the residents of Springfield.