

Belmont Cemetery Preservation Master Plan



October 2024

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Table of Contents

Figures & Tables	5	DPW maintenance & management	103
Introduction	7	Preservation Analysis	107
History of Belmont Cemetery	9	Statement of significance	108
Historical Timeline	11	Period(s) of significance	109
Land Acquisitions	46	Character-defining features	110
Period Plans	47	Statement on integrity	111
Management timeline	54	Preservation treatment methodology	117
Existing Conditions (2023)	61	Treatment methods	117
Landscape inventory & assessment	62	Proposed treatment	117
Setting & site boundaries	63	Conditions Assessment	119
Spatial organization	63	Drive & walkway conditions	121
Views & vistas	68	Drainage	121
Topography & drainage	71	Boundary wall & iron enclosure fence	123
Vegetation & open space	73	Retaining wall above Huron Avenue	123
Circulation: pedestrian & vehicular	81	Headstones & markers	123
Structures in the landscape	87	Drive & walkway signage	123
Small-scale features	89	Chain link fence around Norton Circle	123
Utilities	96	Vegetation	123
Management & procedures	98	Cemetery garage	127
Rules & regulations	98	Preservation Treatment Plan	129
Belmont Cemetery Commission General By-Law (2003)	100	Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation	131
Commemorative shade tree planting program	101	Treatment Recommendations	133
Ceremonies & remembrance	102	Setting & site boundaries	133
		Spatial organization	133

Views & vistas	133
Topography & drainage	133
Vegetation & open space	134
Circulation: pedestrian & vehicular	140
Structures in the landscape	143
Small-scale features	144
Miscellaneous	147
Priority projects	149
Funding opportunities	150
Potential project funding	153

Figures & Tables

Introduction

No figures/tables

History of Belmont Cemetery

1853, Crop of Plan of Watertown.	12
1875, Crop of County Atlas of Middlesex, Massachusetts.	14
1886, Crop of Atlas of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts.	16
1894, Crop of Atlas of the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts.	18
1900, Crop of Atlas of Middlesex County. Vol. 1. Cambridge, Somerville, Arlington, etc.	20
1915, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Belmont, Middlesex County, Massachusetts.	24
1933, Plan Showing Extension of Belmont Cemetery in the City of Cambridge, Mass.	26
1941, Proposed Addition to Belmont Cemetery, 1937.	28
1951, Plan Showing Proposed Addition to Belmont Cemetery, 1945.	30
1938, Crop of USGS Aerial Photography Metro Boston.	32
1955, Crop of USGS Aerial Photography Metro Boston.	33
1969, Crop of USGS Aerial Photography Metro Boston.	36
1978, Crop of USGS Aerial Photography Metro Boston.	37
1995, Crop of USGS Aerial Photography Metro Boston.	38
Undated photographs of the original gate to Belmont Cemetery.	42
Undated photograph of the original gate to Belmont Cemetery.	43
Undated photograph of the original gate to Belmont Cemetery, looking across Grove Street.	43
May 1977 views of the Heart bed, labeled “Flower bed for Mothers’ Day”	44
1977 photographs of cemetery expansion	44
Land Acquisitions Map	46

Period Plan: 1859-1880	47
Period Plan: 1881-1922	48
Period Plan: 1923-1939	49
Period Plan: 1940-1950	50
Period Plan: 1951-1959	51
Period Plan: 1960-1987	52
Period Plan: 1988-2023	53

Existing Conditions

Regional context plan	62
Setting & land use supporting images	63
Setting, site boundaries & spatial organization plan	67
Views & vistas supporting images	68
Views & vistas plan	70
Topography & drainage supporting images	71
Topography & drainage plan	72
Vegetation supporting images	74
Vegetation & open space plan	78
Vegetation: tree species & conditions plan	79
Circulation: pedestrian & vehicular supporting images	80
Circulation: pedestrian & vehicular plan	85
Structures in the landscape supporting images	86
Structures in the landscape plan	88
Small-scale features supporting images	90
Utilities supporting images	94
Small-scale features plan	95
Utilities plan	97

Preservation Analysis

Table of character-defining features	112
--------------------------------------	-----

Conditions Assessment

Images of drive & walkway conditions	120
Images of boundary wall & iron enclosure fence	122
Images of headstones & markers conditions	124
Images of chain link fence conditions	126
Conditions assessment plan	128

Preservation Treatment Plan

Images of hemlock hedge, erosion on Burial Hill & tree damage	136
Proposed vegetation plan	137
Images of example tree protection details & conservation planting	138
Images of example parking signage & existing walkways	142
Images of example site benches	146
Images of example memorial wall for scattering garden	147

Introduction

Project goal: To research, prepare, and present a comprehensive preservation master plan with treatment recommendations consisting of both narrative and graphic elements for Belmont Cemetery.

Cemeteries serve as vital historical, cultural, and emotional landscapes, offering insight into the lives and legacies of those who came before us. They are more than mere resting places; they are repositories of memory and heritage, reflecting the values, traditions, and social dynamics of their communities. However, as time progresses, many cemeteries face significant threats, including environmental degradation, neglect, and urban development pressures.

This preservation report aims to assess the current state of Belmont Cemetery, highlighting its historical significance and the need for preservation efforts. Through a comprehensive evaluation of the site's existing physical condition, historical context, and community value, this report aims to provide guidance for the sustainable stewardship of this important cultural resource. By engaging local stakeholders and fostering a sense of communal responsibility, Belmont Cemetery can continue to honor its past while enriching the future of the community it serves.

In the following sections, we will delve into the cemetery's history, document the existing conditions (2023-2024), provide a preservation analysis of the landscape and its features, identify specific challenges, and propose actionable preservation treatment recommendations for rehabilitation of character-defining features and on-going care of Belmont Cemetery's public amenities.

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History of Belmont Cemetery

From the Department of Public Works:

“One of the first actions of the Town of Belmont after incorporation was to fulfill the requirements for a Town cemetery. The hill site off what is now Grove Street had traditionally been used as a burying hill long before the recognition of Belmont Cemetery in 1859. Belmont Cemetery consists of more than 20 acres with notable local residents, some national figures, and Veterans of every war since inception. Cemetery staff manages and maintains the cemetery’s day-to-day interments and Perpetual Care obligations but does not have the skill set, time, or expertise to properly evaluate, preserve, and restore historic hardscape and historic landscape features and elements throughout the grounds of the Cemetery.”

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Historical Timeline

c. 12,500 BCE

First known Native American settlements in what is now known as New England

c. 1000-450

During this era, the native people began to self-identify as settlements or villages were established, cultivation became more common, and trade patterns solidified. The native people in this region were part of the Massachusett Federation and spoke Algonquin.

c. 1500-1630

The Contact Era settlement at Pequuset (also 'Pequoset' or 'Pequoset') was located near today's Payson Reservoir. Archaeological evidence from this era has been uncovered in Belmont near Grove Street, to the west of Fresh Pond and to the south of Little Pond. The Massachusetts Historical Society reports that there was a likely trail connecting Fresh Pond to Spy Pond in today's Arlington which "apparently followed Grove, Blanchard, Brighton Streets around Little Pond".

1614

The Massachusett Federation numbered approximately 3,000 people in twenty villages across the Boston Basin.

1629

March 4: A land grant received from King Charles I of England to start Massachusetts Bay Colony

1630

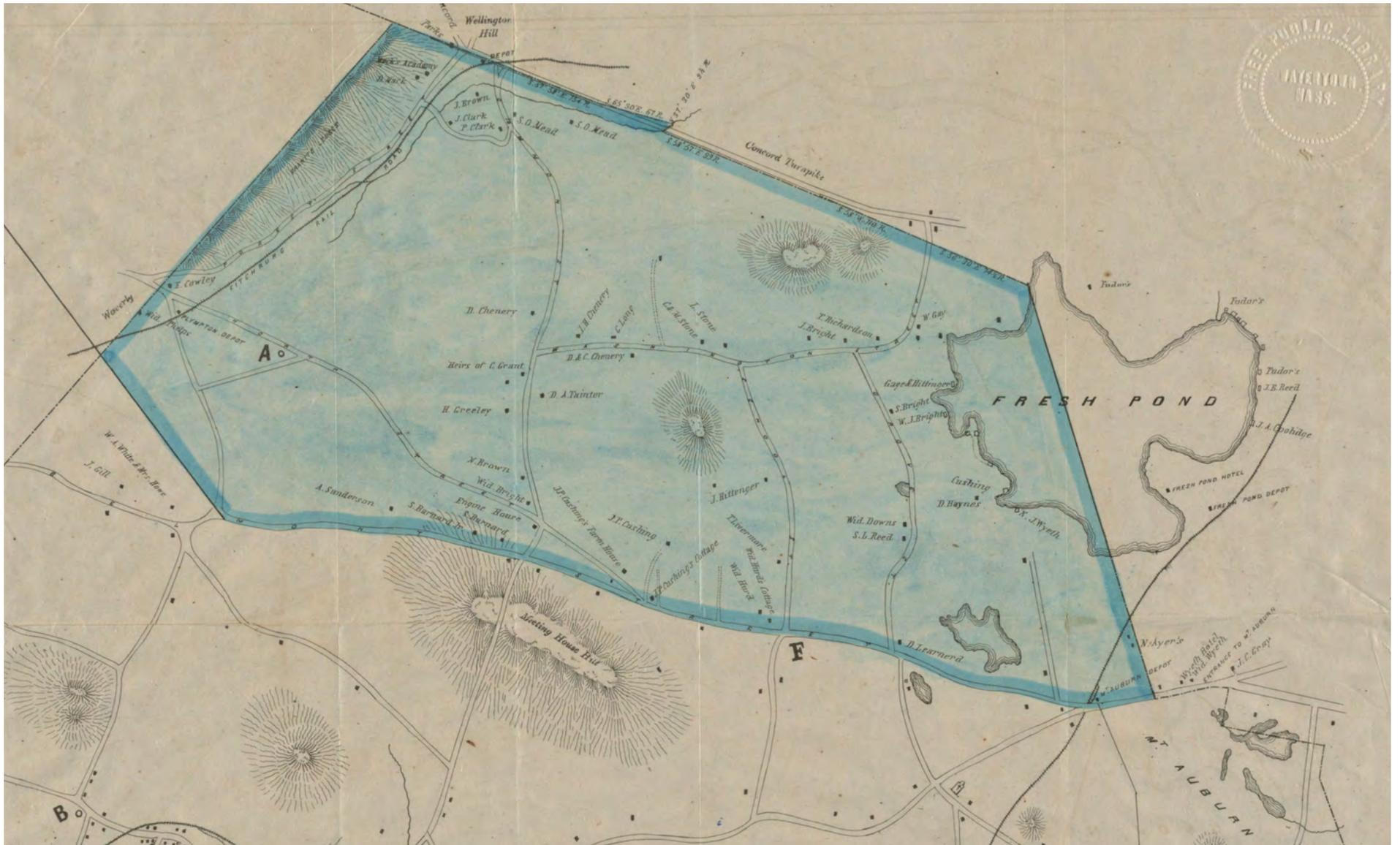
Settlement of the area began after the Massachusetts Bay Colony landed in Salem and a group of approximately 40 families moved inland. There were likely no more than a dozen families in the area that now comprises the Town of Belmont. From the 1930 Town of Belmont Annual Report: "Capt. Richard Beers and Elizabeth came over in 1630 and lived on the southwest shore of Fresh Pond and his lands comprised that now occupied by the Belmont Cemetery."

1634

First known mention of the ancient graveyard of the Pequuset Plantation was established in the area; located near present day Arlington and Mount Auburn Streets of Watertown.

1638

By order of the General Court, the Pequuset were paid 13 pounds, 7 shillings, and 6 pence for the land.



1853, Crop of "Plan of Watertown. The colored portion showing the part proposed to be taken from it for the [T]own of Belmont." The map shows the portion of Watertown that was to be annexed for the newly incorporated Town of Belmont. Image courtesy of Digital Commonwealth.

1654

Richard Beers opened an inn on “The Driftway”—today’s Grove Street—which “led from present day Belmont Street to the Inn, and was on the hill sloping down to what is now called Fresh Pond, lying just across from the present day cemetery.”

1831

Mount Auburn Cemetery opens in Cambridge—the first of its kind as a rural or garden cemetery—as a landscape not just for burying the dead, but for celebrating them, and even as a park for passive recreation. Mount Auburn changed how Americans related to death and how they buried their loved ones.

1842

To support the local ice harvesting business, a railroad was constructed from Fresh Pond to Charlestown where the wharves were located to ship ice to destinations abroad.

1843

A railroad spur connected Fresh Pond to Watertown, passing through the small village of Waverly—what eventually became Belmont Center—with a stop named Wellington Hill. “No town in New England, unless it be a railroad centre [sic], owes its existence as a distinct municipality more directly to railroad enterprise, than does the Town of Belmont.” (Davis, 1890)

1849

Jacob Hittinger moved to the area and starts ice business on Fresh Pond. Hittinger was a key player in the annexation and incorporation of the Town of Belmont.

1853

A petition for land annexation was submitted to the Massachusetts Legislature by approximately 1,000 persons to create a new town as the local governments (Watertown, Waltham, and West Cambridge/Arlington) were too remote for voting and town meetings. One of the petitioners was John Perkins Cushing, a wealthy man, who financially supported the incorporation, with the condition that the new municipality was named after his estate: “Bellmont”.

1854

The first petition, signed by 128 residents, was submitted to the General Court of Massachusetts for an act of incorporation as a new town. However, parties from the towns of Watertown, West Cambridge, and Waltham—from which Belmont was to be created—objected to the petition. Both houses of the Legislature rejected the petition.

1855

A new petition was filed with the Legislature lead by Jacob Hittinger, David Mack, Albert Higgins, and Leonard Stone. A bill was reported to, but refused, by the Massachusetts Senate.

1856

Hittinger and 101 other petitioners again filed for incorporation; this time the bill was defeated in the House.



1875, Crop of "County Atlas of Middlesex, Massachusetts". The original limits of the Town of Belmont, prior to annexation by Cambridge, outlines in yellow. Image courtesy of Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.

1857

One meetinghouse and two post offices were established in town (one in Belmont and one in Waverly), as well as a female seminary.

Hittinger and 127 other petitioners again filed for incorporation. This time, a bill was introduced by the Committee on Towns, but it was defeated in the Massachusetts Senate.

1858

Hittinger and 201 other petitioners again filed for incorporation with the same outcome as 1857.

1859

Hittinger and 203 additional petitioners introduced a bill to the Committee on Towns. Finally, this bill passed the Massachusetts House and the Senate.

March 18: The bill was signed and approved by Governor Honorable Nathaniel P. Banks, and the Town of Belmont was incorporated with 1,175 inhabitants after 6-year dispute. Lands totaling 429 acres were annexed from Waltham, 1,773 acres from West Cambridge (now known as Arlington) and 1,443 acres from Watertown. West Cambridge is reported to have lost “one-third of its territory, one-fifth of its population, and a quarter of its taxable property”—most disappointed to have lost “those fertile farms”. The new Town of Belmont totaled 3,648 acres or 5.75 square miles and was valued at \$2,036,077.

March 28: The first town meeting was held where the act of incorporation was accepted.

October: The Belmont Cemetery Committee was established.

6 acres of land was purchased for the cemetery (5.5 acres) and a school (0.5 acre) from Leonard Stone for cost of \$400 per acre, total of \$2,200. Additional funds were spent on grading the earth, laying out and staking of lots, fence installation, etc.

A schoolhouse located at south side of Belmont Street in Watertown was purchased for \$600 from Deacon Thomas Livermore.

1860

May 9: The Cemetery Committee voted to construct a wall “26 rods in length, on the northeasterly line of the lot, at an expense of \$260.”

November 6: The first version of the *Rules and Regulations of the Belmont Cemetery* were established (Rules 1 to 11). The Board of Selectmen determined to provide burial lots to residents free of charge with families of two or more:

“Every inhabitant of the town, being a voter, and having a family consisting of two or more, shall be entitled to a lot; also, every female whose family shall consist of two or more, shall likewise be entitled to a lot...”

“Each and every inhabitant of the town who shall be entitled to a lot ... shall draw a number which shall be considered as his or her lot. ... The same method shall be adopted until all the lots shall be drawn from the box.”

The Board of Selectmen allocated 265 burial lots with 8 graves each, 24 tomb lots, and 58 single grave lots.

The purchased schoolhouse was relocated from Watertown to Belmont near the corner of Grove Street and the road now known as Huron Avenue (then called Cushing Street) by James Mellon for \$149.



1886, Crop of "Atlas of the [C]ity of Cambridge, Massachusetts." Belmont Cemetery is shown in green towards the top center. Image courtesy of Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.

1861

January: The first recorded burial at Belmont Cemetery was Henrietta Downs, a 3-year old, who apparently died of 'scalds'.

Town expenditures were recorded for setting posts, building walls, and working teams of horses. Additional expenses included \$15 for printing the *Rules and Regulations*, and paying Lemuel Hatch for providing a hearse to transport bodies to the Cemetery.

1862

From the Annual Report: "The expenditures at the Cemetery for the past year, have been for labor, in grading, graveling, and otherwise improving the avenues and walks, in continuance of the work commenced last year."

"A gate of some description is required, to make a finish in the new wall, on the side of Cushing street, so called [now known as Huron Avenue]. ... The Cemetery, at the present time, is but partially enclosed, and it is recommended that a wall or fence be built, beginning at the end of the new wall on Cushing [S]treet, near the School-House, and from thence running to the fence on the opposite side of the lot. The area thus enclosed, would include all the grave lots, as well as other lands well adapted to tomb lots, altogether, affording ample accommodation to meet the wants of inhabitants for many years; leaving the School-House lot, gravel bank, and all the land lying between the proposed new wall, and the street called Grove street, unclosed, at least for the present. Quite a number of the grave lots are already occupied by the burial of the dead, some of which are by removals from burying-grounds in other towns."

Shade trees and shrubs were planted for "ornamental purposes".

1864

Expenditures documented for building and painting of more fence, as well as the repair of existing fence, and the seeding of grass.

1865

\$156.56 was spent on a new iron gate at 'the main entrance' paid to/fabricated by Kendall & Roberts as well as for repairs to the existing gate on the 'northeast side'.

1866

The Town spent \$25 on planting trees, plus additional funds on building new lengths of fence.

1868

From the Annual Report: "No labor has been performed, or expense incurred at the Cemetery, except for the purchase and planting of a small lot of trees, and to keep the principal avenues free from grass and weeds."

1871

Patrick Skahan purchased 15 acres of land, including some adjacent to the cemetery, and established a market garden (produce). Eventually his two sons ran the farm. John W. Skahan to the west of the Grove Street including the house at 74 Grove Street and the seven greenhouses along Fairview Avenue. Edward F. Skahan owned the house and seven acres of land to the east of Grove Street adjacent to the cemetery.



1894, Crop of "Atlas of the [C]ity of Cambridge, Massachusetts." Image courtesy of Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.

1872

The Board of Selectmen determined that the land selected for the cemetery was poor, “that considerable work has been done to improve the looks of the Cemetery, ... it is very difficult to make anything grow or do well upon it.” The report continued: “We would suggest to the town, the feasibility of purchasing a more suitable lot for a Cemetery, procuring the necessary legislation, if needed to remove the bodies to the new Cemetery; using the present one for a gravel bank; which would supply the town with good gravel for several years.”

1873

The Town of Belmont established a public library.

1877

From the Annual Report: “It was found that the stakes defining the bounds of the lots had become decayed, and they have been replaced by new ones of hard-wood, and renumbered, at an expense of \$50.”

The Town of Belmont built a 12-room ‘Tramp House and stable’ on Concord Avenue with five jail cells in the basement.

1880

Agriculture was the principal business in town, farming fruits and vegetables, which was made possible by the train line that came into Belmont Center allowing farmers to export their goods into Boston.

The Strawberry Hill area of Belmont was annexed to Cambridge (0.89 square miles/570 acres) to protect its drinking water as a reaction to the building of a slaughterhouse on the shores of Fresh Pond in Belmont). The new town boundary was a “straight line from Belmont Street to Blanchard Road (then Washington Street) except where it crossed the cemetery where it was drawn around this site to avoid taking any.” With this annexation, Belmont lost “one-tenth of its taxable property, one-third of its school children, and one-sixth of its area”. A boundary stone was located in the cemetery.

The Annual Report stated that the grounds were generally in good condition, and that the iron gate had been repainted. It also made the first mention of annexing the ‘Grove Street School-House’ grounds to enlarge the cemetery.

Also from the Annual report: “Any person burying a body in the Belmont Cemetery, will please notify the Town Clerk as soon as possible.”

1881

The lot with the ‘Grove Street School-House’ was annexed and the schoolhouse was sold to the City of Cambridge and thus relocated. This was the first of several enlargements of the cemetery grounds. A map depicting the development of the Cemetery, included in the State Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, and an 1875 plat plan locate the schoolhouse near the center of the original parcel.



1900, Crop of "Atlas of Middlesex County. Vol. 1. Cambridge, Somerville, Arlington, Belmont, Watertown, Everett, Malden, Medford, Newton, Waltham." Note "Cider Mill Pond" located near the rear of today's Cemetery. Image courtesy of Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center.

1882

\$500 was spent to regrade the lot where the ‘Grove Street School-House’ stood from 1860-1881. This resulted in the closure of the original entrance of the Cemetery and its relocation to the intersection of Grove Street and Cushing Street (today’s Huron Avenue) where it remains today. “The high embankment has been reduced to an easy grade, new roads have been laid out, and it looks very much better.”

1883

A committee was formed to expand the Cemetery grounds. From the Annual Report: “About 250 feet of new wall, capped with granite fourteen inches wide and eight inches thick, were built, and the same pointed with cement. Two new stone posts were set at the entrance way. The portion that was graded last year was property laid out for burial lots, thirty-eight in number.”

1884

From the Annual Report: “We now have a continuous line of stone wall on Grove and Cushing Streets, capped with Rockport granite, eight by fourteen inches.”

It was also reported that Mr. Joseph H. Curtis had drawn a plan of grounds—for which he was paid \$40—though no record of such a plan exists.

1885

Town Meeting decided that burial lots were to be sold for \$25 each.

Census shows that the Town of Belmont is first in the county of producing fruits and second in the county for vegetables.

1886

From the Annual Report: Painted and numbered stakes were replaced in the older portion of the cemetery and in the newer portion bounds are marked with granite markers “marked by numerals cut in the stone, at a corner of each lot.”

The report also stated that a new boundary fence was required on the southern border along the Skahan property. The Committee reported that a twenty by twenty foot shed—with slate roof and concrete floor—would be useful to keep “necessary implements” on the grounds, as well as another shed to house the horses of visitors. There is no indication that these structures were built.

An 1886 map of Cambridge showed that, at a minimum, drives resembling today’s entry and the teardrop bed had been constructed, along with both Central and Magnolia Avenues.

1887

The Cemetery was again enlarged, though not significantly, with the purchase of a “narrow strip of land” from Patrick Skahan. Three feet of land on the southern edge was purchased to allow the construction of a 773-foot fence (completed for forty-five cents per linear foot). The fence was fabricated of pine rails and slats, and painted white. An updated plan was prepared by Mr. Hammatt; no record of this plan exists.

1889

A new rule was adopted that states that no burial of a body is permitted without supervision of the Superintendent of the Cemetery.

The Commissioner of Public Burial Grounds becomes an elected official.

January 14: Cambridge officially annexed the land previously held by Belmont to protect their drinking water supply in Fresh Pond.

1890

Rules for the cemetery were published (this included rules 1 to 11 from 1860, with rules 12 to 15 newly adopted). The price for a grave lot was increased to \$50 with single graves priced at \$5.

“Superintendent Chant has charge of the Cemetery grounds. The walks and drives are kept clean and neat, and the grass cut once or twice a year.” (The mention of grass being cut only once or twice a year is significant compared to today’s standards of mowing to keep turf short. Formal lawns—as we think of them today—in cemeteries were not a convention of early cemeteries in the United States.)

The Annual Report stated that the rear fence is decaying as it was made of wood and needed to be replaced.

1895

There was a minor notation in the Annual Report that stated that some shrubs had been planted in the Cemetery for ornamental character.

1896

Over ten miles of Town of Belmont roads were lit with electric lights.

1897

An increased demand for burial lots was credited to the attractiveness of the grounds.

1899

An agreement of perpetual care was established. The agreement set no price, but guaranteed the burial lot will have grass maintained and top-dressed, “and the remaining income, if any, to be used as the Board shall deem for the best interest of the lot”.

1900

Cemetery Rule 16 increased the price to \$50 per lot; single graves remained at \$5 each.

The Annual Report stated that only three lots and four graves were sold during the year with nineteen burials.

1902

The Annual Report stated that 600 boundary stones were set, “four to each lot”. Also, “the committee recommend[ed] putting up a wall on the easterly side of the cemetery; the foundation is set.”

Town’s first library building was donated by Henry Oliver Underwood.

1903

From the Annual Report: “Massive granite retaining wall built along eastern boundary line of the cemetery grounds bordering on the pond, thus doing away with the steep embankment and the expense incurred by washouts caused by heavy rains.” Filling and grading of an acre of land made usable for single graves.

Granite posts with lot numbers chiseled upon them were substituted for stakes which formerly marked for division of lots.

1907

At Town Meeting, a movement was made to have the Town change the name of Huron Avenue, from the cemetery to Washington Street to the north, to Grove Street.

1912

The first outdoor public swimming pool in America was built by Loring Underwood for the Town of Belmont on Concord Avenue.

From the Annual Report: “Under Articles XII and XIII of the warrant for the Annual Meeting of March, 1912, a Committee was appointed by Moderator to consider and report upon ‘what action the town will take toward acquiring additional land for cemetery purposes, appropriate money for the same or in any way act thereon,’ and to see what action the town will take towards advancing the price for lots for burial in the cemetery. ...

The Committee respectfully ask for further time to consider and report upon the question of acquiring additional land for cemetery purposes. There are now about 48 lots for sale in the present town cemetery, and the cemetery committee think that will be sufficient for about three years. The Committee has examined

and had suggested several sites for additional land and has endeavored to arrive at some price with owners of such lands.”

The Cemetery Committee recommended that records be kept for location of burials.

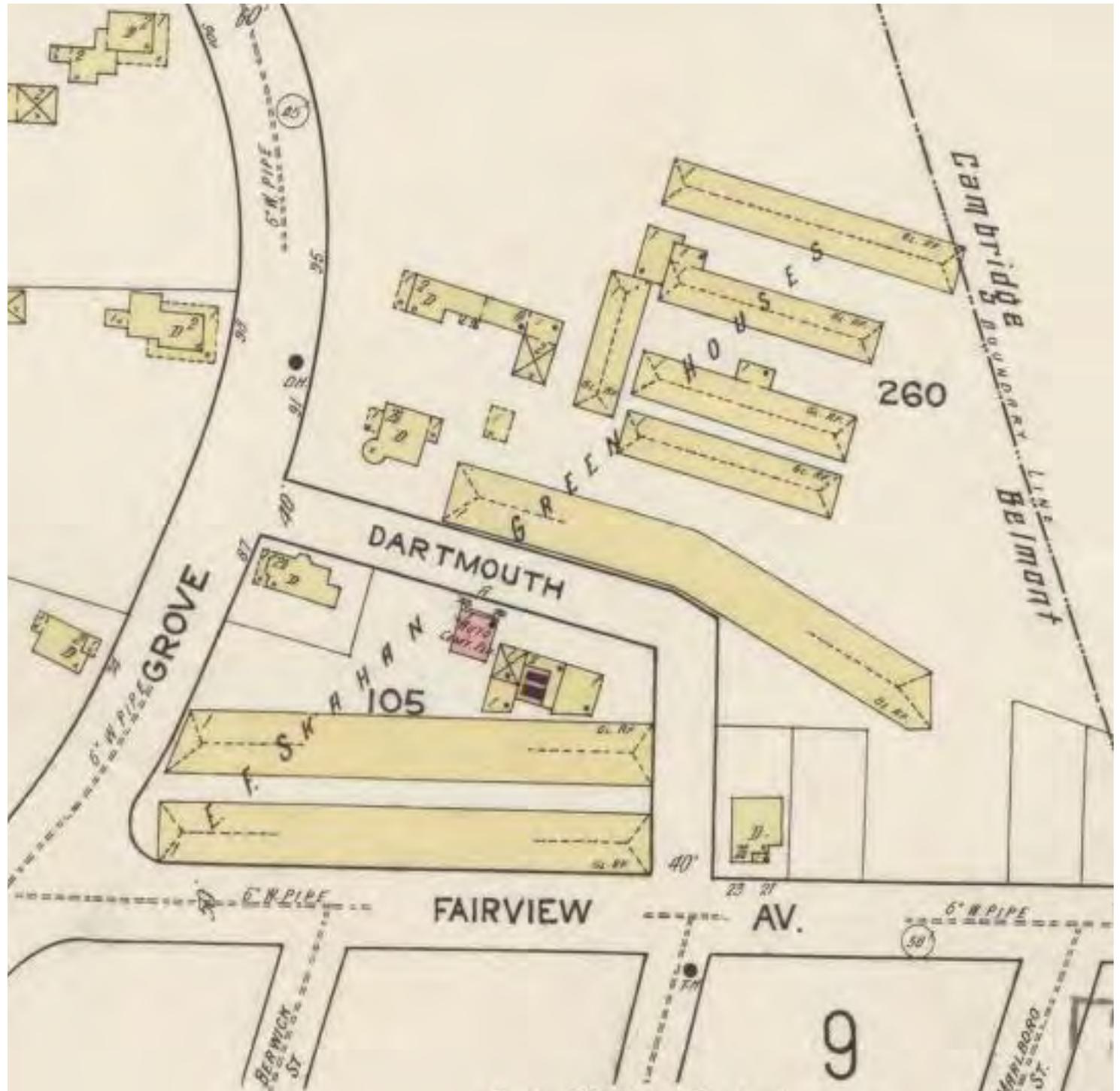
1913

Town Meeting determines that prices for lots were to be increased to \$200, \$100 of which would be dedicated to perpetual care, and singles graves for \$10, with \$5 to dedicated to perpetual care. From this time on, all lots were sold with perpetual care. The *Rules and Regulations* are revised by Town Meeting.

The Commissioners acted to request that existing owners of lots contributed to the upkeep of the cemetery by paying into the perpetual care fund held in the Belmont Savings Bank. From the Annual Report: “During the year your committee sent out circular letters to all owners of lots, asking them to help keep the cemetery in its present condition, by having their lots put under perpetual care.”

The Annual Report of the Commissioners of Public Burying Grounds also reiterated their request made over the last two years for acquiring new land to expend the cemetery, as it was anticipated to be full within the next two years. They also anticipated that new land would take at least a year to be ready for burials.

1915, Crop of "Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Belmont, Middlesex County, Massachusetts." Note the greenhouse in today's Cemetery boundary, as well as Dartmouth Street where additional structures had been constructed. Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.



1914

The decision on acquiring additional land for the cemetery was again delayed with “no pressing need”. The 1914 report states that the Committee found very little land in town suitable for using as cemetery and that objections were expressed regarding some of the parcels that they had been studying. Furthermore, they reported: “We have looked over our present cemetery very carefully and by close study and survey, found that by raising the wall and changing the grade of the east end, we can layout about seventy-two lot more there. In other places, now vacant, we can layout seventy-four lots more and a large number of single graves without materially changing its present beautiful effect. We have yet some thirty-seven lots in the old layout and we propose to dispose of the greater part of those before we lay out the rest of the land that is available in the cemetery.”

1918

Warrant 23 at the Town Meeting requested that the Town approve the acquisition of “one or more suitable places for the internment of persons dying within the town”. Warrant 24 requested funding for the purchase of said land, as well as the funding for survey, planning, and the laying out of the lots, avenues, and “embellishment”. Both warrants were approved by the Town. A Committee comprised of Edwin E. Farnum, Richard Hittinger, and Joseph E. Perry was formed to study potential parcels of land for cemetery expansion.

1919

From the Annual Report: “The present area of the cemetery is about six acres. ... There remains unsold about 90-2 grave lots, 85-1 grave lots and about 25 other lots, mostly 8 graves.”

“The maintenance of roads, walks, fences, vault, and other property is at the expense of the Town except insofar as met by the proceeds from the sale of lots and the income from invested funds.”

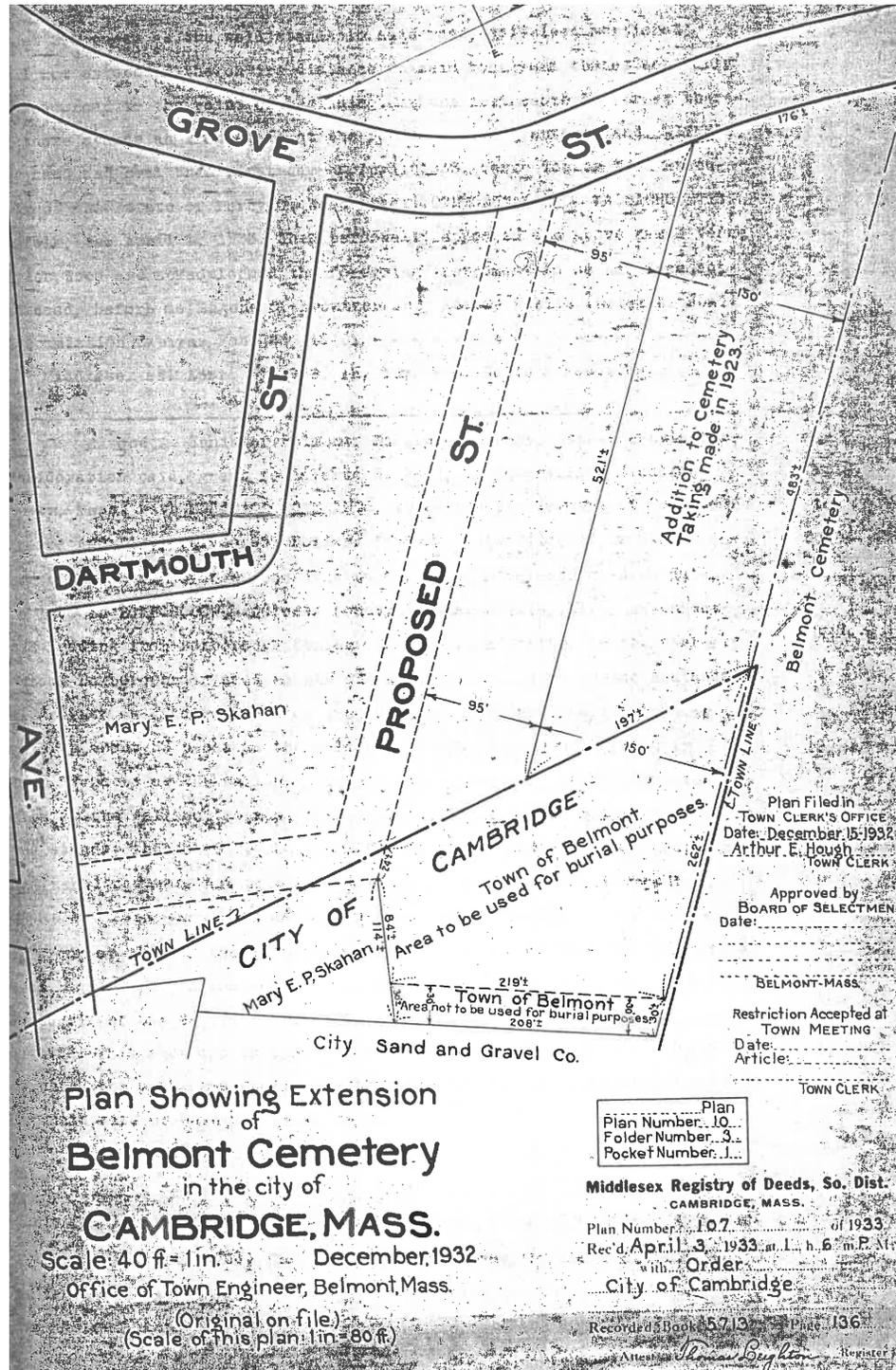
“Economical use of the existing plant and the general aversion to cemeteries both argue for an enlargement of the present one rather than the location of a new cemetery in some other part of the town. ... At the present time, there are two tracts of land available, the smaller tract is owned by Mrs. Mary E. P. Skahan and adjoins the present cemetery on Grove Street, and the other is directly across Grove Street, opposite the present cemetery and contains any desired area up to about 10 acres. ... The Skahan lot is level and adaptable to cemetery purposes and is located partly in the town of Belmont and partly in the City of Cambridge. ... The other tract, on the westerly side of Grove Street ... would require considerable grading.”

The Committee recommended the purchase of the Skahan land east of Grove Street adjacent to the existing cemetery. The Committee recommended survey of both parcels for further investigation.

1921

A flagpole was installed near the entry for \$214.80.

1933, "Plan Showing Extension of Belmont Cemetery in the City of Cambridge, Mass." Image courtesy of Town of Belmont Registry of Deeds.



1923

March: Town Warrant Articles 29 and 30 voted to approve the funds necessary to purchase the lands totaling 119,400 square feet (2.74 acres) from the Mrs. Mary Ellen Purcell Skahan estate adjacent to the existing cemetery, and to purchase a 51,000-square foot (1.17 acre) parcel at the rear of Grove Street, adjacent to the existing cemetery, but within the City of Cambridge. This lot was for the purpose of “park and playground, or for any other public purposes”. Also, “the greenhouse, the greater part of which is on said premises ... is not included in the order of taking.” The seller was allowed 60 days to remove the structure from the parcel. The Belmont parcel was purchased for \$5,000 and the Cambridge parcel for \$4,000. (Recorded by the Registry of Deeds in Book 4602, pages 144-146.)

Land near the new flagpole was set aside for the ‘Legion’ lot, later Veterans’ Section 1.

1924

April: Within the City of Cambridge, 5,100 square feet of land was purchased from Mrs. Skahan adjacent to land “now or formerly of the City Sand and Gravel Co.” (Recorded by the Registry of Deeds in Book 4715, pages 305-308.) Additionally, 75,225 square feet (1.73 acres) was purchased. These were the lands approved by Town Meeting under Article 30, above.

1925

Skahan estate greenhouses were sold (\$400) and the shed relocated. (\$460.27)

Funds were appropriated for laying out and grading of lands; a survey was undertaken. (\$345.97)

The administration building was constructed (\$5,500) and furniture purchased for it. (\$238.93)

720 linear feet of fence along Skahan land (\$1,207.20), a wall along Grove Street (\$132.50), and gate (\$392) were built.

Trees and shrubs planted (\$1,033.35)

1927

From the Annual Report: “A fence has been built from the end of fence erected last year across the end of the lot to the old Cemetery wall. Several hundred shrubs have been planted along the fence in the addition, and also on both sides of the drives at the entrance to the Cemetery.”

Seeds, plants, and fertilizer purchased (\$1,682.48)

1928

A state audit “found fault with the way records were kept”.

1932

Marian K. Hoskins was hired as the first full-time secretary for the Cemetery. In the role, she was responsible for verifying lot and grave records, updating plans, and maps.

December: City of Cambridge granted the Town of Belmont permission to use land purchased in 1924 for burial purposes. The plan associated with the deed notes that the most eastward 30 feet of this parcel should not be used for burial purposes. (Deed recorded in Book 5713, page 135-136. Plan entitled “Plan Showing Extension of Belmont Cemetery in the City of Cambridge, Mass. December 1932” record in Book 5713, page 136.)

1935

State Law required that Town appropriate annual expenses for cemetery.

1936

The Annual Report stated that a new subscription to “The American Cemetery Magazine” found it an “interesting and helpful publication”.

Many older lots placed in perpetual care or yearly care; some lots released back to Town for resale (whole or in part).

Town discontinued planting of lots for Memorial Day at the Town’s expense.

The main drive near office building was ‘surfaced’ (\$700)

Cemetery Commissioners began holding monthly meetings.

118 linear feet of iron fence was erected along Huron Avenue (\$360). The iron fence enclosed the entire cemetery at that time.

1937

25 maple trees were planted.

383 linear feet of iron fence was erected along Huron Avenue (\$1,026.89)

1938

By-Laws and Rules and Regulations was updated.

Interment orders and planting and foundation order forms were printed.

The Cemetery discontinued planting on graves due to the labor and expense. Instead, underground flowerpots were on sale at the administration building.

Rubbish barrels were provided throughout the cemetery.

Main gate was erected for \$690, designed by architect Thaxter Underwood, Architect who was paid \$25.

After Hurricane of 1938, one maple was lost which landed on the office building, two large trees over 100 years old were lost on Magnolia Lane, and six fir trees around the cemetery were lost; equipment was purchased for tree pruning.

1940

March: Town Meeting approved the purchase of the land “including structures and shrubbery thereon ... situated on Grove and Dartmouth Streets in Belmont and Cambridge”. These lands were also purchased from Mrs. Mary E. P. Skahan for a sum of \$35,000, \$13,000 of which came from a surplus of revenue.” These lands totaled 37,773 square feet in ten lots (Lots 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 76, 77, 78, and the rear of lot 75) shown on an undated plan included with the deed, in addition to 2.37 acres fronting on Grove Street. (Recorded the land Taking by the Town of Belmont by the Registry of Deeds in Book 6470, pages 233-236 and the land transfer in Book 6480, pages 590-594 and reflected in the Plan entitled “Proposed Addition to Belmont Cemetery” drawn November 22, 1937, dated February 18, 1941 as Plan No. 126 (A of 2) and recorded by the Registry of Deeds in Book 6470, page 234.) This purchase included the house, built in 1897, at 91 Grove Street.

Plan Showing
Proposed Addition to
BELMONT CEMETERY
August 3, 1945 Scale: 40 ft. to an inch
Joseph W. Kales Town Engineer

(Original on file.)
(Scale of this plan: 1 in. = 60 ft.)

Plan Filed in
Town Clerk's Office
Date: Sept. 21, 1945
Charles B. Wiggins
Town Clerk

Approved by
Board of Selectmen
Date: Jan. 15, 1951
Charles R. Betts
J. Watson Fleit
Howard D. Sharpe

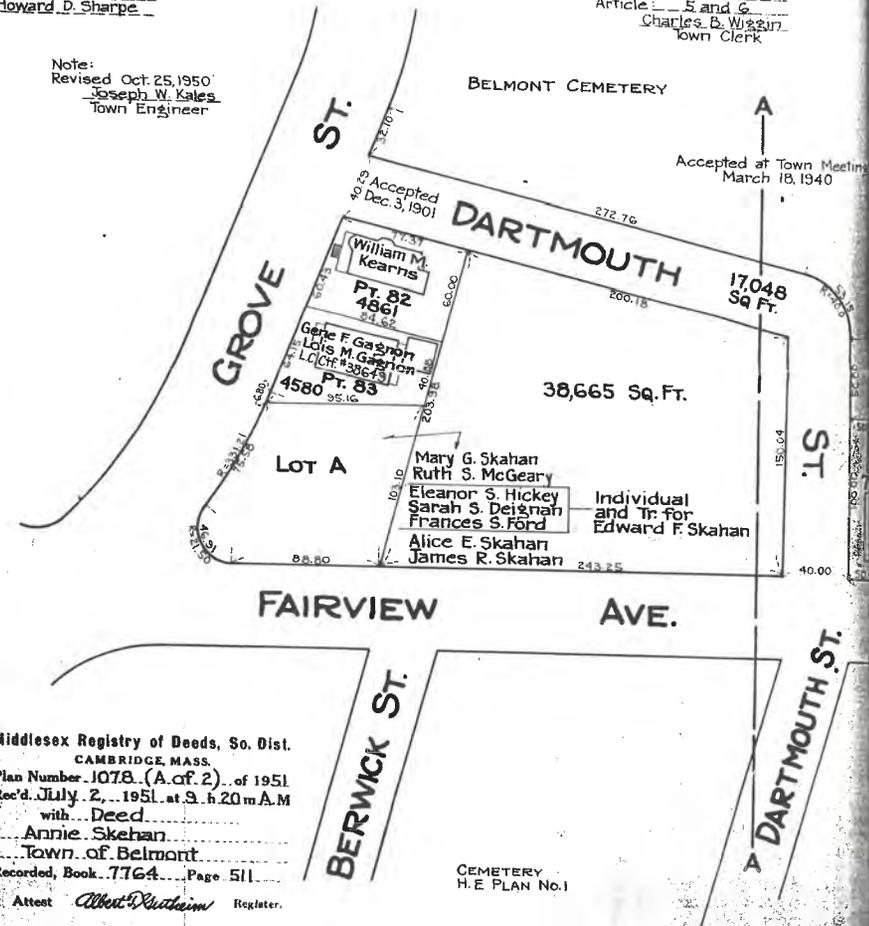
Dismissed at
~~Accepted at~~
Town Meeting
Date: March 14, 1949
Article: 32
Charles B. Wiggins
Town Clerk

Approved by
Board of Selectmen
Date: _____
J. Watson Fleit
Howard D. Sharpe

Note:
Revised Jan. 25, 1949.
Joseph W. Kales
Town Engineer

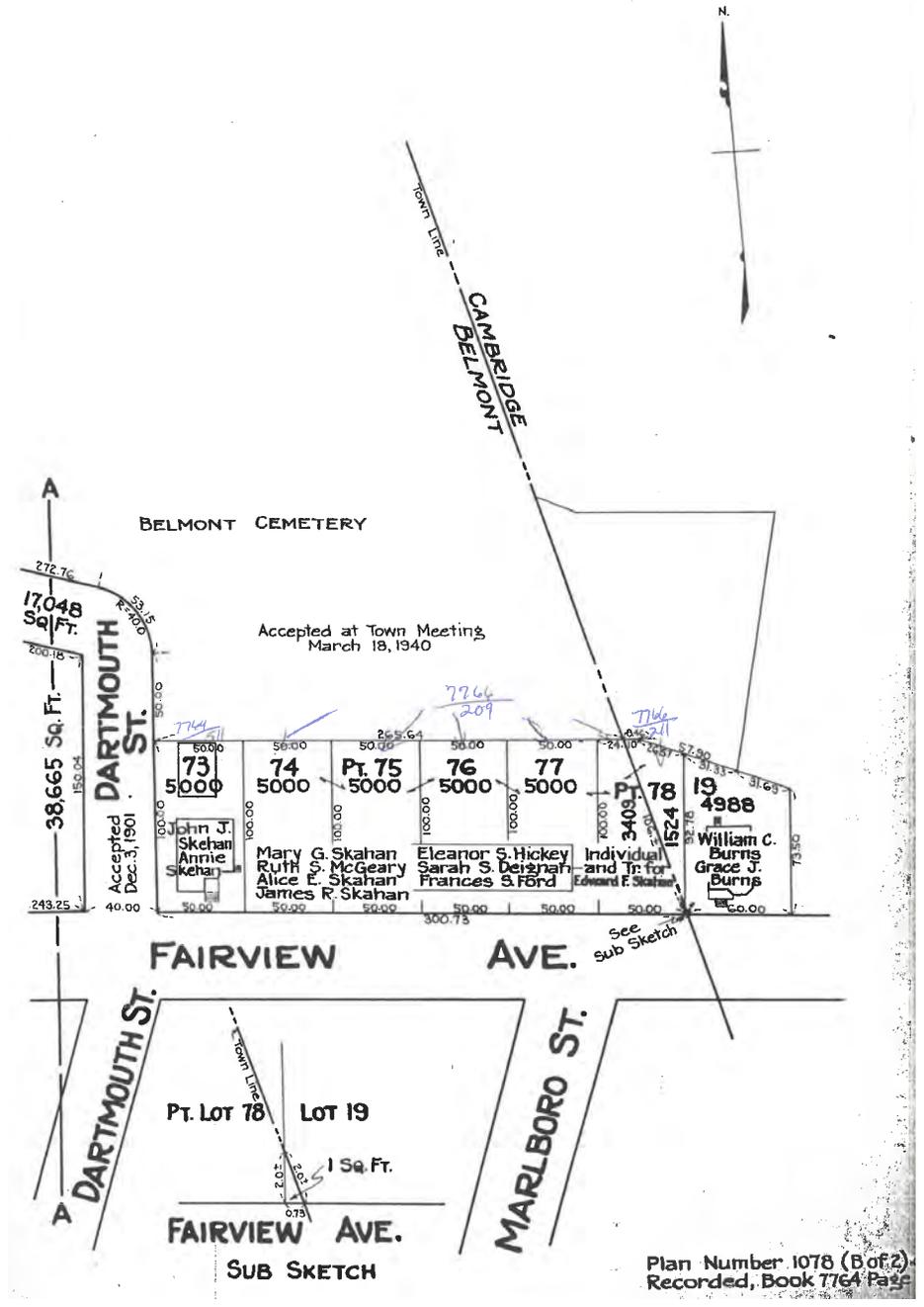
Accepted at
Adjourned Special Town Meeting
Date: March 27, 1951
Article: 5 and 6
Charles B. Wiggins
Town Clerk

Note:
Revised Oct. 25, 1950
Joseph W. Kales
Town Engineer



Middlesex Registry of Deeds, So. Dist.
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
Plan Number 1078 (A of 2) of 1951
Rec'd July 2, 1951 at 3:20 A.M.
with Deed
Annie Skehan
Town of Belmont
Recorded, Book 7764 Page 511
Attest *Albert R. Kautzman* Registrar

CEMETERY
H.E. PLAN No. 1



FAIRVIEW

AVE.

PT. LOT 78

LOT 19

1 Sq. Ft.

FAIRVIEW AVE.

SUB SKETCH

Plan Number 1078 (B of 2)
Recorded, Book 7764 Page 511

1943

The Town of Belmont submitted an appeal to the City of Cambridge's Board of Health's refusal to allow the Town to use the land purchased from the Skahan estate as burial ground.

1944

Article 6 for Town Meeting requested that the Town repurchase unused lots within the cemetery. Article 7 requested funding to layout the cemetery of the 'recent addition'. \$1,000 was approved for Article 7 for the "construction of ways, therein, grading, ornamentation, and other like improvements".

The Town raised the notion of creating the position of General Superintendent of the cemetery.

From the Annual Report: "Belmont bought some land, and a small part of which is located in Cambridge. It cannot be used as a cemetery without the consent of the Cambridge Board of Health which was refused. Our Commissioners have instructed further proceedings."

1948

Article 39 of the Town Warrant requested funding for improvements to the office building at the Cemetery.

The Commissioners' report stated that improvements were made to the office building within the cemetery: a vault to store permanent records, a new heating system, and general renovations were undertaken by the Town's Building Department.

1,065 square yards of bituminous roads were installed with the intent to undertake all roads by the end of the year.

1949

Annual Town Meeting Warrant Article 32 requested the vote to acquire "a certain parcel of land, with all structures and shrubbery thereon if any, ... at the corner of Grove Street and Fairview Avenue ... being all the land located between the Belmont Cemetery as it now exists and Fairview Avenue".

Annual Town Meeting Warrant Article 33 sought approval to sell or otherwise dispose of the house at 91 Grove Street, located within the cemetery "which area was acquired by vote at the Town Meeting in March 1940, under Article 17 of the Warrant."

1950

March: Deed stated that two parcels in the Town of Belmont were purchased from the Skahan family for a total of \$28,000. One contained 38,665 square feet (0.89 acres) located between Dartmouth Street and Fairview Avenue. (This is reflected in the "Plan Showing Proposal Addition to the Belmont Cemetery" dated August 3, 1945, and noted as "accepted at Adjourned Special Town Meeting, date: March 27, 1951, Articles 5 and 6." Plan No. 1078 A of 2, recorded in Book 7764, page 511.) The second lot was the combined lots 74, 75, 76, 77 (5,000 square feet each) and a majority of lot 78 (3,409 square feet) for a total of 23,409 square feet (0.54 acres). These lots are reflected in the "Plan Showing Proposal Addition to the Belmont Cemetery" Plan No. 1078 B of 2, recorded in Book 7764, page 512.) (Several deeds are recoded to reflect these land purchases by the Town of Belmont: a 7/8 interest was purchased for \$24,500 and recorded Book 7766, page 209 and a 1/8 interest was purchased for an additional \$3,500. Deeds recorded in Book 7766, page 213 and 214.)

1938, Crop of "U.S.G.S. Aerial
Photography Metro Boston."
Image courtesy of U.S.
Geological Survey.





1955, Crop of "U.S.G.S. Aerial
Photography Metro Boston."
Image courtesy of U.S.
Geological Survey.

July: Another deed dated July 5th states that lands were purchased from the Skahan family. The land totals 1,524 square feet and was the remainder of lot 78 that falls on the Cambridge side of the town boundary line. The land was purchased for \$2. (A 7/8 interest was purchased for \$1 and the final 1/8 interest was purchased on a separate deed, also for \$1. Deeds recorded in Book 7766, page 211 and 212.)

From Annie Skahan, lot 73 “with the building thereon... containing 5,000 square feet,” located at the intersection of Dartmouth Street and Fairview Avenue, was purchased for the Cemetery. (Recorded in Book 7764, page 511)

The Skahan house at 91 Grove Street was purchased by James and Tom Twigg, businessmen, who relocated it to 100 Dalton Road. Once removed, the Skahan house site was “suitably filled and graded”, as well as seeded and enclosed with a fence.

1954

The storage garage erected, designed by Town Engineer, Richard B. Betts.

1955

Belmont Fire Department placed the Belmont Firefighters’ Memorial near the entrance to the cemetery.

Evergreens were planted along Fairview Avenue (presumably the hemlocks still located along the fence line) and maple trees in the newly developed area.

From the Report of the Commissioners: “One hundred feet of chain link fence and a three hundred-foot barbed wire fence has been installed in the rear of the Cemetery to lessen vandalism.”

“Our new building has been a great asset in many ways. It has lessened the work of moving equipment and materials, and has greatly improved the appearance of the Cemetery.”

“In the careful planning of our new section the Commissioners, Superintendent, and Mr. Joseph Kales, Town Engineer have shown great foresight for the future in the layout of lots. More interments can be made in a small area, this conserving land for the best interest of the Town.”

1956

Belmont Police Relief Association erected the Police Monument near the flagpole towards the center of the cemetery. “The monument is in memory of the departed members of the Belmont Police Department who have served the people of this community with honor and dignity.” (From the Walking Tour narrative)

1960

The final expansion of the cemetery occurred when 2.85 acres of the former Lever Brothers ‘dump site’ located in Cambridge is purchased. The total land acreage was 17.03 with 12.69 acres within the boundary of the Town of Belmont. Article 36 in the Town Warrant requested the approval of \$25,000 for the land “situated in the City of Cambridge, supposed to be owned by Tab Realty Company, adjacent to the present Belmont Cemetery as extended.”

“During the year about 350 grave lots were staked out at the Belmont Cemetery. Further studies and grades were given for the extension of the Belmont Cemetery into the so called ‘Cider Mill Pond Land.’”

From the Report of the Commissioners: “Many comments have been received from the citizens of Belmont and the Press, regarding the appearance of our Cemetery, and the flower beds, especially the Heart Bed at the Cemetery entrance.”

1961

About one-half of new parcel was laid out and graded.

1965

“Two-thirds of the new cemetery section has been completed. This year we plan to bring the roads up to grade, plant trees, and fence in a part of the new Section.”

1966

New roads were graded and paved and lot sales undertaken. Roads in older portion of Cemetery were resurfaced over the past two years.

1967

The final three acres of land, located in Cambridge, were ‘put into use’ with an additional 2,000 graves. The Cemetery Commission assumed that would be enough for 6 years.

1970

From the Annual Report: “Work for the Cemetery Department ... consisted of revising the grave layout in part of the new section and relocating of some of the property lines for fences.”

1977

From the Annual Report: “Recognizing the need to utilize fully our available land, the east end of the Cemetery was engineered, graded, and seeded during the summer months. Repair of the back line fence was completed and overgrown shrubs and trees throughout the grounds were trimmed or removed. Utilization of CETA workers and summer help allowed us to achieve these changes without undue cost to the Town.”

“On August 1, 1977, the Rules and Regulations for the operation of the Cemetery were completely revised. Since this was the first revision in over ten years, we made some modest increases in the prices for graves and our service charges.”

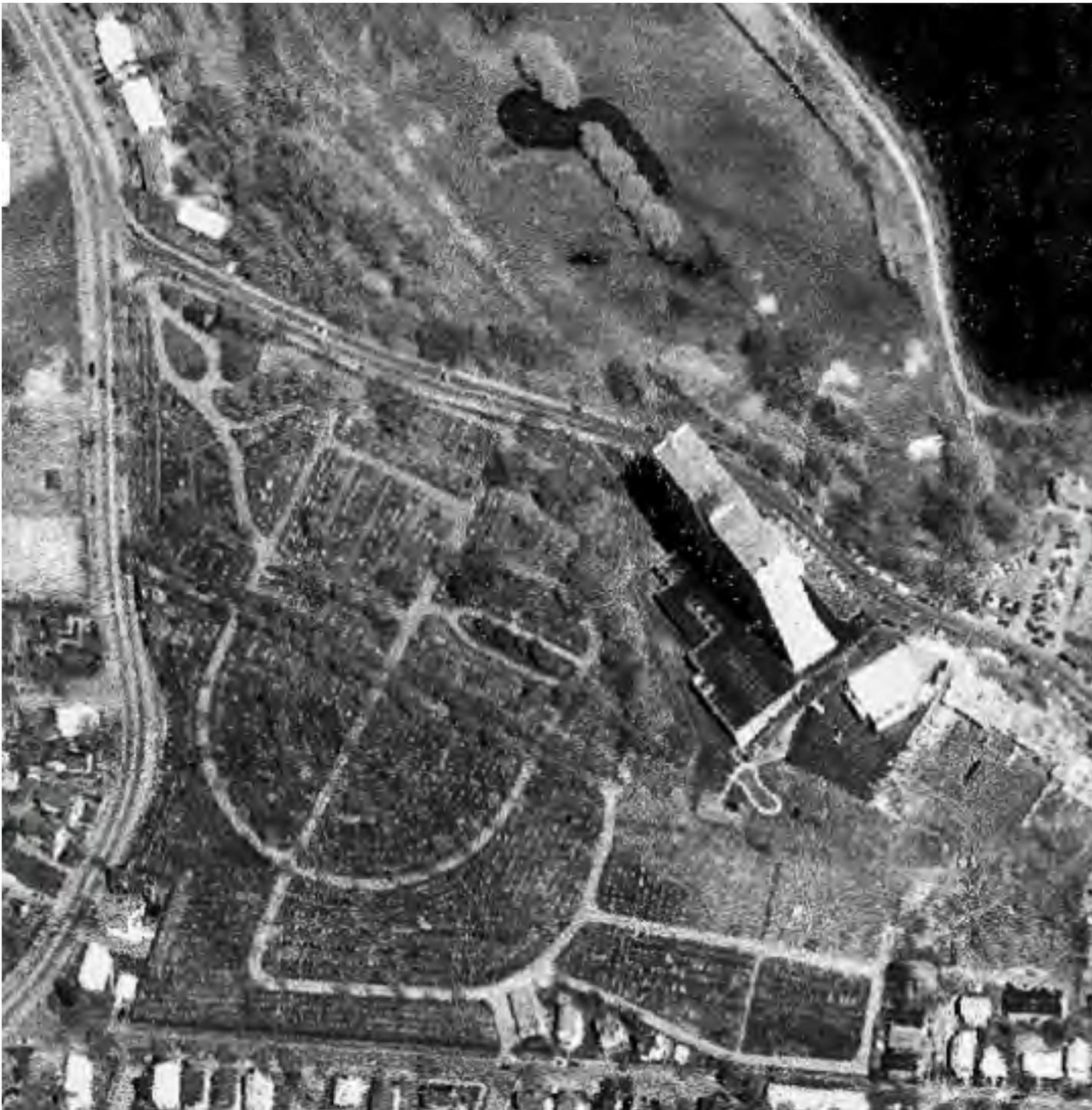
“During Mother’s Day and Memorial Day seasons, visitors from many out-of-state places as well as our own townspeople came to the Cemetery. On many days the number of visitors were in the hundreds. Although motor vehicles did present problems, we continued their use within the grounds and our personnel deserved praise for the handling of this problem with minimum inconvenience to all.”

Additionally, the Cemetery reported laying out and staking 150 new grave lots, surveying property lines, and regrading a portion of the grounds, as well as the allocation of thirty lots near the cemetery office building for a new Veterans’ section as the original section was completely full. To do so, utility lines were relocated, and trees and shrubs removed.

Sections V, W, and the new Veterans’ lot were made ready for use.

1969, Crop of "U.S.G.S. Aerial
Photography Metro Boston."
Image courtesy of U.S.
Geological Survey.





1978, Crop of "U.S.G.S. Aerial
Photography Metro Boston."
Image courtesy of U.S.
Geological Survey.

1995, Crop of "U.S.G.S. Aerial
Photography Metro Boston."
Image courtesy of U.S.
Geological Survey.



1978

104 evergreens were planted along the eastern boundary to buffer the view impact of the Huron towers (now Parkside Place). Additional shade trees were planted along drives of the newest section.

From the Annual Report: “Hard topping was completed at the rear of the garage and new security measures were accomplished in the garage to insure better protection of the building and equipment.”

1979

Cemetery search committee reviewed properties for new cemetery to expand.

1982

A vote to purchase new land for a second cemetery location was defeated at Town Meeting.

Belmont Cemetery was listed on the Massachusetts Inventory of Historic Assets for its significance in landscape architecture and religion. It is listed on the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) as inventory #BLM.801.

1984

A vote was made to study the possibility of new cemetery locations approved and funded with \$20,000.

1985

The ‘Heart bed’ was redesigned with perennials and permanent plantings instead of the “gorgeous and much appreciated” gold and red tulips, pansies, and geraniums.

1986

The Cemetery ended its tradition of planting the Heart bed with seasonal annuals and it was replanted with perennials. The redesign was proposed by a landscape design firm and included ‘permanent plantings’: “While we regret the passing of our annual spring showing of tulips, we feel in future years this spot will provide a fine attractive entrance.”

The Police Monument was relocated near the point of the Heart bed across from the Belmont Firefighters’ Memorial.

1987

From the Annual Report: “In our past several Reports we remind the Town that the present cemetery on the Cambridge line was very close to capacity and noted that the Cemetery Commissioners and the Selectmen were searching for additional space. That capacity has now been reached.”

“This low point in the long history of the Belmont Cemetery was quickly followed by the enactment of House Bill #6266 which transferred about 27 acres of Metropolitan State Hospital land to the Town of Belmont for future use as a Cemetery. The Cemetery Commission is very grateful to Representative Mary Jane Gibson who has expended much time and effort in bringing this sorely needed acreage for our future Cemetery needs.”

1988

June: No more lots for casket burials remained for purchase, though internments for previously sold lots continued. Since that time, only cremation graves and graves for Veterans in Section 3 (near the flagpole) have been available for purchase.

The land of the Metropolitan State Hospital designated for Belmont cemetery use was ultimately not approved by the City of Waltham and the study committee was disbanded.

1995

The decorative iron arch atop the front gate was damaged by a trash truck. The gate was repaired and elevated higher above the gate to allow for vehicular access underneath. The smith who repaired the gate, Auciello Iron Works, reportedly discovered that the original fabricator was his grandfather by identifying his initials in the metal while undertaking the repairs.

1996

“The Board of Cemetery Commissioners and the Board of Selectmen worked cooperatively in 1995 and early 1996 in a joint attempt to acquire property from McLean Hospital Corp. for a new cemetery. However, as a result of the announcement by McLean of its intention to explore all land development options, negotiations stopped. Though this action was a disappointment, we committed to work to develop a plan addressing all the Town’s various needs. The Board of Cemetery Commissioners is a voting member of the new McLean Hospital Task Force formed by the Selectmen and we are confident that the cemetery will be expressed as a priority in any negotiations with McLean and its parent corporation, Partners Healthcare.”

Superintendent Gardiner acquired a marker from the United States Veterans’ Administration for George Sias, one of the first men from Belmont to join the fight of the Civil War. Sias succumbed to wounds received in battle in 1866, and was buried in Belmont Cemetery, yet until 1996 he never had headstone or marker to note his sacrifice.

The cemetery administration building was made accessible by addition of a ramp with handrails for wheelchair access.

From the Annual Report: “Enter ALL historical source documents into computer system, focusing on lot owners and burials. Maintain current records and transactions using computer system. Project is on track for completion by the end of FY97 (June 1997). We continue to receive many Requests for genealogical information and find that the computer records greatly improve response time and completeness of information.”

1998

The new Veterans’ Section No. 3 was dedicated near the center of the cemetery (formerly a pine tree grove) with the capacity for 122 graves. The Belmont Lion’s Club donated the flagpole in memory of their long-time member and Veterans of World War II, John O’Brien to commemorate the Club’s 50th Anniversary. Mr. O’Brien, who died in 1989, was the father of then Cemetery Commissioner Ellen O’Brien Cushman. The stone was donated by Belmont Memorials.

New lilac bushes were planted to begin restoration of the lilac and spirea hedge along the Huron Avenue fence line.

1999

First burial in the Veterans' Section No. 3 between Iris and Primrose Paths.

2001

The Board of Cemetery Commissioners placed a marker on Henrietta Down's grave to commemorate the first recorded burial in the cemetery.

2003

From the Annual Report: "The new Department of Public Works consisting of the Cemetery Division, Highway Division, Parks and Facilities, and the Water Division began to operate under the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, and the newly created position of Director of Public Works on July 1, 2003.

2004

The *Master Plan of Highland MeWadow Cemetery*—prepared by Halvorson Design Partnership of Boston—wins a merit award from the Boston Society of Landscape Architects

2005

13.9 acres of land was deeded to Town of Belmont by the McLean Hospital Corporation for new cemetery grounds at Highland Meadow. Construction began in October 2005.

The Commission's goal from the Annual Report: "continue tree planting program originally established in 1996 and enhance landscape areas to beautify Belmont Cemetery." Annual planting

fund (includes H. Smith Fund) reported to have nearly \$73,000.

2007

October 20: Highland Meadow was dedicated as Belmont's new cemetery. From the Annual Report: "This is a place of memorial that begins by remembering the land itself."

The Master Plan for Highland Meadow Cemetery received an award of excellence by Boston Society of Landscape Architects.

2009

Annual Reports stated: "Continue tree planting program and enhance landscape areas at Belmont Cemetery. Planning renovation of the heart-shaped planting bed at Belmont Cemetery to spring/fall 2010, hoping to partner with non-profit sponsor."

2010

The first burial on the east side of flagpole in Veteran's Section No.3.

2011

The Heart Bed was dedicated in memory of Cemetery Superintendent Robert P. Gardiner for his extraordinary dedication and service to Belmont. Gardiner served as Cemetery Superintendent from 1977-2011 at the time of his death.

"Mr. Gardiner always said that the Heart Bed represented the broken hearts of Belmont's mothers. The Board noted Mr. Gardiner's meticulous care of Belmont Cemetery and the obvious pride that he and his staff take in maintaining the grounds on behalf of Belmont's grieving families."

2013

The Police Monument was cleaned, turned, and a Policeman's Prayer was added to the back of the monument.

2015

Annual Report stated as a goal for the upcoming year: "Redesign the Heart Bed at Belmont Cemetery to enhance the beauty of the entrance while balancing our desire for more limited maintenance design." This work was undertaken by the Cemetery staff.

2016

The Annual Report stated: "Although new burial lots for traditional interments have not been available at the Belmont Cemetery on Grove Street since 1988, 69 interments were made to existing lots in 2016, including 28 cremations."

2021

On-going pruning and tree removal was conducted along the border with Huron Towers for safety.

2022

Community Preservation Act funds were awarded to the Department of Public Works, to work with the Cemetery Commission, to undertake a Preservation Plan.

2023

On-going pruning and tree removal of aging canopy trees was undertaken.



Undated photograph of the original gate to Belmont Cemetery. Note the smaller columns and lower arch. Image courtesy of Belmont Cemetery.



Undated photograph of the original gate to Belmont Cemetery. Image courtesy of Belmont Cemetery.



Undated photograph of the original gate to Belmont Cemetery, looking across Grove Street. The house was relocated to 196 Grove Street when the Grove Street Playground was laid out. Image courtesy of Belmont Cemetery.



May 1977 views of the Heart bed, labeled "Flower bed for Mothers' Day". Images courtesy of Belmont Cemetery.



(top) "Section U, 1977", (bottom) "Sections V, W, X May 1977" Images courtesy of Belmont Cemetery.

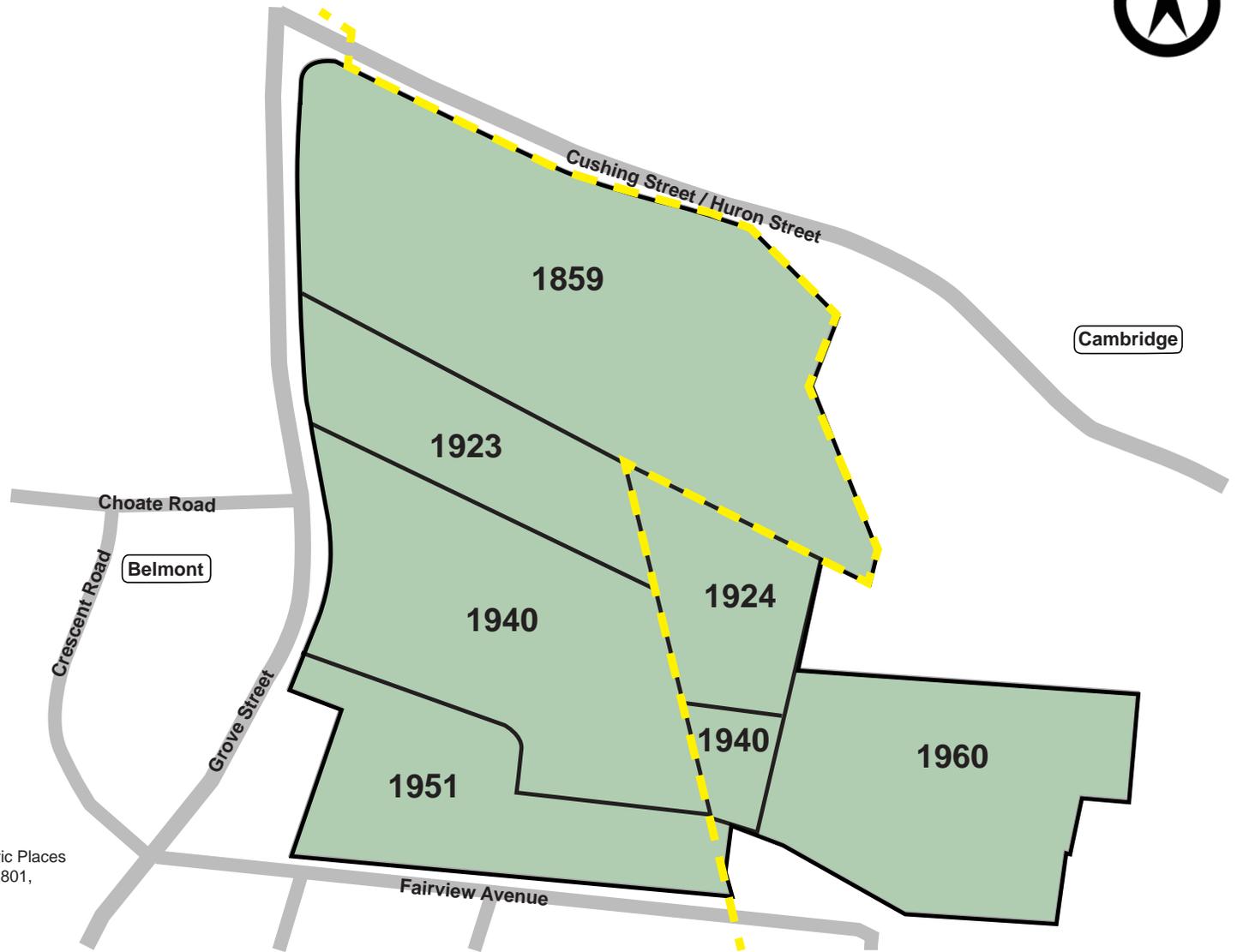


*(top) "Sections W and X, July 1977-August 1977, Grading area",
(bottom) "Sections V, W, X May 1977" Images courtesy of
Belmont Cemetery.*



Legend

- Roads
- ▭ Cemetery Boundary
- ▬ Town Line



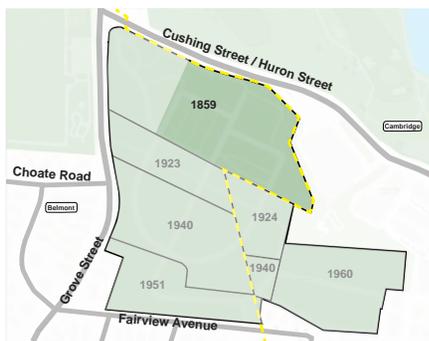
Map Data Sources: National Register of Historic Places
Nomination Form for Belmont Cemetery, BLM.801,
dated 1982

LAND ACQUISITIONS MAP

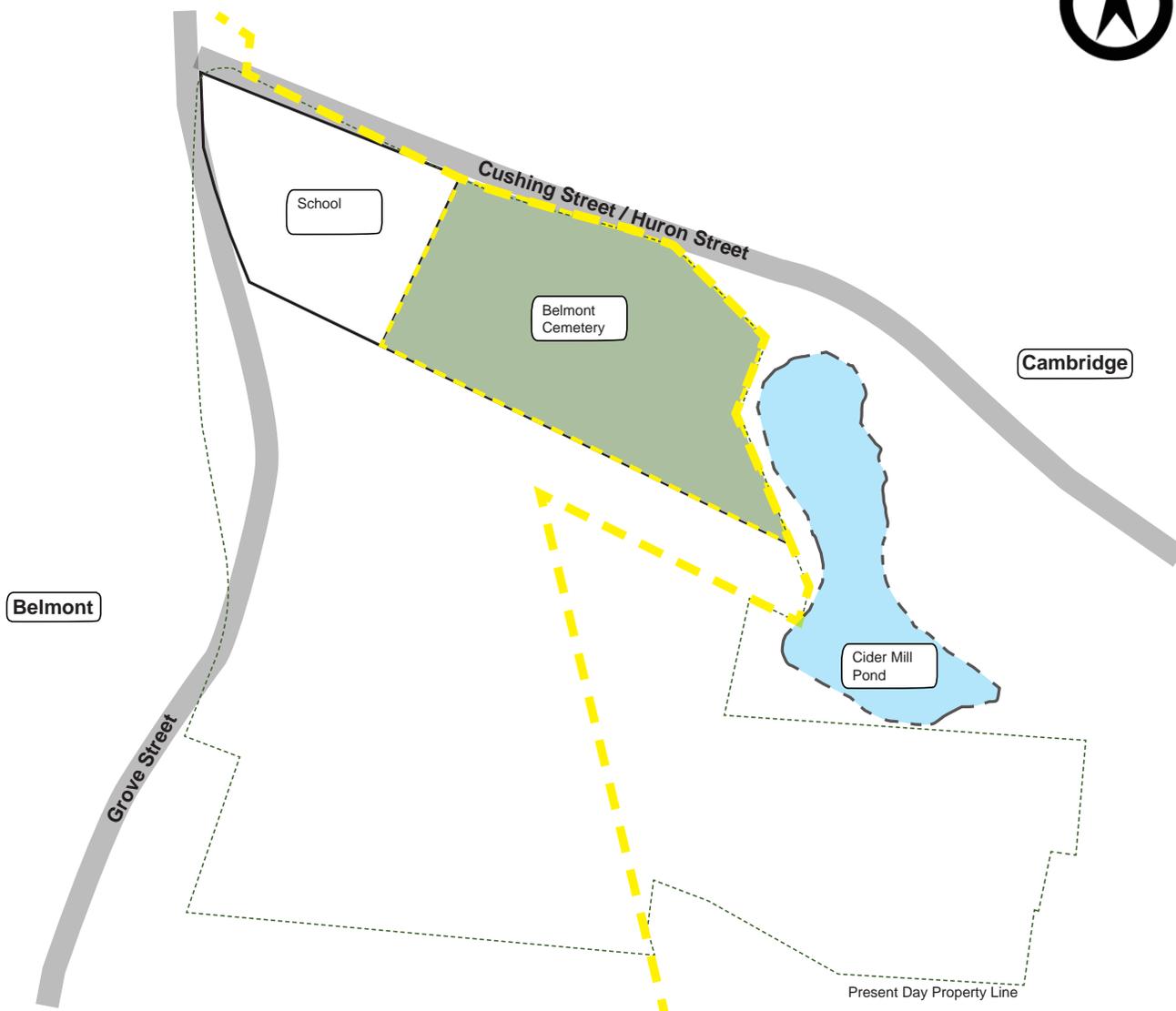


Legend

- New Drive and Walkways
- - - Infilled Drive and Walkways
- Existing Drive and Walkways
- Buildings
- Roads
- (-) Former Pond
- - - Property Lines
- Town Line



Map Data Sources: Boston Planning and Development Agency, Historic Aerial Photos and Atlas Plans Online Viewer, 1875 Atlas



PERIOD PLAN: 1859-1880

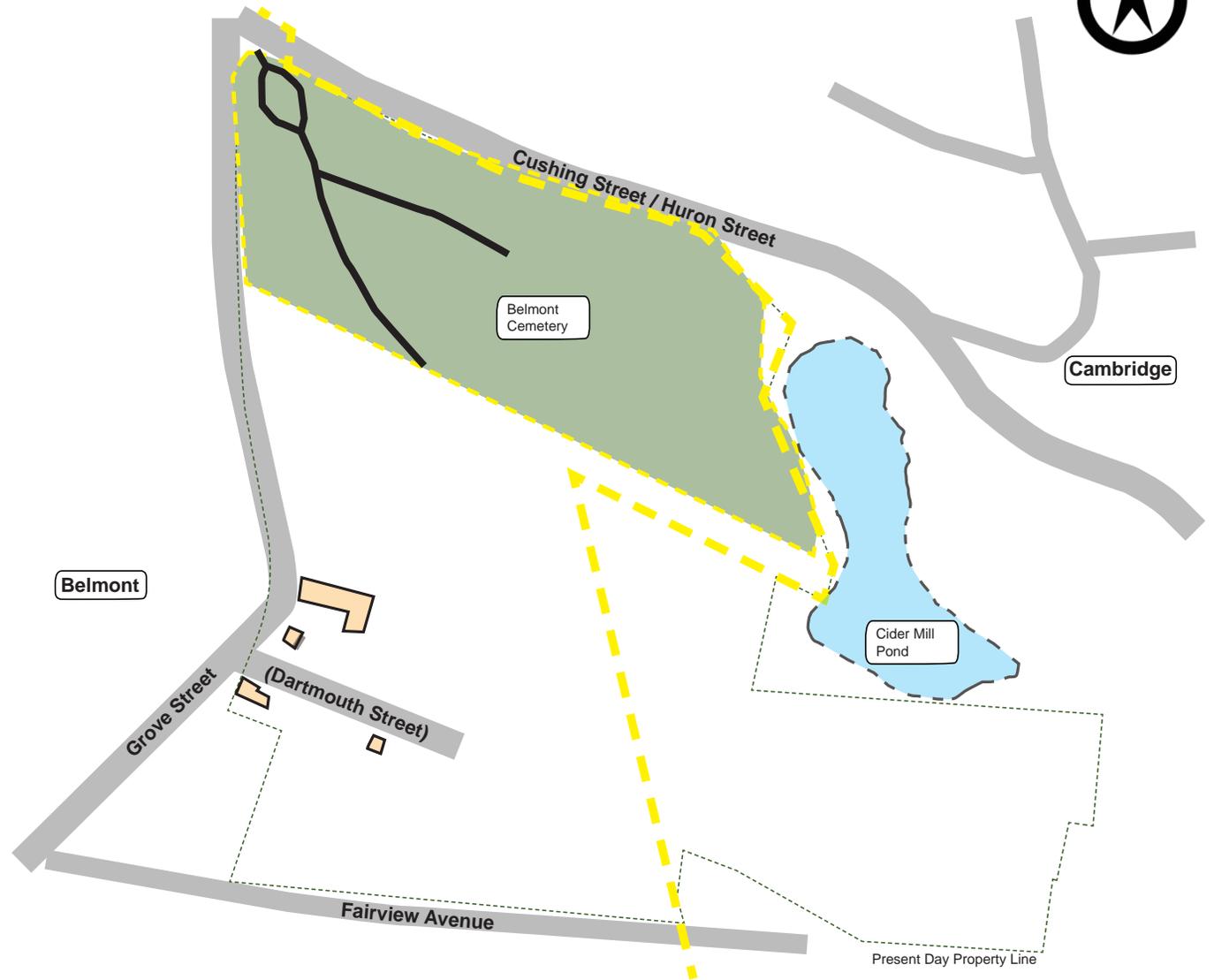


Legend

-  New Drive and Walkways
-  Infilled Drive and Walkways
-  Existing Drive and Walkways
-  Buildings
-  Roads
-  Former Pond
-  Property Lines
-  Town Line
-  Present Day Property Line



Map Data Sources: Boston Planning and Development Agency, Historic Aerial Photos and Atlas Plans Online Viewer, 1900 Atlas, 1894 Cambridge Bromley Atlas, 1886 Cambridge Hopkins Atlas

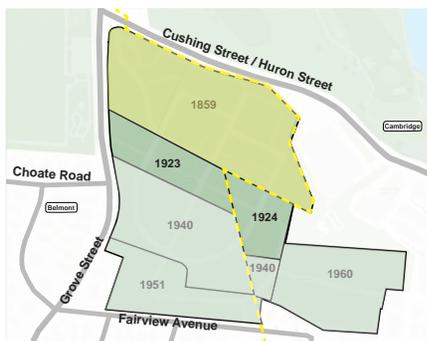


PERIOD PLAN: 1881-1922

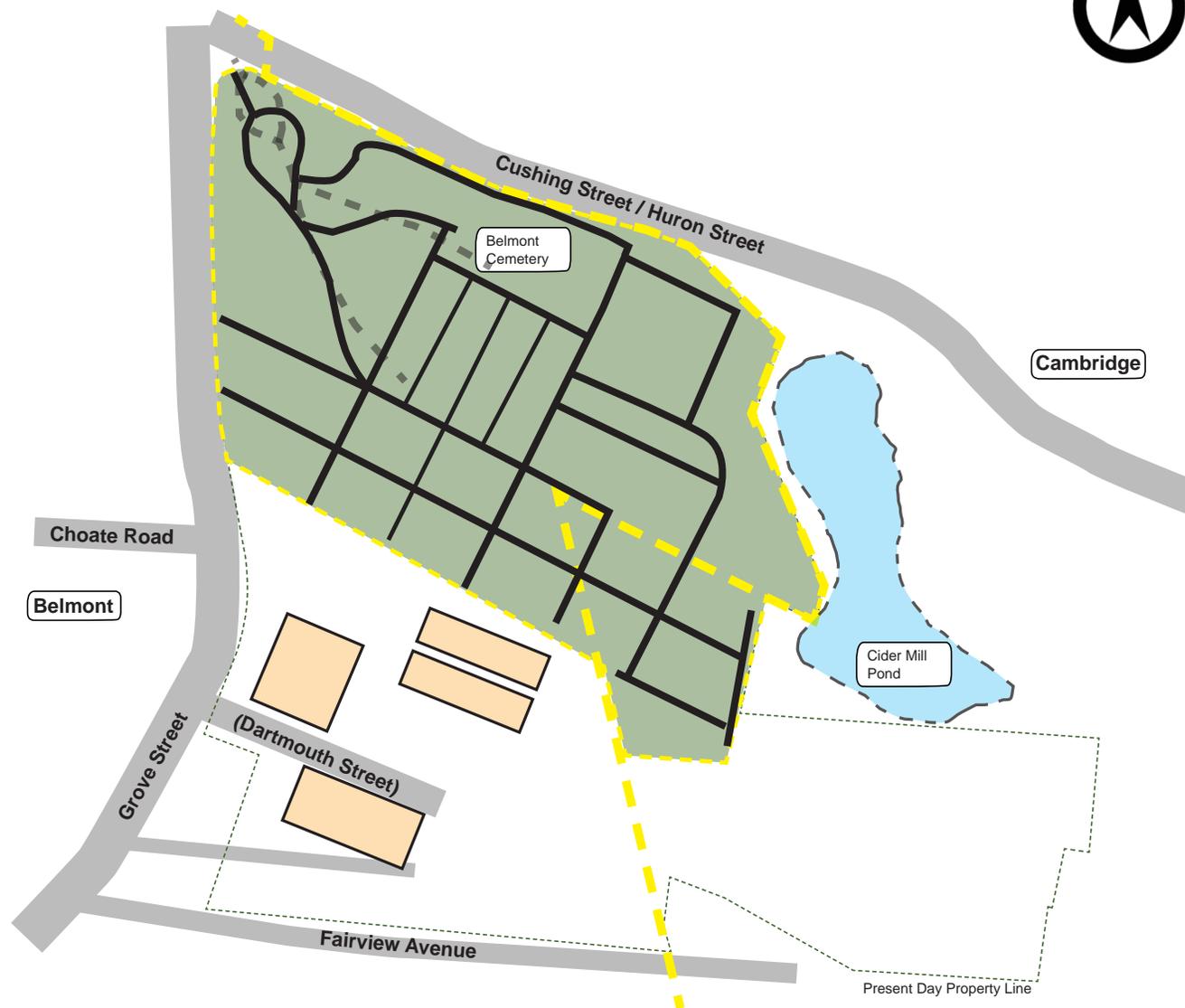


Legend

- New Drive and Walkways
- - - Removed Drive and Walkways
- Existing Drive and Walkways
- Buildings
- Roads
- Former Pond
- ▭ Property Lines
- ▭ Town Line
- - - Present Day Property Line



Map Data Sources: Boston Planning and Development Agency, Historic Aerial Photos and Atlas Plans Online Viewer, 1938 Aerial

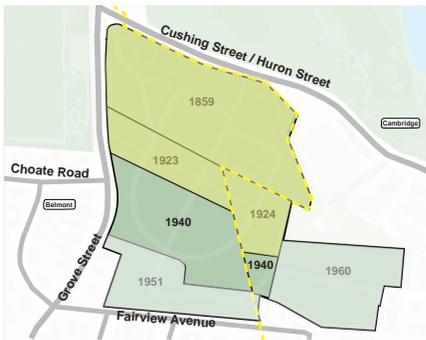


PERIOD PLAN: 1923-1939



Legend

- New Drive and Walkways
- - - Infilled Drive and Walkways
- Existing Drive and Walkways
- ▭ Buildings
- ▭ Removed Buildings
- Roads
- Pond
- ▭ Property Lines
- ▭ Town Line
- - - Present Day Property Line



Map Data Sources: Boston Planning and Development Agency, Historic Aerial Photos and Atlas Plans Online Viewer, 1947 Aerial



PERIOD PLAN: 1940-1950

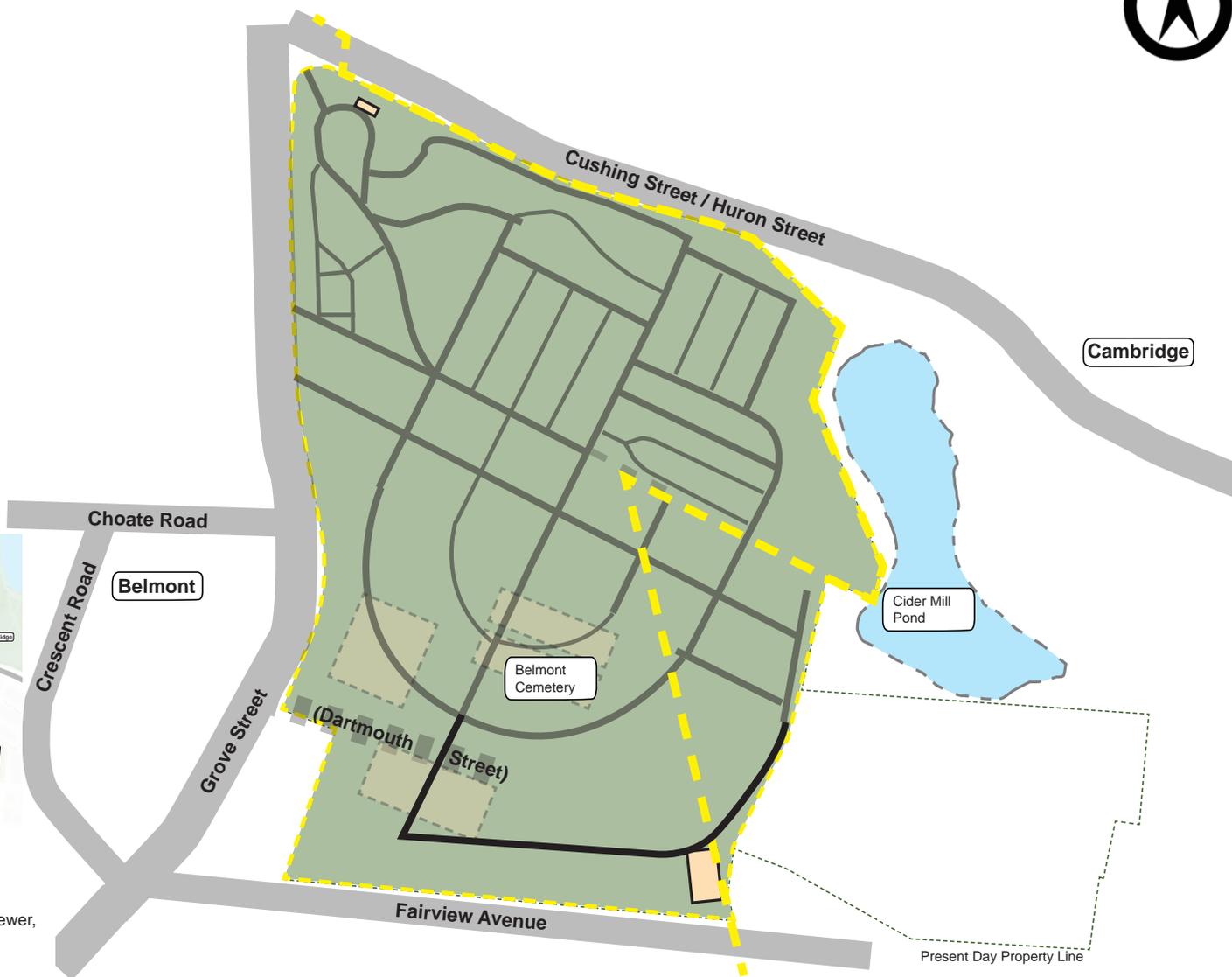


Legend

- New Drive and Walkways
- - - Removed Drive and Walk-
- Existing Drive and Walkways
- Buildings
- Removed Buildings
- Roads
- Pond
- Property Lines
- Town Line
- - - Present Day Property Line



Map Data Sources: Boston Planning and Development Agency, Historic Aerial Photos and Atlas Plans Online Viewer, 1955 Aerial

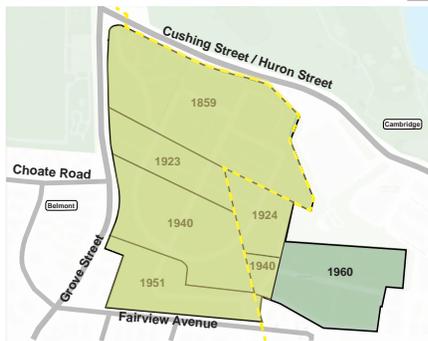


PERIOD PLAN: 1951-1959

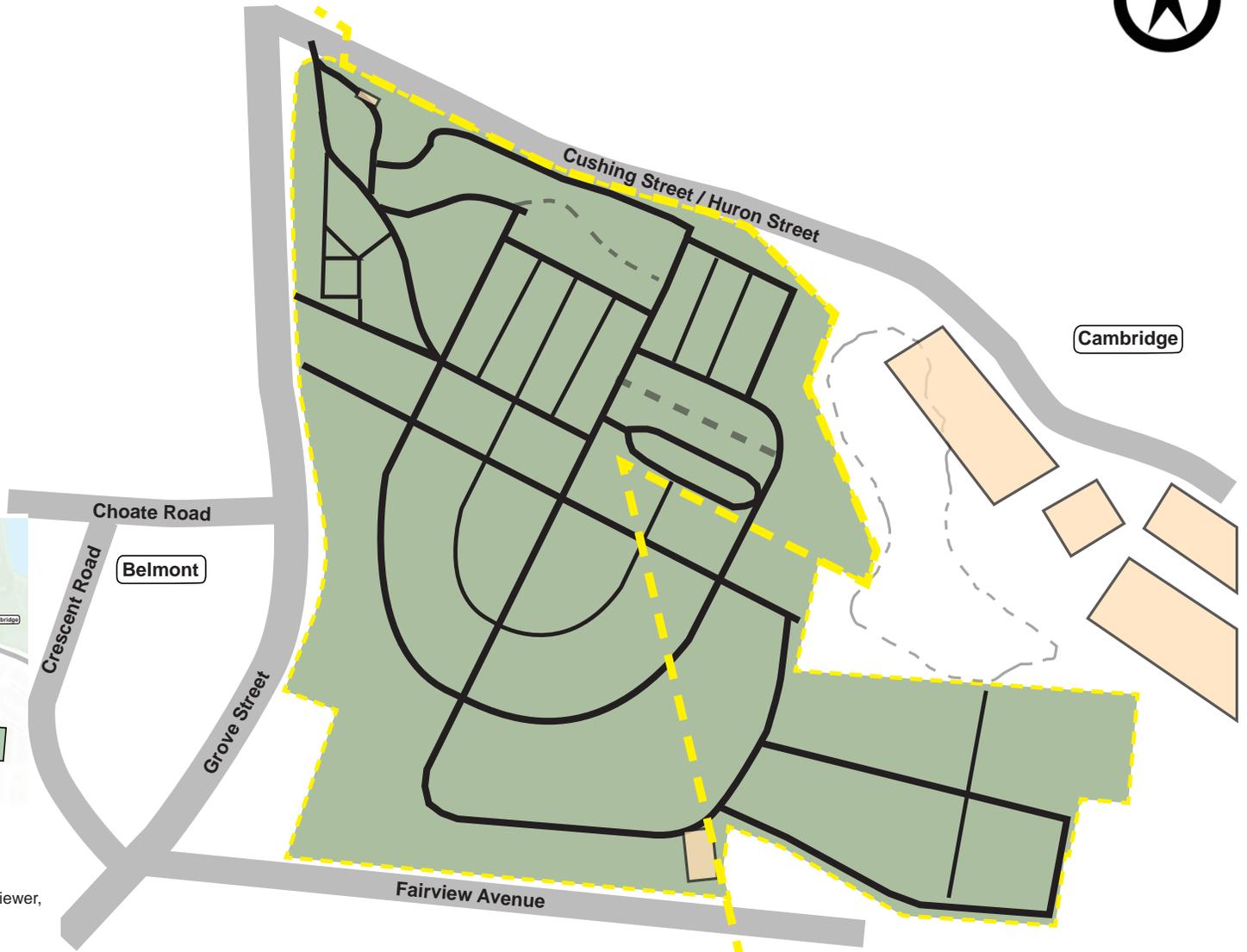


Legend

- New Drive and Walkways
- - - Infilled Drive and Walkways
- Existing Drive and Walkways
- ▭ Buildings
- ▭ Roads
- - - Former Pond
- - - Property Lines
- - - Town Line



Map Data Sources: Boston Planning and Development Agency, Historic Aerial Photos and Atlas Plans Online Viewer, 1978 Aerial

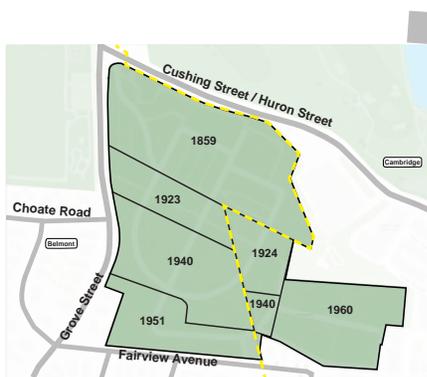


PERIOD PLAN: 1960-1987

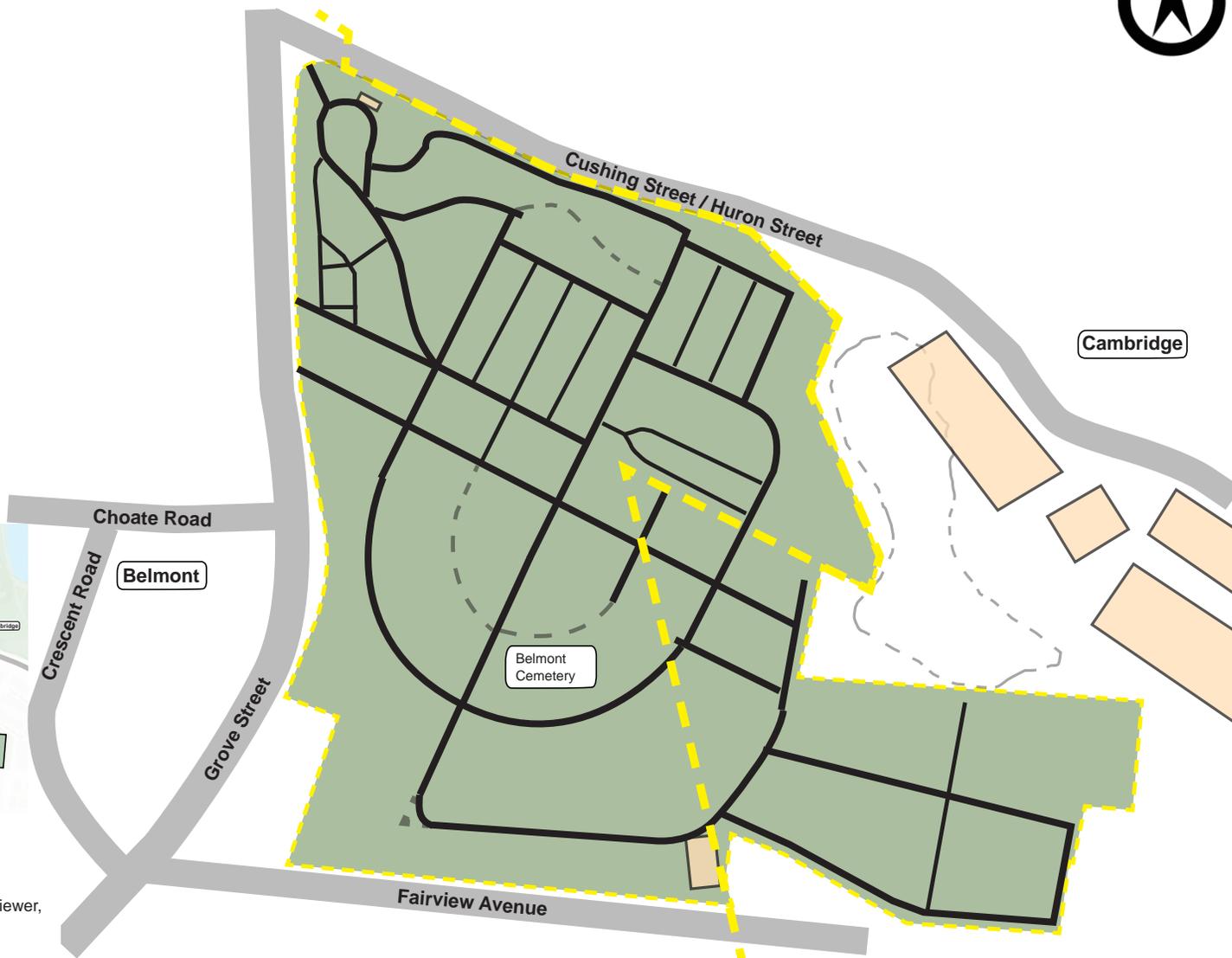


Legend

- New Drive and Walkways
- - - Infilled Drive and Walkways
- Existing Drive and Walkways
- Buildings
- Roads
- - - Former Pond
- - - Property Lines
- Town Line



Map Data Sources: Boston Planning and Development Agency, Historic Aerial Photos and Atlas Plans Online Viewer, 1995 Aerial



PERIOD PLAN: 1988-2023

Management timeline

1859

Selectmen of Belmont assumed the role of Cemetery Committee.

1859

Selectmen: M. W. Marsh, Jacob Hittinger, J. V. Fletcher, Joseph Hill acting as Commissioners of Public Burying Grounds

1860

Cemetery Rules and Regulations established the Cemetery Committee.

1861

Selectmen: M. W. Marsh, Jacob Hittinger, & J. V. Fletcher

1862

Selectmen: M. W. Marsh, Thomas Livermore, William H. Locke

1863

Cemetery Committee: M. W. Marsh, Thomas Livermore, & William H. Locke

1865

Cemetery Committee: Amos Hill & Danial A. Tainter

1870

Selectmen: M. W. Marsh, Thomas Livermore, & Josiah S. Kendall

1871

Selectmen: M. W. Marsh, J. W. Hill, & Isaac Watts

1877

Care of grounds: Richard Powers

1880

Care of grounds: Richard Powers & Patrick Skahan

1882-1883

Care of grounds: George F. Nillson

1885

Selectmen appoint Cemetery Committee

Superintendent: Frank. D. Chant

1887-1897

Superintendent: Frank D. Chant

1888

Selectmen: J. Henry Fletcher, Jacob Hittinger, & Josiah S. Kendall

1889

March: Commissioner of Public Burial Grounds become elected position.

1894

Commissioners: Thomas L. Creeley, Jacob Hittinger, & Josiah S. Kendall

1895-1896

Commissioners: Thomas L. Creeley, Thomas A. Davis, & Joseph O. Wellington

1897-1898

Commissioners: H. O. Underwood, Thomas A. Davis, & Joseph O. Wellington

1899-1902

Chairman: George P. Walcott

Clerk: William Wallace Edgar (until 1907)

Superintendent: Frank D. Chant

1908

Cemetery Commission: Edward F. Skahan after the passing of William W. Edgar

1910

Chairman: George P. Walcott

Commissioner: Edward F. Skahan

Superintendent: Frank D. Chant

1913-1914

Commission Chairman: George C. Flett

Commissioners: J. Howard Richardson & Edward L. Skahan

Superintendent: Frank Chant

1915

Commission Chairman: George C. Flett

Commissioners: Richard Hittinger, Edward F. Skahan, & Francis H. Kendall (Edward L. Skahan died)

Superintendent: Frank Chant

1916

Superintendent Chant resigned

Martin Troy added to Commission

1918

Commissioners: J. Howard Richardson, Richard Hittinger, & Martin Troy

1919

Commissioners: Richard Hittinger, Joseph E. Perry, & Edwin E. Farnham

1920-1921

Commissioners: Richard Hittinger, Joseph E. Perry, Edwin E. Farnham, & William Lyman Underwood

(1920: Hittinger dies, William B. Mullen elected to Commission)

1923-1927

Commissioners: William B. Mullen, Martin Troy, & Edwin E. Farnham

(1923: Howard Richardson dies, Edwin R. Farnham elected.)

1933

Commissioners: William B. Mullen, Edwin E. Farnham, & Leon A. Small

(Martin Troy dies, Leon A. Small elected)

1936

Commissioners: Farnham resigns, George L. Foster elected

1937-1946

Commissioners: Olof Nelson, Leon A. Small & George L. Foster

1937: Mullen resigns, Olof Nelson elected)

1944

No Superintendent, position needs to be filled.

1946

Commissioners: Edgar T. Downs, Leon A. Small, & George L. Foster

c. 1946

Francis J. Norton becomes Cemetery Superintendent

1947

Commissioners: Edgar T. Downs, Standley R. Perry, Sr., & George L. Foster

1948-1951

Commission Chairman: Edgar T. Downs

Clerk: Stanley R. Perry

Commissioner: Russell H. Pearson

Superintendent: Frank Norton

Town Engineer: Joseph W. Kales

1952-1956

Commissioners: Edgar T. Downs, John T. Hollis, & Russell H. Pearson

1957-1959

Commissioners: Gerald Downs, John T. Hollis, & Albert E. Shelton

1960-1962

Commission Chairman: Gerald E. Downs

Clerk: John T. Hollis

Commissioner: Albert E. Shelton

Superintendent: Frank Norton

1963

Commission Chairman: Albert E. Shelton

Clerk: Gerald E. Downs

Commissioner: John T. Hollis

Superintendent: Frank Norton

1964

Commission Chairman: Albert E. Shelton

Clerk: Gerald E. Downs

Commissioner: Robert M. Little

Superintendent: Frank Norton

1965-1966

Commission Chairman: Robert M. Little

Clerk: Albert E. Shelton

Commissioner: Gerald E. Downs

Superintendent: Frank Norton

1967-1973

Commission Chairman: Robert M. Little

Clerk: Albert E. Shelton

Commissioner: Alexander E. Corbett, Jr.

Superintendent: Frank Norton

1974-1975

Commissioners: Gerald E. Downs, John J. Reilly, & Alexander E. Corbett, Jr.

1976

Commissioners: Thomas F. Feeley, John J. Reilly, & Alexander E. Corbett, Jr.

1977

Commission Chairman: Alexander E. Corbett, Jr.

Commissioners: Thomas F. Feeley & John L. Reilly (died after served for 7 years)

Superintendent: Robert P. Gardiner named Superintendent (June 1st) after the death of Norton (March 31st); Gardiner had been named Assistant in January 1977. (Gardiner also served as Belmont's Veterans' Agent.)

Town Engineer: Richard B. Betts

Secretary: Mary Santoro retired in June and was replaced by Barbara Howard.

1978

Commission Chairman: Alexander "Sandy" Corbett

Clerk: Thomas Feeley

Commissioner: John J. Reilly

Superintendent: Robert P. Gardiner

1979-1985

Commissioners: Sandy Corbett, Tom Feeley, & Charles R. Johnson

Superintendent: Robert P. Gardiner

1986-1993

Commission Chairman: Thomas Feeley

Clerk: Charles R. Johnson

Commissioner: Alexander "Sandy" Corbett

Superintendent: Robert P. Gardiner

1994-1996

Chairman: Charles R. Johnson

Clerk: Ellen O'Brien Cushman

Commissioner: Alexander "Sandy" Corbett

1997-2004

Chairman: Ellen O'Brien Cushman

Commissioner: Charles R. Johnson & Alexander E. Corbett, III

2003

The staff of Belmont Cemetery reorganized as a Division of the Department of Public Works.

Election Board of Cemetery Commissioners' responsibilities revised. These have been included towards the end of Existing Conditions section.

2005-2007

Commission Chairman: Ellen O'Brien Cushman

Commissioners: Charles R. Johnson & Alexander E. Corbett, III

Superintendent: Robert P. Gardiner

2008-2009

Commission Chairman: Ellen O'Brien Cushman

Vice Chair: Charles R. Johnson

Clerk: Alexander E. Corbett, III

Superintendent: Robert P. Gardiner

Acting Superintendent: Joseph Urciuolo

2010

Commission Chairman: Ellen O'Brien Cushman

Clerk: Alexander E. Corbett, III

Commissioner: Charles R. Laverty, III

Superintendent: Robert P. Gardiner retired in 2010. After his retirement, the Cemetery was combined with Parks & Facilities and Joseph M. Urciuolo became Parks and Cemetery Division Manager.

2011-2012

Commission Chairman: Alexander E. Corbett, III

Vice Chair: Ellen O'Brien Cushman

Secretary: Charles R. Laverty, III

Parks & Cemetery Division Manager: Joseph M. Urciuolo

2013-2015

Commission Chairman: Alexander E. Corbett, III

Vice Chair: Ellen O'Brien Cushman

Secretary: William J. Chemelli

Parks & Cemetery Division Manager: Joseph M. Urciuolo

2016-2022

Commission Chairman: Ellen O'Brien Cushman

Vice Chair: William J. Chemelli

Clerk: Alexander E. Corbett, III

Parks & Cemetery Division Manager: Frank Sartori hired after Joe Urciuolo retired

2023

Commission Chairman: Ellen O'Brien Cushman

Vice Chair: William J. Chemelli

Clerk: Alexander E. Corbett, III

Public Works Director: Jay Marcotte

Parks and Cemetery Division Manager: Frank Sartori

*Other Commissioners over time: George L. Foster, Stanley
Russell H. Pearson

**Gaps in years are due to gaps in documentation

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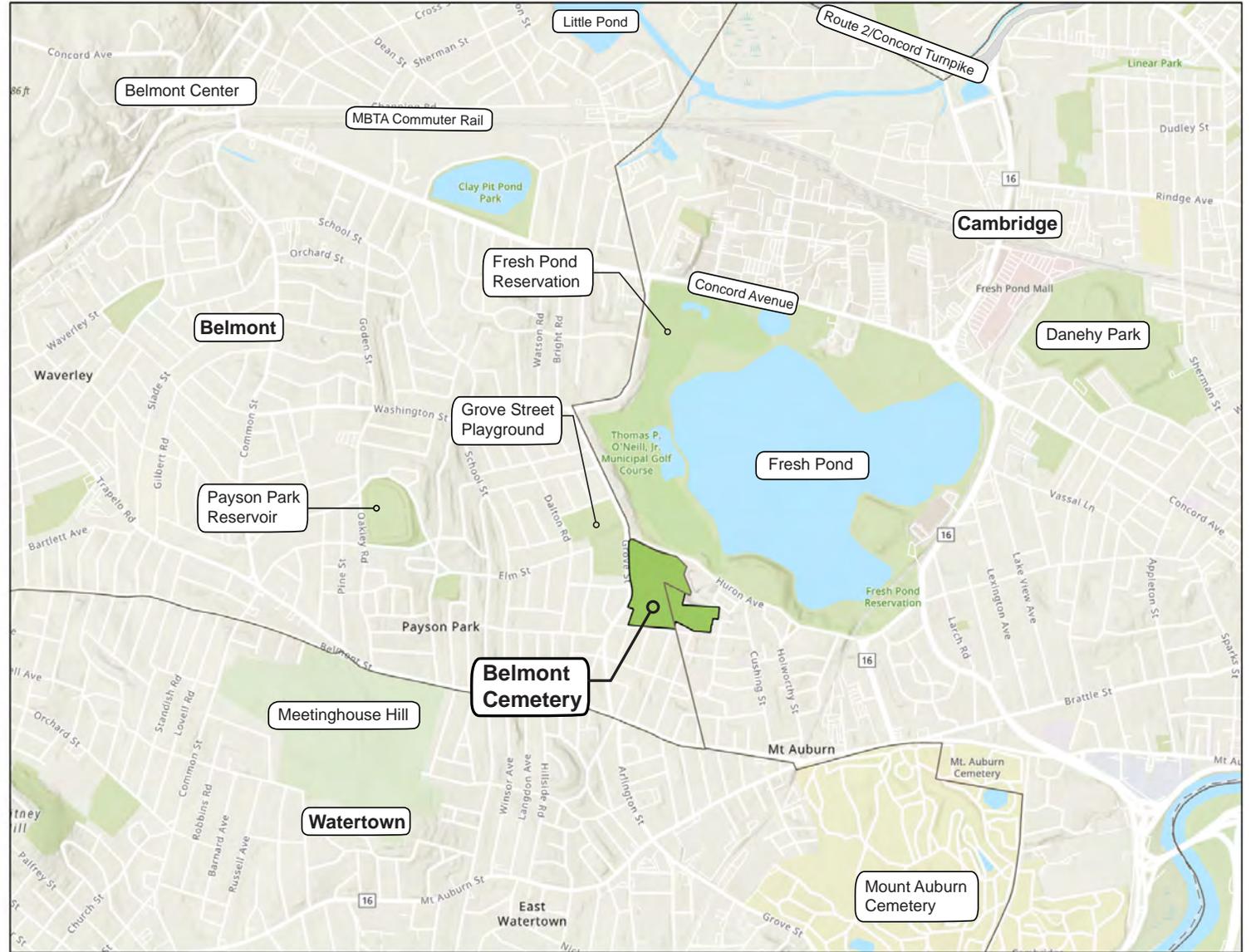
Existing Conditions

The site inventory and assessment was completed between January and February of 2023, and updated in the summer of 2024. This section of the report documents the conditions of Belmont Cemetery during this time. The documentation includes the following:

- Regional context
- Setting, site boundaries
- Spatial organization
- Views and vistas
- Topography and drainage
- Vegetation and open space
- Circulation: pedestrian and vehicular
- Structures in the landscape
- Small-scale features
- Utilities
- Management policies

Legend

-  Project Site
-  Town Boundary



REGIONAL CONTEXT

Setting and site boundaries

The Town of Belmont, Massachusetts is located to the northwest of the City of Boston in Middlesex County. Belmont shares boundaries with the Town of Arlington (to its north across Route 2), the City of Watertown to the south, the City of Waltham to the west, and the City Cambridge to the east. It is located on the divide of the Charles River and Mystic River watersheds. Recorded in the 2020 census, the population was just over 27,000 inhabitants.

Belmont Cemetery is located in the southeastern corner of Belmont, with approximately one-third of the land located within the City of Cambridge. Belmont Cemetery is located at 121 Grove Street in Belmont, Massachusetts (Parcel ID 11-40). While 12.69 acres of the total 17.10 acres are within the Town of Belmont, the southeast portion (4.41 acres) is located within the boundary of the City of Cambridge. (Listed per the City's Assessor as 121 Fairview Avenue, parcel ID 257-53).

Belmont Cemetery is bordered by a mix of public open space and residential neighborhoods. To the northwest is Grove Street Park and Playground across Grove Street. To the north, and across Huron Avenue is City of Cambridge and Fresh Pond Reservation (some of which is land that used to be part of the Town of Belmont.) Immediately to the north, and sharing a boundary, is Parkside Place (historically referred to as the Huron Towers, at 700 Huron Avenue), a residential apartment building and the West Cambridge Youth Center (at 680 Huron Avenue). (Historic maps show the Parkside Place area as 'Cider Mill Pond'.) To the east and south are residences within the City of Cambridge, including residences located along Fresh Pond Place due east of the Youth Center. Much of the site is bordered immediately to the south by Fairview Avenue, and to the west by Grove Street. The extreme southwest corner of the Cemetery is bordered by three residential properties which had been built before the land was sold to the



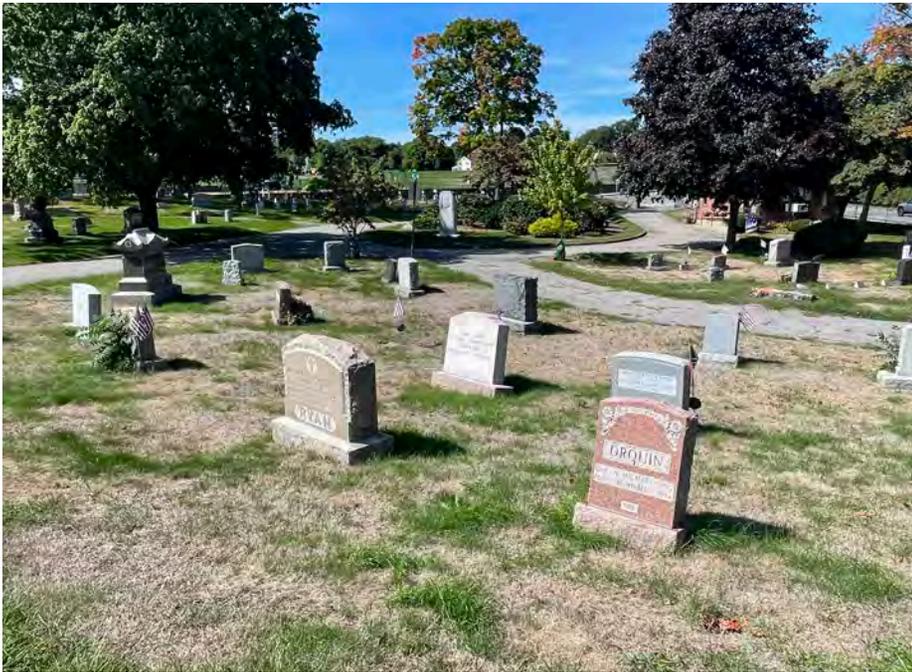
Image of entrance to Belmont Cemetery showing general setting

Town for the expansion of the Cemetery; these residences are a part of the Harvard Lawn Historic District.

The site is surrounded by a series of historic districts local to the Town of Belmont: Skahan Gardens (BLM.BY), Harvard Lawn (BLM.BU), the Richardson Estate (BLM.BZ), the William P. Hale Estate (BLM.BV), the Hittinger Estate (BLM.CA), and Fresh Pond (CAM.AL).

Spatial organization

Belmont Cemetery is organized by a series of drives and walkways that reflect the Cemetery's development over time. Many of these drives were once lined with shade trees. Some of the alignments that were originally created no longer exist, as space was needed for burials. For example, the arcs of Salvia and Clover Paths were infilled with burial, though mature shade trees—particularly along Clover Path—still define the alignments.



2023 images of Belmont Cemetery showing general setting: (top left & right) character and placement of headstones, (bottom left) entry drive and office building, (bottom right) Veterans' Section No. 3

Enlargement of the Cemetery over time is reflected in the layout of these drives and walkways.

The original six-acre parcel set aside in 1859 includes the land from Huron Avenue (then Cushing Street) to Central Avenue, and back to what is now Parkside Place. An 1875 plan shows the division of land of Belmont Cemetery versus the schoolhouse.

- In 1923, a narrow swath of land was purchased and laid out from Central Avenue to the south. South Avenue appears to have been the center line of this parcel. Today, South Avenue serves as the main circulation spine in the Cemetery.
- In 1924, an additional 1.17 acres was purchased from the City of Cambridge to the eastern end of the 1923 Skahan parcel.
- In 1940, 3.56 acres were purchased to expand the Cemetery south from South Avenue, to extend Orchid Avenue, and to include Pansy and Buttercup Avenues, as well as Salvia and Clover Paths. A 1947 aerial photograph shows South Avenue looping back to connect to Buttercup Path. Clover, Salvia, and Aster Paths are all clearly visible in the image, as is the allée flanking South Avenue. Laurel Path, south of South Avenue, is also visible, but much narrower than the others.
- In 1951, the remaining Skahan property south to Fairview Avenue was purchased (save for the three house lots which had already been built on and still exist at the intersection with Grove Street). The Cemetery was then laid out from Huron Avenue to Fairview Avenue.
- Finally, the eastern portion of the Cemetery in Cambridge—everything from Goldenrod Path east, now Norton Circle—was purchased in 1960. Norton Circle within the City of Cambridge bounds, was the last area of the Cemetery developed and has the densest grave layout due to the scarcity of available land.

Belmont Cemetery contains three Veterans' sections, two in the front of the Cemetery flanking the main gate, and one towards center which was dedicated in 1998. The first veteran buried was from the American Civil War. Veterans from the Spanish American War and all subsequent wars are buried in the Belmont Cemetery.

Near the end of South Avenue, there is an infant burial section.

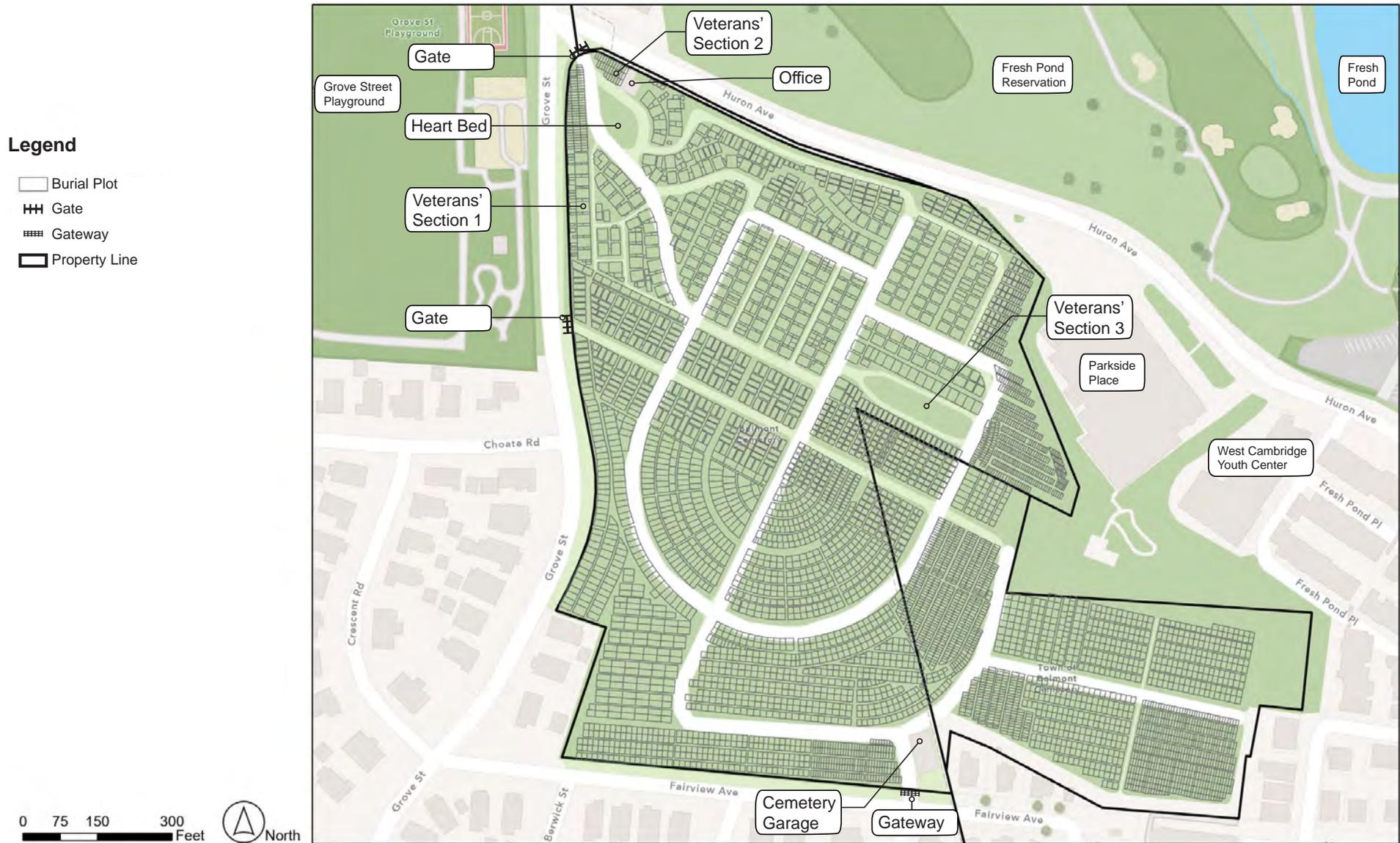
Belmont Cemetery has never had a pauper or potter's field section, however those in need have been aided by the Town and local funeral directors.

There are two clear open lawn areas: the northwestern most portion of Norton Circle where it meets Goldenrod Path and to the very northeast of the Cemetery at Norton Circle before the lay-down area. The small area along Buttercup and Norton Circle appears to be outside of the Cemetery's boundary lines, according to the Massachusetts Interactive Property Map on-line viewer (<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-interactive-property-map>). While the open lawn appears to be part of the Cemetery, the land is part of the Parkside Place parcel (#257-60).

A lay-down area is located in back of the Cemetery beyond the burial at Norton Circle; it is screened by a hedge. Stored there are loam and brush piles, as well as vehicles including equipment trailers.



2023 images of Belmont Cemetery showing general setting: (top left) Veterans' Section No. 1 along Grove Street, (top right) Veterans' Section No. 2 along Huron Avenue, (bottom left) lay-down yard to rear of Cemetery



SETTING, SITE BOUNDARIES & SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

Views and vistas

Views into the Belmont Cemetery are idyllic: mature trees, manicured lawn, and well maintained and cared for monuments and headstones. These views are mainly from Grove Street which is generally at the same grade as the Cemetery. On Huron Avenue in Cambridge, there are some views into the Cemetery, but they are more limited due to mature canopy trees along the road and within the Cemetery, the lilac hedge planted inside the wall and fence, as well as the steep slopes of Burying Hill which prevent views into the heart of the Cemetery.

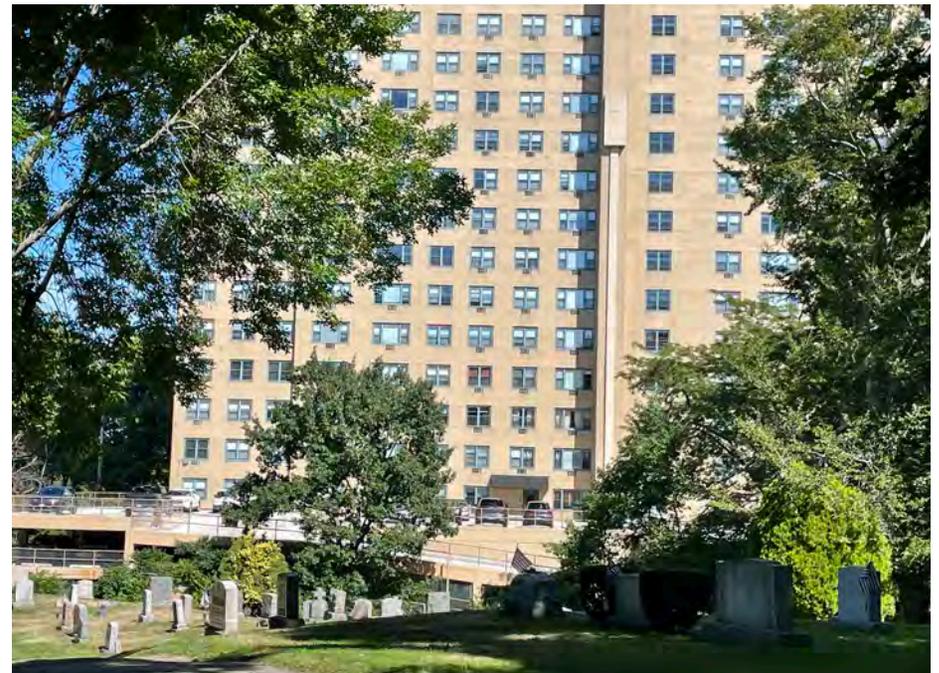
The view out of the front gate on Grove Street is also ideal: it looks directly onto the green parkland of Grove Street Park. A historic image (undated) shows that there was once a home here; the home originally belonged to John W. Skahan located at 74 Grove Street. (The MHC Inventory Form for the Hittinger Estate Historic District (BLM.CA), documented in 1982, states that this house was originally located where the Grove Street Playground now stands and was relocated in 1940 to 196 Grove Street.)

Views to the east from the interior of Cemetery is of the Parkside Place high-rise towering above Burial Hill without much screening. The tower and its garage underneath can be clearly seen from various locations in the Cemetery.

Views to Fresh Pond and the Fresh Pond Golf Course from above Huron Avenue extend the rural scenery of the Cemetery, but likely only in winter when leaves are off the trees.

Views to the east from the Norton Circle area are of the surrounding Cambridge residences.

Views to the south are predominantly blocked by hemlock hedge which parallels Fairview Avenue. Residences at the southwest end of Grove Street are, however, visible.



(top & bottom) Images of Belmont Cemetery showing views out of the Cemetery of the imposing Parkside Place towers



(top & bottom) Views out of the Cemetery to Fresh Pond across Huron Avenue

Legend

Viewshed

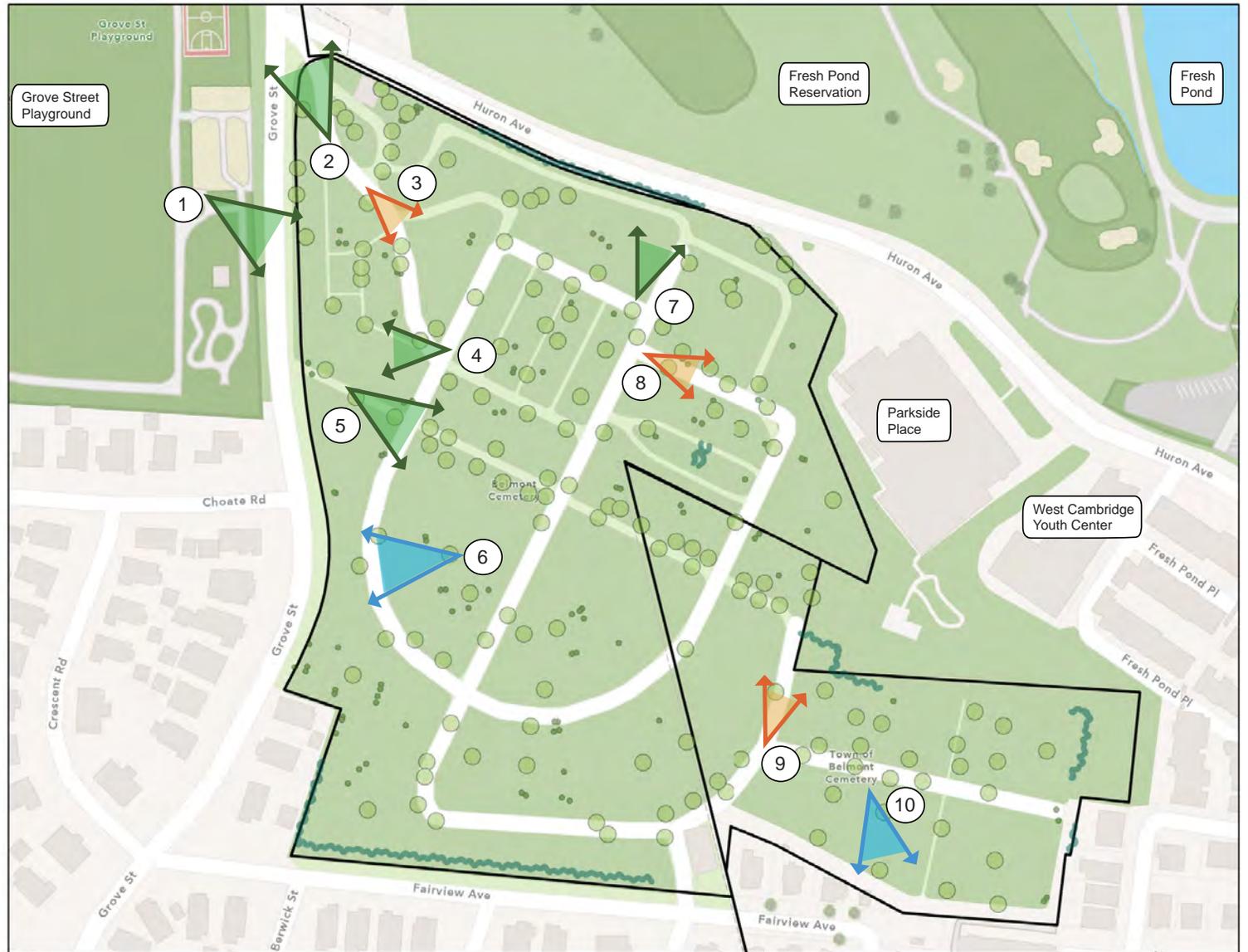
- Favorable View
- Unfavorable View
- Neutral View

Tree

- Tree
- Shrub

Hedge

- Hedge
- Property Line

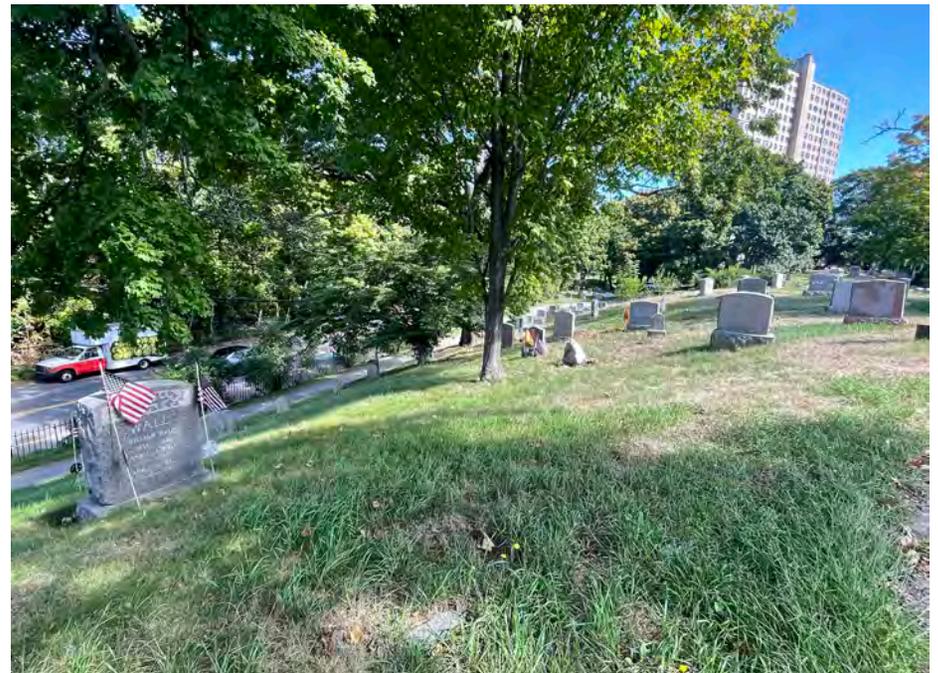


VIEWS & VISTAS

Topography and drainage

Burial Hill, the original burying location from 1859, is the northwest portion of the site. (Between Central Avenue and Huron Avenue). From here the site slopes steeply to the north down towards Fresh Pond. Generally, the site is level across the south with steep grades dropping from Burying Hill to Huron Avenue, with at least 30 feet of grade change. Grades generally drop to the north and northeast as the natural landform sloughs off towards Fresh Pond. The highest point within the Cemetery is located near the intersection of Central and Pansy Avenues; approximate elevation is 50 feet above sea level. The depression that is in the area of today's Parkside Place tower is shown on historic maps as a pond, and in some, labeled "Cider Mill Pond." U.S.G.S. Topographic maps shows this at elevation 9 feet above sea level.

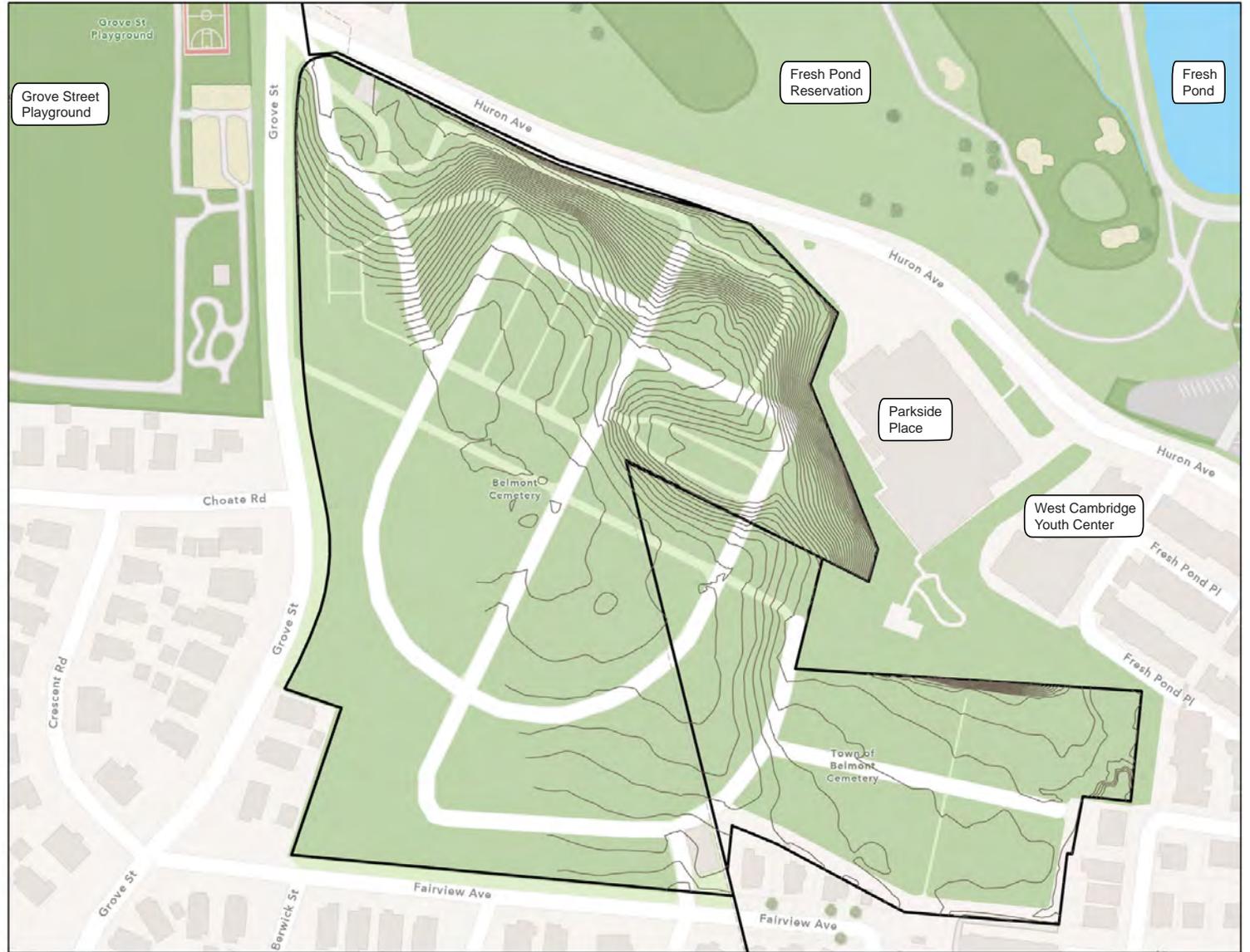
There are several areas with drainage issues. Catch basins and area drains are very limited on site. Two drains are located near the main entry by the Cemetery office. One basin near Veterans' section 3, one to the south of the Cemetery along Goldenrod Path, and two are located on the northern section of Norton Circle.



(top & bottom) Images showing the topography of Burial Hill, which slopes toward Huron Avenue & Fresh Pond

Legend

- Contour (1 Foot Intervals)
- ▭ Property Line



TOPOGRAPHY & DRAINAGE

Vegetation and open space

In June 2024 there were a total of 184 trees on site. The trees break down into the following species):

- *Acer japonica*, Japanese maple: 1
- **Acer platanoides*, Norway maple: 59 (32.0% of trees on site)
- *Acer rubrum*, red maple: 10 (5.4%)
- *Acer saccharum*, sugar maple: 15 (8.2%)
- *Betula nigra* 'Heritage', river birch: 1
- *Betula papyrifera*, paper birch: 2
- *Cornus florida*, flowering dogwood: 9 (4.8%)
- *Cornus kousa*, kousa dogwood: 8 (4.3%)
- *Crataegus douglasii*, black hawthorn 1
- *Fagus spp.*, beech: 2
- ***Fraxinus americana*, white ash: 1
- ***Fraxinus pennsylvanica*, green ash: 1
- *Gleditsia tricanthos var. inermis*, honeylocust: 10 (5.4%)
- *Juniperus virginiana*, red cedar: 1
- *Liriodendron tulipifera*, tulip tree: 4 (4.8%)
- *Magnolia spp.*, magnolia: 1
- *Magnolia stellata*, star magnolia: 1
- *Malus spp.*, crabapple: 3 (1.6%)
- *Nyssa sylvatica*, tupelo 2
- *Ostrya virginiana*, hop hornbeam 2
- *Platanus occidentalis*, American sycamore 1
- *Prunus spp.*, cherry: 2
- *Prunus pendula*, weeping cherry: 1
- *Prunus serotina*, black cherry: 1

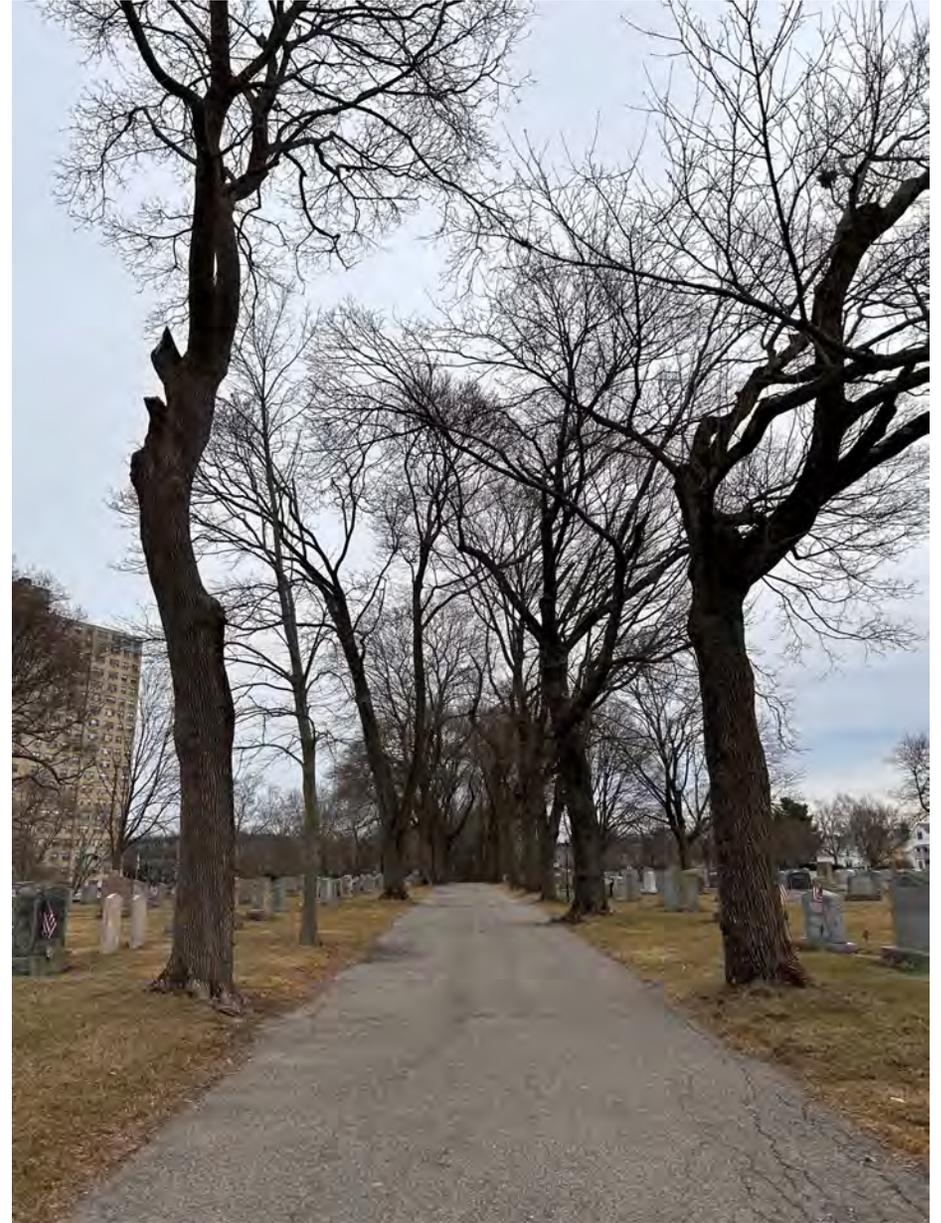
- *Prunus serrulata* 'Kwanzan', Kwanzan cherry: 9 (4.8%)
- *Pyrus spp.*, ornamental pear 1
- *Quercus alba*, Swamp white oak: 4 (4.8%)
- *Quercus palustris* Pin oak: 2
- *Quercus robur*, upright English oak 2
- *Quercus rubra*, Red oak: 5 (2.7%)
- *Quercus velutina*, Black oak: 1
- *Ulmus spp.*, Elm: 8 (4.3%)
- *Tilia americana*, Linden: 10 (5.4%)

*Denotes tree species identified as an invasive species in Massachusetts by Mass Audubon, and/or is included on the Massachusetts Prohibited Plant List prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources.

**10 ash trees were removed in the fall of 2023 due to the infestation of Emerald Ash Borer. As of June 2024, one green ash and one white ash remained.

The tree inventory was originally conducted in 2023 and there was 158 trees on site comprising 27 different species. A number of unhealthy and diseased trees were removed in the fall, including 10 out of 12 ash trees. Replanting in the fall 2023 and spring of 2024 creating a net increase of 26 trees and an improved species diversity of 6 additional species. These removals and subsequent planting also reduced the percentage of Norway maples from 38.6% to 32.0%.

The Heart bed is a planting island just inside the Grove Street gate where the planting bed in the shape of a heart. Originally, and until 1986, the bed was planted seasonally with annuals. The plantings were then replaced with shrubs and perennials. Shrubs include rhododendron, azalea, hydrangea, spirea, rose, and dogwoods trees.



2023 images of the allée which lines South Avenue. The allée is predominantly comprised of Norway maples which are between 3 and 42 inches diameter breast height (DBH).

Several hedges exist on the property. Along Fairview Avenue is a hedge of eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*). (Presumably, these were the evergreens reported to have been planted in 1955.) Despite the declining health of many eastern hemlocks in the region, the DPW reports that the hedge is healthy and regularly treated for woolly adelgid. Below the canopy of the hemlocks is a vine planting of creeping euonymus (*Euonymus fortunei*) to add to the screen as the evergreens naturally lose their lower branches.

A lilac hedge, with some gaps and infill planting other than lilac exists along Huron Avenue just inside the retaining wall and fence. Towards the back of the Cemetery is a juniper (*Juniperus virginiana*) hedge near the boundary with Parkside Place and West Cambridge Youth Center. Another juniper hedge is located at the back of cemetery screening lay-down area. A low boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*) hedge lines the walkway in Veterans' section 3 in the center of the Cemetery.

Flanking South Avenue, the main spine of the Cemetery, is an allée which is comprised of mainly Norway maples (*Acer platanoides*)—three of the trees are lindens (*Tilia americana*). The trees range in diameter from 3 inches to 42 inches DBH (diameter breast height) as replacements have been made over time. Today, there are some gaps in the allée—as many as eight—based on the existing planting locations.

The Cemetery Commission reported that trees originally lined many of the drives, and today many trees are located directly adjacent to the bituminous concrete, which creates an undesirable condition for both the trees and the pavement, but staff has reported that damage to the trees from vehicles is minimal. In several locations trees are also located directly adjacent to the Cemetery's walkways. In many locations, especially where walkways have a less robust cross-section



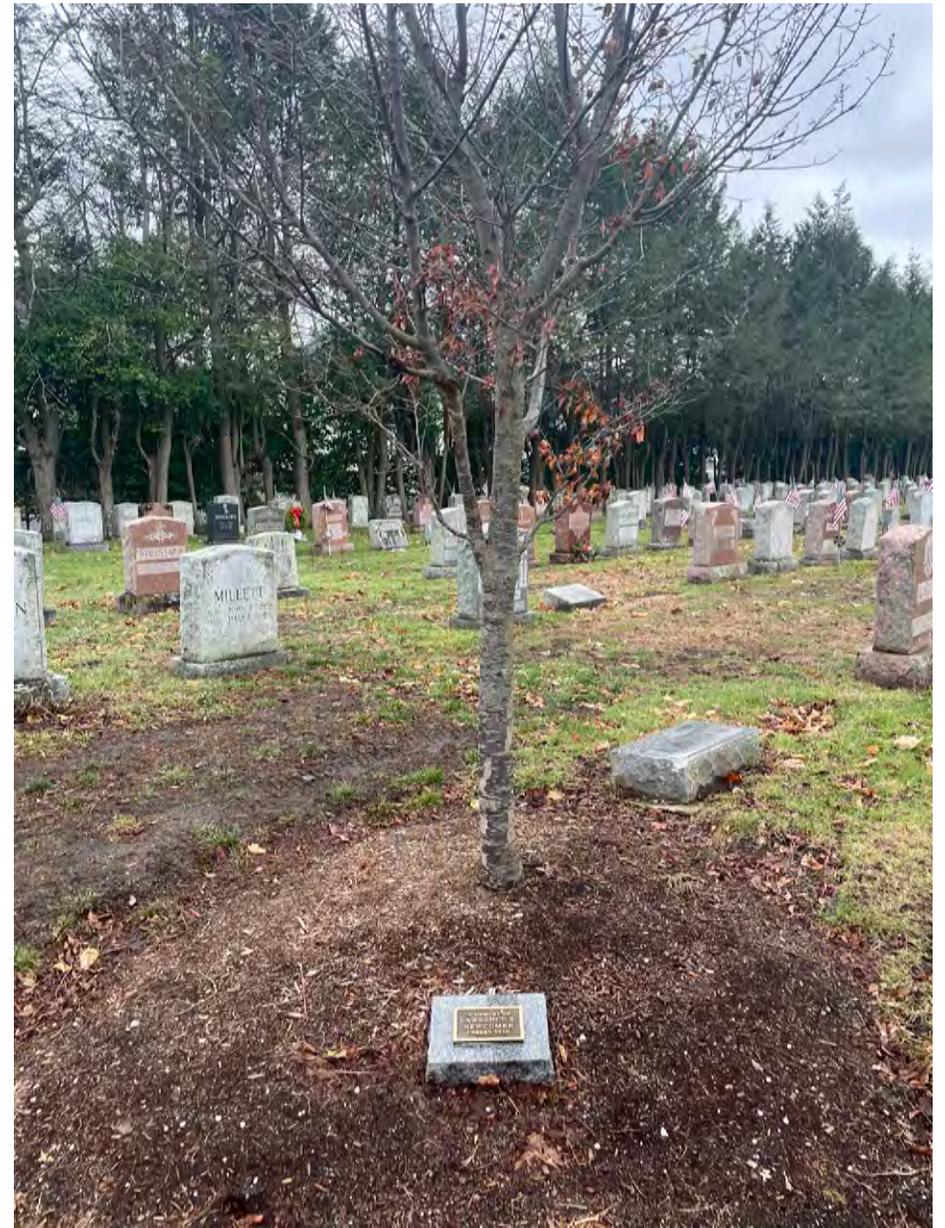
The Heart bed in 2023 just inside the Cemetery entry

compared to the drives, the pavement is heaving causing tripping hazards and making the walkways non-accessible.

The Town has two lists of significant trees, however no trees in the Cemetery have been included on either the Notable or Distinguished tree lists prepared by Shade Tree Committee.

The Cemetery Commission has established an annual planting program where families are allowed to purchase plantings, either geraniums or petunias in red or pink in time for Memorial Day. However, families are not allowed to plant shrubs or perennials at burial sites, though some shrub plantings to remain from decades past that add to the beauty of the Cemetery.

The Cemetery Commission established a Memorial Tree program for both Belmont Cemetery and Highland Meadow Cemetery. In 2023, the Cemetery Commission voted to combine the Cemetery's Memorial Tree program with a newly established Town-wide Memorial Tree program. (Information about the program is included at the end of this section.) In January 2023 there were eight memorial trees designated in Belmont Cemetery, as shown on the plan which follows. A plan of the available trees which can be designated as Memorial trees is under development by the Town.



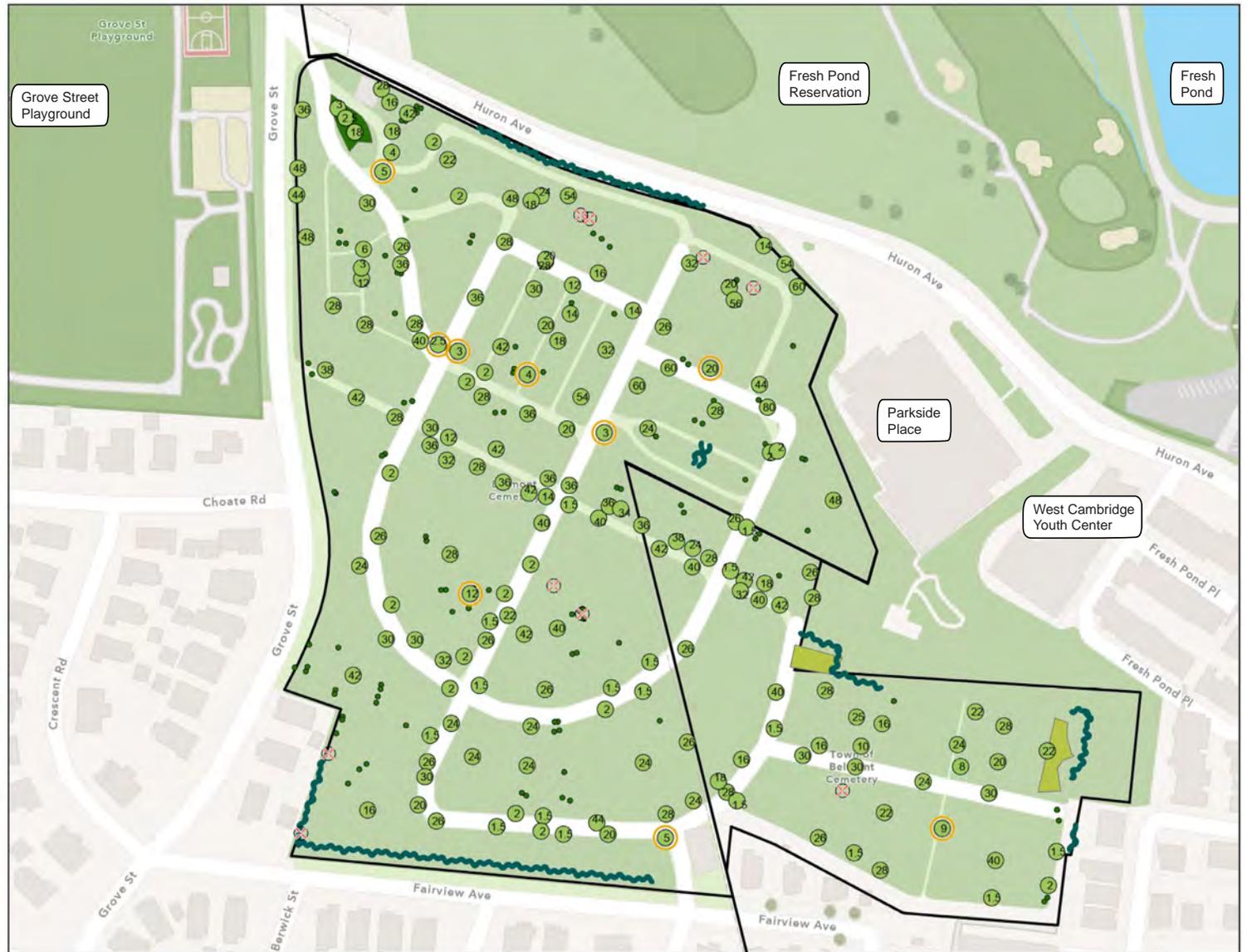
(left) One of several memorial trees in the Cemetery



(top left) Juniper hedge screening a portion of the Parkside Place tower, (top right) juniper hedge screening the lay-down area at the rear of the Cemetery, each with open lawn area adjacent, and (bottom left & right) recent stumps after hazard tree removals

Legend

-  Stump
-  Tree, dbh
-  Memorial Tree
-  Shrub
-  Lawn Area
-  Hedge
-  Shrub Massing
-  Property Line



VEGETATION & OPEN SPACE

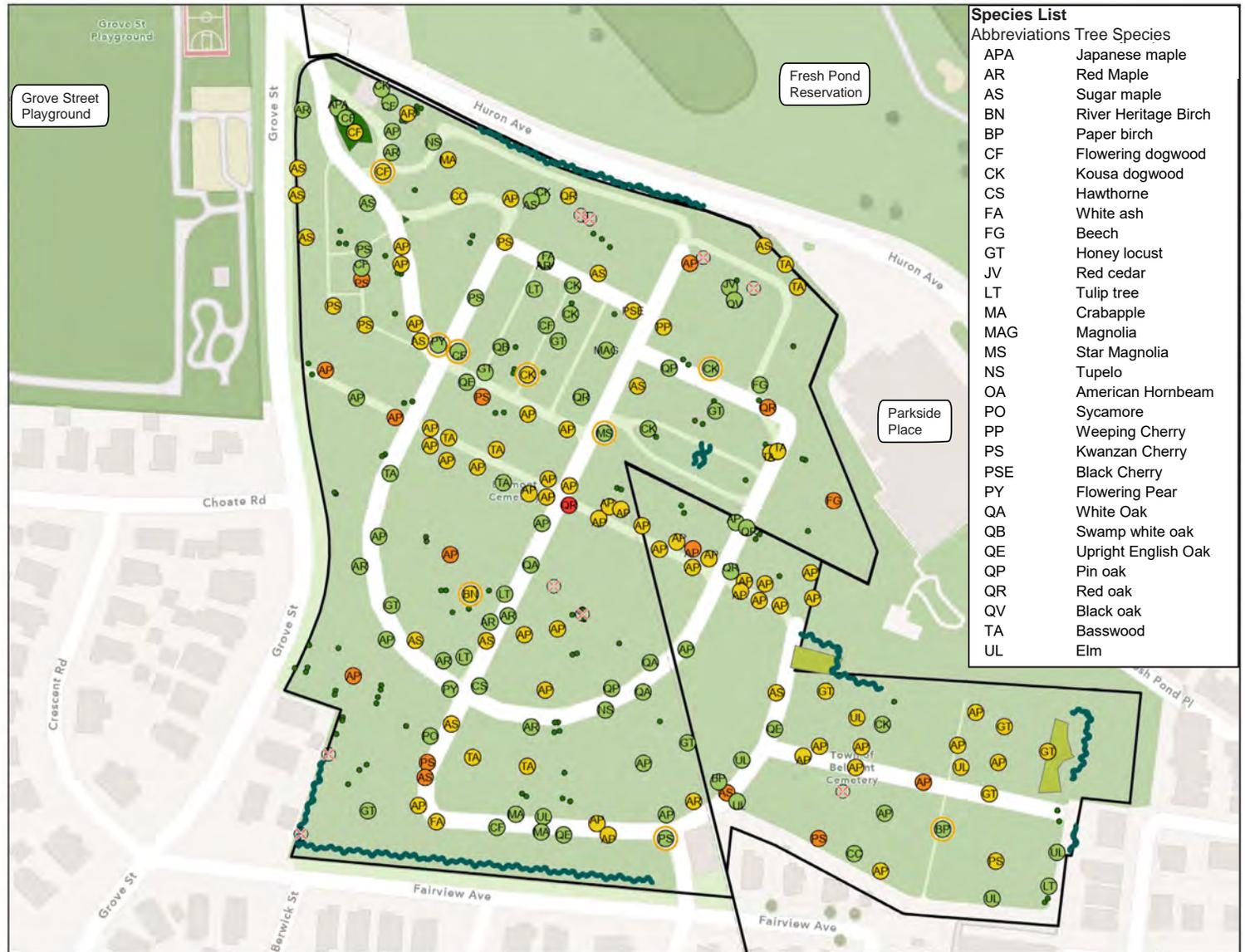
Legend

Tree Condition

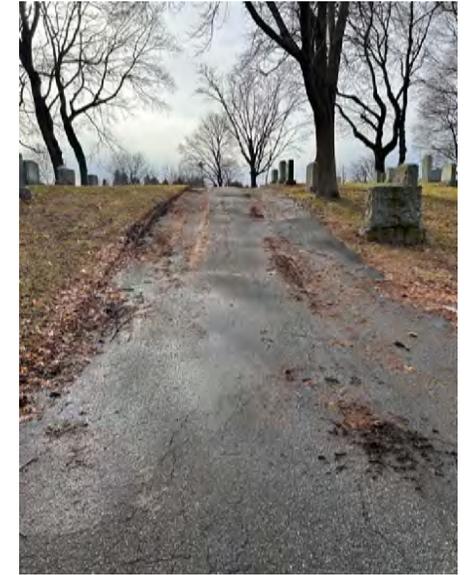
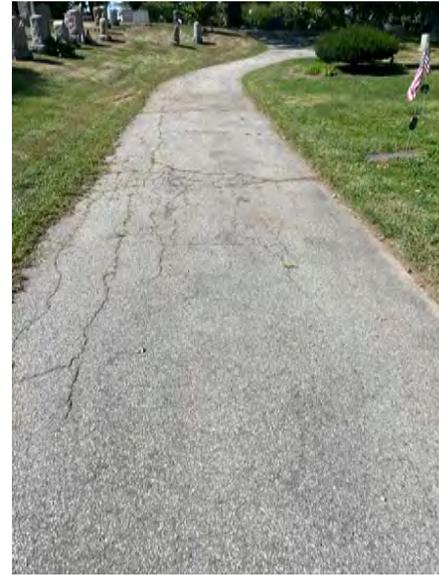
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- Dead
- ⊗ Stump
- Memorial Tree
- Shrub
- Lawn Area
- Hedge
- Shrub Massing
- Property Line

Species List

Abbreviations	Tree Species
APA	Japanese maple
AR	Red Maple
AS	Sugar maple
BN	River Heritage Birch
BP	Paper birch
CF	Flowering dogwood
CK	Kousa dogwood
CS	Hawthorne
FA	White ash
FG	Beech
GT	Honey locust
JV	Red cedar
LT	Tulip tree
MA	Crabapple
MAG	Magnolia
MS	Star Magnolia
NS	Tupelo
OA	American Hornbeam
PO	Sycamore
PP	Weeping Cherry
PS	Kwanzan Cherry
PSE	Black Cherry
PY	Flowering Pear
QA	White Oak
QB	Swamp white oak
QE	Upright English Oak
QP	Pin oak
QR	Red oak
QV	Black oak
TA	Basswood
UL	Elm



VEGETATION: TREE SPECIES & CONDITION



(top) Condition of drives and (bottom) curbing in the Cemetery (left to right) granite curb at catch basin, recycled concrete curb painted white, and bituminous concrete curb

Circulation: vehicular & pedestrian

Gates into the Cemetery exist at three locations:

- The main gate at the intersection of Grove Street and Huron Avenue
- The secondary gate at the western terminus of South Avenue where it meets Grove Street
- To the south of the Cemetery, next to the Cemetery garage where Fairview Avenue meets Marlboro Street. This is an open gateway in the chain link fence.

The gateways are further described in the Small-scale features narrative, further below in this Section of the report.

The drives and walkways are the organizational elements for the burial lots, but also the Cemetery's layout. South Avenue is the main axis which runs east-west and Orchid Avenue is the main axis running north-south.

For the most part, the drives and walkways are named after plants:

- Aster Path – no longer a formal walkway or drive; the eastern extent still visible from Orchid Avenue; no signage
- Buttercup Path – drive
- Carnation Path – walkway
- Central Avenue – drive
- Clover Path – signage exists, but path has been infilled with burials and trees
- Evergreen Path – walkway
- Goldenrod Path – drive
- Iris Path – walkway & drive; follows a meandering route through the Cemetery with varying widths; signage near Veterans' section 3 is missing

- Laurel Path – walkway
- Lilac Circle – walkway
- Magnolia Avenue – drive
- Maple Path – walkway
- Norton Circle – drive
- Orchid Avenue – drive
- Pansy Avenue – drive
- Peony Avenue – drive
- Primrose Path – walkway
- Rose Path – walkway
- Salvia Path – walkway from South Avenue to Magnolia Avenue; from South Avenue to Orchid Avenue signage exists with no formal walkway, but path has been infilled with burials and trees
- South Avenue – drive
- Tulip Path – walkway
- Violet Path – walkway

All of the drives are paved with bituminous concrete, though some are in poor condition. (Research has not uncovered a record of when drives were last paved.) Some have significant alligator cracking, spidering with weeds, and depressions on edges of pavement causing puddling. (More information on conditions is included in the Conditions Assessment section of this report.)



(left) Flagstone stepping stones near Grove Street, (top right) social trail behind the Youth Center, and (right) narrow bituminous concrete walkways near Grove Street



Compaction and loss of turfgrass at the edge of drives due to vehicles continually parking on grass rather than pavement

The drives vary greatly in width from eight feet to seventeen feet, though most are between thirteen feet and fifteen feet-six inches wide. Some drives are strongly crowned, and some are very steep:

- Primrose Path from Orchid Avenue toward Veterans' Section 3: 12.0% to 16.5%
- Orchid Avenue as it heads towards Huron Avenue: 9.0% to 16.5%
- Carnation Path: 4.8% to 22.0%

Curbing is limited in the Cemetery. The heart bed at the main entry is one of the few areas with continuous curbs. The end point (near Grove Street) has been lost. Curbs are also located lining the lawn area/burial sections in the immediate area. These are all bituminous. In some other select intersections, corners are reinforced with curbing to protect trees, catch basins, or site furnishings. Mostly this curbing is reclaimed granite curbing painted white.

Parking is allowed on all drives in the Cemetery and signs regularly remind visitors not to park on the grass. However, as can be seen in the example images, visitors parking on the grass still happens quite a bit. The regular parking is compacting the soil and killing the grass. This likely lends to the expansion of drive widths.

Visitors walk on the walkways and the drives but traffic volume is such that this rarely causes conflicts. Because visitors can drive into the Cemetery and are allowed to park on the drives as they please, accessibility is not a concern. However, there are some drives that are narrow (Iris and Primrose), very steep (the most northern extents of Orchid Avenue, Carnation Path, and Violet Path) or which have a significant crown or cross-pitch (i.e., Buttercup Path). If assessed in terms of accessible walkways, concerns could be raised.

Pedestrian walkways are mostly focused in the older sections of the Cemetery. Three are located between Magnolia and Central Avenues. Lilac Path frames the first Veterans' section with smaller paths through the area. Save for Laurel Path, all the formal walkways are paved with bituminous concrete and are between 22 inches to 56 inches wide. Some have been heaved by the roots of nearby trees. One walkway—Laurel Path, which parallels Grove Street to the south of South Avenue—is made of bluestone stepping stones.

Three walkways are mapped and part of the organizational layout of the lots but are no longer formalized with paving. These include Salvia Path, Clover Path, and Aster Path (near Huron Avenue). To increase the number of burial lots, in the late 1970s and 1980s the Cemetery Commission authorized the conversion of some of the pedestrian paths to burial lots.

There is one social trail towards the back near Parkside Place and the Youth Center. It leads behind the edge to an informal, unauthorized sitting area. Most of the trail is off the Cemetery property but at its eastern end it does cross into the property.



(top left) Clover and Salvia Paths at their intersection with Orchid Avenue, (top right) looking down Clover Path showing the burial infill of the path, and (bottom left) unpaved, but still visible Aster Path near where it meets Orchid Avenue

Legend

Signage

- Cemetery Sign

Circulation Type

- Drive
- - - Walkway
- · - · - Infilled Path
- · · · · Informal Drive
- · - · - Property Line
- Curb
- Property Line

**For poor condition walkway and pathways, refer to areas of concern map.



CIRCULATION: VEHICULAR & PEDESTRIAN



(top left) Office building, originally built in 1925, and (top right) 1954 garage/shop



Some of the notable monuments: (from left to right) Belmont Fire Memorial, Belmont Police Memorial, Lions Club Memorial, and one of the Skahan family monuments

Structures in the landscape

There are two buildings within the Belmont Cemetery: the office building and the garage. The Cemetery office was built in 1925 and in 1948 renovations were made to include a permanent vault and improved heating system, and in 1996, the building was made accessible by addition of a ramp. The office building is a brick structure approximately 18 feet wide by 30 feet long and contains a non-working fireplace and a cold storage vault.

The Cemetery garage/shop was built in 1954. It is a concrete masonry unit (CMU) block structure with parking and additional storage around it including storage container, dumpster, snowplows, etc. The garage has four bay doors which face west towards Grove Street and a small congregate space for staff breaks

Monuments: A majority of headstones and monuments appear fairly consistent, especially those erected in the latter half of the twentieth century and later. The latest edition of the Rules and Regulation (2002) have set size limits for the headstones and flat markers.

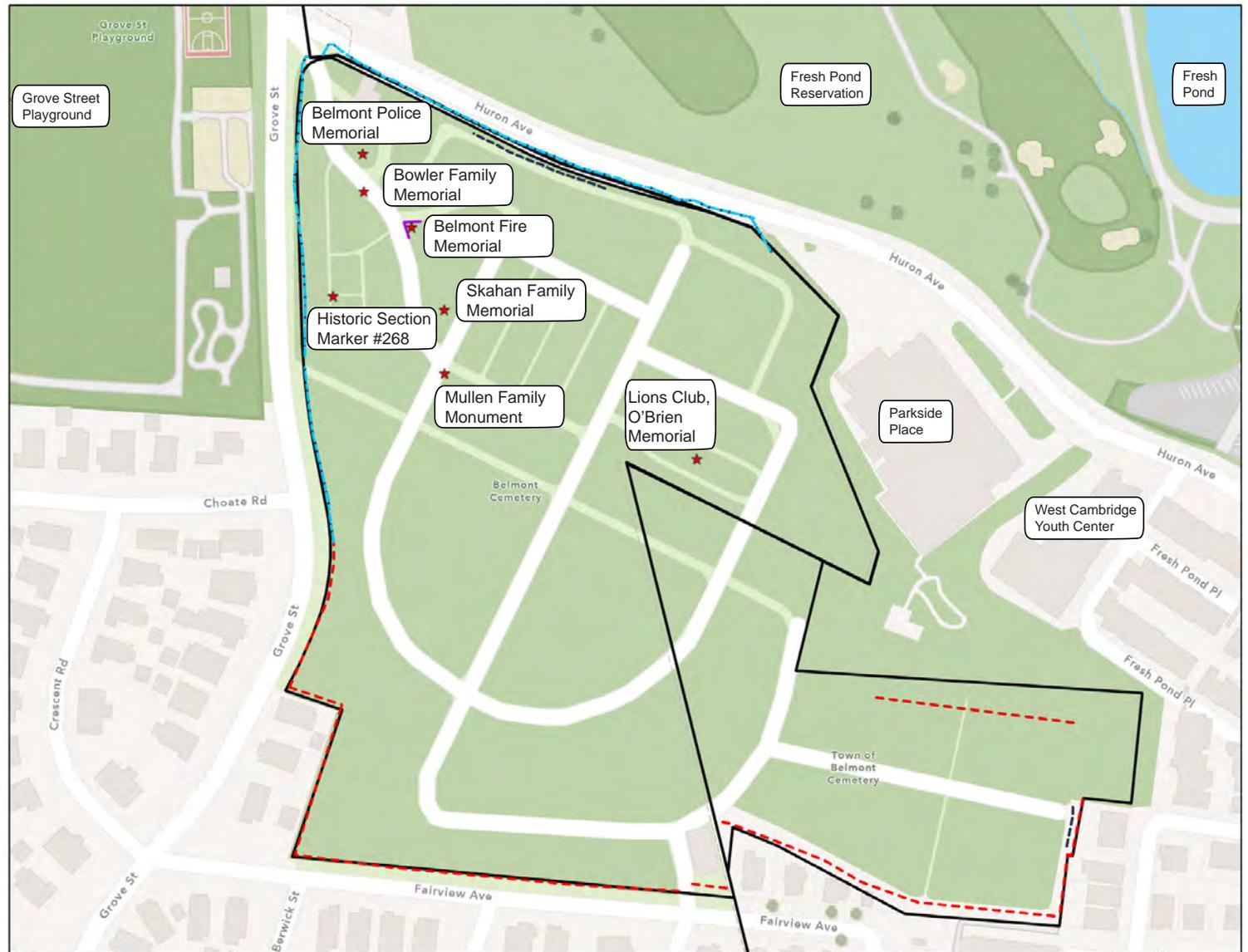
Significant monuments include:

- Belmont Fire Memorial
- Belmont Police Memorial
- Belmont Lions Club, John J. O'Brien Memorial
- Skahan Family Monument(s)
- Mullen Family Monument
- Bowler Family Monument
- Historic section marker (#268)

Veterans' monuments in section 1 are the historic standard Government-provided white marble headstones with a few more modern flat-laid bronze markers mixed in. In Veterans' sections 2 and 3 are flat laid bronze plaques. One granite marker is included in Section 3. In other sections throughout the Cemetery, Veterans' graves are marked by the bronze plaques, as well as flat laid white marble markers. Some have subsided so that the grass is growing over their edges, making them difficult to read.

Legend

- Distinctive Monument
- ★ Distinctive Monument
- Walls
- Wall
- Wall with Fence
- Fencing
- Fencing Type
- - - Chain Link Fence
- Ball and Chain
- ▭ Property Line



STRUCTURES IN THE LANDSCAPE

Small-scale features

The main entrance for the Belmont Cemetery is located near the intersection of Grove Street and Huron Avenue. The entrance is comprised of two piers with an ornamental gate and archway at Grove Street. The piers (eight feet-six inches tall and thirty inches square) are comprised of ashlar cut stone with a granite cap stone. Each pier has a bronze plaque which reads “Belmont Cemetery/1859”. The arch which spans the piers is made wrought iron and is painted black. After an accident in 1996 the arch was raised high above the piers on two verticals that match the detail of the original archway to allow for larger vehicles to pass underneath without damage. The arch says “Belmont Cemetery” in white-painted lettering with 1859 in smaller letters above.

A second, smaller cast/wrought iron gate is located at the western end of South Avenue where it meets Grove Street. It is set on two stone piers (five feet-three inches and five feet-seven inches tall) which terminate the iron fence. The ornamental gate is comprised of pickets similar to the border fencing with some scroll work; all of which is painted black. This is also a vehicular gate with white-painted “Belmont Cemetery” lettering. In 2024, this gate was hit by a truck attempting to exit the cemetery onto Grove Street. This was the second time such an accident occurred in recent memory. The piers were rebuilt after the accident.

Fencing falls into four categories:

- Wrought iron fence along the Cemetery boundary of Huron Avenue and much of Grove Street. All of this fence sits on top of the granite block wall. The portion that runs along Grove Street has been painted black in recent years. The portion along Huron Avenue has not been painted in some time.
- Chain link fence with green privacy slats along the southwest, south, and southeast borders.

- Chain link fence is also located on Grove Street south of the secondary gate to the residence at 87 Grove Street, behind the three homes at the corner of Grove Street/Fairview Avenue, and extending behind the garage. This chain link fence has no privacy slats and dates to 1955 when DPW installed it with a barbed wire top to reduce vandalism.
- Low post and chain near the Belmont Fire Department memorial

A wrought iron fence sits atop the retaining wall along Huron Avenue and Grove Street. The original fence dates to 1937 and enclosed the entire Cemetery at the time. It was extended in the 1950s with the relocation of the home at 91 Grove Street and expansion of the Cemetery. The wrought iron fence is generally in fair condition. The fence panels are ten feet-six inches long, with pickets spaced six inches on center, and the fence stands four feet above the capstone. Every fifth picket—and all posts—is secured into the wall.

The retaining wall is a low wall. The height varies from sixteen inches high near the northwest corner of the office along Huron Avenue fifty-two inches high at the northeastern end by Parkside Place. Generally, however, it is twenty-four to thirty inches high. It has very large granite capstones that are eight inches high by fourteen inches deep and up to ninety-two inches long. The wall itself is comprised of field stones and angular stones.

There is a gateway at Fairview Avenue by the garage: an opening in the chain link fence. Rules signs are posted on the chain link fence facing into the neighborhood.



(top left) Iron arch atop the entry gateway, (top right) iron gates at the main gateway, (bottom left) bronze plaque on entry pillars, and (bottom right) chain link fence with privacy screening to the east of the Cemetery

There are two flagpoles within the Cemetery (both flags are lit per the U.S. Flag Code):

- One flagpole near the original Veterans' section 1 along Grove Street which flies the American flag.
- The flagpole in Veterans' section 3 flies the American flag and the POW/MIA (Prisoners of War/Missing in Action) flag.

Signage in the Cemetery includes identification signs and rules signs.

- Identification signs include the "Belmont Cemetery/1859" plaques on the Grove Street entrance piers, as well as the signs identifying the names of drives and paths. Historically, these path signs were cast iron signs which are traditional to cemeteries and burying grounds of the same era. (Many of the City of Boston's Historic Burying Grounds use these same signs.) Some of these have been replaced with standard street signs. Some historic signposts remain without signs topping them. Today, these signs typically are of four combinations of materials:
 - Cast iron sign (painted black with white lettering) on a cast iron post – Generally in fair condition.
 - Cast iron sign (painted black with white lettering) on round steel pipe – Generally in fair condition.
 - Aluminum sign on round steel pipe (painted green or black) – Generally in fair condition.
 - Aluminum signs on square galvanized steel posts — In good to fair condition.
 - There are one or two signposts with no signs.
- Signs also include traffic directional signs and rules—these are typically posted on square galvanized steel posts,

sometimes on the same post of identification signs. Rules signs include:

- "Please no parking on grass"
- "No dogs allowed"
- "Open dawn to dusk"

The bronze rules signs state the following:

- "Open to the public from dawn to dusk.
- Visitors are welcome to walk on roads and paths.
- Only natural plant material/decorations permitted year round.
- No enclosures of any kind, including fences and curbing.
- Vigil lights are not permitted.
- No dogs allowed, leashed, or unleashed.
- No active sports permitted."

There are four standard benches in the Cemetery. They are made of wood and steel and are painted green.

- One is located on Burial Hill looking down towards Grove Street.
- Two are located along South Avenue.
- One is located on Maple Path towards the rear of the Cemetery.

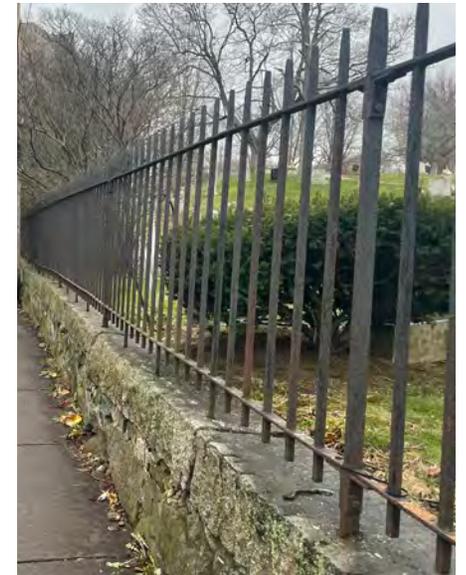
A fifth bench is a granite memorial bench located in Veterans' section 3.

Trash cans are typically located with hose bibs.

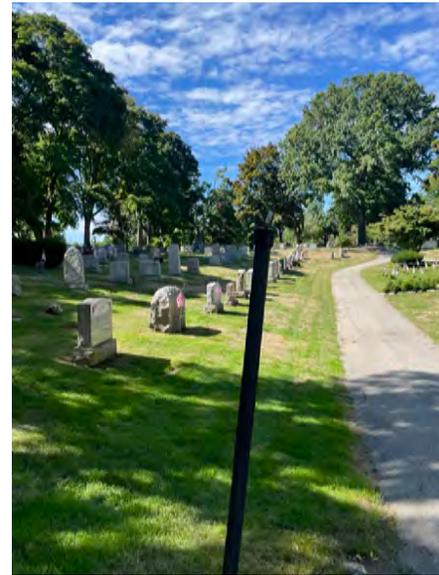
Next to the Cemetery office, there is a flag drop box.



Images of the secondary gate at the end of South Avenue along Grove Street showing piers and gate



Images of the granite block retaining wall and iron picket fence along Huron Avenue and Grove Street



Example of historic signage in the Cemetery, including (left to right): iron sign on iron post, iron sign on round steel post, steel posts with missing sign, and bronze rules sign



Signs with more modern aesthetics in the Cemetery, (left) drive naming sign: aluminum sign on square galvanized steel posts, and (center): street and rules signs



Benches in the Cemetery: (left) wood and steel with historic aesthetic, and (right) granite memorial bench



Site amenities (left to right): flagpole at Veterans' Section 1, flag drop box near office building, water spigot and trash can, and spot light for flagpole

Legend

Site Amenities Amenity Type

-  Bench
-  Flagpole
-  Flag Dropbox

Signage

-  Cemetery ID
-  Road Name
-  Cemetery Rules
-  Property Line



SMALL-SCALE FEATURES

Utilities

Utilities in the Cemetery include hose bibs, a sewer line and manhole, and limited irrigation and lighting. The catch basin/ areas drains described in the Topography & Drainage portion of the Section of the report are connected to the Town's combined stormwater/sewer line.

There are approximately forty hose bibs within the Cemetery—some of which are paired with waste bins. The Cemetery staff has reported that these are sufficient.

The Heart Bed is the only planting area that has irrigation.

Lighting is limited in the Cemetery as it is open from dawn till dusk. There are two lights which light the American flag as required per the American Flag Code:

- An in-ground spotlight on flagpole in Veterans' Section No. 1
- A pole-mounted solar spotlight to illuminate the flag in Veterans' Section No. 3

Additionally, a pole-mounted spotlight is located in the southeast corner of the Cemetery near Fairview Avenue.

Legend

Utilities

Manhole Type

● Sewer

● Water

Catch Basin

■ Catch Basin

Hose Bib

● Hose Bib

Lighting

⚡ Spot Light

⚡ Telephone Pole - Spot Light

● Telephone Pole - No Spot Light

⚡ Solar Mounted Flagpole Light

▭ Property Line



UTILITIES

Management & policies

Rules & Regulations

(From the Town website)

Adopted by The Board of Cemetery Commissioners, Revised November 20, 2002.

Interments

- *Rules and regulations of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners of the Town of Belmont, Massachusetts, are made for the protection of Grave and Lot Owners in conformity with the Town by-laws and Statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.*
- *Vaults or liner boxes are required for all earth burials.*
- *Graves and Lots are not sold for future use.*
- *Graves and Lots are sold to residents of Belmont only and are not transferable to non-residents.*
- *The first interment must be a member of the immediate family of the purchaser, and a resident of the Town of Belmont (see residency requirements).*
- *Business hours are 8:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. Monday through Friday. The Cemetery is open for visitations from dawn to dusk only.*
- *Interments are not made on Sunday or on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Presidents Day, Patriots Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving*

and Christmas.

- *There will be an extra charge for all funerals on Saturdays, holidays, and processions arriving after 1:30 P.M. weekdays.*
- *The Cemetery Manager may refuse to make an interment until a more expedient time if too many funerals are scheduled to arrive at the same hour or when the weather is too prohibitive.*

Monuments & Markers

- *Monuments and markers may be erected subject to the approval of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners or its designee. Only granite and bronze will be allowed.*
- *Signed orders with designs and specifications must be submitted to the Board of Cemetery Commissioners. No statues or objectionable designs will be permitted.*
- *Grave/Lot and section numbers must be on the base of the stone.*
- *All monuments must be uniform size:*
 - *Single Grave: 2 feet by 1 foot by 3 feet high*
 - *Two Grave: 3 feet by 1 foot by 3 feet high*
- *Flat Markers:*
 - *Single Grave: 2 feet by 1 foot or 2 feet by 1 foot-2 inches*
 - *Two Grave: 3 feet x 1 foot-2 inches*

- *Government Markers:*
 - *Only one Government Marker is allowed on each Veteran's grave in the Veterans' sections.*
- *The Cemetery Division is not responsible for any damage to monuments or markers.*
- *The Cemetery Division shall set all foundations. Foundations will not be set between November 20th and until the frost is out of the ground in the spring.*
- *Orders for foundations for Memorial Day must be submitted before the first of May.*
- *All work in the Cemetery must be done during working hours.*
- *Visitors are forbidden to walk across Cemetery lots unless on their way to visit a grave.*
- *Motor vehicles must not be operated within the Cemetery at a rate of speed that is greater than reasonable and proper because the roadways are winding and used by pedestrians.*
- *The following is forbidden within the Cemetery:*
 - *No dogs allowed, leashed or unleashed*
 - *The drinking of alcoholic beverages is prohibited*
 - *Ball playing, roller-skating, sledding*
 - *The riding of bicycles, mini-bikes, go-carts, and skateboards*
 - *The display and/or sale of goods, wares, and merchandise*
 - *Instructing persons in the use and operation of a motor vehicle*
 - *For any unauthorized person or persons to be loitering within the Cemetery after regular working hours*

Rules

- *No bushes or shrubs are to be planted or replaced.*
- *Flowerbeds must conform to size and will be placed not more than 12 inches from the face of the monument only.*
- *No enclosure of any nature, as fence, ditches, curbs, boxes or urns, is allowed. Vigil lights are not permitted. Potted plants, baskets and flowers will be permitted at Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day and Memorial Day or any other day to commemorate a special occasion including, but not restricted to a birthday or anniversary. Wreaths or sprays of natural evergreens are allowed during the Christmas season.*
- *All decorations will be removed ten days after the specific holiday or as soon as they become faded or unsightly.*
- *No artificial flowers/decorations are permitted.*
- *The Cemetery will not be responsible for any flowers, decorations, holders or other devices or receptacles placed on graves.*
- *Any person found in violation of the above subsections shall be deemed a trespasser and subject to prosecution therefore.*
- *Dis-interments: For all dis-interments, a Funeral Director must be engaged to ensure compliance with relevant Massachusetts' laws. Removals are prohibited between May 15th and October 15th.*
- *Non-Resident Charge: There will be a non-resident fee assessed for decedents who have not lived in Belmont or owned property in the town for the three (3) years immediately prior to death. Verification will be determined from records available at the Town Clerk's office and/or the Board of Assessors.*

- *Veterans' Graves: There are a limited number of graves available for Veterans. The Veteran must be the first burial, and, at the time of death, the spouse must indicate a desire to be cremated and buried with his/her spouse. No other individual may be buried in that grave.*
- *Welfare Graves: Welfare graves (for cremation remains only) may be made available to Belmont residents at the Belmont Cemetery on Grove Street at the discretion of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners.*
- *The foregoing rules and regulations and prices are made by the Board of Cemetery Commissioners and are subject to change without notice.*
- *Exceptions to these rules may be made by a majority vote of the Board of Cemetery Commissioners.*

Belmont Cemetery Commission General By-Law

§40-215 Board of Cemetery Commissioners

- A. The Board of Cemetery Commissioners shall consist of three members elected by ballot at the Annual Town Election for a term of three years. One member shall be elected in each year. No sooner than five years from the date of passage of that certain special act entitled "Home Rule Petition for Belmont, An Act To Reorganize the Public Works Functions in the Town of Belmont," the Select Board may request Town Meeting to convert the Board of Cemetery Commissioners to an appointive body. Upon a two-thirds vote of Town Meeting, the Select Board shall establish and appoint a three-member Board of Cemetery Commissioners, consisting of the incumbent elected members for the duration of their term. Should an incumbent member choose not to serve in an appointive capacity, the Select Board shall appoint a new Commissioner to fill the remainder of that term. Upon the expiration of the initial terms of appointment, the Select Board shall appoint Commissioners in a manner consistent with Article 1 of this chapter.

- B. The Board of Cemetery Commissioners shall have the following duties and responsibilities:
 - (1) To educate the Select Board, Town administration and the citizens of Belmont regarding the need for burial space and cemetery services;
 - (2) To advocate on behalf of the citizens of Belmont for burial space and cemetery services, including expansion, maintenance, and beautification of existing facilities;
 - (3) To establish policies and regulations relating to the cemetery, including but not limited to the terms and conditions of burial rights, the prices for sale of lots

and graves and other services and the erection of monuments and ornamentation;

- (4) To identify and advocate for major capital and facility improvements, including expansion, to meet the long-term needs of the cemetery system and to work cooperatively with the Town's staff to develop an appropriate financing plan for such improvements;
- (5) To develop an appropriate marketing strategy to sell cemetery lots as required to meet financial requirements of cemetery needs;
- (6) To certify and recommend for Town Meeting appropriation the amount and use of proceeds from the sale of cemetery lots paid into the Town treasury for reimbursement to the Town for the cost of the land, its care, improvement and embellishment, or the enlargement of the cemetery;
- (7) To report annually, in cooperation with the Director of Public Works and the Town Treasurer, on the status of the Perpetual Care Fund and on progress in implementing the capital improvement plan. In cooperation with the Town Accountant, to certify and recommend for Town Meeting appropriation the amount of perpetual care interest income to offset the cost of routine cemetery maintenance; and to assume jurisdiction and representation of applicable provisions of that certain Memorandum of Agreement dated November 22, 1999, relating to the use of land in Belmont formerly owned by McLean Hospital, including, without limitation, Attachment B2 - Conservation Restriction, Attachment E - Land Use and Management Plan, and Attachment K - Cemetery Agreement.

Commemorative Shade Tree Planting Program

*In May 2023, the Memorial Tree program joined with the Commemorative Shade Tree program.

(From the Town website)

The Town of Belmont is proud to announce its Commemorative Shade Tree Planting Program. The shade tree planting program offers an opportunity for you to help beautify Belmont and to recognize a person or event with the planting of a shade tree. Any person, business, or group may sponsor a tree and be recognized on the Town's commemorative plaque located in Town Hall and on the Town of Belmont's website. Celebrate a birth, a graduation or wedding, or donate in memory of a loved one. Scout Troops, organizations or businesses can sponsor a tree too. In addition to the advantage of sponsorship, our community will enjoy the benefit of tree for generations to come.

Your sponsorship contribution of \$500 will pay for the tree, its planting and maintenance as well as a plate on the commemorative plaque displayed in Town Hall. The town will be responsible for care and maintenance of all trees planted under this program.

** Please note that the Town's Tree Warden will work with each contributor to the program. There may be some cases that the choice of tree may not be the right fit for the preferred location or that some trees may not have the appropriate conditions to be planted at that location, in which case the Tree Warden will work with the sponsor to find a suitable location.*

Belmont's publicly owned trees are a capital asset and are as important as our streets, sidewalks, public buildings and recreational facilities. Belmont's street trees, as well as all public area and forest trees, continually profit the town by working to improve our environment and quality of life.

Trees bring numerous benefits to our community because:

- *Improve Air Quality*
- *Reduce Green House Gases*
- *Lower Summer Temperatures*
- *Lessen Topsoil Erosion*
- *Diminish Noise Levels*
- *Increase Property Values*
- *Improve Aesthetics*
- *Provide Wildlife Habitat*
- *Increase Overall Well Being*

Join Belmont's Commemorative Shade Tree Planting Program by sponsoring the planting of a shade tree. Your sponsorship will be a gift that will last for generations to come. Our community trees create a beautiful canopy of lush greens in the summer and vibrant colors in the fall, all the while vigilantly protecting our sustainability.

Sponsor a tree by filling out the brochure and mail or drop off at: Belmont Public Works Department.

Ceremonies & remembrance

- Memorial Day ceremonies include a solemn ceremony at which an invited guest offers reflections on Memorial Day and military service. The roll of the names of each of Belmont's soldiers killed in action is read and flowers are placed on the Veteran graves at the main entrance to the Cemetery. At noon the U.S. Flag is raised by the local Boy Scouts of America.
- Flags and military medallions are permitted year-round for Veterans' burial sites, both in the Veterans' sections and throughout the Cemetery for those veterans whose burials are marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker.
- Wreaths Across America has not, to date, laid wreaths at the Belmont Cemetery in December, as they do for other Veterans' burial sites.
- In the past, volunteers have been used to place flags at veterans' graves. An Eagle Scout project and volunteer project by Belmont resident William McEvoy provided a list of all Veteran burials in Belmont to Find A Grave, a website to assist members of the public interested in finding a specific grave.

DPW maintenance & management

KZLA and DPW staff members met to discuss current maintenance practices and to discuss maintenance goals for the Cemetery.

The DPW is currently short-staffed, typically they have four full-time Cemetery crew members and in spring 2023 had only three crew members. In the summer when there are vacations and/or sick time, the work load is difficult to manage. Those four staff members are dedicated to the two Town-managed cemeteries. Even with the opening of Highland Meadow Cemetery in 2007, the cemetery maintenance staff has not been increased. (Highland Cemetery comes with maintenance challenges as it was built on glacial till that makes excavation more difficult, taking more time per grave and also has groundwater/drainage issues.) Each summer, DPW typically hires two seasonal employees from April 1st through November 1st.

Annual maintenance calender

Summer maintenance activities include grass cutting, weed whacking, regular plantings, and general maintenance.

Fall maintenance includes preparation for Veterans' Day (resetting medallions and flags, and general clean-up), leaf blowing, general maintenance, and equipment maintenance. Grass cutting continues until November.

Any time there is a winter weather event, Cemetery Division staff will report to DPW to assist the rest of DPW staff in snow removal. The drives in Belmont Cemetery are cleared of snow as a priority. Walkways typically wait until the end of the removal process, unless there is a interment service, in which case the walkways around the burial lot are cleared with a small snowblower. (At Highland Meadow Cemetery, staff also needed to clear burial lots

for sales, as necessary.) After winter storms, any fallen branches are also removed from the site. Winter maintenance also includes many of the tasks that are not able to be tackled throughout the year, including maintenance of equipment and vehicles.

Spring maintenance activities include preparation for Memorial Day (resetting Veterans' medallions and flags, cleaning of Police and Fire Memorials, and general clean-up), seeding and topdressing of lawn, trimming of boxwood shrubs at Veterans' Section 3, and weeding and pruning of the shrubs in the Heart bed. Additionally, the crew is responsible for the planting of annuals ahead of Memorial Day. In 2023, over 560 geraniums were planted in 147 plots, plus more annuals planted in the Veterans' sections and at the Fire and Police Memorials. The crew puts in a substantial amount of overtime hours in the spring.

General maintenance typically includes wall maintenance: re-pointing and re-chinking the boundary wall. Additionally, the crew is working to make any headstone repairs, including simple resetting of tipped or tipping monuments and the resetting of markers which are sunken. Additionally, the catch basins are cleaned out annually.

Of course, year-round work includes interments. All burial lots have been sold, however, there are many lots still available for burials. Cremations can be handled with just one staff member, and can be prepared ahead of time. Casket burials require all three crew members for interments. Sometimes crew members are needed to help carry caskets as the standard four people maintains balance of the casket.

Equipment, materials & amenities

Cemetery equipment is shared between both cemetery facilities, but stored at Belmont Cemetery, as there is no garage at Highland Meadow Cemetery. Driving between the two facilities and relocating equipment can be a challenge. Though they are just 2.6 miles apart, they are located on opposite edges of the community, and traffic is such that it can take a substantial amount of time to get from one site to the other.

The drains on the Fairview Avenue side of the Cemetery are connected to the Town's stormwater system and function well. The rest of the drains on site are dry wells; they do not—and cannot—connect to any stormwater system. These dry wells overflow regularly, including the one next to the office building, which causes puddling and ice.

Other comments regarding equipment, materials, and amenities include the following:

- The facilities have outgrown the garage/shop building. The modern equipment does not fit in the outdated structure and additional storage (trailer, stockpiling, and dumpster) have been added behind the structure, as it is too small for today's needs.
- Staff reported that having another John Deere cart would be useful for moving materials (i.e., loam, mulch) around.
- Also, another thatcher for the mower would be beneficial for maintenance efforts.
- To the knowledge of the DPW staff, the last time that the Cemetery's drives were repaved was likely in the 1980s. Since then, discrete areas have been paved or patched as needed.
- Staff reported that the Heart Bed irrigation is working well.

- The benches in the Cemetery are nearing the end of their useful life and should be replaced.
- The soil which makes up the site is general of good quality. Much of the site was re-graded as the Cemetery expanded. This makes excavation relatively easy.
- On the slopes of Burial Hill on the Huron Avenue side, erosion is significant. The erosion is damaging the low retaining wall that is above Huron Avenue on Iris Avenue as it has no weep holes to allow water to pass through.
- The lay down area in the rear of the Cemetery is typically used to store backfill for burials, loam, debris after clean-ups, etc. until the materials can be transferred off-site or re-used on site.
- It is most cost effective to replace the historic drive and walkway signs with street signs, as they are included under a current DPW contract.
- In May 2023, the Memorial Tree program was joined with the Commemorative Shade Tree Planting program. As trees that have been designated as memorial trees in the past are no longer viable, the plaque will be removed, and a commemorative plaque located in Town Hall.

Volunteer efforts

Recent volunteer efforts include the following:

- In the spring 2022, the Town had volunteers assist in the cleaning of headstones, but only in Veterans Sections 1 and 2. DPW thought that the process went well and would like to continue the effort.
- Volunteers have also been used to set flags at Veterans' graves.
- Retired DPW worker Austin Bennett, "Butchie", has scraped and repainted the antique fencing.

- The Belmont Garden Club has donated trees for the Cemetery in the past.

Contract work

Any specialized work that is required in the Cemetery, is contracted out. This includes fencing repairs, pruning of trees, etc. The Town does not have regular contracts, but will put out a request for services as a project is necessary and funding is available. DPW reported that 95% of the tree pruning is outsourced.

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Preservation Analysis

To understand the preservation philosophy and treatment methodology to be applied to any cultural landscape, there are a number of factors that must be considered. These include historical significance, period of significance, identification of the character-defining features, and the integrity of those features.

In 1996, the U.S. Department of the Interior published the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*. The *Guidelines* (hereafter) assist preservation planners and managers of cultural landscapes to understand appropriate methods of treatment as they apply to cultural landscapes and their dynamic resources.

Belmont Cemetery was listed on the National Register of Historic Places for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1982. The nomination form filed with the Massachusetts Historic Commission (MHC) is a standard form that the state has developed for Burial Grounds, and does not include pertinent factors described above. They have been identified herein.

Statement of significance

The **significance** of a cultural landscape is derived from its associations and features. There are four criteria considered when evaluating a historic landscape for inclusion on the National Register or a local designation. A landscape must meet at least one of the following criteria in order to be considered a significant cultural landscape:

- A.** Event: have an association with an event that contributed to broad patterns of history
- B.** Person: have an association with the life of a significant person
- C.** Design/construction: be representative of a “distinctive characteristic of a type, period, or method of construction”, represent the work of a master, or possess “high artistic value”
- D.** Information potential: possess the potential to yield significant information important to prehistory or history

Significance of a property, structure, object or landscape must have been achieved at least 50 years prior in order to be eligible for listing on the National, or a local, Register.

Cemeteries do not necessarily automatically qualify for inclusion on the National Register (as well as graves or birthplaces or historical figures, and/or properties owned by religious institutions/used for religious purposes). “Cemeteries serve as a primary means of an individual’s recognition of family history and as expressions of collective religions and/or ethnic identity. Because cemeteries may embody values beyond personal or family-specific emotions, the National Register criteria allows for listing of cemeteries under certain conditions.” (*National Register Bulletin No. 15: How to Apply National Register Criteria*, 34)

Unless they meet additional Criteria Considerations established specific to burial sites (Consideration D), a cemetery is not eligible for listing. Consideration D allows for “a cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons with transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events”. (*National Bulletin No. 41: Guidelines for Evaluating and Resistering Cemeteries and Burial Places*, 16)

Belmont Cemetery is eligible for listing on the National Register of Massachusetts under Criterion A as it reflects the broad patterns of development of the Town of Belmont and the region of Massachusetts developing around the periphery of Boston in the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Shortly after the incorporation of the Town of Belmont in March 1859, the Cemetery Commission was established, October 1859, to locate property and within the same year, five-and-a-half acres were purchased for the purpose of burying the Town’s deceased residences.

Belmont Cemetery (1859) was established less than three decades after Mount Auburn Cemetery (1831), located less than a mile away in Cambridge and Watertown. As discussed in the historical timeline of this report, the opening of Mount Auburn changed the way Americans related to death and provoked a transformation in the setting and character of cemeteries. Labeled as a “rural” or “garden” cemetery, its design was influenced by Victorian aesthetics and romanticism. By mid-century, “lawn cemeteries” moved away from the romanticism of death and took on more commemorative ideals. Lawn cemeteries were laid-out with park-like settings, and a preference of lawn over ornamental plantings. Plantings were typically kept to defining sections or lining lots or drives. Monuments were often designated for families or civic groups. Belmont Cemetery clearly reflects this era in cemetery design.

The development of this area of Town was spurred by the train line reaching to Fresh Pond, spurred by Jacob Hittinger who was partner in the ice industry. In 1871, the fifteen acres of land around cemetery was purchased by Patrick Skahan for a market garden and by 1880, agriculture was the primary business in town. That same year, Cambridge annexed 570 acres in an effort to protect its drinking water in Fresh Pond, and the delineation of boundary is drawn around Belmont Cemetery. By 1883, the Town is searching for additional lands for the Town's dead. The Town of Belmont, literally, developed around Belmont Cemetery.

When Belmont Cemetery was listed on the National Register of Massachusetts in 1982, its 'themes' of significance were listed as Landscape Architecture and Religion. Community Planning should also be included as a theme of its significance.

Period(s) of significance

As defined by the Secretary of the Interior, a **period of significance** is "the length of time when a property was associated with important events, activities, or persons, or attained the characteristics which qualify it for National Register listing." A listing may have more than one period of significance, and those dates may include a range of time.

For Belmont Cemetery, the period(s) of significance have been identified as:

- **1859:** The date of establishment of Belmont Cemetery.
- **1881-1960:** This is the period of expansion within the Cemetery. In 1881, the schoolhouse was sold and land annexed and prepared for burial lots. New parcels were purchased to expand the Cemetery grounds, beginning in 1923. By 1960, the final land acquisition was made, and the layout of the Cemetery had been completed save for the most recent parcel.

Significant dates identified within this period include:

- **1861:** First recorded burial
- **1881:** Removal of schoolhouse for additional grave lots
- **1885:** Town begins to charge for grave lots
- **1889:** Perpetual care established
- **1923-1924:** Land expansion in Belmont & Cambridge
- **1940:** Land expansion to south in Belmont & Cambridge
- **1951:** Land expansion to south in Belmont & Cambridge
- **1960:** Land expansion to east in Cambridge
- **1987:** Last sale of a burial lot

Character-defining features

Character-defining features are those features of a historic site that without which the landscape would cease to maintain its historical character and significance.

The character-defining features have been identified in a table, included below, with significant dates (established by the first documentation of the feature), removal date—if a missing feature and if removal date known, and dates of documented changes. The features are then categorized as contributing, non-contributing, or missing. Naturally occurring features have not been dated.

Contributing resources are defined by the National Park Service as “a building site, structure, or object that adds to the historic association, historical architectural qualities, or archaeological values for which a property is significant because:

- *It was present during the period of significance, relates to the documented significance of the property, and possesses historic integrity, or is capable of yielding important information about the period; or*
- *It independently meets the National Register criteria.”*

Non-contributing resources do not add to the significance of the property because:

- *“It was not present during the period of significance, or does not relate to the documented significance of the property;*
- *Due to alterations, disturbances, additions, or other changes, it no longer possesses historic integrity or is capable of yielding important information about the period;*
or

- *It does not independently meet the National Register criteria.”*

Missing historical features include those elements of the landscape that were present during the period(s) of significance but have since been lost.

Statement on integrity

Integrity is defined in the *Guidelines* as “the authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evinced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s history period. The seven qualities of integrity as defined by the National Register Program are location, setting, feeling, association, design, workmanship, and materials.” (*Guidelines* 5)

- **Location** and **association** have not yet changed since the period(s) of significance.
- **Setting** of cultural landscapes, however, nearly always transform over time. However, for Belmont Cemetery the setting has remained fairly stable: Grove Street and Huron Avenue (then Cushing Street) were established prior to the Cemetery. Fresh Pond and its associated open space remains to the east. The broad open space to the northwest has not changed significantly though it once was a market garden, whereas today it is park and playground. To the east are residences of Cambridge. The most significant change to the setting is the loss of Cider Mill Pond, which was filled in and Parkside Place tower built upon the land.
- The **feeling** tends to be closely associated with the setting. If the setting does not dramatically change, neither likely will the feeling. That is true in this case, and the feeling of the Cemetery itself has not been significantly altered over time. Trees have grown and aged, shrubs have been removed, and more headstones added over time.
- Since the end of the period(s) of significance, the landscape’s **design** has changed, but only to add burial lots and Norton Circle. As land was added to the Cemetery, drives and walkways changed, but overall the design intent remains. One small shift in design was the increased density of the burial lots in the easternmost portion of the Cemetery, but this occurred outside the period(s) of significance.

- **Workmanship** and **materials** are closely related. Here, material changes include the “improvements” of the drives and walks from what was likely cinder or aggregate to bituminous concrete. The standardization of headstones through much of the Cemetery ensured materials are consistent.

Belmont Cemetery retains its integrity in all seven qualities of integrity ensuring its eligibility and historical significance.

Character-defining feature	Significant date(s)	Contributing, non-contributing, or missing
Topography of Burial Hill	n/a	Contributing
Views of Fresh Pond	n/a	Contributing
Wood fence enclosure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painting & repair of existing fence • New length of fence • 773 LF fence on southern boundary • 720 LF fence on southern boundary • From the end of fence last built to the old Cemetery wall 	1859-1937 1864 1866 1887 1925 1927	Missing
Wood boundary markers for grave lots <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repaired/replaced 	1859-1886 1877, 1883	Missing
Grave lot layout <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded and/or revised 	1860-today 1883, 1923, 1925, 1940, 1944, 1955, 1960, 1967, 1970, 1977	Contributing
Schoolhouse	1860-1881	Missing
Boundary wall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Along Cushing Street/Huron Avenue • Granite cap added • Extended along Grove Street 	1861-today 1861 1863 1925	Contributing

Character-defining feature	Significant date(s)	Contributing, non-contributing, or missing
Tree canopy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$25 spent on planting trees • Planting of a small lot of trees • Trees & shrubs plants • 25 maples planted • Hurricane destroyed 9 trees • Maple trees planted in new area • Trees & shrubs removed for Veterans' Section 3 • Tree planting 	1862-today 1866 1868 1925 1937 1938 1955 1978 1996	Contributing
Shrub plantings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shrubs planted for ornamentation • Trees and shrubs plants • Seeds, plants, and fertilizer purchased 	1862-today 1895 1925 1927	Non-contributing
Grass understory	1864-today	Contributing
Grove Street iron gate (original) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repainted 	1865-1882 1880	Missing
Granite boundary markers for grave lots	1886-1903	*Missing
Vehicular drives & pedestrian walkways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocated entry • Teardrop loop, Central & Magnolia Ave • Expansion • Main drive near office building resurfaced • Expansion • Paving of all roads • New roads graded & all paved 	1868-today 1882 1886 1925 1936 1944 1948 1966	Contributing
Southern boundary wood fence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 773-foot fence installed along Skahan land • Removed & replaced along new boundary 	1887-1924 1887 1890	Missing

Character-defining feature	Significant date(s)	Contributing, non-contributing, or missing
Eastern boundary retaining wall bordering pond	1903-1914	Missing
Drive & walkway signs	c. 1904	**Contributing
Flagpole near Cemetery entrance	1921-today	Contributing
Veterans' Section 1	1923-today	Contributing
View to Grove Street Playground	c. 1924	Contributing
Allée of trees	c. 1925	Contributing
Office building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added record vault & heating Accessibility improvements 	1925-today 1948 1996	Contributing
Grove Street gateway with iron arch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arch repaired & elevated 	1937-today 1995	Contributing
Lilac hedge along Huron Ave	c. 1927-today	Contributing
Iron enclosure fence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended 118 LF erected along Huron Avenue 383 LF erected along Huron Avenue Extended along Grove Street 	1925-today 1927 1936 1937 1950	Contributing
Grove Street iron gate at South Avenue	1925-today	Contributing
Trash barrels	1930-today	Non-contributing
Storage garage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security upgrades 	1954-today 1978	Non-contributing
Belmont Firefighters' Memorial	1955-today	Contributing
Evergreen hedge on Fairview Avenue	1955-today	Non-contributing
Chain link fence with barbed wire at rear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barbed wire removed Repaired 	1955-today Date unknown 1977	Non-contributing

Character-defining feature	Significant date(s)	Contributing, non-contributing, or missing
Belmont Police Monument <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocated Cleaned, turned, & prayer added to back 	1956-today 1986 2013	Contributing
Heart bed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual plantings ended Renovated 	c. 1960-today 1985 c. 2010	Contributing
Veterans' Section 2	1977-today	Contributing
Evergreen hedge at Parkside Place	1978-today	Non-contributing
Veterans' Section 3 with flagpole & O'Brien monument	1998-today	Contributing
Benches	Date unknown	Non-contributing

* Granite boundary markers for grave lots are noted as missing, the exception is marker 268 which is located near Grove Street.

** Drive and walkway signs are noted as contributing, however many of the historic signs are missing and/or have been replaced with modern road signs.

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Preservation treatment methodology

Treatment methods

The Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* (the *Guidelines*) identifies four methods of preservation treatment: preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. They are defined as:

- **Preservation:** “The act or process of applying measure necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property.”
- **Restoration:** “The act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period.”
- **Rehabilitation:** “The act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey historical, cultural, or architectural values.”
- **Reconstruction:** “The act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site [...] for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.”

Proposed treatment

More often than not, a cultural landscape is treated as a **rehabilitation** project. This allows the opportunity to alter the landscape in subtle and compatible ways so that modern regulations and guidelines can be accommodated (i.e., Americans with Disability Act Accessibility Standards, stormwater guidelines, and building codes). It also allows modern technology, such as improved pavement materials and light fixtures to be implemented. Rehabilitation also provides for the inclusion of new amenities, parking improvements, additional pedestrian connections, and safety/security measures, as pertinent to a twenty-first century landscape.

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Conditions Assessment

Having inventoried the existing landscape and documented the historic development, some areas of concern become evident. (Not listed in any particular order.) These concerns generally are related to:

- Drive & walkway conditions
- Drainage
- Boundary wall & iron enclosure fence
- Retaining wall above Huron Avenue
- Headstones & markers
- Drive & walkway signage
- Chain link fence around Norton Circle
- Vegetation
 - Mature tree canopy
 - Allée of trees on South Avenue
 - Lilac hedge on Huron Avenue
 - Evergreen hedge along Fairview Avenue
- Cemetery garage/shop

These areas of concern are further described on the following pages.



Block cracking at entry and on Central Avenue (as well as edge cracking)



Edge cracking on South Avenue



Alligator cracking on Orchid Avenue



Transverse crossing on Primrose Drive



Depressions and filled pot holes on Goldenrod Path



Rutting on Norton Circle



Plow scars and root upheaval on Iris Avenue

Drive & walkway conditions

Most of the drives are in poor condition with significant cracking of different types, which reflects different conditions. These include:

- Block cracking: This damage is typically caused by shrinkage of the asphalt due to the inability to expand or contract with temperature changes. Thin cracks can be sealed to prevent moisture getting into the cross-section. Cracks larger than 1/2-inch in width should have the bituminous layers replaced.
- Edge cracking: Edge cracking is typically caused by a weak cross-section at the edge of the pavement and/or poor drainage, especially with a crowned roadway section where the water has no place to drain off the pavement causing base materials to settle. Any drainage issues must be repaired & a full-depth repair if the base materials have in fact settled.
- Alligator cracking: Alligator cracking is usually associated with a structural failure of the pavement cross-section. This can be due to the surface, base, or sub-base materials. This failure requires a full depth replacement.
- Transverse crossing: Typically caused by cracks in an underlying layer, temperature swings, and/or poor construction. Cracks larger than 1/2-inch in width should have the cracked layers replaced.
- Depressions: Depressions typically fill with water after storms. They may have been caused by poor construction or settling of base materials. Significant depressions should be repaired to the full depth.
- Pot holes: Pot holes are common in New England given our temperate climate as moisture gets into the pavement cross-section and infiltrates into the base material causing alligator cracking which eventually results in the pavement breaking and dislodging as vehicles drive over. Patching is only a

short-term fix; full-depth repair is required.

- Rutting: Likely cause by insufficient pavement thickness, or insufficient compaction of the base material, or infiltration of water which results in linear depressions in the pavement surface. Minor ruts can be filled and overlaid; more significant ruts require a full-depth repair.
- Plow scars: The rutting and linear depressions in the pavement result in difficulty for snow plows to smoothly plow the pavement surface resulting in the plow scars. Repairing the depressions will remove the plow scars.
- Root upheaval: With trees so close to pavement surfaces, both drives and walkways, root upheaval is likely to occur.
- Patching for utility lines, at pot holes, and catch basins
- Cracking of bituminous curb at the heart bed

Walkways generally appear to be in better condition, in large part, due to the lack of vehicle traffic. Some of the bituminous walkways have grass growing in transverse cracks. The biggest issue with the walkways are tree roots which are causing upheaval and tripping hazards.

Drainage

There are several areas with drainage issues within the Cemetery, and they mostly occur along the driveways. As shown on the Conditions Assessment plan, these occur predominantly on Goldenrod Path and Norton Circle, although a smaller puddle also exists on Pansy Path. As noted in previous sections, catch basins and area drains are limited within the site. The puddling is mostly caused by lack of drainage structures, dry wells which cannot handle heavy rains, subsidence of paving surfaces and depressions, and lack of positive grading on the drives.



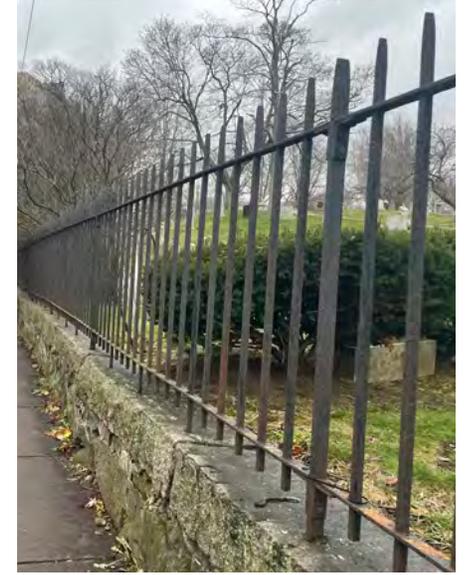
Patching for utility lines on Goldenrod Path



Cracking of bituminous curb at the heart bed



Tree root impacting a narrow walkway on Lilac Circle



Steel picket fence atop the boundary wall



Boundary wall along Huron Avenue



Retaining wall above Huron Avenue

Boundary wall & iron enclosure fence

The boundary wall along Huron Avenue and Grove Street were installed and expanded upon beginning in 1861 until 1925. Given their age, they are in fairly good condition. Despite many chinking stones and some mortar missing, it generally appears to be in decent condition and shows little evidence of hydrostatic pressure from retaining soil.

The first segment of the iron picket fence which sits atop the boundary wall, was installed in 1925. The fence is rusty and paint is flaking, but most of the pickets are intact with few that are bent. The section along Grove Street has been repainted in place in recent years, but not the section along Huron Avenue.

Retaining wall above Huron Avenue

The retaining wall that parallels Huron Avenue and supports a part of Burial Hill is in fair condition. It appears to have been repointed since its initial installation. The mortar towards the top of the wall shows cracking. No weep holes are evident, though it is a low wall, so there maybe some hydrostatic pressure affecting its integrity.

Headstones & markers

During the 2023 inventory, approximately seven headstones were found to have fallen. The oldest of the headstones which are comprised of marble and located near the intersection of Magnolia Avenue and Aster Path. Three others are located on the slope overlooking Huron Avenue. Within Norton Circle there is one headstone that has fallen off of its base, and another just adjacent to it, that is tipping and may soon fall from its base.

Several of the veteran's markers—particularly those which are located around the Cemetery and outside the Veterans'

sections—have subsided. Grass is now growing over the edges making some of the markers difficult to read.

During the inventory process, one of the white marble headstones had been cleaned (not by the Town), but the wrong solution was used and the marble was turned pink.

Drive & walkway signage

Today, the drive and walkway identification signage is a mix of the black-painted historic cast iron signs on cast iron posts and modern green and white street signs on aluminum posts. A few drives and walkways have no signage at all, which could lead to confusion if visitors are trying to locate loved ones.

Chain link fence around Norton Circle

The chain link fence surrounding the land purchased in 1960 within the City of Cambridge (around Norton Circle) is in poor condition. In many locations the green privacy screen fabric and the chain link fence fabric has been cut to allow pet access through the fence, despite dogs not being allowed in the Cemetery. The fence fabric is reported to have been repaired in the spring of 2023.

Vegetation

Based on the tree data collected during the inventory process, nearly 40% of the Belmont Cemetery's tree canopy is comprised of an invasive species for Massachusetts, Norway maple. When originally planted, likely around 1925, Norway maples were considered a beneficial shade tree. They were hardy species that created a strong canopy. They grew at a rate that was not too quick to make them weak-wooded, but steady enough to have an impact in the landscape not long after established.



Examples of fallen headstones: (left) within Norton Circle, (center & right) some of the oldest headstones located near Magnolia Avenue and Aster Path



A fallen headstone on the slope overlooking Huron Avenue



One of the veteran's markers which has subsided. Cemetery staff has cleared turf around the marker for legibility.

Today, different communities take different stances on mature trees of invasive species. While some communities prefer to maintain their mature trees until the natural end of their life cycle, other remove invasive species full stop.

Because some of the Norway maples in the Cemetery are approximately one-hundred years old and have diameters up to forty-two inches, removing these trees simply because they are invasive would be detrimental to the historic landscape, as well as to the air quality and temperatures of Belmont. They are currently providing significant shade, reducing temperatures, and converting carbon dioxide to oxygen. However, their canopy is so dense that they often shade out any light making it difficult for any other plants, including turfgrass, to establish underneath. Additionally, the species is allelopathic meaning that the roots emit chemicals which prevent other species from germinating. Regular mowing helps to control the spread of any Norway maple seedlings.

The allée of trees on South Avenue is comprised almost entirely of Norway maples save for three linden trees in the segment between Pansy Path and Orchid Avenue. The diameters vary significantly, and as noted in the inventory section of this report, at least eight trees have been lost in the allée and not yet replaced.

The second most common tree species in the Cemetery is the sugar maple, comprising just over 8%. A classic New England native, sugar maples provide much of the most magnificent foliage color come autumn. However, climate change is expected to significantly impact the species in Massachusetts. The warm winters that we are experiencing mean lighter snowpack. This in turn leads to root damage and reduced tree growth. It is anticipated that as winters get warmer and warmer, the ideal range for the sugar maple will shift further north, while at the same time the northern range will be limited by soil chemistry and

fauna.

The third most common tree in the Cemetery landscape had been the ash, both green and white species. The ash tree has been under attack by the emerald ash borer, first encountered in the United States early in the 2000s. Another New England native species, the species has severely declined in coverage in the last two decades. Once infested with the insect, the ash will typically succumb within three years.

In subsequent discussions, DPW staff reported that in the summer 2023, all of the green ash trees were removed due to infestation of emerald ash borer. The Town of Belmont has a tree canopy that contains a significant amount of ash trees, reportedly over 900 throughout the community. Select trees have been treated, but due to the extensive ash canopy in Town, it would be cost prohibitive to treat them all. Removing these infected trees will help to maintain the rest of the species in Town. In 2023, the Town removed most of the ash trees, but one white and one green remain.

Most of the trees in the Cemetery are generally in fair to good condition, with regular pruning and removals of hazards by DPW. Based on existing conditions, fourteen trees are designated as being in poor condition, all of which are Kwanzan cherries and Norway maples, save for one beech; three of these, have been recommended for removal. The hemlock hedge along Fairview Avenue are currently in good condition as they are treated regularly for woolly adelgid. If the treatments are not kept up, they could be infested and start to decline.

The lilac hedge above Huron Avenue dates to around 1927. Traditionally they symbolize renewal (as an early spring bloom), remembrance, and spirituality. (Walt Whitman included them in a poem after President Abraham Lincoln's assassination—*When*



White marble headstone stained by cleaning solution



Condition of fence fabric and privacy slats



Chain link fence fabric and privacy slats have been cut, presumably to allow dogs into the Cemetery.



Condition of the canopies of the Norway maples making up the allée along South Avenue

Lilacs Last in Dooryard Bloom'd, and likely forever connected grief and lilacs in the American psyche.) The lilac hedge is often mentioned as significant to the Cemetery landscape and in the memories of the Town.

Cemetery garage

The garage/shop was built in 1954 and is reconstructed of CMU blocks. While the structure once served the Cemetery well, it is now undersized for the equipment and materials stored within, especially with the second cemetery, Highland Meadow, having opened in 2007. No equipment is stored at the second facility. Today, there is a dumpster and storage trailer at the rear of the building, but that trailer appears to still not be enough space, as snow plows and materials are stored behind the building.

The storage is utilitarian and not sensitive to the aesthetics of the historic cemetery. In addition there is evidence of water leaks and damage to the structure in the back.

Preservation Treatment Plan

The establishment of Belmont Cemetery was one of the initial tasks undertaken after the incorporation of the Town of Belmont. From 1859 until 2007, Belmont Cemetery served as the Town's only secular burying ground. The gradual expansion of the grounds between 1881 and 1960 reflected the dynamic growth of the community it served. When lands were annexed to Cambridge, the new boundary line was delineated around the cemetery.

Today, Belmont Cemetery is a cherished landscape within the community and place of consolation and memorization for families and friends of the deceased. While graves are no longer available for sale, interments do continue, mainly in family lots and those dedicated to veterans. The grounds also serve, unofficially, as a passive recreation space where residents walk and enjoy the lush landscape with relatively few intrusions. This is a vestige of the era in which the cemetery was established and the character with which it was created.

Belmont Cemetery will continue to serve the public as a place to commemorate lost loved ones and honored community members. It will also continue to serve as one of the Town's sites for Memorial Day remembrances. Belmont Cemetery will provide the Town with climate benefits including improved air quality and reduced air temperature so long as the tree canopy is maintained. The cemetery can continue to provide its secondary function as a quiet, safe greenspace for passive recreation, so long as visitors are respectful of policies intended to uphold its sanctity.

Treatment recommendations should preserve as much of the historic fabric as possible. When conditions are such that a character-defining feature needs to be reconstructed or rehabilitated (i.e., wall, fence, of tree allée), the work should reuse the historic materials to the greatest extent possible.

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The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

The following Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.

- 1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*
- 2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
- 3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*
- 4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*
- 5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
- 6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*
- 7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*
- 8. Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*
- 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
- 10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

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Treatment Recommendations

The treatment recommendations set forth herein are organized in the same categories as the existing conditions section of this report. Those that are site-specific have been identified on a Treatment Recommendations plan which follows. (To be developed)

Setting and site boundaries

There are no recommendations for the Cemetery's setting or site boundaries. Setting is outside the project limits and boundaries that have been set since 1960. Public open space is directly to the north, northeast (Fresh Pond Park) and northwest (Grove Street Park) of the Cemetery. To the south is the Harvard Lawn Historic District and to the east is the Skahan Gardens Historic District; fortunately all these areas are protected from development to some extent.

Spatial organization

Given that the Cemetery lots were laid out last in the 1970s, there are few treatment recommendations that can be made for spatial organization.

SO-1. There is one open space area within the Cemetery boundary that does not have interments: very northeast of the Cemetery at Norton Circle by the lay-down area. The Cemetery Commission has expressed that it does not intend to open the area for burials, however, if the intent is to keep the Cemetery active, alternatives such as columbaria and/or "scattering" gardens are a trend for memorialization where space is limited. They provide a

low impact, affordable option that can keep spaces green and present new opportunities for funding. They also allow families to remain together.

Views and vistas

VV-1. Where possible, larger trees should be planted to screen the imposing view of Parkside Place.

Topography and drainage

TD-1. Drainage of the Norton Circle and Goldenrod Path area is a significant issue. Existing dry wells are quickly overwhelmed. DPW should engage with a civil engineer to study existing drainage and stormwater needs. Because the drainage of Norton Circle cannot be connected to the Town's stormwater/sewer system in this area, the study should assess if existing dry wells can be made deeper or if more are needed in selected locations.

TD-2. Erosion is limited on site, but the potential is significant in the oldest portions of the Cemetery, especially facing Huron Avenue. The drainage study for the Cemetery should also include Burial Hill. Interventions can be made to limit overland flow of water to the extent feasible. Additionally, replanting the slopes with a non-grass groundcover will slow water flow.

- a. If erosion or compaction is impacting graves or other features, consult with an archaeologist to explore grading treatment to redirect water flows.

Vegetation and open space

VO-1. General tree maintenance: The Town of Belmont's Tree Warden is trained to know when trees are in poor or vulnerable condition (a hazard limb or pest infestation) and shall be the determinator of when trees need to be pruned or removed for health and safety beyond the general tree maintenance outlined below:

- a. Trees should be monitored on a yearly basis, with an emphasis on weak-wooded trees, such as Norway maples, for deadwood (dead limbs or branches) greater than 2 inches in diameter.
- b. Trees shall be serviced and pruned on a 5-year pruning cycle.
- c. Trees in decline, with more than 50% canopy dieback, shall be considered for removal, with final inspection and approval coming from the Town of Belmont Tree Warden.
- d. Newly planted trees shall be inspected for structural pruning within the first 5-10 years of planting, depending on the species. Structural pruning provides trees with proper form to reduce long term maintenance costs.
- e. Remove any volunteer growth.
- f. Tree removal: Cut stumps to grade and promote natural decay. Remove within 5 years. If rot is present, the stumps could be removed sooner; larger trees may take more time to degrade. Do not stump grind. Loam and seed once the stump has degraded.
- g. As funds are available, consider additional tree care which may include:
 - Deep root fertilization applications for (1) increasing nutrients to the trees/ encourage root growth and

(2) reducing soil compaction within the root zones.

- Air spade/decompaction methods to improve overall tree health

VO-2. Allée: Restore the allée by planting in existing gaps. Remove unhealthy trees or trees that have lost more than 50% of their canopy and replace. Consider a new species to replace Norway maples, such as: red maple, liquidambar (fruitless), tuliptree, hackberry, disease resistant elm variety. (Ideally a native tree that has similar height and form and no known pests/diseases.) Consider replacing trees in zones along the allée so that a monoculture is not created, and any future pest problems can be avoided.

VO-3. Tree canopy: Successional planting to maintain a uniform shade tree canopy. Successional planting should be implemented by the following priority criteria/strategy:

- a. Open canopy zones
- b. Targeting areas with large mature trees that are reaching their life expectancy (tree size distribution map)
- c. Areas of recent removals

VO-4. Diversity of tree species: As annotated in the Existing Conditions section of this report, the existing tree canopy does not have a strong species diversity; the canopy is 32% Norway maple, a Massachusetts listed invasive species. The newer plantings from 2023-2024, improved diversity by adding species, including upright English oak, tupelo, hawthorn, sycamore, pear, and hop hornbeam.

- a. Diversity goals: The general rule for diversifying the urban forest is to include in a holistic canopy, trees that comprise no more than:
 - 30% single family

- 20% single genus
- 10% single species

Therefore, as the Norway maples reach the end of their life, they should be replaced by a diverse array of species, just as was done in the 2023-2024 plantings. Trees in the genus *Acer* (includes *A. rubrum*, *A. japonica*, *A. saccharum*, and *A. platanoides*) today make up 85 of the 184 trees; that is 46%. So no more maples should be planted. Similarly, dogwoods make up 9.2% of the tree canopy, so other species should be focused on for planting.

- b. Certain characteristics in trees should be avoided in cemeteries given their inherent nature. These include:
- Tree species that have shallow root systems which can impact pavement and headstones, i.e., willow, beech, Norway and sugar maples, pin oak, flowering pears
 - Tree species that have a lot of litter, i.e., catalpa, mulberry, ginkgo, black cherry, sweetgum—unless non-fruiting varieties are selected for planting.
 - Tree species with known pests, i.e., ash, hemlock, beech
 - Tree species that inhibit understory growth, i.e., Norway maple, beech, black walnut
 - Tree species that have heavy sap or drip sugars from pests, i.e., American linden
 - Tree species known to be fast growing and weak wooded, i.e., willow, poplar/cottonwood, white pine, silver maple
 - Tree species less susceptible to climate change, i.e., sugar maple

- c. Favorable tree species for planting within the Cemetery. (This is by no means an exhaustive list of potential trees species.):

- *Acer campestre*, hedge maple
- *Carya ovata*, shagbark hickory
- *Celtis occidentalis*, hackberry
- *Chionanthus retusus*, Chinese fringetree
- *Carpinus caroliniana*, ironwood
- *Cornus florida*, flowering dogwood
- *Gleditsia triacanthos var. inermis*, honeylocust
- *Ginkgo biloba*, ginkgo
- *Gymnocladus dioicus*, Kentucky coffeetree
- *Liquidambar styraciflua*, sweetgum
- *Liriodendron tulipifera*, tuliptree
- *Nyssa sylvatica*, black gum
- *Ostrya virginiana*, American hophornbeam
- *Platanus occidentalis*, American planetree
- *Quercus macrocarpa*, bur oak
- *Quercus palustris*, pin oak
- *Quercus imbricaria*, shingle oak
- *Ulmus americana 'Jefferson'*, American elm
- *Ulmus americana 'Valley Forge'*, American elm
- *Ulmus americana 'New Harmony'*, American elm



Gaps in the hemlock hedge bring the surrounding landscape into the Cemetery.



Erosion on Burial Hill facing Huron Avenue

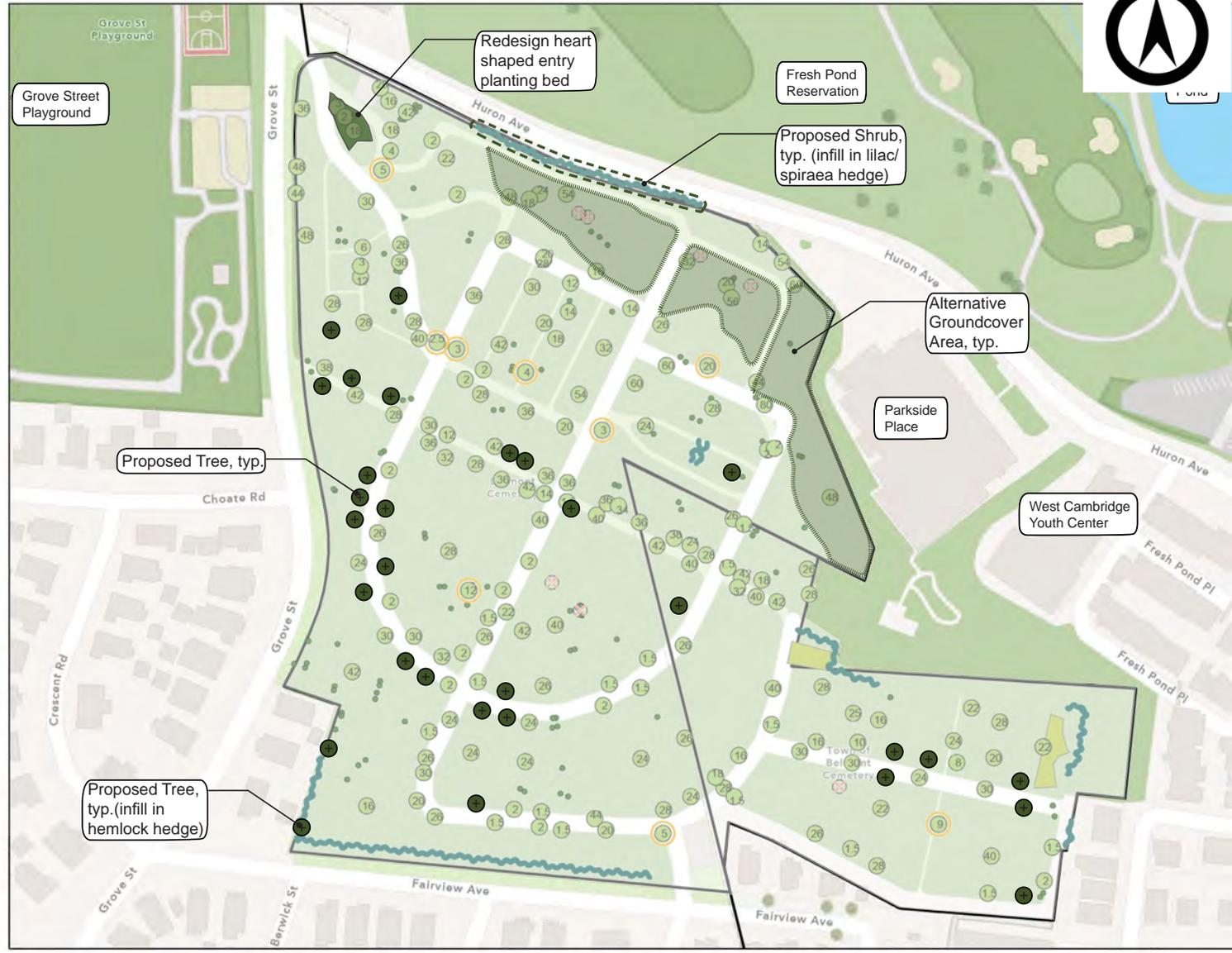


Tree damage at the edge of drive, likely from vehicles



Legend

-  Proposed Tree
-  Proposed Planting Area
-  Alternative Groundcover Area
-  Stump
-  Tree, dbh
-  Memorial Tree
-  Existing Shrub
-  Lawn Area
-  Hedge
-  Shrub Massing
-  Property Line



PROPOSED VEGETATION



Tree protection details with fencing, and with watering bags



Little bluestem as an alternate groundcover (image taken in June) for steep slopes. Traditional turf (fescue mix) shown to the rear.



Example of a grasses & wildflower mix in historic cemetery grounds

VO-5. Beech Trees: Due to the recent outbreak of Beech leaf disease and Beech bark disease, monitoring the beech trees for symptoms of either disease is strongly recommended. Both diseases are associated with rapid decline of overall health. Preventative treatments are not recommended for the two existing beech trees on site. Twice yearly monitoring of these two trees is recommended for decline.

VO-6. Hemlocks row along Fairview Avenue:

- a. Continue regular treatment for woolly adelgid for existing hemlock trees.
- b. As funds become available, consider phasing out the hemlock hedge with an alternative evergreen species. Replacing the species will reduce maintenance costs by reducing the need for regular treatment.
- c. Now that hemlocks are mature, their canopies are lifting as lower branches are lost. Today, growing on the fence is creeping euonymus. In most places it provides a good cover and screen from the abutting properties, but there are some gaps. However, there are at least two gaps in the hedge row where the hemlocks have been lost. One location is on the eastern boundary abutting the residence at 81 Grove Street. The vehicles parked at the residence can be a distraction and the gap in hedgerow should be filled. (See images.) This also occurs along Fairview Avenue. The aggressive climbing vine is twining up the hemlock and should be removed from the trees.

VO-7. When planting new trees, add a tree protection. Consider adding two watering bags (placed on tree stakes rather than the tree itself) and surround with tree protection fencing. This keeps mechanical equipment and string trimmers away from the tree trunks. Leave them up for two

to three years and remove the fence when the watering bags come off, i.e. once the tree is established.

VO-8. Consider redesigning the Heart bed. Engage a landscape architect to re-imagine the Heart bed to have more seasonal color without relying on annuals. Consider a design with select shrubs and perennials for low maintenance, high impact design.

VO-9. Hedges: *Terra Firma 10: Mourning Glory: Preserving Historic Cemeteries*, a publication of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's Historic Preservation Initiative (2011) makes the following recommendation for hedges: "Without adequate maintenance, these plants [evergreen hedges] become tall, top heavy evergreens, easily toppled by snow and wind. Regular pruning and replacement can avoid catastrophic damage to historic plantings."

VO-10. Lilac hedge: Restore lilac hedge to full length of Huron Avenue. Consider including spirea as it was included in the early planting, c. 1927.

- a. There are several volunteer Norway maple saplings that are becoming established (some as large as 4 inch DBH) that should be removed before they become unmanageable.

VO-11. Boxwood planting in Veterans' section 3 should be monitored for health. The box tree moth has been found in Massachusetts (spring 2024) and can quickly defoliate a plant once infested. Look for eggs laid in gelatinous masses on the underside of leaves, webbing within the plant branching, and/or yellow and black caterpillars roughly an inch-and-a-half long. For more information see Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources.

VO-12. Consider changing the groundcover planting in select locations from lawn to reduce maintenance, to slow runoff on slopes, and to increase water infiltration. Consider a low mow fescue mix which has a similar aesthetic as turfgrass but can grow longer and only needs to be cut once or twice per year. Another alternative is a conservation mix of grasses grass-like plants, and wildflowers. These conservation mixes can be readily purchased from several suppliers and can be customized to include only native plant species, if desired. They too only requiring mowing once a year. Where mowing is difficult, i.e., slopes greater than 4:1, consider replacing turfgrass with a low-growing groundcover which needs no mowing.

VO-13. Turf Maintenance: Mow lawn to a height of 3 inches keeping equipment 12 inches away from markers. Finish the last 12 inches with nylon line trimmers. (Do not use line trimmers around marble headstones).

- a. Use only organic fertilizers and Integrated Pest Management, avoid chemical treatment which can damage headstones or create barren turf zones from high salt content.
- b. Where soils are compacted, periodic aeration in the late summer or early fall with a core aerator may be desirable. Aeration should be limited to a depth of 6 inches to protect against potential damage to buried resources, and aeration equipment should remain at least 12 inches away from grave markers.
- c. Renovate lawn areas by filling in depressions and eliminate bare spots. Fill and restore eroded area at main pedestrian entrance and by mound tombs.

VO-4. Invasive vegetation: Remove invasive species by cutting to grade (do not pull roots or grind stumps). Concentrate on areas where historic plants, trees, and groundcover are

threatened. A licensed applicator may apply herbicides, if necessary for a significant stand.

Circulation: pedestrian and vehicular

- CI-1. Coordinating with the drainage plan for the eastern end of the site, a pavement study of drives and walkways should be undertaken by a professional civil engineer. A civil engineer can determine if testing could prove that certain areas could be repaired, or if overhaul of the entire system is necessary
- CI-2. Given the fact that it is unknown when the drives were last resurfaced, and their general condition, it is likely that full depth repaving, including base material is necessary. However, it would be worth undertaking boring tests in select areas that are in better condition.
 - a. Determine if milling and reclamation is a possibility for the Cemetery. Borings can help determine the depth of base material and whether it is suitable for reuse. Milling the existing material and reclaiming both base gravel and existing asphalt could be a substantial savings for the Town. However, the vibratory actions could present problems for headstones, especially taller monuments. Additionally, the equipment necessary to undertake the milling could be too large for some of the narrower drives and lower branches of existing trees.
 - b. Coordination with the drainage plan will be essential in designing the crown or cross-pitch of the drives.
 - c. Similarly, existing curbing should be reviewed. It is mainly recycled material or placed boulders used to protect trees at the end of drives.

- CI-3. Given the low rate of speed in the Cemetery, drive widths can be narrowed; this would also help to protect existing trees. Additionally, standardizing the widths helps visitors understand where they can and cannot park. Today there is an issue with visitors parking on the grass which kills it off, compacts the soil, and creates ruts and mud. Standardize drive widths to provide clarity for visitors.
- a. Narrow those drives that are in excess of 12 feet. The majority of drives, especially in the older sections of the Cemetery, vary between 11 feet and 15.5 feet. A standard width of 12 feet allows cars to park on pavement with passable space for moving vehicles. This would also allow additional greenspace for trees which are located directly on the edge.
 - b. Norton Circle varies in width from 15 to 17 feet in width. As this is the newest area of the Cemetery, it likely receives the highest visitation, and therefore additional pavement width makes sense. Consider standardizing the driveway width of Norton Circle to 15 feet.
 - c. Exceptions would include Primrose Path and Iris Avenue (both of them). These are very narrow drives and should be clearly labeled as one-way circulation.
- CI-4. Wayfinding should be considered as part of the circulation system. Signs themselves, are discussed in the small-scale features section below, but the wayfinding system should be considered as part of the improvements to cemetery drives and pathways.
- a. Signage should be coordinated with a clear driveway hierarchy. Drive widths signal to visitors that certain roads are primary routes. If drive hierarchies are clear, signs can be predominantly placed only along primary routes, reducing the overall number of signs that are required.

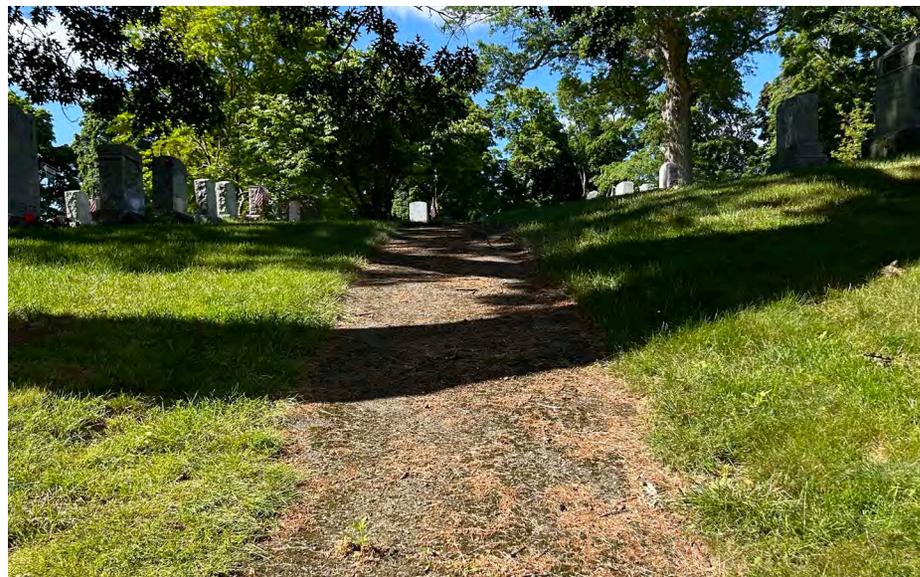
- CI-5. Parking is currently allowed along all drives, but visitors are reminded with signs that state “Please No Parking on Grass.” The difficulty with the existing signage is that it is posted at a street sign height and not immediately visible when visitors are deciding where to park. Mount Auburn Cemetery uses their staff to hand out small notes of paper on car windscreens that are parked on the grass. While this is an effective reminder, the Belmont Cemetery does not have the resources to utilize this method. It is recommended that the Cemetery incorporate different signage that can be placed at a lower vantage point to remind visitors as they are parking.
- The bronze rules signs and the historic street signs are historically appropriate in design. New signage should be kept with the design aesthetic of these signs in mind, as appropriate to the historic cemetery.
- CI-6. Reassess pedestrian circulation for hazards, accessibility, and functionality. The existing conditions of much of the site make universal accessibility a challenge. The existing widths of walkways vary from 22 inches to 6 feet; materials include grass, bluestone steppingstones, asphalt, of which only the asphalt meets the accessibility requirements. The asphalt walks also have significant cracking and weeds, very steep slopes, and are more narrow than allowable. Likely only Tulip, Salvia, Rose, Maple, and Evergreen Paths meet the regulations. It is difficult to tell when any of these paths were introduced to the Cemetery, but we know Tulip, Salvia, and Rose were introduced between 1923-1939, and most of the others (save for in the Norton Circle area) by 1950. While they are significant features to the Cemetery, the delineating of the walkways does not necessarily have to be with pavement, just as Salvia, Clover, and Aster Paths no longer are paved. Signage should be maintained to demarcate the historic paths.



Alternative “No Parking on Grass” signs that are suited to the aesthetic of the Cemetery, and placed lower to the eye level. The final image on the right is from Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge.



Stepping stone walkway recommended for removal



Example of a grasses & wildflower mix in historic cemetery grounds

- a. Improvements to universal accessibility should be made to the extent feasible, however, Carnation and Violet Paths are impossible to make accessible due to their extremely steep slopes. It is recommended that these paths be removed and replaced with a vegetated groundcover. (This is one area that is very difficult to mow and should be considered for turf replacement with either conservation seed or low-growing groundcover; see the section on vegetation.)
- b. The very narrow paths near Grove Street, including Laurel and Lilac, and those labeled herein as Pathways A, B, and C, also have cracking and weeds and tree roots growing within them which create tripping hazards. It is recommended that these walkways also be removed and replaced with a vegetated groundcover.
- c. Standardize walkway widths. Those that are to remain—Evergreen, Maple, Tulip, Salvia, and Rose—should be standardized to a typical 4-foot width.
- d. As a walkway material, asphalt is durable and accessible, though an aggregate or stonedust material would be more aesthetically appropriate to the historical context, they require regular maintenance. When the driveway network is repaved, so should the walkways that are intended to remain.

Structures in the landscape

- SL-1. Maintenance building: The Cemetery crew has stated that the existing structure has outlived its usefulness. The facilities are too small for the needs and storage has spilled out around the building. An architectural study should be undertaken to determine the needs of a new structure. The study should assess the site's potential and whether or not the maintenance structure should remain in this location. It should also consider aesthetics and functionality.
 - a. If it is determined that the structure does not remain in this location, the site could be re-purposed. While it is not the intent of the Cemetery Commission to open up land in the Cemetery for burials, this would be an ideal location for a commemorative space. Near the Fairview Avenue entrance, with a strong vegetative screen to the abutting residences, this space could provide a welcome garden for reflection.
 - b. The granite boundary markers were installed in the early portions of the Cemetery from 1886-1903. Today, only one is visible near Lilac and Laurel Paths. If others are encountered by work crews, they should be restored to their original height and noted on the Cemetery plan.
 - c. Fallen monuments and markers are rare, but there are a few in the cemetery. They mostly occur in the older section of the cemetery, but there are others that appear to be tipping. When these are noticed, they should be addressed as soon as possible. Presumably, this work is covered by perpetual care.
 - d. Flat-laid veterans' markers should be reset to be flush to grade so as to be legible. This could be an excellent volunteer effort as not a lot of skill is required for the task.

Small-scale features

- SS-1. Considering its age, the granite boundary wall is in fairly good condition. There are some areas that show spalling and some loss of smaller, or chinking stones, and mortar loss which should be addressed. To ensure the wall remains in good condition, a registered structural engineer who specializes in historic structures should be retained by the Town for further recommendations.
- SS-2. Both historic gates on Grove Street have been hit and damaged by trucks entering and exiting the cemetery. The gates have been altered from their historic condition either from these accidents and/or to prevent further damage. A wider, non-historic and more utilitarian gate is located adjacent to the garage and can be accessed off of Fairview Avenue.
- Given the number of accidents that has occurred in recent history, it is recommended that all trucks which need to enter the Cemetery be directed to use only the Fairview Avenue entrance.
- a. The secondary gate on Grove Street can be converted to pedestrian-only by adding a drop-pin to one, or both, gate leaf and by adding a bollard to the western end of South Avenue to preclude vehicles but not pedestrians.
- SS-2. The iron fence which sits atop the boundary wall should be removed from the wall, stripped to bare metal (removing all layers of paint), galvanized, and shop-painted and reset. While the fence is removed from the wall, any bent pickets should be straightened, any missing picket should be replaced, bolts should be tightened, and any missing bolts replaced.
- a. While the fence is removed, any repair work, including replacing chinking stones and grouting of voids should be undertaken, as well as the resetting granite capstones, as necessary.
- SS-3. The lower wall which parallels Iris Avenue should also be assessed for structural integrity. The wall should be assessed to determine if hydrostatic pressure is an issue.
- SS-4. The chain link fence around Norton Circle is in decent condition. Many of the privacy slats have been replaced in 2023-2024, though some notable gaps do still exist.
- SS-5. One of the more significant changes that can be undertaken in the Cemetery is replacing all modern street signs with signs of a more appropriate historic aesthetic. Understanding that the modern signs are easier and less expensive to replace, they detract from the historic character of the cemetery. The existing drive and walkway identification signs should be removed from the site, and just as with the iron fence, stripped to bare metal (removing all layers of paint), galvanized, and shop-painted and reset.
- a. New cast iron signs will have to be created where currently missing. The City of Boston's Historic Burying Grounds Initiative has recently undertaken this work with a very similar pattern, which was very common. There is the potential for the City of Boston to loan the pattern to the Town of Belmont to create the missing signs.
- SS-6. The bronze rules signs are appropriate for the historic context. As with the drive and walkway identification signs, any modern road signs should be replaced with a new signage standard that compliments the drive and walkway identification signs and the bronze rules sign. The overall signage package and information system should be consistent, accessible, and predictable.

SS-7. There are currently only four typical benches in the cemetery. It is recommended that additional seating be placed throughout in select locations, affording visitors places to stop, rest, and remember their loved ones.

- a. It is recommended that the existing benches, which are near the end of their useful life, be replaced with contextually-appropriate, historically-inspired benches. Selecting readily available, 'off the shelf' benches will make them easy to repair and replace parts as necessary.

Examples include:

- Victor Stanley model #FMBF-324, Ductile iron, powder coated; 4, 6, 8-foot lengths, with center arm rest option
- Victor Stanley model #CR-96, Ductile iron, powder coated; 4, 6, 8-foot lengths, with center arm rest option
- Victor Stanley model #FR-7, Wood slats with ductile iron, powder coated; 4, 6, 8-foot lengths, with center arm rest option
- Kenneth Lynch & Sons 1939 World's Fair Bench, Wood slats with ductile iron, powder coated; 4, 6, 8-foot lengths, with center arm rest option

- b. All benches should be universally accessible (this is not required by the Massachusetts Architectural Barriers Act, but good practice especially on a site with high numbers of senior visitors), located on concrete pads with adjacent wheelchair spaces. Arm rests and backs make them friendlier for people with mobility impairments and seniors.

SS-8. In the Cemetery, litter receptacles bins are commonly paired with water spigots. This allows visitors to add water

to vases for live plants and flowers and dispose of any wrappings at the same location. A detail that is used in other cemeteries is to provide a small hardscape splash area to preserve the turf around and disperse water, and provide a consistent location for the litter receptacles, often in cobble stones, or exposed aggregate.

- a. It is recommended that the litter receptacles be replaced. Similar to the benches, they should be contextually-appropriate and should recede into the landscape. Once the standard bench is selected, a complimentary litter receptacle can be selected to coordinate.

SS-9. For cleaning of those markers provided by the National Cemetery Association (NCA) veterans' markers (including marble and bronze), refer to the NCA's website: <https://www.cem.va.gov/hmm/cleaning.asp>

Their guidelines specifically state: "The goal of cleaning is to remove air pollution soiling, lichen, bird droppings, dirt, salts, and sap—it is NOT to make the headstone or marker look "like new." Improper or unnecessary cleaning can accelerate the deterioration of marble and granite; pre-1970s bronze was not sealed and will have a blue-green patina that will not be removed by cleaning.

VA prohibits the general public from power washing Government-furnished headstones and markers due to the damage it may cause to historical headstones."

SS-10. Stone monuments and markers:

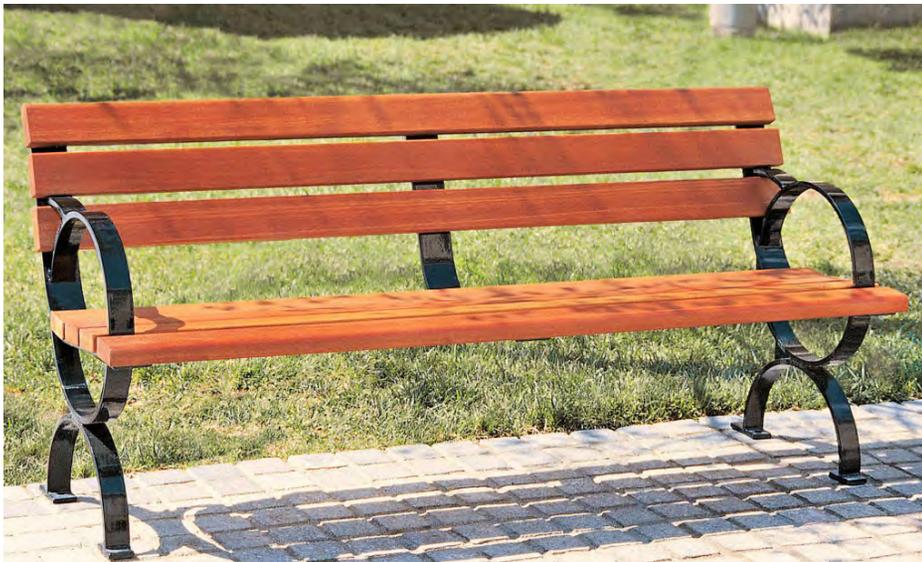
- a. Reset toppled stones from walls.
- b. Remove limbs, branches and other debris from stone walls, steps and monuments immediately after major storm events and seasonally each spring.



Victor Stanley bench model #FMBF-324



Victor Stanley bench model #CR-96



Victor Stanley bench model #FR-7

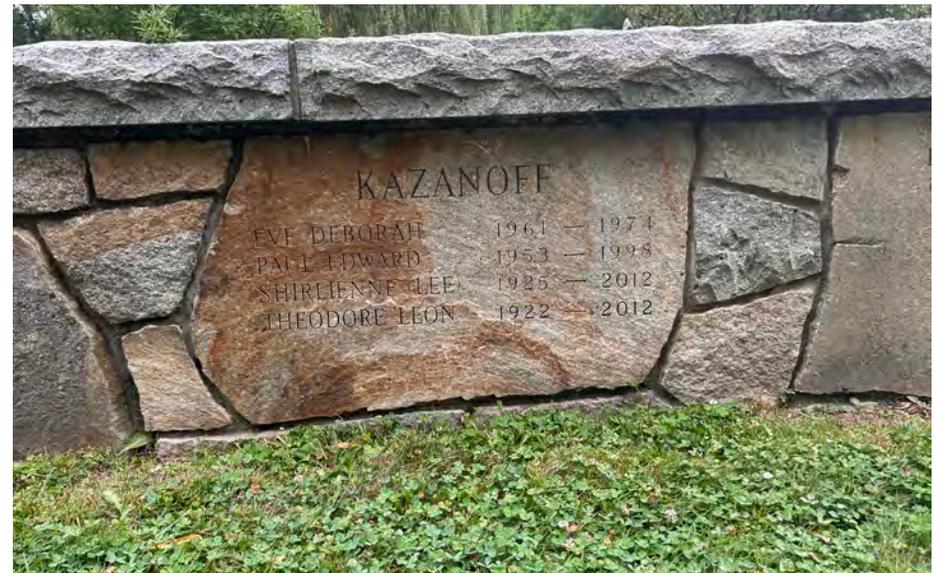


Kenneth Lynch & Sons 1939 World's Fair Bench

- c. Record major structural collapse of walls, steps and monuments.
- d. Markers are typically slate, marble and granite but may also be zinc or other metal.
- e. Do not attempt to clean, right, or reset markers without consultation with an archaeologist.
- f. Do not remove markers even if they are damaged.
- g. Prune sap- and berry- producing trees and shrubs away from stones.

Miscellaneous

- GC-1. Prepare and provide the public a map of the cemetery grounds for the purpose of easily finding grave sites. Make the map available on-line on the Town website, accessible via QR code in select locations in cemetery, and provide a limited number of printed maps in administration building.
- GC-2. Consider the use of available open space in the cemetery. While extremely limited, this includes the grassed areas adjacent to the laydown in the rear of the cemetery and should the garage building be eliminated from the site, this space could also be used. If the intent is to keep the cemetery active, alternatives such as columbaria and/or “scattering” gardens are a trend for memorialization where space is limited. They provide a low impact, affordable option that can keep spaces green and present new opportunities for funding. They also allow families to remain together within the same grounds.



Example images of a memorial wall from Mount Auburn Cemetery which could be paired with a scattering garden.

- GC-3. Despite the increase in workload after the opening of Highland Meadow cemetery, no additional staff has been provided for the cemetery crew. Staff needs and resources should be reviewed and analyzed to determine how many additional staff is required, if any, and whether or not the positions would be seasonal.
- GC-4. Given the cemetery's listing on the State Register of Historic Places, any significant changes to its grounds would require filing a Project Notification Form (PNF) with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) for review prior to the commencement of the work. It is required by 950 CMR 71, Protection of Properties Included in The State Register of Historic Places, that the MHC determine "if the nature and scope of a project is likely to impact a geographical area and cause a change in the historical, architectural, archaeological, or cultural qualities of a property." Additional information can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/09/13/950cmr71.pdf>
- GC-6. Consider updating the Walking Tour for on-line use on the Town's website with a supporting map that can be followed by visitors. This could potentially be a volunteer project.

Priority Projects

In a historic cemetery where we are remembering and honoring our deceased loved ones, all needs are important. However, with certain tasks (i.e. drainage and conditions of drives), there is a level of urgency since much of this work has been deferred for a number of years. However, limitations on resources—whether funding or manpower, mean that realistically, work will need to be phased.

Addressing safety issues should be the first priority to protect people and property. Safety issues include removing dead trees, pruning hazardous trees, repaving potholed roads, repairing uneven walkways and replacing. The drainage of the Norton Circle area and the condition of the drives throughout the cemetery are priorities, as well.

Once improvements are made for pressing safety issues, preserving the historic fabric of the cemeteries is a second area of projects that should be addressed. Consideration should be given to remedying fallen headstones, repairs or replacement of the Grove Street/Huron avenue iron fence and granite wall, removing trees and shrubs that are impacting burial plots, and any other character-defining elements of the individual cemeteries.

Finally, elements that impact the visitor experience makeup another major category of work that should be addressed. This includes standardized and clear signage and mapping, repair of non-structural walls, general pruning work, providing comfortable seating, and ensuring water access is functional and adequate.

High priority: To be undertaken within the next year, or as soon as funding is available.

- Vandalism, debris, etc.
- Engineering study of drainage
- Resetting of fallen headstones
- Remove any soil buildup behind headstones on slopes to reduce the likelihood of the stones falling over
- Tree canopy & allée restoration
- Increase standard mowing height to 3 inches and establish zones for groundcover alternative

Medium priority: To be undertaken within 5 years.

- Sign replacement
- Erosion repair
- Pavement replacement & stormwater management improvements
- Walkways
- Redesign of storage garage

Low priority: These projects can wait at least 5 years for implementation.

- All other recommendations.

Funding Potentials

A summary of potential funding opportunities with typical grant amounts, application cycles, and matching requirements, if known, is included below. Following this summary is a list of identified projects which may be suited to these funding opportunities.

The **Community Preservation Act**, which funded this report, can also be used to fund discrete projects, including fence and wall restoration, sign and plighting upgrade/improvements, conservation of gravestones and monuments, tree care, landscaping and irrigation projects, survey and design work, interpretation and public education.

Veterans' Heritage Grants from the Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin and the Massachusetts State Historical Records Advisory Board (MA SHRAB). This is a matching grant award of up to \$15,000. It is intended to “preserve objects, sites, and document collections that are significant to the history and experiences of military veterans in the commonwealth.”

- Matches up to 50% of project's total cost. 'Matches can be satisfied through direct funding, in-kind donations, volunteer time, or some combination thereof.'
- Open to Massachusetts municipalities and non-profit organizations
- Typical funding cycle requests Letters of Intent by early November.

Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF)

The Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) is a 50% matching grant reimbursement program established for the preservation of historic properties, landscapes, and sites (cultural resources) that are listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Properties must be in municipal or nonprofit ownership to qualify for funding.

Nonprofit organizations and municipalities who own or have a long-term interest in the property (at least a 25 – 30 year lease) are eligible to apply for funds.

- Pre-development: The minimum grant request is \$5,000, resulting in a total project cost of at least \$10,000. The maximum request is \$30,000, resulting in a total project cost of at least \$60,000.
- Development and Acquisition: The minimum grant request is \$7,500, resulting in a total project cost of at least \$15,000. The maximum grant request is \$100,000, resulting in a total project cost of at least \$200,000.

Applicants must provide a 50% match to the grant amount requested.

MASS: Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Grants

Offered through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Mass.gov) for strategic community tree plantings and 'heritage' tree care projects : “High visibility community tree plantings that enhance environmental and aesthetic quality, strengthen community involvement, and follow the principles of planting the right

trees in the right places. Also projects that include professional arborist care of ‘Heritage’ trees (those larger trees over 32 inches in diameter that have a documented cultural and/or historical significance) if these projects also result in enhanced public awareness and support for urban and community forestry and/or improved community tree care.”

- Intent to Apply Deadline: October 1st
- Application Deadline: November 1st
- Match Rate: 50/50

Arbor Day Foundation: TD Green Space Grants

“Projects must take place within TD’s footprint in the United States or Canada. Preference will be given to projects in areas that primarily serve low- to moderate-income residents or take place in equity-seeking communities.

- Primary applicant must have a vested interest in the success of the project and local connection to the community. Preference will be given to applicants based in the community where the project is taking place.
- Primary applicants are strongly encouraged to apply in partnership with community partners such as the municipality, nonprofit organizations, schools, businesses, etc.
- Preference will be given to currently recognized Tree City USA communities or those interested in becoming a Tree City USA community over the next calendar year.”
- Typical funding cycle requests applications by early December.

New England Chapter: International Society of Arboriculture

“The Arbor Day Grant was created in 2006 to support small towns and communities that needed help to build their Arbor Day Programs.”

- This grant awards up to \$1,000.00 to a municipality, non-profit organization, or institution that demonstrates need to promote and support their Arbor Day celebration.
- Communities must complete and submit their Arbor Day Grant application by the deadline of March 31st.

Chapter 90

The Chapter 90 program entitles municipalities to reimbursement for capital improvement projects for highway construction, preservation, and improvement that create or extend the life of capital facilities. The funds can be used for maintaining, repairing, improving, or constructing town and county ways and bridges that qualify under the State Aid Highway Guidelines issued by the Public Works Commission. Items eligible for Chapter 90 funding include roadways, sidewalks, right-of-way acquisition, shoulders, landscaping and tree planting, roadside drainage, street lighting, and traffic control devices. A municipality seeking Chapter 90 reimbursement for a project must complete a Chapter 90 Project Request Form and an Environmental Punch List for each proposed project and submit it to the appropriate MassDOT District Office. Each municipality in Massachusetts is granted an annual allocation of Chapter 90 reimbursement funding that it is eligible for, and the municipality can choose among any eligible infrastructure investments.

Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant

The Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program is intended to provide funding to cities and towns to acquire and develop land for park and outdoor recreation purposes. The PARC grant is a reimbursement program and provides financial assistance to municipalities for the acquisition of recreation land, development of new parks, or the renovation of existing parks. Eligible communities must have a current Open Space and Recreation Plan on file with the Division of Conservation Services. Cities of any size, Cape Cod communities, and towns with more than 35,000 residents are eligible for the grant maximum of \$400,000. Towns with less than 35,000 residents are eligible for a maximum grant award of \$50,000, unless the proposed project is accessible via public transportation and/or has parking for 100 cars. Grant applications generally are due in July and awarded in November.

Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund (CCF)

CCF grants “support the acquisition, design, repair, rehabilitation, renovation, expansion, or construction of non-profit cultural facilities.”

- Application cycle opens in October
- Typical deadline, mid-December

National Trust Preservation Funds (NTPF)

National Trust Preservation Funds are intended to promote local preservation efforts by supporting ongoing initiatives and providing seed funding for projects.

- Grants generally start at \$2,500 and range to \$5,000
- Typical grant deadline is October 1
- Applicants must be either a public agency, 501(c) (3), or other

non-profit organization to be considered eligible.

FEMA’s Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)

“Aims to shift federal focus away from reactive disaster spending and toward research-supported proactive investment in community resilience by providing funding for greater investments in resiliency and mitigation efforts in preparation for an extreme weather event. This funding includes support for mitigation planning and project grants as well as for management costs.”

- Grants, as well as technical assistance available for states and local governments
- Projects must be cost effective and be designed to increase resilience and reduce risk of injuries, loss of life, and damage and destruction of property.

Potential project funding

Community Preservation Act

Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF)

Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund (CCF)

Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund (CCF)

- Any projects which are working to restore character-defining features of Belmont Cemetery:
 - Boundary wall and fence, as well as gates (SS-1 and SS-2)
 - Restoration of drive and walkway signs (SS-5)
 - Planting projects, including restoration of lilac hedge (VO-10), screening of Parkside Place (VV-1) and/or rehabilitation the heart bed (VO-8)
 - Conservation of monuments and markers (SS-9 and SS-10)
 - Reconstruction of Iris Avenue wall (SS-3)
 - Improvements to signage (wayfinding, direction, regulations, etc.) (SS-6)
 - Pedestrian circulation and accessibility (CI-6)

Veterans' Heritage Grants from Massachusetts State Historical Records Advisory Board (MA SHRAB)

- Conservation of veterans' markers (SS-9)
- Restoration of flat-laid veterans' markers which have settled and difficult to read (SL-1)

MASS: Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Grants

Arbor Day Foundation: TD Green Space Grants

New England Chapter: International Society of Arboriculture

- Restoration of the urban tree canopy and the historic allée (VO-2 and VO-3)
- Adding a mix of tree species to enhance the tree canopy and add diversity of species (VO-4)

Chapter 90

- Drainage and stormwater planning rehabilitation of Norton Circle area (TD-1)
- Full depth repaving of paved drives and walkways (CI-1, CI-2)

Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant

- Applying for a PARC grant for Belmont Cemetery may take some creative wordsmithing, but if the Town considers the Cemetery as a public open space, the walkways should be functional for all, and the renovation of existing public open space is often funded with these grants. Reassessing pedestrian circulation and accessibility, potentially with new signage, would be an applicable use for this grant. (CI-6)

FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)

- Rehabilitating steep slopes with vegetation other than lawn, (VO-12), especially if undertaken in conjunction with stormwater mitigation measures (TD-1) and reduction of pavement surfaces (CI-3 and CI-6)

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