



Summary Memorandum

Thomas Brooks Park Master Plan

Medford, Massachusetts

Archaeological Sensitivity

Assessment March 11, 2020

Submitted to:

Hedlund Design Group

10 Central Street

Arlington, Massachusetts 02476

This summary memorandum presents the results of an archaeological sensitivity assessment conducted by The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL) for the Thomas Brooks Park Master Plan in Medford, Massachusetts, under contract to Hedlund Design Group. The Medford Historical Commission is seeking to create a master plan for the park that emphasizes the historical nature of the parcel. One of the tasks that will contribute to the master plan is an archaeological sensitivity assessment.

The Thomas Brooks Park is a 6-acre parcel bound by Grove Street on the west, the MBTA (Lowell Branch) railroad on the east, and residential abutters fronting Ravine Road on the south. The park landscape contains woodlands and open grassland on a relatively flat terrace interspersed with small rises. The park was part of an historical estate that belonged to the Brooks family of West Medford from the mid-seventeenth through early twentieth centuries.

The archaeological sensitivity assessment was conducted by Suzanne Cherau, Senior Archaeologist, who meets the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards* (36 CFR 61, Appendix A to Part 61) and the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) Professional Qualifications (950 CMR 70.10) to conduct archaeological investigations.

Methodology

The archaeological sensitivity assessment consisted of research and a walkover of the 6-acre park lands. The research included a review of park historical documentation provided by the Medford Historical Commission and information about recorded archaeological sites in the MHC's *Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth* (also known as the statewide inventory). Cultural resource management (CRM) reports, town and park histories, and historic maps were also reviewed as part of the research.

A pedestrian walkover of the park was conducted to provide a visual overview of the existing environmental and cultural conditions including previous disturbances. Visible evidence of historic features and aboveground indications of potential archaeological sites were noted on the park's existing conditions plan and digital photographs were taken.

Information collected during the research and walkover was used to develop a predictive model of potential site types and their cultural and temporal affiliations. The predictive model considers various criteria to rank the potential for the park lands to contain archaeological sites: proximity of

recorded and documented sites, local land use history, environmental data, and existing conditions. The park lands were stratified into zones of expected archaeological sensitivity (low, moderate, and high) to determine which areas are likely to contain significant archaeological resources. Table 1 is a summary of the factors used to develop the archaeological sensitivity rankings.

Table 1. Archaeological Sensitivity Rankings Used During the Sensitivity Assessment.

Presence of Sites		Proximity to Favorable Cultural/ Environmental Characteristics			Degree of Disturbance			Sensitivity Ranking
Known	Unknown	< 150 m	≥ 150 ≤ 500 m	> 500 m	None/Minimal	Moderate	Extensive	
•		•			•			High
•		•				•		High
•		•					•	Low
•			•		•			High
•			•			•		High
•			•				•	Low
•				•	•			High
•				•		•		High
•				•			•	Low
	•	•			•			High
	•	•				•		Moderate
	•	•					•	Low
	•		•		•			Moderate
	•		•			•		Moderate
	•		•				•	Low
	•			•	•			Moderate
	•			•		•		Low
	•			•			•	Low

Brief Site History

English occupation of the park and its vicinity dates back to 1660 when Thomas Brooks (died 1667) purchased 400 acres of land east of the Mystic Lake and River. Subdivisions of the lands passed to subsequent family generations including Thomas' grandson Samuel Brooks (1700–1768) and great-grandson Thomas Brooks (1732–1799). The family's first homestead was on High Street near Boston Avenue. The Thomas Brooks Park lands were first occupied by Samuel Brooks who inherited the parcel from his father Thomas Brooks (Jr.) and built a house there circa (ca.) 1727. The house was later occupied by Samuel's son Thomas and then by Thomas' son Isaac who sold it to his cousin Peter C. Brooks who then conveyed it to his son Gorham Brooks who died there in 1855 (Brooks 1885). The heirs of Gorham Brooks, sons Peter Chardon Brooks (1831–1866) and Shepherd Brooks

(1837–1922), demolished the house in 1860. Their abutting estates were located due north at that time. A brick wall (MHC #MDF.905) in front of the house along the road (Grove Street) was built ca. 1760 by Samuel Brooks and his son Thomas and Thomas’ negro slave “Pomp” (also called Pompeii or Pompey) using bricks made by the Brooks family in their brickyard near the Mystic River (Brooks 1885; Clemson 2018a, b; *Medford Historical Register* 1912).

A ca. 1765 map of the Brooks Estate includes the land of Samuel Brooks “2nd” (1700–1768) on the east side of Grove Street. His house and barn (to the north or rear side of the house) was north of his father’s house (Samuel “1st” 1672 –1733). The property of Samuel Brooks (1st) that included both house sites was a narrow strip of land on the east side of Grove Street from High Street north to Symme’s Corner (present Grove Street-Main Street-Bacon Street intersection in Winchester). The house of Samuel Brooks (1st) was destroyed by fire in 1762, and by ca. 1850 the former house site had been replaced by two barns associated with the estates of Edward Brooks (son of Samuel 2nd) and Peter C. Brooks (son of Edward), whose house sites were on the opposite (west) side of Grove Street north of High Street. Samuel Brooks’ (2nd) house to the north on Grove Street in the present-day park was still standing ca. 1850 but no barn was depicted at that time (Brooks 1885).

The 1855 (Walling) map of Medford depicts only the ca. 1727 house of Samuel and Thomas Brooks, which belonged to Gorham Brooks (1795–1855) at that time. The 1856 (Walling) map of Medford also only depicts one structure, the house, as belonging to the “Gorham Brooks Estate.” An 1855 artist’s rendering of the “house of Thomas Brooks, built by Samuel Brooks, 1727”, depicts the two-story building with center chimney and front porch and rear ell addition (Brooks 1855). The house faced southwest towards Grove Street and was accessed by way of a semi-circular cart path fenced along its east side closest to the house and demarcated from the street (east) side by the brick “slave wall.” The front and side yards contained mature black walnut trees and lilac bushes. Although demolished in 1860, the L-shaped house belonging to “G. Brooks” is still depicted on the 1875 (Beers) map of Medford. No house appears on the property on the 1898 (Stadly) atlas map of Medford.

The vacant “G. Brooks” property was transferred to subsequent generations of the Brooks family: Peter Chardon Brooks who conveyed it to his son Gorham Brooks in 1909, who then donated it to the City of Medford in 1924 for use as a public park. The 1924 conveyance to the City included a provision that the “slave wall so-called” be “preserved and forever” maintained” on the 6-acre parcel (Clemson 2018a, b).

Results

The sensitivity assessment consisted of three tasks: identifying known archaeological sites within and in the vicinity of Thomas Brooks Park; examining existing conditions including any visible evidence of archaeological sites; and assigning rankings of low, moderate, and high sensitivity for potential archaeological resources within the 6-acre park parcel.

Known Archaeological Sites

There are no recorded archaeological sites within the park boundaries; however, there are 16 pre-contact Native American and 4 post-contact EuroAmerican sites within a one-mile radius (Table 2).¹ Seven of the pre-contact sites (MHC #19-MD-256, 19-MD-257, 19-MD-258, 19-MD-259, 19-MD-260, 19-MD-366, and 19-MD-421) are in West Medford within a 1-mile radius of the park between the Mystic River-Mystic Valley Parkway to the southeast and the town line with Winchester to the north. Two of these sites (19-MD-259 and 19-MD-421) are within 600 feet (ft) of the southern end of the park.

Table 2. Archaeological Sites Recorded Within a 1-Mile Radius of Thomas Brooks Park, Medford, MA.

Site Name	MHC #	Town	Site Type	Temporal Period
Goat Groat Acre (Aka Sagamore John)	19-MD-61	Somerville	Habitation	Late Archaic; Contact Period
Pine Ridge Shore	19-MD-256	Medford	Flake scatter	Unknown
Dead Tree	19-MD-257	Medford	Flake scatter	Unknown
Russell Site	19-MD-258	Medford	Unknown	Middle Archaic Late Archaic, Early Woodland, Middle Woodland, and Late Woodland
Indian Necropolis	19-MD-259	Medford	Human burial(s)	Contact Period (late 16th-early 17th c.
B. And L. Railroad	19-MD-260	Medford	Unknown	Late Archaic
Goat Acre	19-MD-262	Arlington	Habitation	Early Archaic, Middle Archaic, Late-Transitional Archaic, Early Woodland,

¹ An archaeological site may be pre-contact, post-contact, or contain components from both periods. Pre-contact (or what is often termed “prehistoric”) archaeology focuses on the remains of indigenous American societies as they existed before substantial contact with Europeans and the resulting written records. In accordance with the National Park Service guidelines, “pre-contact” is used, unless directly quoting materials that use “prehistoric.” There is no single year that marks the transition from pre-contact to post-contact. In southern New England the pre-contact period ranges from approximately 12,500 years before present to 300 years before present and covers the PaleoIndian, Archaic, Woodland, and Contact sub-periods.

Post-contact (or what is often termed “historical”) archaeology is the archaeology of sites and structures dating from time periods since significant contact between Native Americans and Europeans. Documentary records and oral traditions can be used to better understand these properties and their inhabitants. Again, for reasons of consistency with the National Park Service guidelines, “post-contact” is used when referring to archaeology of this period, unless directly quoting materials that use “historical.” In southern New England the post-contact period begins with the Plantation Period (circa 1620) and continues through the Colonial, Federal, Industrial, and Modern Periods up to present-day.

Site Name	MHC #	Town	Site Type	Temporal Period
				Middle Woodland, and Late Woodland
Mt. Pleasant	19-MD-263	Arlington	Unknown	Late Archaic, Early Woodland, and Middle Woodland
Alewife Brook	19-MD-264	Arlington	Unknown	Middle Archaic, Late Archaic, Early Woodland, Middle Woodland, and Late Woodland
Rock Hill	19-MD-366	Medford	Unknown	Late Archaic
Goat Acre (Rawson Locus)	19-MD-368	Arlington	Habitation	Late Archaic
Goat Acre (Fillerbrown Locus)	19-MD-369	Arlington	Habitation	Late Archaic
Everett Site	19-MD-376	Winchester	Unknown	Late Archaic; Middle Woodland
F. Brooks Farm	19-MD-421	Medford	Unknown	Middle Archaic, Late Archaic
Sleepy Hollow Site	19-MD-768	Arlington	Find Spot	Late Archaic; Early Woodland
Goat Acre (Riverside Locus)	19-MD-1025	Arlington	Flake scatter	Unknown
Middlesex Canal	MDF.HA.3	Medford	Transportation, Commerce	19th century
Brooks Farm Indian Burials	MDF.HA.4	Medford	Burial Ground	17th century
Sagamore John Monument	MDF.HA.5	Medford	Funerary	17th century; 20th century (monument)
Land of Squawsachem	ARL.HA.8	Arlington	Ethnic Heritage	17th century

The Indian Necropolis Site (19-MD-259), off Sagamore Avenue west of Grove Street, was the location of at least five Contact Period Native American graves uncovered by workmen in 1862. The graves were sheltered between two low knolls on a relatively sandy terrace near spring-fed brooks that formerly flowed west to the Mystic River. Artifacts recovered with one of the burials indicate it dated to the late 1500s-early 1600s (MHC site files). The area has since been developed for residential housing but a twentieth-century monument (MHC #MDF.HA.5) placed in Sagamore Park marks the site of the graves. The monument is dedicated to Wonohaquaham, chief of the Pawtucket Indian Tribe who inhabited the Medford area prior to European settlement and was called Sagamore John by the locals. The F. Brooks Farm Site (19-MD-421), on the east side of Grove Street north of High Street, contained projectile points dating from the Middle Archaic and Late Archaic Periods, about 8,000–3,000 years before present.

The recorded pre-contact sites in West Medford attest to the importance of the Mystic River valley to Native American populations for approximately 8,000–10,000 years prior to and including the earliest contact with Europeans in the sixteenth century. Given the proximity of Thomas Brooks Park to the Mystic River, which is approximately 1,200 feet to the west, and the presence of several stream drainages and associated wetlands that appear on historical town maps to the east of the MBTA ROW, it is highly likely that undisturbed portions of the park lands contain archaeological evidence of pre-contact and contact period Native American settlement and subsistence activities. Expected site types would range from scatters of lithic chipping debris (by-products of chipped stone tool manufacture) to seasonal habitations with living surfaces, hearths, fire pits, storage pits, and artifacts including chipped and ground stone tools, pottery, and food waste (e.g., shell middens). The possibility of pre-contact and contact period Native American human burials also cannot be discounted.

None of the four recorded post-contact sites in a one-mile radius of Thomas Brooks Park are related to the historical occupation of the park lands on Grove Street. However, as noted in the MHC inventory form for the Thomas Brooks Park (Clemson 2018a), the post-contact period occupation of the park lands dates to the eighteenth-century Brooks family when they were first developed as the home site of Thomas Brooks ca. 1727. The two-story house was set slightly back from the street, behind a semi-circular drive and the brick “slave wall” that fronted Grove Street (see below). The Medford Historical Commission has recommended Thomas Brooks Park (no MHC # yet assigned) eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, under Criterion A for its associations with the locally prominent Brooks family, who were closely associated with the development of West Medford from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, and under Criterion D because it contains a documented eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century Brooks family house site (Clemson 2018a).² The house was taken down in 1860 but its foundation and cellar hole along with the center chimney base and firebox were likely left in place and filled in with demolition rubble. There has been no other documented earthmoving or other constructions in this portion of the park since the 1860 house demolition. The property also contained a barn that appears on the 1795 family estate map, and probably one or more wells and privies along with walkways, small garden plots, and ornamental plantings in the front, rear, and side yards that surrounded the main house.

The park lands also contain the recorded “Old Slave Wall” (MHC #MDF.905), which has been recommended eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a “rare object in the

² The National Park Service (NPS) has established four criteria for listing significant cultural properties in the National Register (36 CFR 60). The criteria are broadly defined to include the wide range of properties that are significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. The quality of significance may be present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The criteria (known by the letters A–D) allow for the listing of properties

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

built landscape of New England that can be attributed to the region's little-understood history of slave ownership and links to the North American slave trade." Under Criterion A the wall is important for its association with an identified slave, Pompey Phillis (1736–1820), who built the wall with members of the Brooks family, locally prominent residents of West Medford. The wall is also important under Criterion C as "an example or a rare, early and distinctive form of landscape decoration and artisanal masonry from the eighteenth century." The wall also has potential under Criterion D to yield important information through archaeological research (Clemson 2018b).

Existing Conditions

The park lands parcel is mostly second-growth woodlands with an open grassy area at the south end. There are a unimproved walking paths but no standing structures or other built-up areas. The eastern third of the parcel along the MBTA ROW contains sandy Udorthents, which are cut and filled soils in a base of glaciofluvial deposits. The western two-thirds of the parcel along Grove Street contains somewhat excessively drained Merrimac-Urban land complex having 0 to 8 percent slopes (USDA-NRCS 2020).

The walkover identified a shallow, squarish depression in a flat wooded area of the park with a center point approximately 65 ft east of the brick "slave wall." The depression could represent the filled-in cellar of the documented ca. 1726–1860 Brooks house. There are no visible structural remains of the house or any other structures or landscape features that may have been present in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The remainder of the park lands consist of woodlands, including visible remnants of the nineteenth-century estate tree landscape, and an open grassy area. The open grassy area is at the south end of the parcel and contains a 30-ft wide permanent MWRA easement with underground sewer manholes that runs in a northwest-southeast direction through the parcel between the MBTA ROW and Grove Street. The underground sewer main was built with an 82-ft wide construction area through the park (MDC 1965).

Sensitivity Assessment

High archaeological sensitivity is assigned to an approximately 800-ft long (north-south) section of the central portion of the park containing the approximate footprint of the former Brooks Estate (1727–1860) house site, brick "slave wall," and surrounding landscape (Figure 1). Moderate sensitivity is assigned to an approximately 450-ft long (north-south) section at the north end of the park. The high and moderate sensitivity areas have the potential to contain cultural deposits including structural remains, landscape features, and associated artifact assemblages associated with the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Brooks Estate. There is also potential for significant pre-contact and contact period Native American resources including human remains in these portions of the park lands, as noted above.

Low sensitivity is assigned to an approximately 250-ft long (north-south) section at the south end of the park containing the MWRA easement and construction work spaces and open grassy field formerly used by local residents as a "Victory Garden" following World War II. This area is not expected to contain potentially significant, intact archaeological deposits because of previous disturbances in top and subsoil horizons related to the utility easement construction and the mid-twentieth-century garden plots.

Recommendations

As part of the Thomas Brook's Park Master Plan, the Medford Historical Commission could consider funding an archaeological survey in the high and/or moderate sensitivity areas depicted on Figure 1. The high sensitivity area in particular is expected to contain the buried cellar hole and foundation remains of the ca. 1727–1860 Brooks house site and associated barn and other possible smaller outbuildings and structures including privies and wells. The living area centered in and around the house site would have the highest potential for yielding a high density and variety of domestic household refuse including tableware and glassware and personal items of the Brooks' family occupants. The identification of buried structural remains and a representative sample of household artifacts would provide important clues to the house site's configuration and the daily lives of the occupants in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. The archaeological data would supplement the rich documentary history of the Brooks Family in West Medford and could be used to help preserve and interpret the park site for the public.

An initial archaeological survey or “dig” could be undertaken by a professional archaeological consultant working collaboratively with volunteers from the local community, or by a university field school (e.g., University of Massachusetts-Boston, Andrew Fiske Memorial Center for Archaeological Research). Either approach would require that the field and laboratory investigations be conducted under the direction of a Principal Investigator who meets the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards* (36 CFR 61, Appendix A to Part 61) and the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) Professional Qualifications (950 CMR 70.10). The Principal Investigator would work with the Medford Historical Commission to develop an appropriate archaeological research design, testing methodology, reporting schedule, and artifact curation plan approved by the MHC under a State Archaeologist's Permit in accordance with 950 CMR 70-71.

In the collaborative approach, a team of archaeologists would work with Medford Historical Commission members and other local volunteers to excavate test pits, collect cultural materials, and record information in the field. Two volunteers would be paired with a professional archaeologist during the fieldwork phase of the project. Local volunteers could also participate in the laboratory processing and interpretation of the site and recovered artifacts. An initial archaeological dig in the high sensitivity area, for example, would be designed to identify the presence of any intact structural remains of the house and/or barn buildings, other buried buildings and landscape features, and associated artifacts (see Figure 1). The testing would involve the hand excavation of 50-x-50-centimeter (cm) (1.5-x-1.5-ft) test pits and screening of excavated soils at targeted locations within and surrounding the suspected house site's cellar hole and foundation remains and in the surrounding yard areas particularly to the north in the area of the documented barn. Test pits could also be placed along the interior (east) side of the brick “slave” wall to identify and date a possible eighteenth-century builder's trench, if hand digging to a depth of 2–3 ft would not affect the physical integrity or stability of the wall.

The cost estimate for one week of field digging by PAL archaeologists working daily with up to four to six local volunteers; laboratory processing, analysis, and curation of recovered artifacts; and the required technical reporting by the Principal Investigator would be approximately \$12,000–15,000. This work would take approximately 4–6 months to complete (MHC permit application through final technical report). Additional professional public outreach related to the archaeological dig could include the preparation a PowerPoint presentation and talk for the Medford Historical Commission and general public to present the results of the collaborative archaeological investigations. The

professional archaeological consultant could also coordinate with the Medford Historical Commission to provide an educational program for local students either on-site or in the classroom.

A university field school would have minimal costs to the Medford Historical Commission. The field school could be structured similar to the collaborative approach described above except that the field and laboratory work would typically be conducted by archaeology–anthropology students enrolled in or working through the university. The fieldwork would be scheduled at the discretion of the University Department professor and would depend on the seasonable availability of students, which typically would be during the summer months. The fieldwork could likely be completed in one summer program, but the total duration of artifact processing, data analysis, and reporting could take one or more years depending on professor and student work schedules and other commitments.

The archaeological data obtained during the initial one week field “dig”, either through the collaborative approach or through a university field school, would provide the information needed to make recommendations concerning the historical significance of any identified archaeological resources including buried structural remains, features, and associated artifacts. This information would in turn assist in determining the need for and generate an interest in funding a larger archaeological excavation at the house and/or barn site. A larger archaeological excavation effort could be accomplished by means of a university field school or a broader collaborative effort between professional archaeologists and local volunteers over one or more field seasons.

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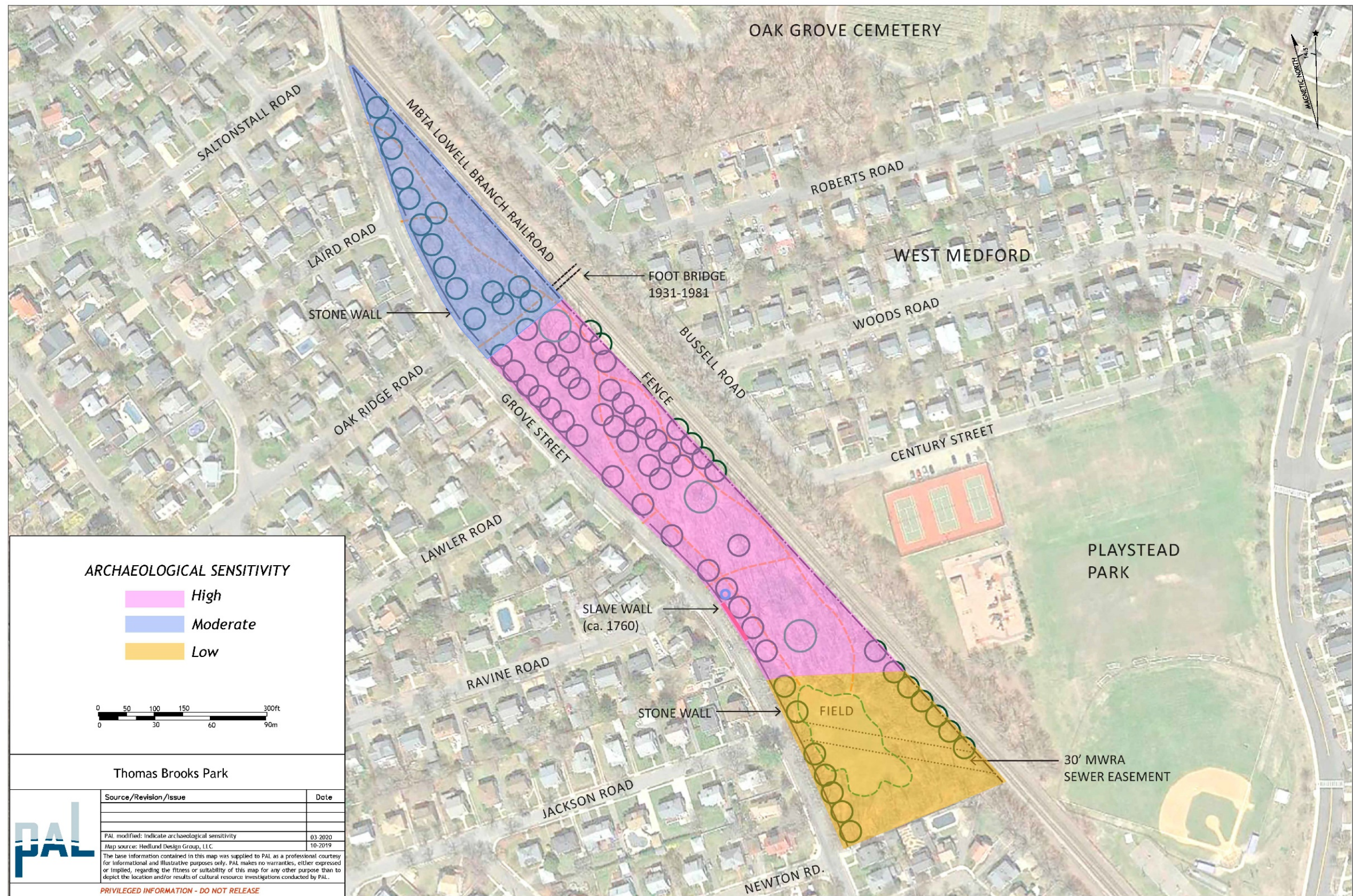


Figure 1. Archaeological sensitivity assigned within the Thomas Brooks Park, Medford, MA, March 2020.