

Thomas Brooks Park Archaeological Protection Concept Design

City of Medford Historical Commission
October 22, 2024

Public Meeting



HEDLUND DESIGN GROUP
LLC

2020 Master Plan





① Wall Restoration



② Archaeological Dig at Estate



③ Grove Street Edge



④ New Crosswalks



⑤ Trail Improvements



⑥ Entry Signage



⑦ Central Allee

Master Plan



- Wall evaluation
- Technical memo
- Restoration options



- Previous joint condition



- Cap stone repair needed

2019 Wall Condition



2023 Wall Restoration





2023 Wall Restoration



- Field stone wall in need of repair

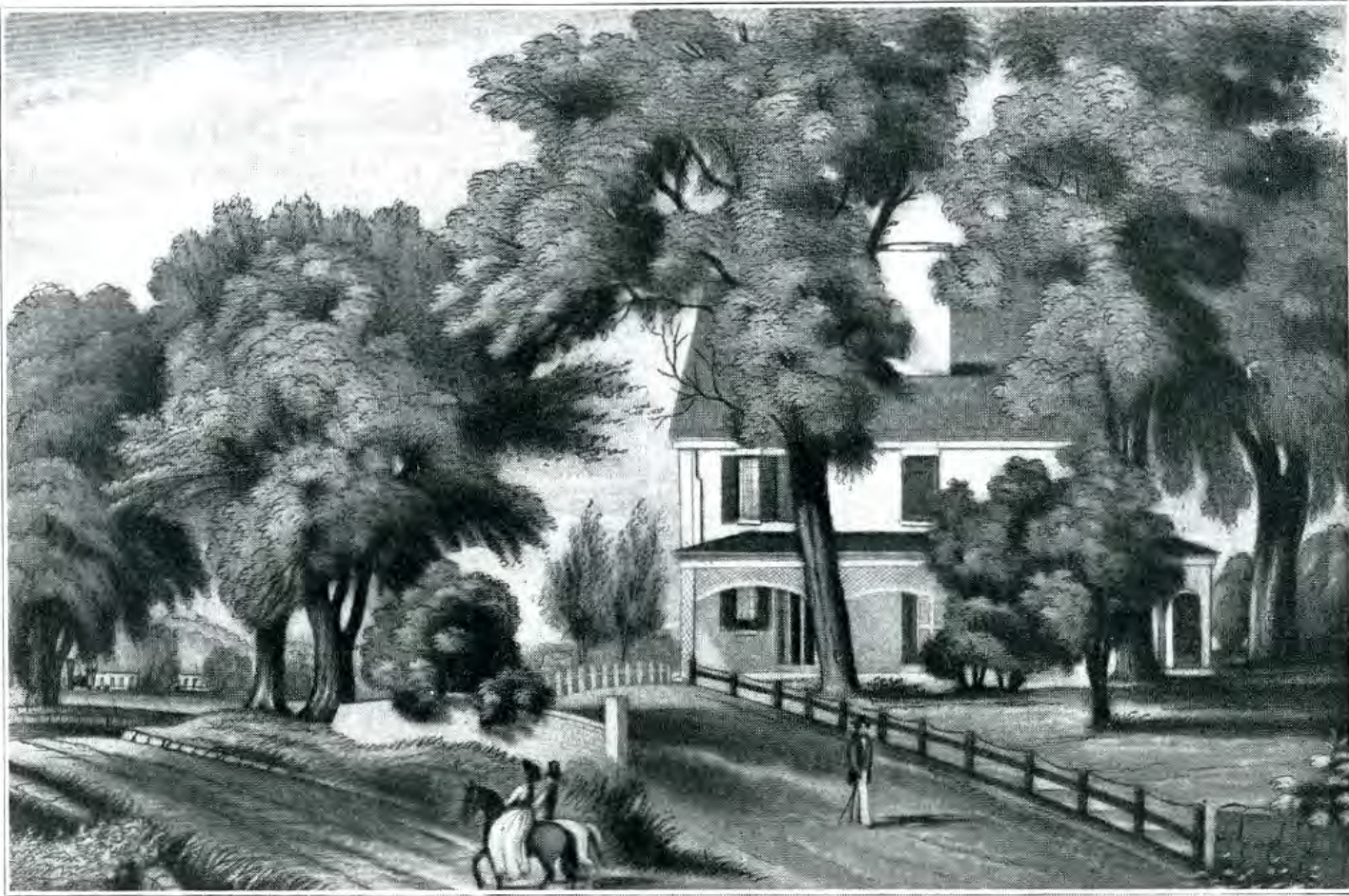


- Clear understory behind wall to provide some visibility into the park

2019 Grove Street Edge Condition



2023 Grove Street Edge Improvements



HOUSE OF THOMAS BROOKS
Built by Samuel Brooks, 1727

- House was built in 1727
- House was demolished in 1860
- Highly sensitive area
- Master Plan proposed an archaeological dig with professional archaeologist
- Work collaboratively with community volunteers
- Possibility to find both pre-contact and post-contact artifacts

Archaeological Dig at Estate Site



2022-23 Archaeological Survey

- 23 test pits
- 1,635 post-contact artifacts
- 64 pre-contact artifacts



Recommendations from 2023 Archaeological Survey Technical Report:

- PAL recommends site protection and preservation measures
- Site protection and preservation measures recommended for the high sensitivity area in and around the house site
- In these archaeologically sensitive areas, belowground disturbances should be avoided and /or kept at a minimum



Approximate house location



Looking south



Looking north

Approximate estate house location



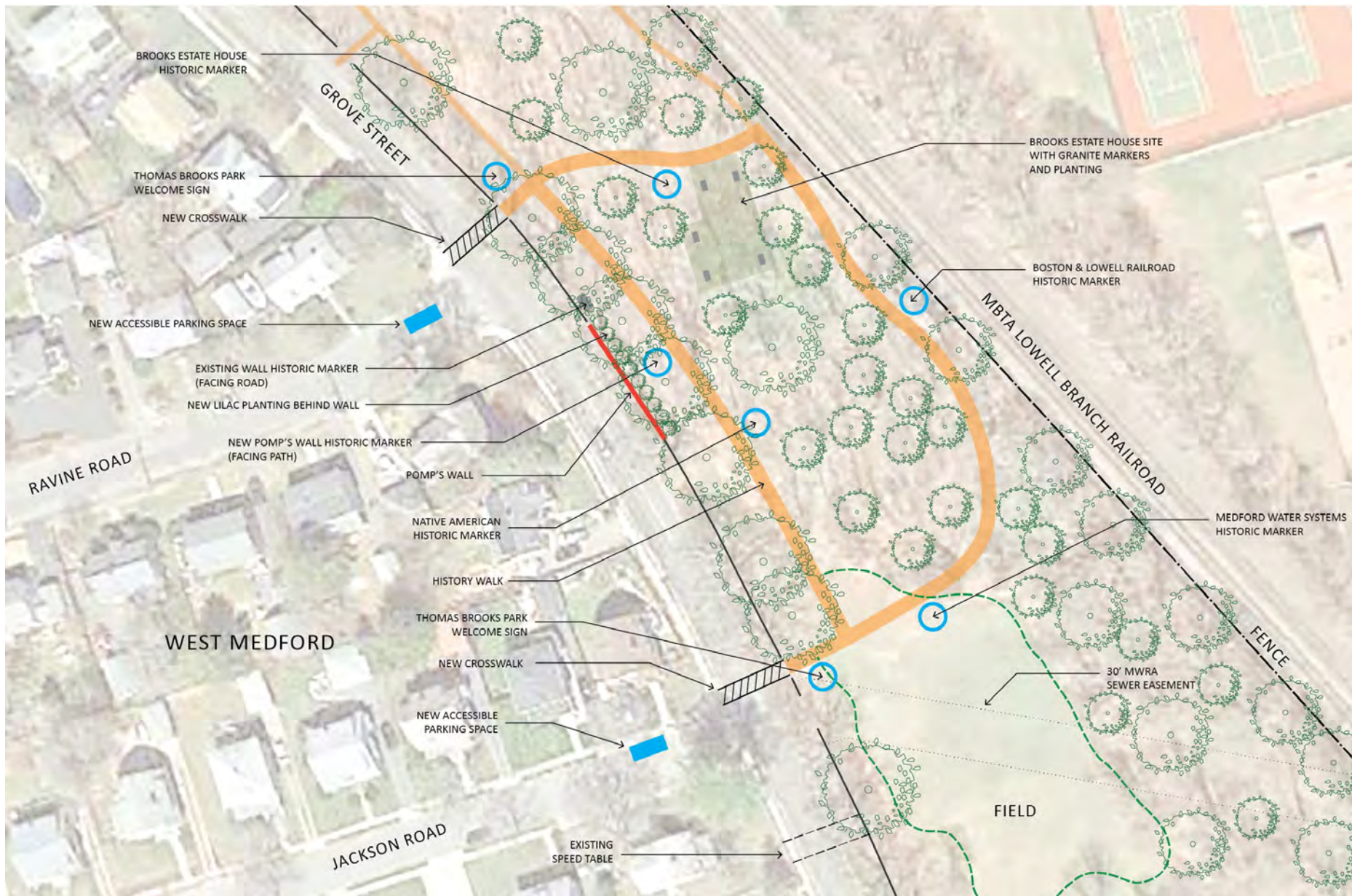
North entrance



South approach

Design Concept

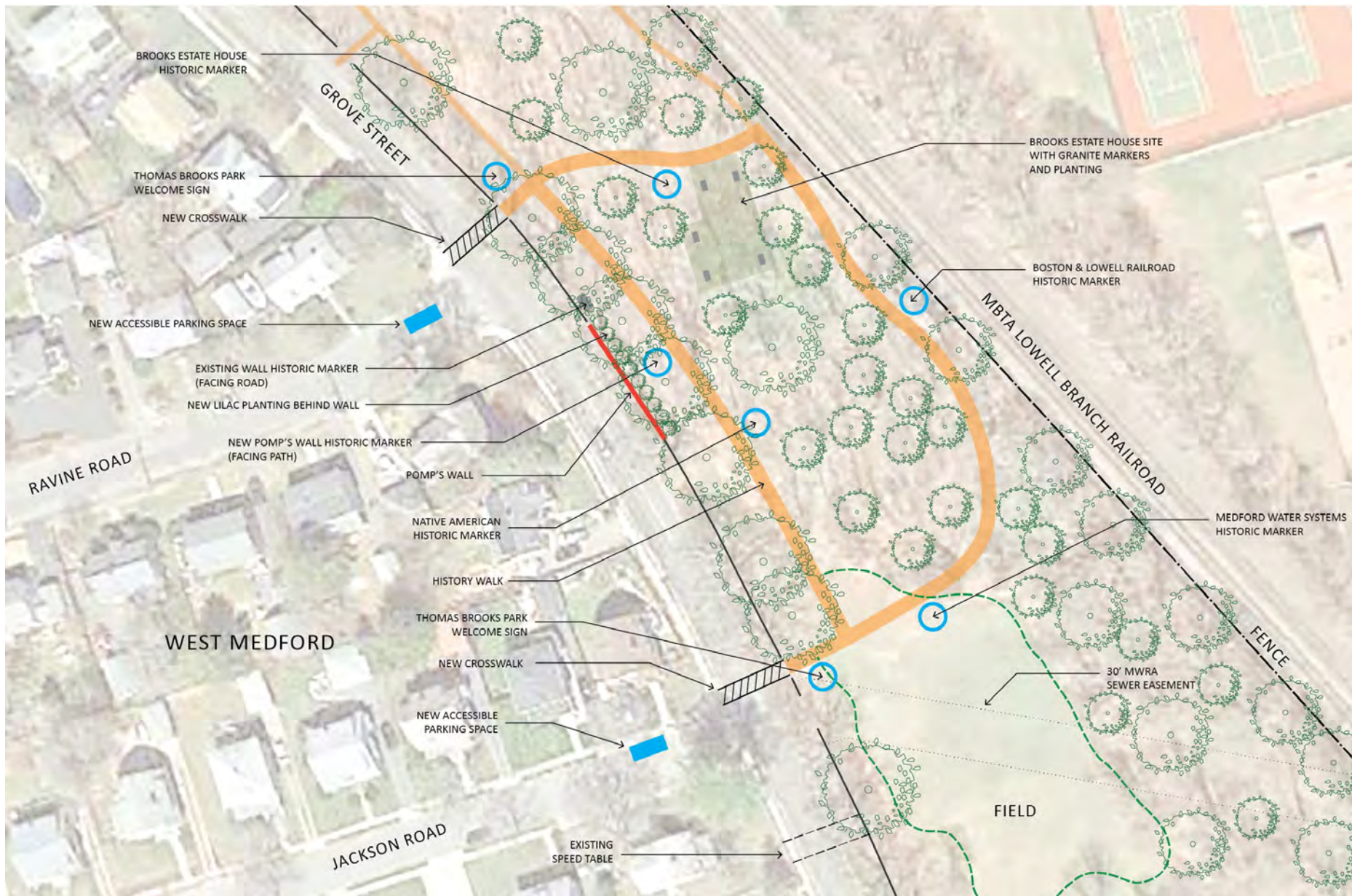
- History walk
- Historic markers
- Park welcome signs
- Estate house site stabilization
- New crosswalks
- Accessible parking



improve accessibility – identification of park – making history visible

History Walk

- Accessible path for slope and surfacing
- Connected to new crosswalks



Thomas Brooks Park Welcome Signs

- Identify park
- Welcome visitors



Thomas Brooks Park
Welcome Signs



Thomas Brooks Park Welcome Signs

- Estate dates back to 1660
- 1860 Brooks Estate plan
- 1855 H.F. Walling Plan
- Adjacent to Boston & Lowell Railroad
- 6-acre park conveyed to the City in 1924

5. Colonial American



4. Boston & Lowell Railroad



History Walk Historic Markers

1. Native American

2. African American

3. Water Systems

4. Boston & Lowell
Railroad

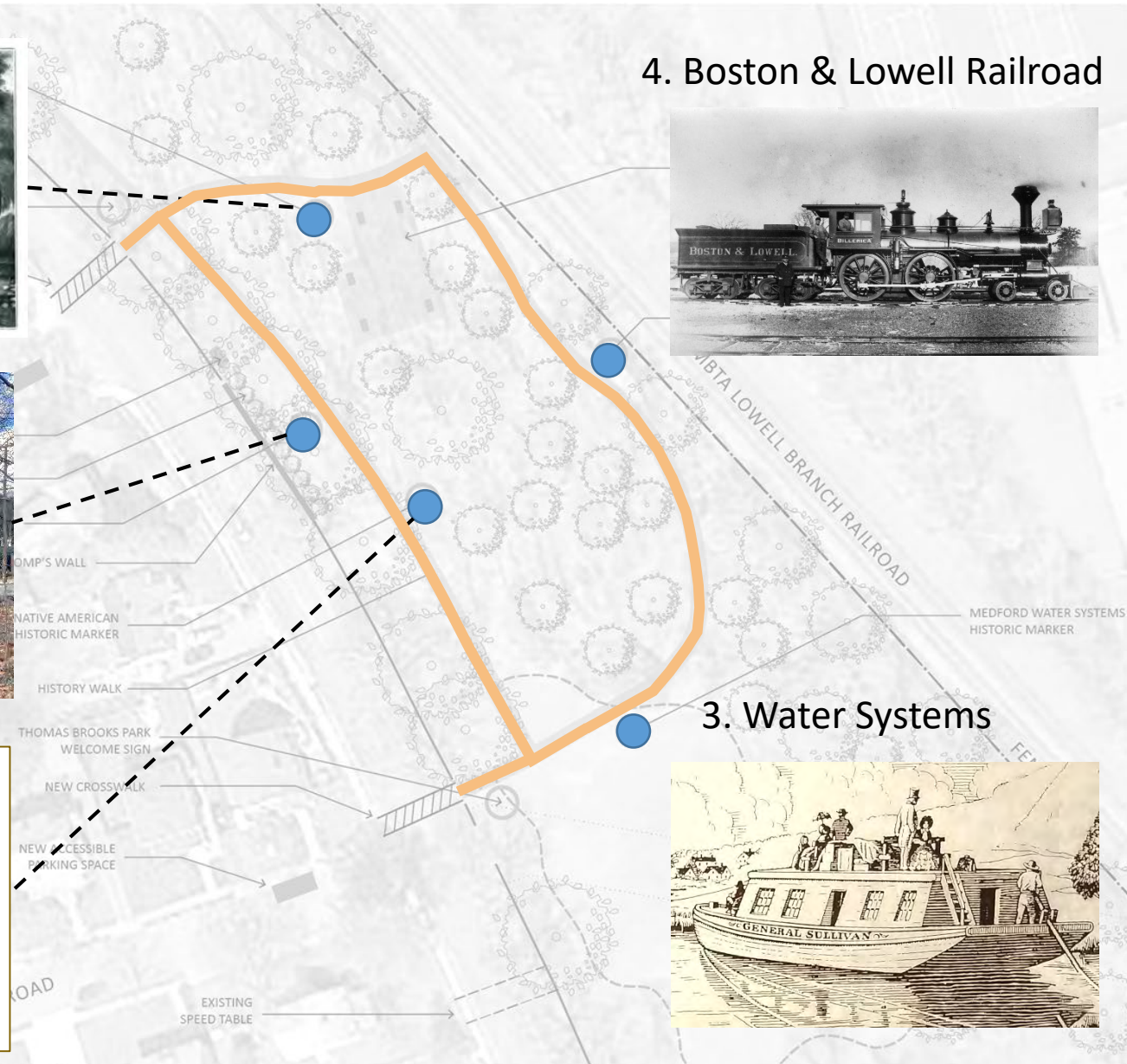
5. Colonial American



2. African American



1. Native American





- Pre-Contact Native American archaeological site
- 64 pre-contact cultural artifacts collected from 2022 dig
 - Chipping debris and pottery shards
 - Middle to Late Woodlands periods (2,000 – 450 years ago)

1. Native American Historic Marker



Wall photo - date unknown



Old Slave Wall on Grove Street in the Brooks Estate, circa 1899.

Wall photo – 1899



Existing marker

- Wall constructed circa 1760
- City required to “preserve and forever maintain” wall
- Important restoration and renaming of the wall

2. Pomp’s Wall Historic Marker

MIDDLESEX CANAL 1793-1853

At this location canal boats pulled by horses carried freight and passengers between Boston and the Merrimack River at Lowell before the days of railroads.

The canal ran from Charlestown through what are now Somerville, Medford, Winchester, Woburn, Wilmington, Billerica, and Chelmsford to Lowell.

The canal was just over 27 miles long. It was 20 ft. wide at the bottom, 30½ ft. wide at the surface, and 3½ ft. deep. There were 20 locks, 8 aqueducts, and 50 bridges.

Here Gilson's Lock, west of the aqueduct over the Mystic River, provided the final drop in canal level before reaching Charlestown.



Erected by Middlesex Canal Commission 1987.

- Middlesex Canal 1793-1853 from Charlestown to Lowell
- Partially financed by Brooks family
- Supplied much of the lumber for Medford shipbuilding
- Medford's role in the Boston water and sewer system



3. Medford Water Systems Historic Marker



- Constructed in 1835
- Partially financed by the Brooks family
- Replaced the Middlesex Canal in order to speed up and provide year-round freight transportation
- Still used today as MBTA commuter rail Lowell Line

4. Boston & Lowell Railroad Historic Marker



Thomas Brooks House

- Sign would interpret history of site
- House was built in 1727
- Curved driveway from street
- Brick wall between street and driveway
- Three black walnut trees in front
- Demolished in 1860
- 1,635 post-contact artifacts recovered from 2022 dig



HOUSE OF THOMAS BROOKS
Built by Samuel Brooks, 1727

5. Brooks Estate House Historic Marker





Brooks Estate Site Protection



- Site protection and preservation measures
- Corner stones to mark site
- Stabilize surface with plantings



Robbins Farm Park, Arlington, MA



Trace of foundation for Governor Winthrop House

Great House Site, Charlestown, MA



Brooks Estate Site Protection



- Stabilize surface with groundcover planting

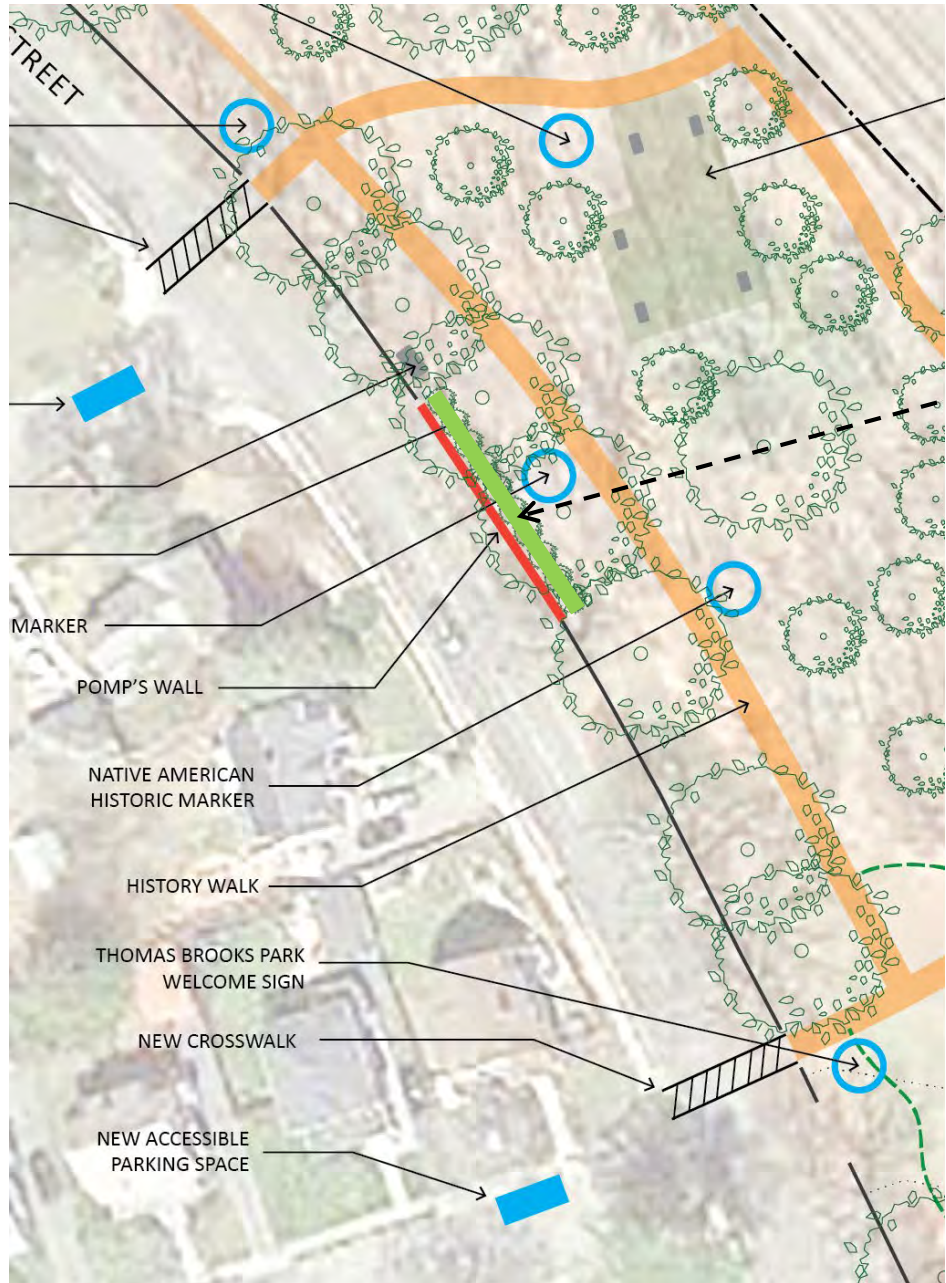


Brooks Estate Site Protection



Chrysogonum virginianum Gold Star

- Native and shade-tolerant perennial
- 6-12" tall
- Blooms for months from late spring to fall



Syringa vulgaris - Lilac

- Part of New England's horticultural heritage
- "Beside the street and between the ends of the drive was this brick wall constructed, and bordered with a row of lilacs."

MHC Form C – from 1912 Medford Historical Register



Existing Conditions – Pomp's Wall from Grove Street



Proposed lilacs behind Pomp's Wall



Existing Conditions – walk behind Pomp's Wall



Proposed Conditions – History Walk

Phase II Construction Update

What is planned for Phase II:

- Larger Archaeological Dig
- Tree Trimming and Deadwood Removal
- ADA/MAAB Curb Cuts, Sidewalk, and Parking Space
- Crossing Identification (striping and signage)
- Public Park Signage



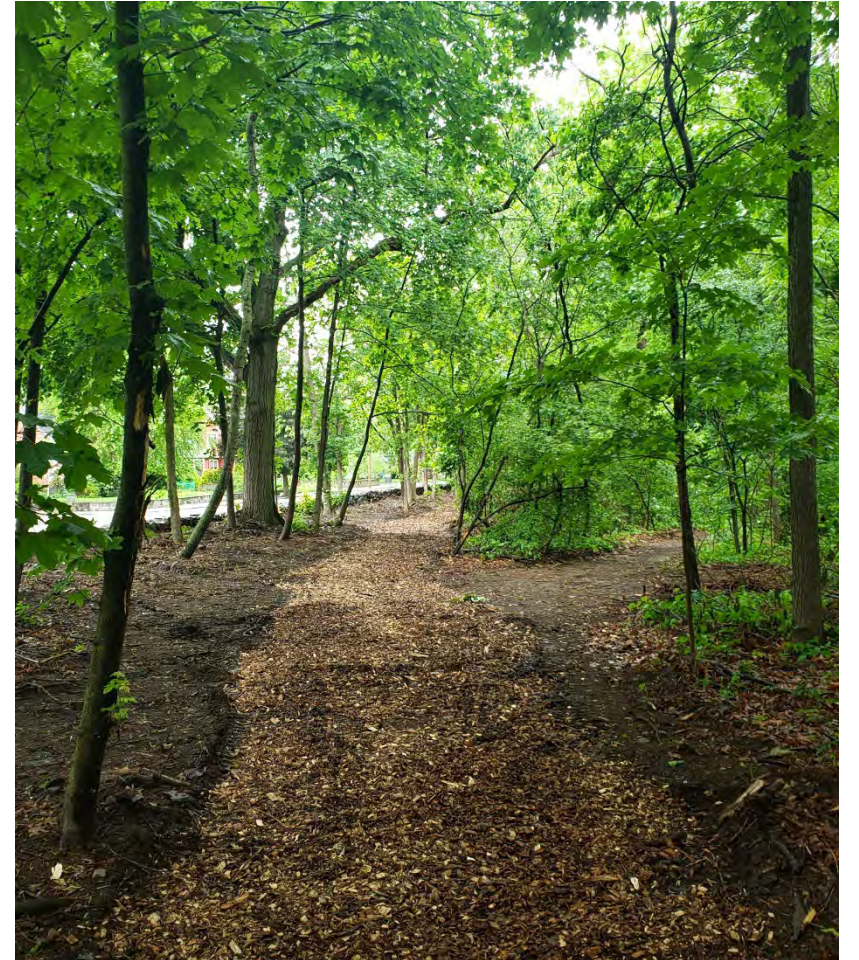
Phase II Construction Update

Being considered for the future:

- Improved Trail Definitions
- Appropriate Plantings/Trees
- Underbrush Thinning and Invasive Cutting

What is **not** being considered:

- No Community Gardens
- No Railroad Bridge/Crossing



Archaeology



Larger Dig Planned:

- Exploration of the Thomas Brooks House Site.
- Volunteers can help. We will reach out for assistance.
- Work will complete our investigations into the sensitivity of the site.
- The archaeological cap will protect the site once work is completed.

Tree Trimming/Deadwood Removal



Addressing the Trees:

- 30+ 150 year old trees will be pruned (Oaks, Maples, Black Walnut).
- 10+ dead/dangerous old trees will be removed.
- Any invasive tree that is dead/dying will be removed (Norway Maples).
- Plant 15 new oak trees to replace those removed and then some.

Tree Trimming/Deadwood Removal



Deadwood Removal

- Trees previously dropped for public safety will be removed.
- Groundwood will be shredded and laid on paths.
- Generally the entirety of debris left behind from trees shall be cleaned up. The scope is the entire park.
- Existing trees to otherwise remain.

Accessibility Improvements

ADA/MAAB Curb Cut and Walk:

- Sidewalk along east side of Grove Street from the current end opposite Newton Road to Jackson Road.
- Curb Cut at all Wall Openings.
- Striped Walkways at Jackson Road, Ravine Road, and Laird Road.
- Signage to Mark Crosswalks.
- Final designs are many months away.



Accessibility Improvements

ADA/MAAB Parking Space:

- A single parking space will need to be provided for an accessible route to the park. The final location TBD.
- This space was moved onto the street to keep automobiles out of the park.
- Will require approval from City entities who will hold a public hearing on the matter. Again, many months away.



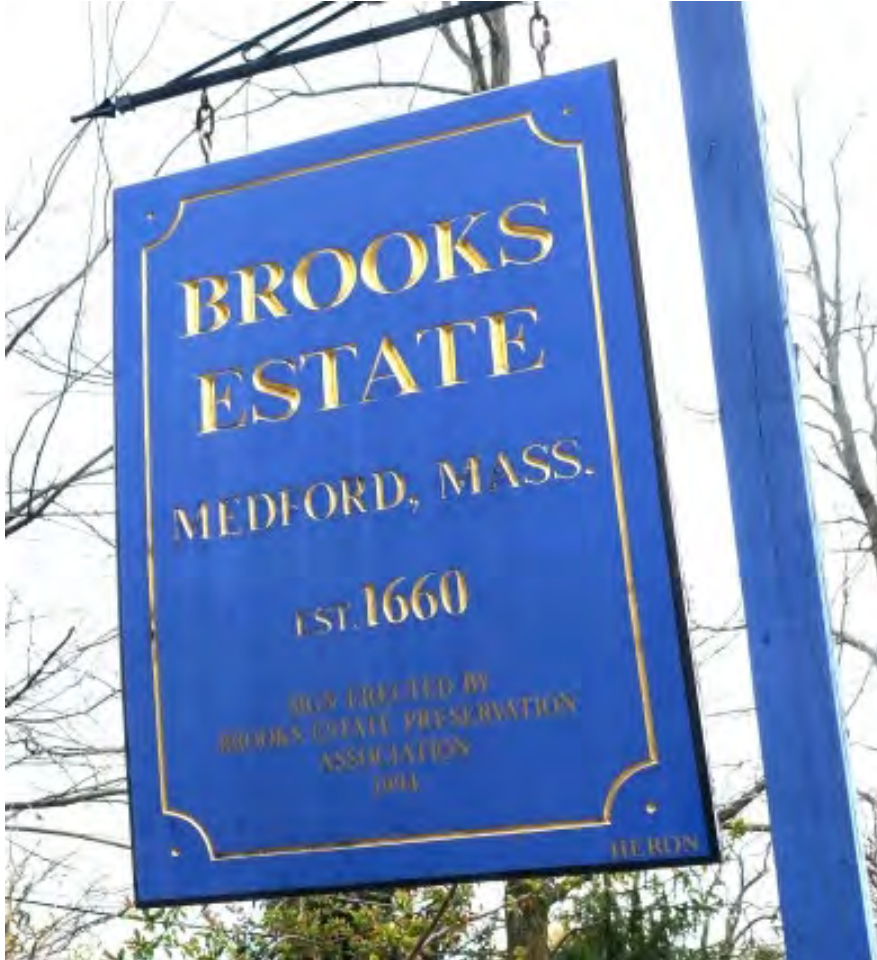
Accessibility Improvements

Striping Walkways:

- Striping will match the existing sidewalk on the street.
- Signage will be kept at a minimum.
- The only lighted sign (if at all) will be proposed at Jackson Road, which is the main entrance to the park.
- Will assist with marking crossing locations so vehicles use caution.



Park Signage



New Signage to Identify the Park

- Sign will be provided at each end of the park at the accessible entrance.
- Design of the sign loosely to look like the Brooks Estate sign.
- Will have a standard list of community park rules/regulations.
- Want to make the community aware of this historic resource.

Ongoing Planning



Tree Planting/Thinning:

- There's an allee of trees that can be restored. New trees will be needed.
- As trees are planted, invasive trees can be thinned.
- Work will be mindful of requests to maintain a sound buffer.

MBTA Fence Repairs:

- Damaged fence will be repaired once tree work complete.

Questions or Comments



We welcome your feedback!

- Please let us know if you have questions.
- Keep comments brief (2 minutes).
- Comments do not all have to be made this evening. Please feel free to email them to the Medford Historical Commission at:

HistoricalCommission@medford-ma.gov

Thank you!