

# Natick Dog Park

## FIDO of Natick Feasibility Report

September 4, 2015 – V7



**Horne + Johnson Architects / StepONE**

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A. Purpose

This report is the result of collaboration between Natick citizens and town government.

The Natick Open Space Advisory Committee had been examining the potential creation of a dog park. Aware of this effort, citizens attended the Committee's meetings, to voice support of this endeavor.

To move the idea forward, in 2013 the Committee charged the citizens to form a working group to identify and evaluate possible sites, and report back to the Committee with the findings. The working group named itself FIDO of Natick, with FIDO the acronym for "Fun – Informed - Dog Owners".

The Town Administrator, Martha White, and the Deputy Town Administrator, Bill Chenard, have been serving as the liaison between FIDO and the various town departments concerned with the development of the dog park facility. In addition to meetings with the Open Space Advisory Committee, FIDO has met with the Conservation Commission, the DPW, the Recreation and Parks Department and the Safety Committee.

Horne + Johnson / StepONE, a Natick-based architectural company with experience in the design of dog-related facilities, including the Greyhound Friends Kennel in Hopkinton, MA, is providing *pro bono* services. Project designer, Randy Johnson, is a member of FIDO, and served on the Natick Conservation Commission for 19 years.

**B. Dog Park Program**

1. An early organizational meeting focused on the desired program elements for a dog park. It was understood that these are the ideal ingredients, and all may not be feasible at eventual site. The list included:

- a. Central location
- b. Location near populated areas to encourage pedestrian access.
- c. Minimal impact on residential neighborhoods
- d. Adequate parking
- e. Appropriate size.
- f. Handicapped accessible
- g. Fencing, including vestibule for entrance into park.
- h. Shade
- i. Provision of water for cleaning and dog fountain
- j. Provision for maintenance access
- k. Provision for both large and small dogs
- l. Amenities for users, including benches and tables
- m. Variation in topography
- n. Suitable ground cover material for ease of maintenance
- o. “Dog Agility” equipment

2. Added considerations included those of requirements of potential funders, of which the Stanton Grant program was seen to have the potential for significant financial contribution. These requirements included:

- a. Town controlled land.

3. Part of the program is the development of rules for the use and operation of the park. FIDO is generating a draft of these rules.

C. Research

1. FIDO members investigated several existing dog parks and discussed their attributes. These parks included:

- a. Medway
- b. Arlington
- c. Dedham
- d. Provincetown
- e. Hingham
- f. Ellison Park (Rochester, NY)

2. FIDO also obtained examples of planning studies for dog parks. These documents included:

- a. Arlington Dog Park feasibility study (Leonard Associates)
- b. Salt Lake County Off-Leash Dog Park Master Plan, June 2008
- c. Dog Parks: Benefits and Liabilities, May 2007 (Laurel Allen, author)

**D. Site Evaluation**

1. The following sites were investigated.
  - a. Mill Street NStar power line area
  - b. Morency Woods (West Natick)
  - c. Land north of Henry Wilson cobbler shop
  - d. NStar property north of West School site.
  - e. Middlesex Path – dirt bike area
  - f. West end of Middlesex Path at existing recreational parking area
  - g. Town Forest

Preliminary design studies were done for Mill Street, Morency Woods and the West end of Middlesex Path, to aid in the site evaluation.

2. Each site was evaluated as to their ability to accommodate the dog park program elements. The following is a summary of this evaluation process

- a. Mill Street NStar power line area

Site had very positive potential for improving existing unsightly conditions under the power line right of way, and had good access with reasonable separation from residential areas. Primary obstacle was dealing with utility company, and not being town owned property.

- b. Morency Woods (West Natick)

Under utilized parcel, with suitable topography, but secluded in corner of town, with access only through residential streets.

- c. Land north of Henry Wilson cobbler shop

Limited parking in existing lot, with potential conflicts with visitors to the Cobbler Shop. Potential wetlands issues in northern part of site.

- d. NStar property north of West School site.

Good location, removed from residential areas. Existing parking, but parking is shared with T ball recreation use. Same issue as with Mill Street power lines, as to challenges working with utility company.

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e. Middlesex Path – dirt bike area

This site was recommended by member of Open Space Advisory Committee as addressing current social and policing issues relating to unsupervised activities. Site seen as not acceptable for dog park due to topography (handicapped access), proximity to residential uses, and remoteness from parking.

f. West end of Middlesex Path at existing recreational parking area

Site is wooded area between train right of way and Middlesex Path. Site would utilize existing recreational parking, which is typically under utilized. Site is at fringe of residential area, allowing pedestrian access of large population, but with limited impact on residential properties. Site is at western terminus of Middlesex Path, which will encourage use of this park land, and provide pedestrian access from Natick Center to the park. Proposed location is elevated, but with low cost provision of an accessible route from parking to the park entrance. Site has convenient connection to utilities. Site abuts rail right-of-way, but is seen to have sufficient separation with the existing elevation changes and proposed fencing. Good access for maintenance utilizing existing curb cut on West Central Street. Land is publicly owned.

g. Town Forest

Site has potential field areas that could be used for off-leash dog park, but these areas are at the park interior and remote from parking. Accessible route from existing parking would be challenging due to existing topography. Good separation from residential areas.

3. Selection of preferred location.

The site at the West End of Middlesex Path was identified as the preferred location for the dog park, as it offered the most potential for development in line with the program goals.

E. Design

H+J/StepONE conducted preliminary design studies for the preferred site. Base plans were both from the Natick Assessors Maps, and the Town GIS department.

The design proposal was reviewed with the town DPW, Conservation Commission and Safety Commission.

The enclosed area is approximately one acre, in keeping with design standards of a neighborhood (small) or community (medium) facility.

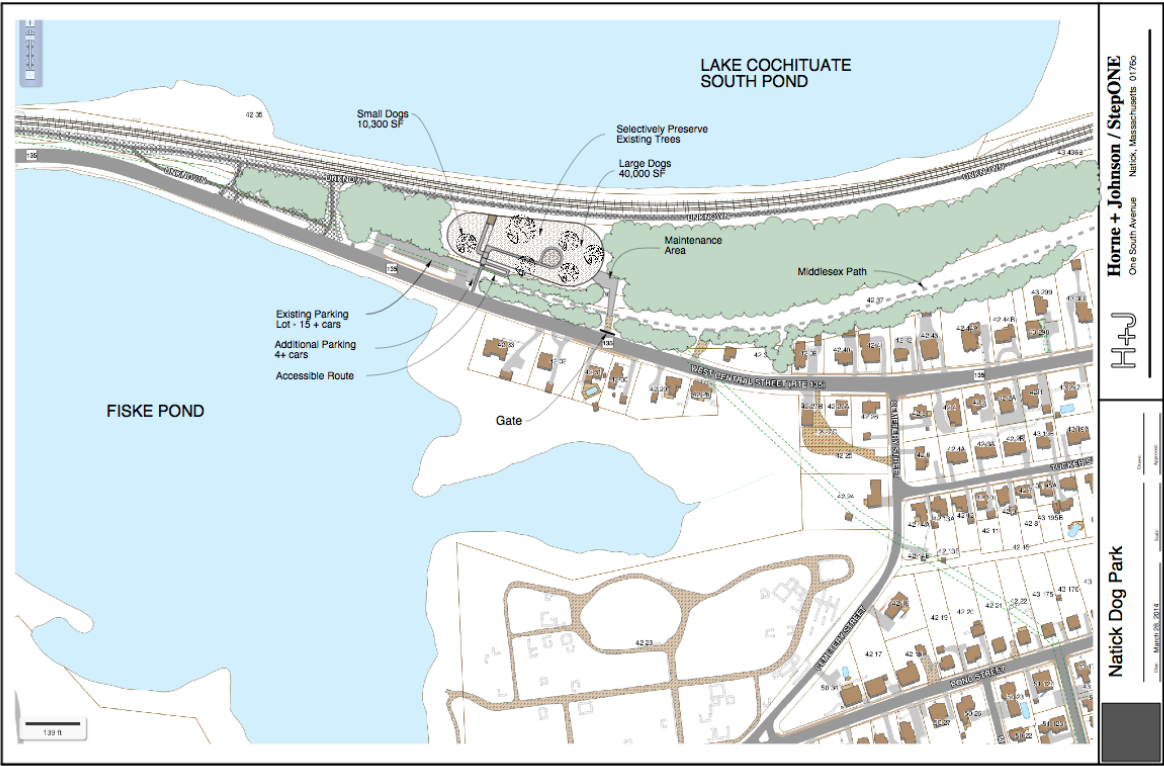
Handicapped access is possible regrading to create a walkway with a slope no greater than 5%.

The existing parking area is expanded to provide an accessible parking (van accessible) stall.

Storm water control is achieved through modification of the existing recharge system.

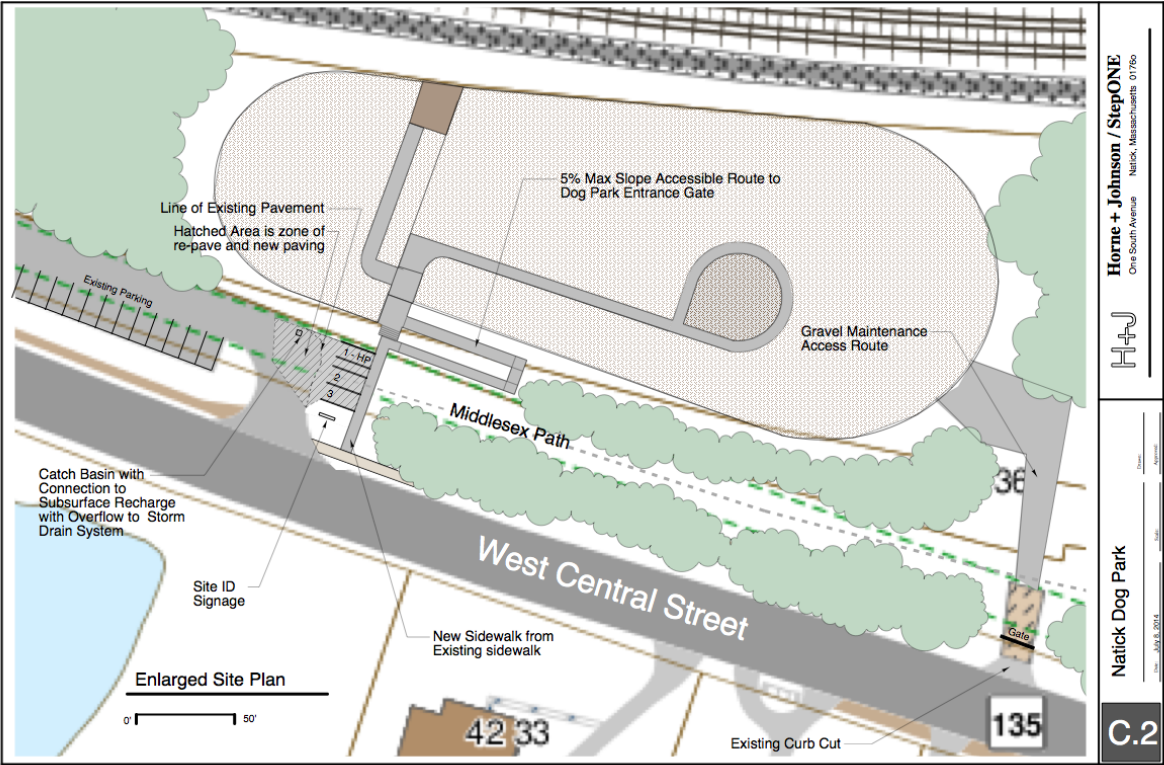
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Dog Park locus plan



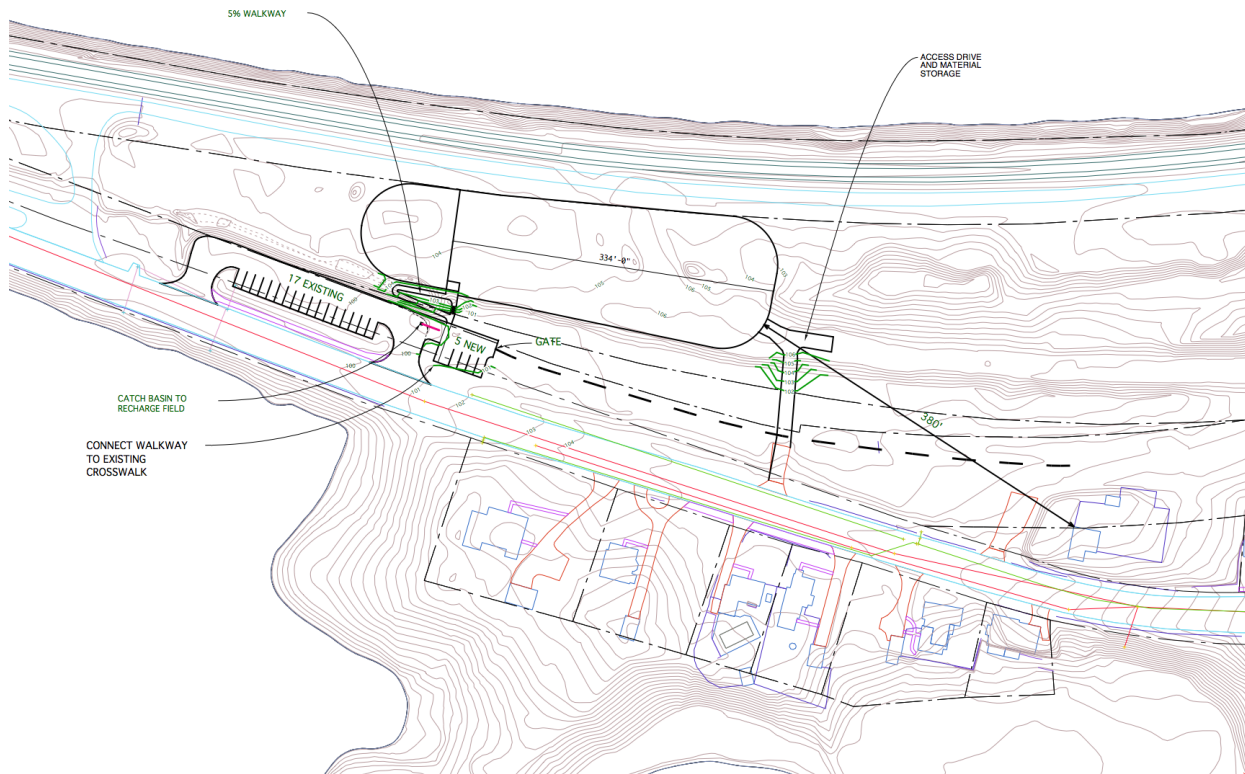
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Enlarged plan of park area.



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Study using town GIS as base plan, with modified parking arrangement. Note alternative location of accessible route to minimize regrading. Proposed grading changes are shown in green.



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**F. Preliminary Cost Estimate**

H+J/StepONE generated a preliminary cost estimate, based on the design studies. The estimate includes design and survey fees.

ITEM	QUANTITY	UNIT	\$/ UNIT	COST
Selective Clearing	1	LS	\$20,000	\$15,000
Grading	1	LS	\$20,000	\$20,000
Storm Water Materials and Install	1	LS	\$30,000	\$30,000
Water Connection materials and install	1	LS	\$10,000	\$10,000
Bit Conc parking Paving and base	3200	SF	\$6	\$19,200
Bit Conc walkways - inside fence	3000	SF	\$5	\$15,000
Bit Conc walkways - outside fence	920	SF	\$5	\$4,600
Stairs and Railing	1	LS	\$6,000	\$6,000
Gravel maintenance access Drive	2700	SF	\$2	\$5,400
Fencing	1150	LF	\$30	\$34,500
Gates	3	EA	\$500	\$1,500
Ground Cover Material and Placement	46000	SF	\$2	\$69,000
Gate at Path	1	EA	\$3,000	\$3,000
Benches	6	EA	\$500	\$3,000
Shed	1	EA	\$3,000	\$3,000
Fountain	1	EA	\$5,000	\$5,000
Waste	1	ea	\$2,000	\$2,000
Signage	1	ea	\$2,000	\$2,000
Landscaping	1	LS	\$5,000	\$5,000
			<b>SUBTOTAL</b>	<b>\$253,200</b>
Survey				\$3,000
Design				\$25,320
GC Fee @ 8% construction				\$20,256
Contingency @ 10%				\$30,178
				<b>\$331,954</b>

**G. Next Steps**

FIDO is working with the town administration in securing the Stanton grant; this report is one ingredient in that process.

Other action items include:

- Approval of the use of the municipal land for the dog park through formal public meeting process.
- Selection of designer who would produce bid documents
- Fund raising for matching funds
- Town Meeting articles for off-leash permission
- Park “naming”

End of Report

Analysis of Pickerel Pond / Sunkaway / Cochituate Aqueduct Trail

At the request of the Lt. Lauzon of the Natick Safety Committee, FIDO examined an area in North Natick for dog park suitability. The area is the location of a current open space planning initiative, with the creation of a walking trail over a portion of the Cochituate Aqueduct. The area also contains the Natick Pine Oaks Well, and Pickerel Pond, and substantial wetlands areas. The area is ringed by both residential and commercial development.

The investigation included a site inspection as well as a review of site plans that showed existing walking trails, access points, topo, property lines, property ownership and conservation resource areas.

The investigation has found the following:

1. Development of a dog park on any portion of the Cochituate Aqueduct by use of the Stanton Grant would not be feasible, as the land must be town owned. Additionally, much of the land where the walking trail exists is intersected by wetlands or open bodies of water.
2. Current access to the interior portion of the site is through the Huron Drive industrial park. There is no provision for additional off-street parking development in this privately owned district. Access at the end of Bradford Road is possible, but the available area is 100% wetlands, with no potential for any off street parking without substantial wetlands alteration. Development of parking at the end of Otis Street or along Harwood Street, both of which have trail access, lack any feasible area for the development of off street parking.
3. If parking were possible, there is no direct access to an area suitable for a dog park that would have accessible handicapped access. The surrounding roadways are typically much higher than the potential areas park areas.
4. As noted above, wetland disturbance or buffer zone alterations in the ecologically sensitive area, would be a problematic obstacle to any dog park development.

In conclusion, FIDO's opinion is that this area lacks feasibility for the construction of the dog park.

Analysis of Coolidge Hill Area

FIDO examined the Coolidge Hill area for dog park suitability. This hill is south of the Coolidge Field recreation fields. The fields are also used on an informal basis as an off-leash recreational area. Conversion of the fields into a dog park is not feasible due to the high demand for athletic recreational use of this area.

The investigation included a site inspections as well as a review of site plans and aerial views that showed existing walking trails, potential access points, topo, and property lines.

The investigation has found the following:

1. The Coolidge Hill area is 19 Acres. As town owned land, the area would be eligible for the grant funding.
2. There is approximately 80 feet of relief from base to summit. The steepest slope is westerly facing, rising up from School Street Extension.
3. The hill is ringed by approximately 35 residences, either immediately abutting or across a right of way.
4. There are three possible areas that can be developed for parking.

One is at the fork of School Street Extension and Edgewood Ave. Here, a triangular piece of town property is relatively flat, could be developed with approximately 16 parking stalls. The land is immediately adjacent to 32 Edgewood Avenue, and directly across School Street Extension from 57, 59 and 61 School Street Extension.

The second is north of Jefferson Street. Approximately 30 stalls could be constructed in this area. This land is directly in front 24 Jefferson Street. The driveway of 24 Jefferson Street crosses this town owned land.

The third area is the unpaved extension of Coolidge Ave. which connects with Jefferson Street at the intersection of Jefferson and Morse Street. Here, the relatively flat area could be the location of 45 + parking spots, in single loaded aisle design. This area is behind three houses on Jefferson Street, numbers 17, 19 and 21, and the side yard of 28 School Street extension. This area is adjacent to the North side of the hill, and a trail access point.

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On-street parking would also be available. The east end of Jefferson Street is currently used for recreational parking, both for the recreational fields, and trail access.

Of the three possible off-street parking area, the area utilizing the unpaved Coolidge Ave. right of way appears to be the most feasible. The area developable as a dog park would be the North shoulder of the hill. Grades appear to allow feasible handicapped accessibility.

5. The hill has no wetlands.

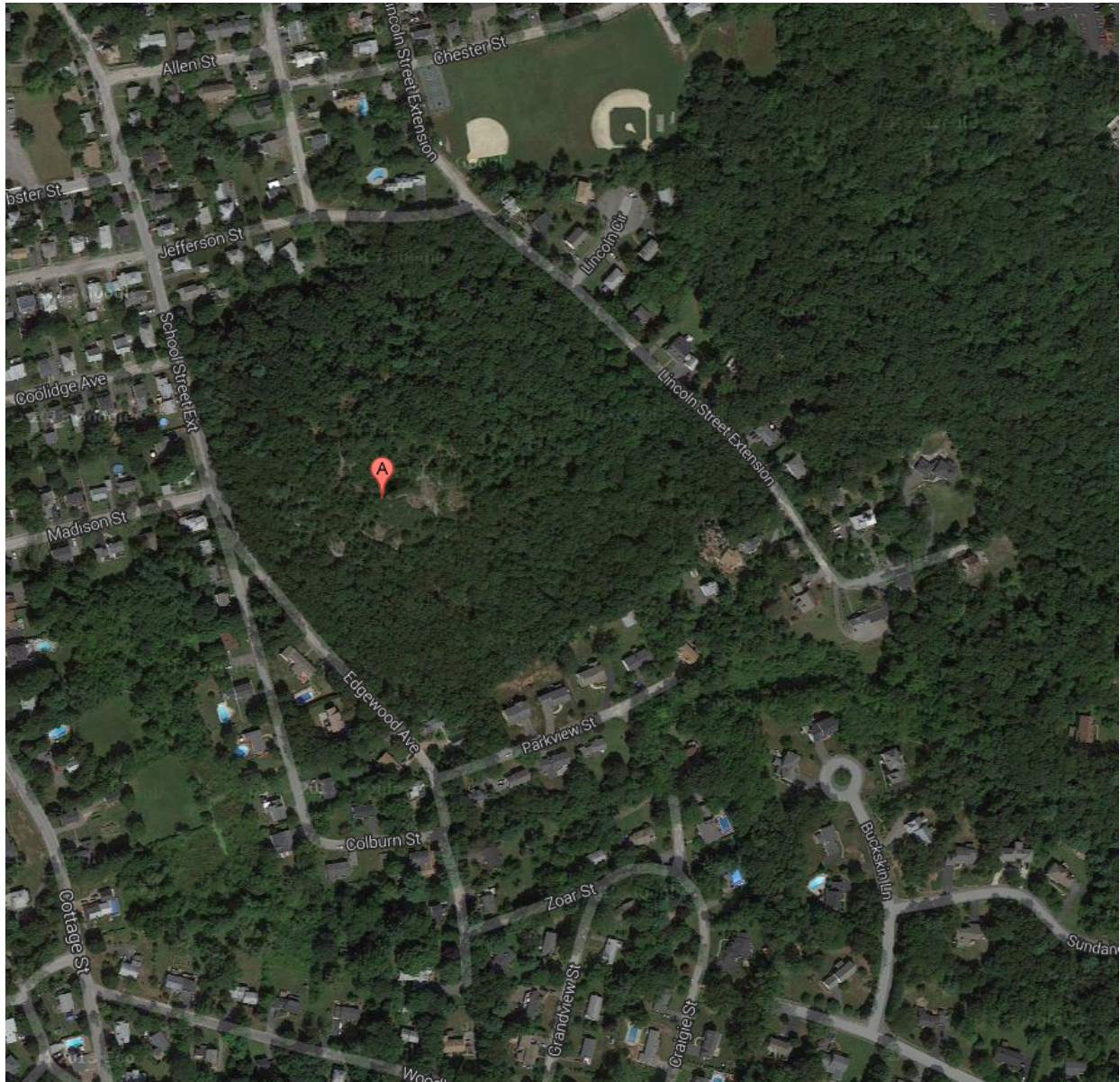
In conclusion, FIDO's opinion is that this area is feasible for dog park development in several of the evaluation criteria, but would involve the development of land for parking and for the off-leash area that is in close proximity to residential uses. The dog park construction might be done in a manner to preserve existing walking trails. The dog park terrain would likely lack areas of low pitch, limiting accessibility of mobility impaired users. The dog park fencing and tree clearing required for the parking area construction would lessen the quality of the existing natural environment and passive recreational use.

**Attachments:**

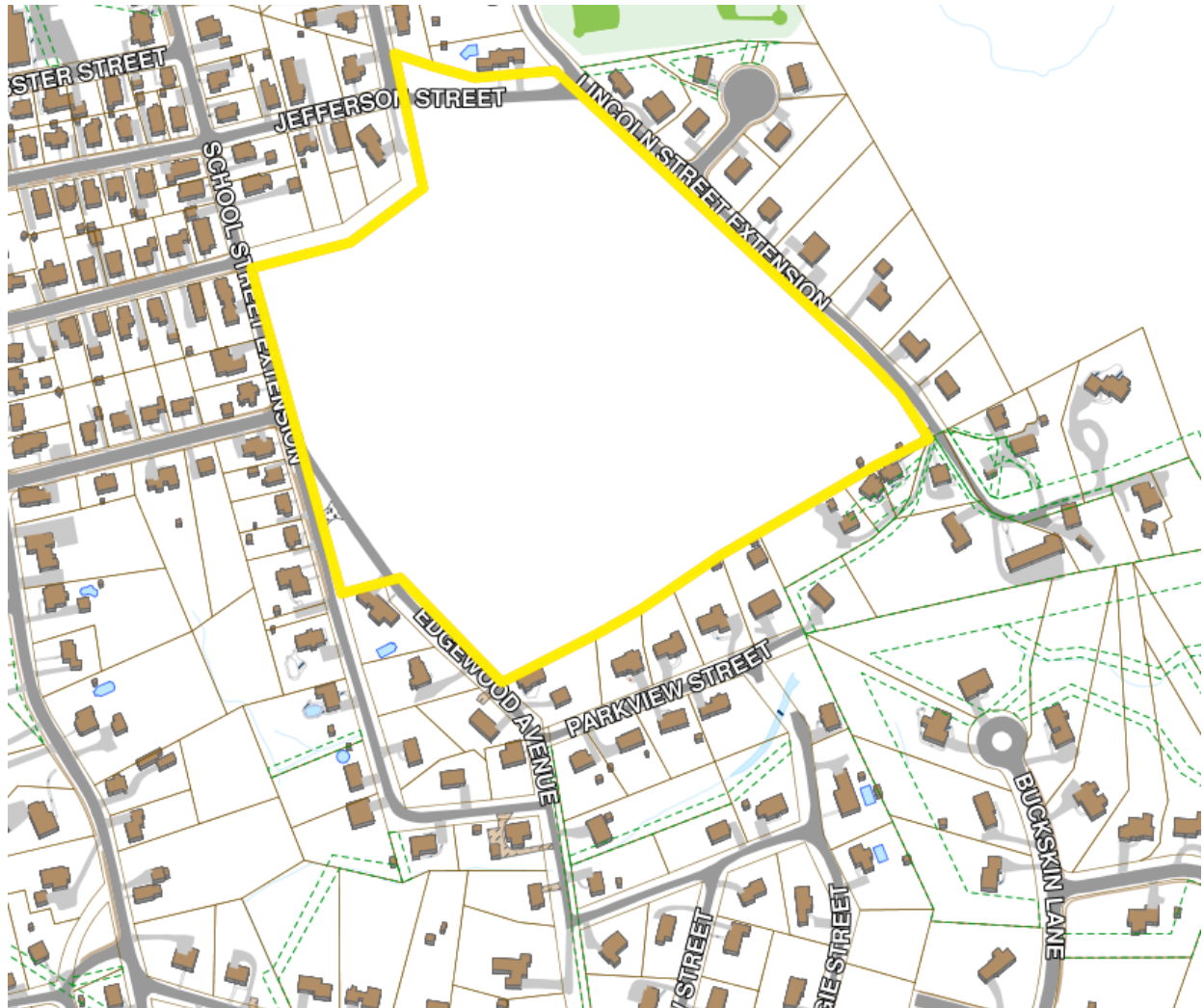
Aerial View  
Town Assessors Map  
Natick USGS Topo Map, Partial

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**Aerial View**

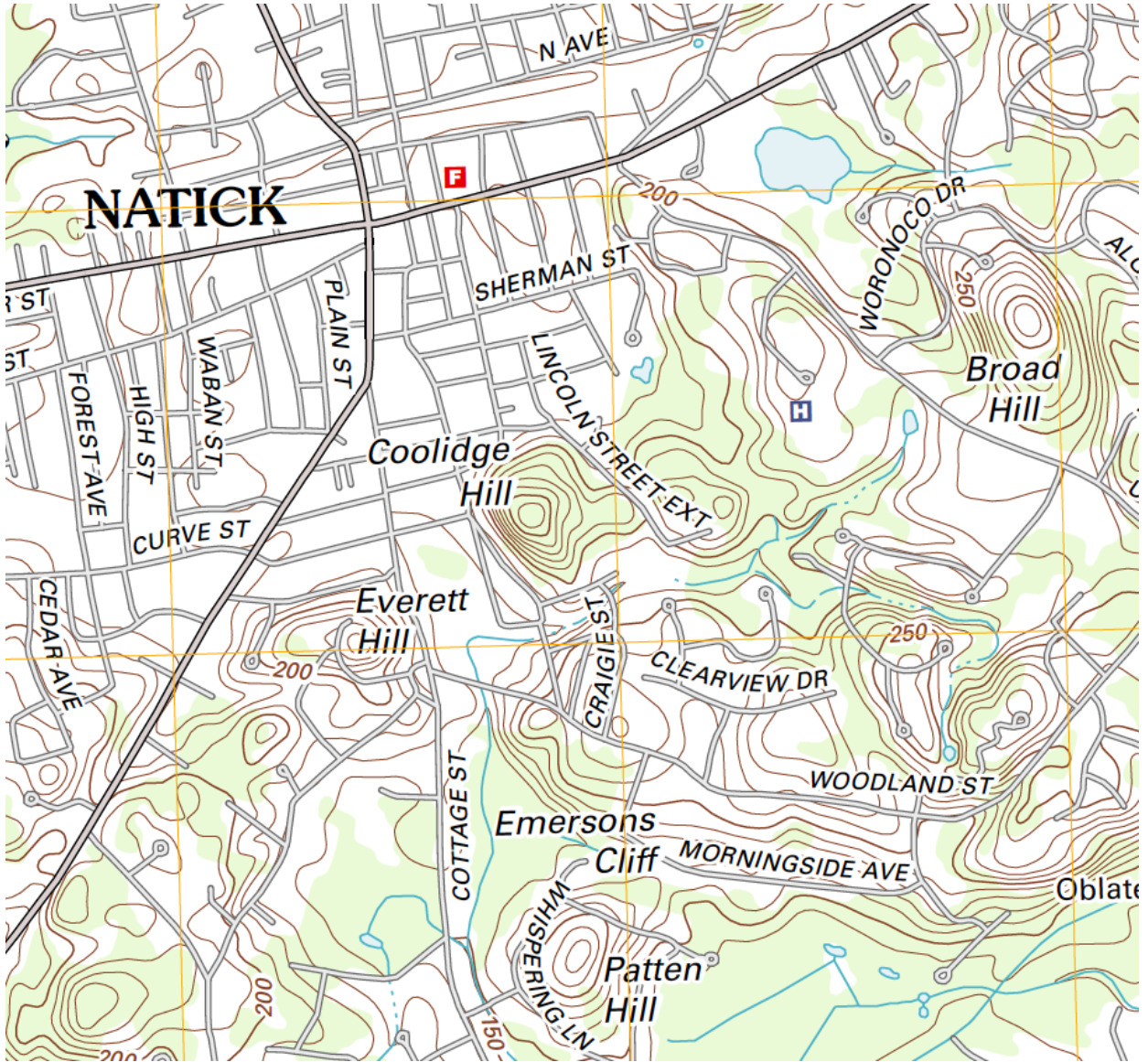


Assessors Map



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Topo



Analysis of Town Forest Area

FIDO examined the Natick Hunnewell Town Forest area for dog park suitability. The Town Forest is located just south of RT 9, east of Walnut Street and west of the “Generals” subdivision. At the top of the drumlin formation (Pleasant Hill, elev. 318’) is a town water tank. The investigation included an April 4, 2015 site inspection as well as a review of site plans and aerial views that showed existing walking trails, potential access points, topo, and property lines.

The investigation has found the following:

1. The Town Forest area is 97 Acres. As town owned land, the area would be eligible for the grant funding.
2. A relatively flat field area exists at the eastern side of the hill, of approximately 2 acres. This area is approximately .35 miles from the small parking area on Oak Street, that is adjacent to Little Jennings Pond. The perimeter of the field has on-going plant succession, with new growth of pines. Grades rise up from the field on all sides except to the north, the location of the trail into the site. Deer tracks were observed in the snow.
3. During the site inspection, the portion of the trail close to the park was flooded. The surrounding woods still had snow cover. While walking around the wet area to gain access to the field, a spotted salamander was observed on the trail. It is likely that the wet area could be classified as a vernal pool, if it is not already recorded on the state vernal pool registry.
4. The Access road was still ice covered. Dog fecal mater was observed in multiple locations along the road, with close proximity to Little Jennings pond.
5. The access roads abuts the rear yard of 14 residences on MacArthur Road, and is across the pond from nine houses on Connecticut Ave.
6. Other potential town forest access points that could connect to the field area.
  - a. The water tower service road that connects to Bacon Street at the intersection of Bacon and Marion. This seemed suitable for pedestrians, but too steep and narrow for safe vehicular use by the general public, especially at the intersection with Oak Street
  - b. The northern forest boundary is Route 9. Access could be made with a parking area in this location, but complicated by safety concerns and environmental issues. This area would be about .5 miles from the field.

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All other areas of potential access cross private property.

7. One of the challenges of the site is the development of parking. Expansion of the existing area at Oak Street is not feasible due to the lack of available land. Parking along the access road would be possible in some areas with some clearing and regrading, but again limited by environmental issues and proximity to abutting properties. Parking close to the field would need to address the apparent vernal pool issue. Any parking in the interior of the site would create a management burden with the need for nightly securing of the parking area after dark
8. The existing grades from the Oak Street parking area to the field would allow handicapped access, after the creation of a suitable walking surface.

### Summary

In conclusion, FIDO's opinion is that this area is feasible for the development of a dog park that would be limited to pedestrian access only. The development of additional parking is challenging due to environmental, management and safety issues. The dog park fencing and tree clearing required for the parking area construction would lessen the quality of the existing natural environment, wildlife habitat and passive recreational use. Additionally, it would interrupt the existing trail pattern.

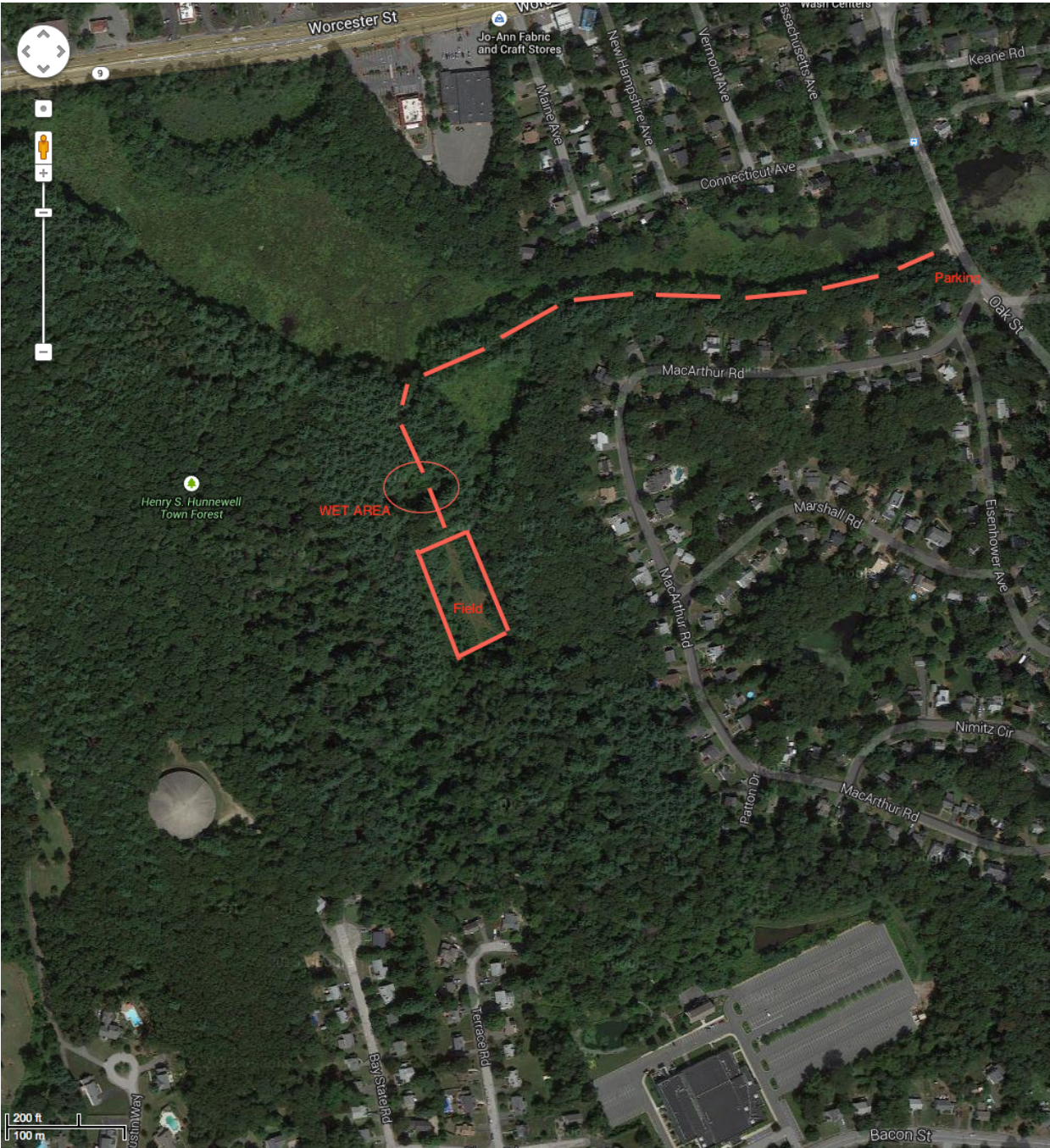
The area currently is used by dog walkers, and the town forest functions to some degree as an unenclosed, off leash area. Educational efforts should be taken to promote dog waste removal, especially along the environmentally sensitive access road. FIDO can assist in this effort.

### Attachments:

Aerial View  
Town Assessors Map  
Town Forest Map  
Site Inspection Photos

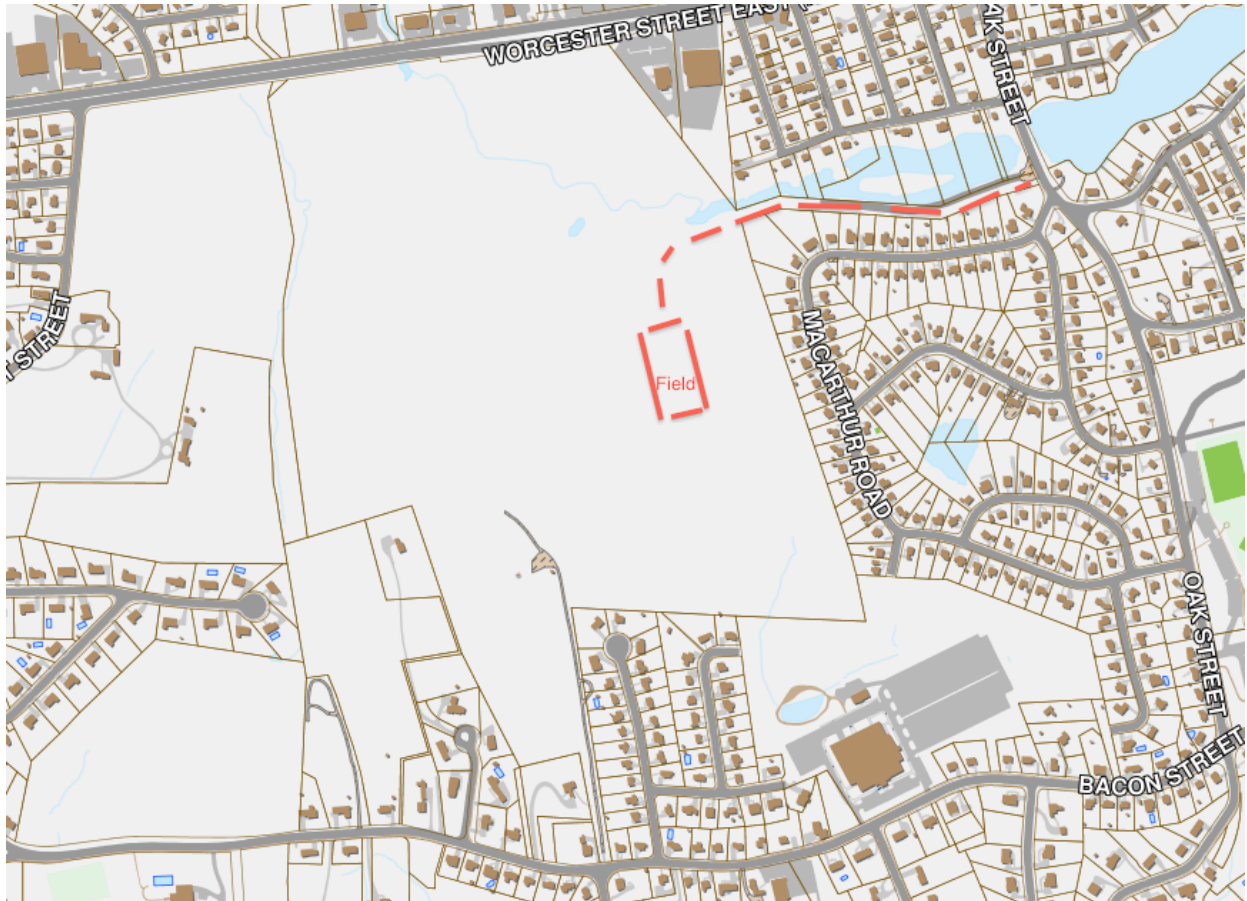
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Aerial View



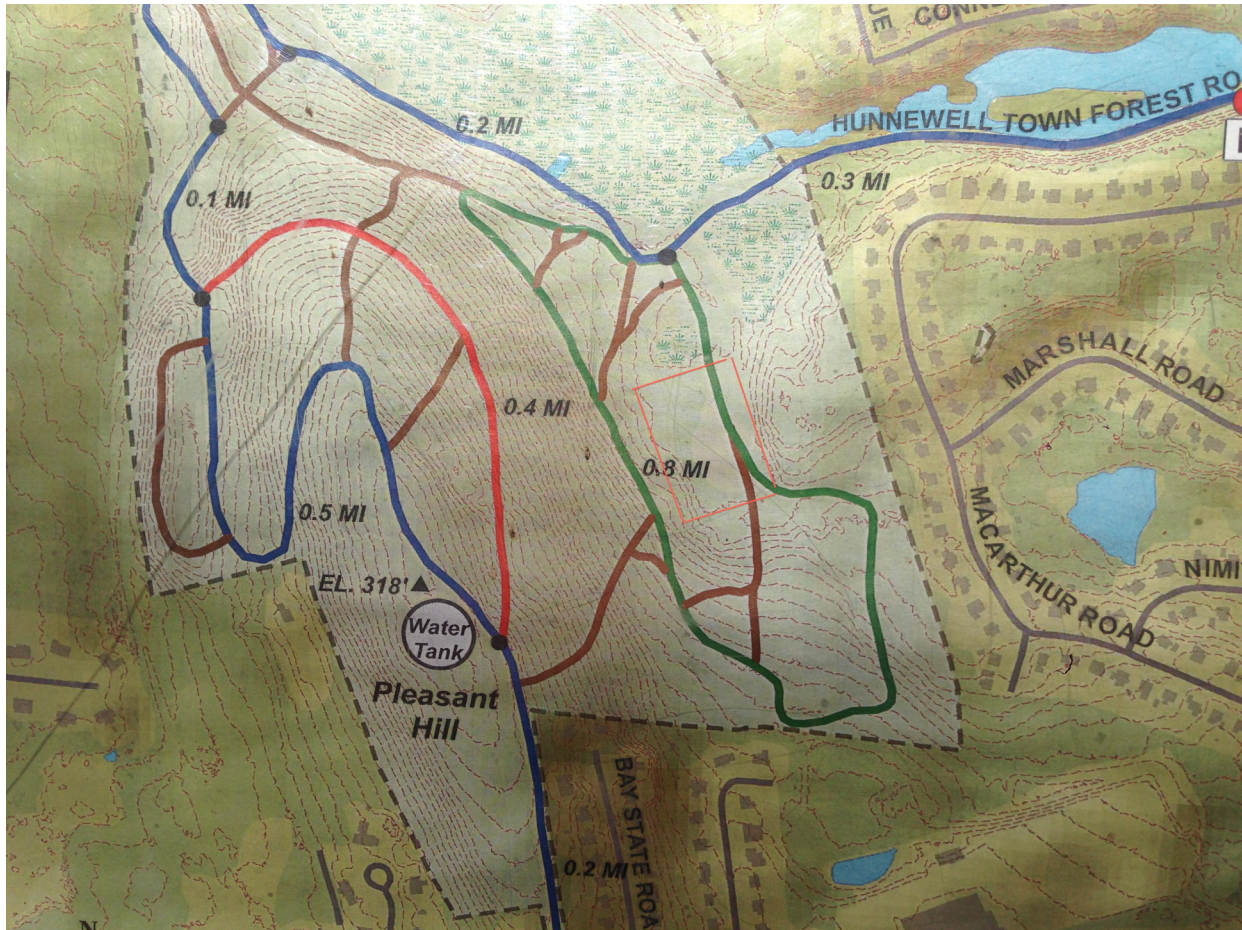
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Town Assessors map



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Town Forest Trails Map



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Site Photos



View of field from hill to the east



View of field looking southwest



View of field looking south



Deer tracks in snow

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View from the field looking north to the access trail.



Flooded area along trail to the north of the field.



Flooded area crossing trail looking north.



Flooded area of trail looking south, near area of the field

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Path along Little Jennings Pond leading to the existing parking area on Oak Street



Path along the ponde was littered with dog waste.



Spotted Salamander  
End of Addendum #3

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Addendum #4



**TOWN OF NATICK**  
**Massachusetts 01760**  
*www.natickma.gov*

*Martha L. White*  
Town Administrator

*William D. Chenard*  
Deputy Town Administrator/Operations

*Jeffrey C. Towne*  
Deputy Town Administrator/Finance

June 11, 2015

The Stanton Foundation  
1 Broadway, 14th Floor  
Cambridge, MA 02142  
Attn.: Steve Sallan

Dear Mr. Sallan:

Please be advised that at their meeting of January 12, 2015, the Natick Board of Selectmen unanimously approved the so-called Middlesex Path site (as depicted on plans presented to the Board) for a dog park. Further, at their meeting of February 17, 2015, the Town of Natick Safety Committee voted to recommend to the Board of Selectmen the Middlesex Path site for a dog park.

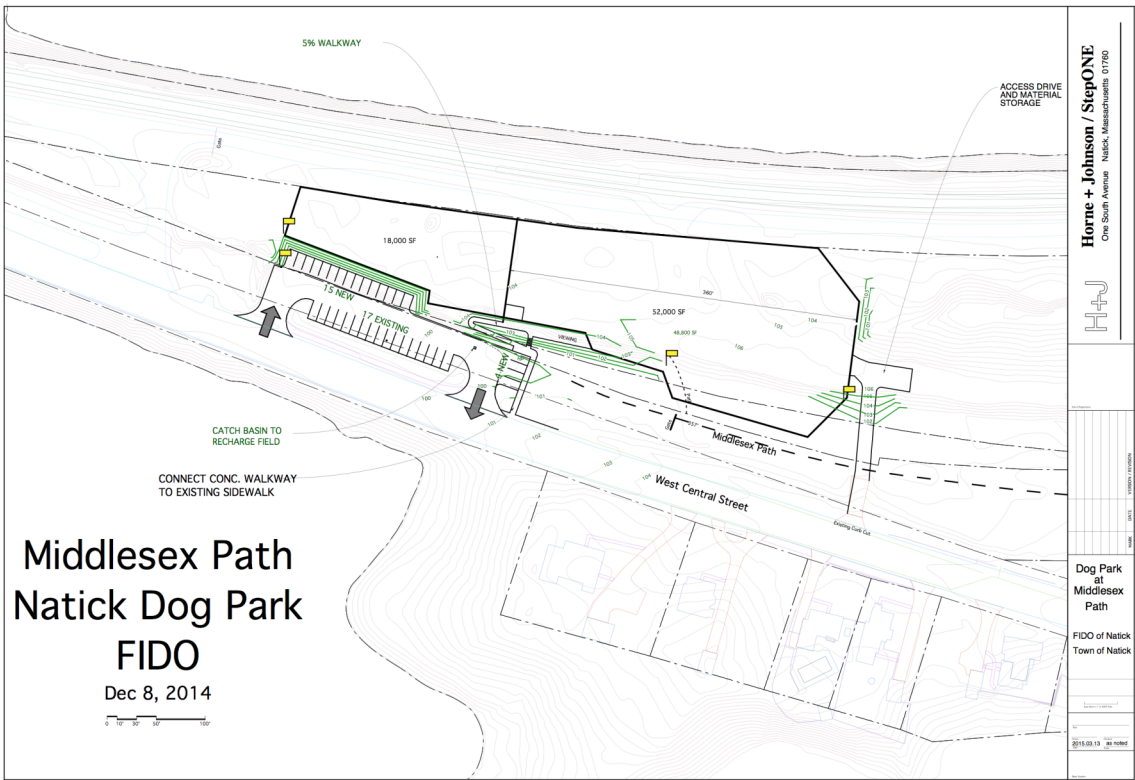
Also, as we discussed, I've designated James (Jamie) Errickson, Director of Community and Economic Development, as the Town's "point person" on this project. Jamie can be reached at 508-647-6445 or [jerrickson@natickma.org](mailto:jerrickson@natickma.org)

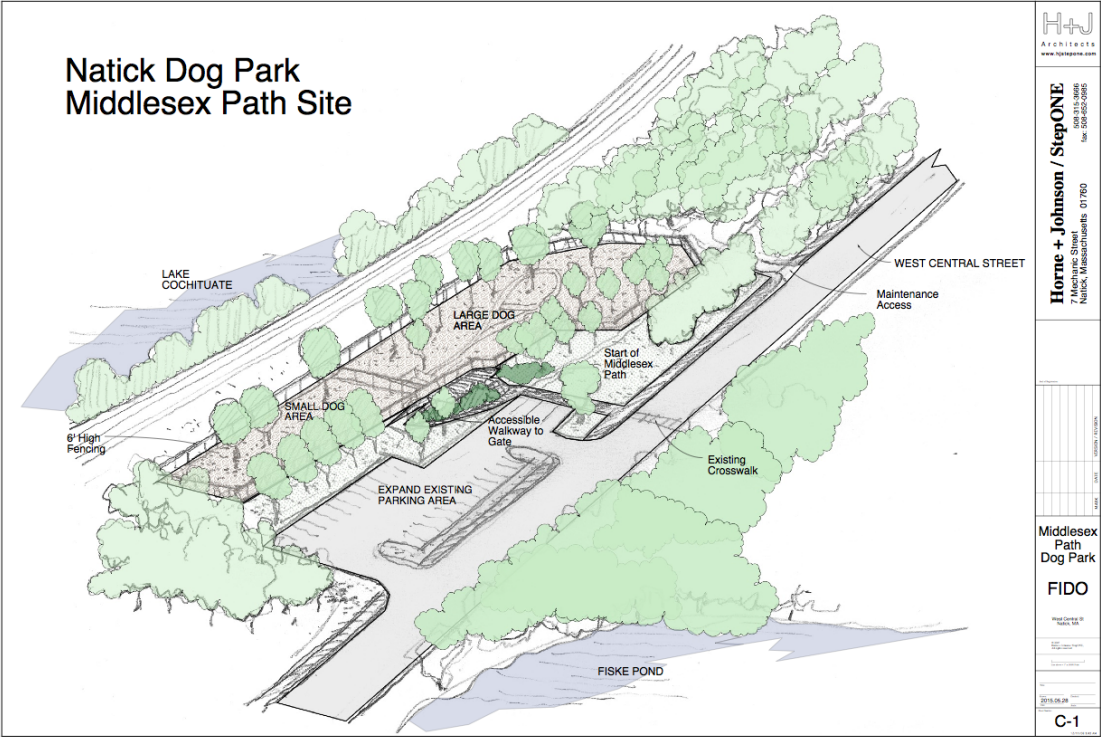
Please do not hesitate to contact me should you need any further information.

Sincerely,

Martha L. White  
Town Administrator

cc: FIDO  
Jamie Errickson





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July 18, 2015  
Addendum #7

**181 West Central Street – Henry Wilson Memorial Site**

**GENERAL**

FIDO, at the request of the Natick Board of Health, revisited the Henry Wilson Memorial property, located at the NW corner of Mill and West Central Streets. The site visit occurred on July 17, 2015 at 6 PM. Attending the site visit were Kelly McPherson, Lynne Johnson and Randy Johnson.

This report used the Town of Natick GIS base map for a rough determination of property boundaries and dimensions. Observations made herein should be verified with a property survey. FIDO did not secure the GIS topo information for the site.

Adjacent uses are a strip mall on the NE corner of the intersection, residential on the SE corner with a nursing home farther to the east, professional offices on the SW corner and industrial parking / storage to the west. Power lines run N-S to the west of the site. The railroad is to the north; beyond the tracks is single family residential development. The lot is zoned RESGEN.

There is no sidewalk on north side of West Central at this location. Connection to site from the sidewalk on the south side of West Central is made by a cross walk.

The 2.45 acre site has approximately 310' of frontage on West Central Street. An existing 10 car parking lot is accessed from West Central at the western most part of the frontage, giving the greatest separation from the Mill Street intersection. A fence runs along the western edge of the parking, which is currently overgrown with vegetation and provides screening of the adjacent use. A small grass area (15' +/-) is between the northern end of the parking and a 6' wood fence that runs east west, with an paved access drive from the parking area to a gate. The fence appears to have been constructed after 2008, as it does not appear in the GIS 2008 aerial photo. The paved access drive to the gate is nearly completely covered with soil and vegetation. Beyond the gate is an access way (now overgrown) to the railroad right-of-way as well as a connection to the adjacent property. It is assumed that the connection to the railroad right-of-way should be maintained as part of any future development of the site.

The abutting property use appears to be encroaching approximately 20' onto the town-owned property. This condition continues for approximately 200' along the western property line. It is unclear if there is an easement for this use, or whether what appears to be an encroachment is due to an inaccuracy in the base map.

Granite curbing is between the parking stalls and a colored concrete walk, which is textured with a pattern to resemble brick pavers. The walk extends into the interior of the site, branching off from the parking area at accessible parking spots and a curb ramp. The accessible parking spots are not identified with signage or pavement marking. The walkway climbs an incline to the highest area of the site, and terminates at the Henry Wilson cobbler shop. The walkway, intended to be an accessible route, is fairly steep and should be evaluated if to see if it is within the 5% allowable slope. The small cobbler shop is in fair condition; the most notable areas of damage are the wood windows sills, which are uniformly decayed. Along the walkway is a small landscaped area; other plantings are around the cobbler shop. A large bell is also along the walkway. A lawn area surrounds the cobbler shop, and extends north. A damaged chain link access gate is located approximately 100' from the Mill – West Central Street intersection. Overall, the site comprising the memorial is approximately 41,000 SF, including parking and the apparent area of encroachment.

The site environmental quality is diminished by the noise generated by traffic on Mill and West Central Streets.

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Directly north of the wood fence is a grassy area, undergoing plant succession. The 2008 aerial photo showed this area as a gravel connection to both the abutting property and the rail road right of way extending the entire width of the side property line. According to the town GIS maps, a wetlands exists to the east of the access way, at the rear of the property. The initial FIDO site visit noted this wet area. Is not clear if the area is classified as wetlands under the Wetlands Protection Act, or otherwise protected by other environmental regulations. A drainage swale leads to this area from the memorial site lawn area. In general, the center of site is heavily wooded, with much poison ivy and bittersweet growth. The interior of the site was not inspected. The topography slopes to the wet area, with an elevation difference from high to low points of approximately 20'.

The 1894 USGS map shows the site connecting to a broader wet area surrounding Beaver Dam Brook. This area has been extensively altered, apparently severing any hydrological connection between the wet area on the site and other water areas. The depression likely floods in heavy rains. It is not on the FEMA flood map.



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**EVALUATION**

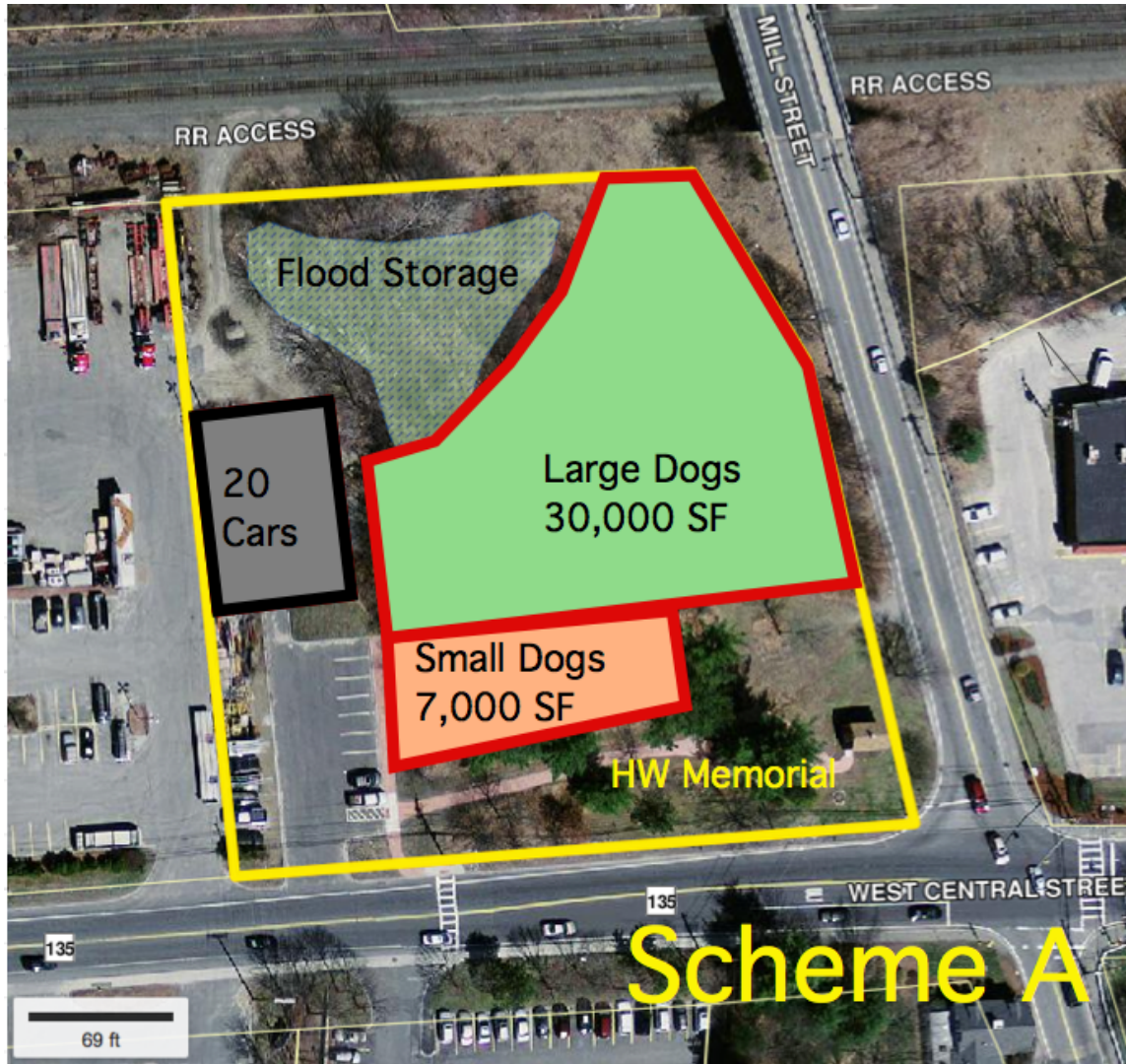
Two potential dog park schemes (“A” and “B”) have been generated for this site.

As per previous discussions with the Natick Safety Committee pertaining the Middlesex Path site, a total of 30 parking spots appear to be adequate for the combined use of the dog park and the memorial. Both dog park schemes proposed in this appendix provide this amount of parking by adding twenty stalls. For both schemes, parking up to the parking lot line may require a waiver of zoning requirements.

It is assumed that the wet area is not a protected wetland, and that clearing and grading can be done within the 100’ buffer without permit. As a flood storage area, it must be determined that it is not an isolated land subject to flooding. It must be demonstrated that the depression can handle the additional storm water runoff from the additional parking.

Review by the Natick Historical Commission regarding the impact of each development proposal on the memorial is needed.

Scheme A



Scheme “A” adds the dog park to the current use.

The twenty additional parking spots are created by expansion of the parking area to the north.

A small dog area is created to the north of the existing access path that leads to the memorial. A large dog area is to the north of the small dog area. The grass area around the memorial is preserved. Entrance to both areas would be through a double-gated entrance.

The fenced areas have about 50% of the area possible at the Middlesex path site.

The amount of land with grades suitable for accessibility would likely be minimal at this site without extensive regarding. Further investigation is needed.

Scheme B



Scheme “B” proposes using the entire parcel for the dog park program. The Henry Wilson memorial would be moved to the western end of Middlesex path, at the start of the Henry Wilson Historic District. This relocation has been previously proposed as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act grant application created by the Natick Conservation Commission in the 1990’s.

The twenty additional parking spots are created by expansion of the existing parking area to the west and north.

A small dog area is created to the north of the new parking area. Access to the railroad right-of-way would be through the small dog area. A large dog area would be created out of the remaining land, with a setback of the fence line along West Central Street.. Entrance to both areas would be through a double-gated entrance.

The fenced areas have about 65% of the area possible at the Middlesex path site. This scheme also has the added expense of relocation of the memorial and site improvements and landscaping at the new location. As with Scheme

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“A”, the amount of land with grades suitable for accessibility would likely be minimal at this site without extensive regarding. Further investigation is needed.

Photos of Existing Conditions



Photo 1  
Memorial – view from the gate on Mill Street.



Photo 2  
View to the west. Bell is visible along the pathway.



Photo 3  
Corner of Mill and West Central from SE corner of the memorial



Photo 4  
Pathway to memorial.

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Photo 5  
Curb ramp at south end of existing parking lot.



Photo 6  
View of existing parking lot looking north.



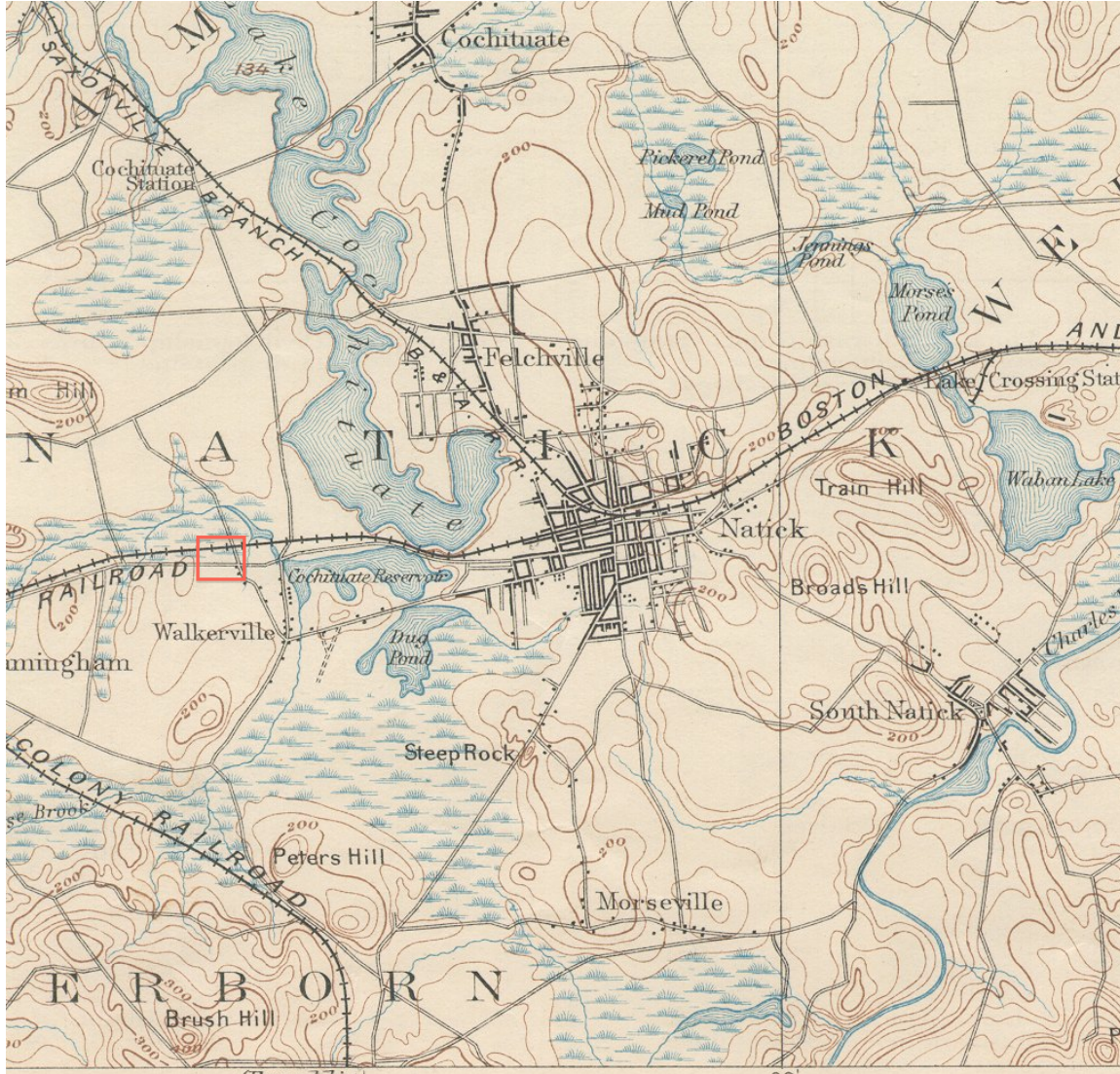
Photo 7  
Access drive to rear of property.



Photo 8  
View looking north over existing fence

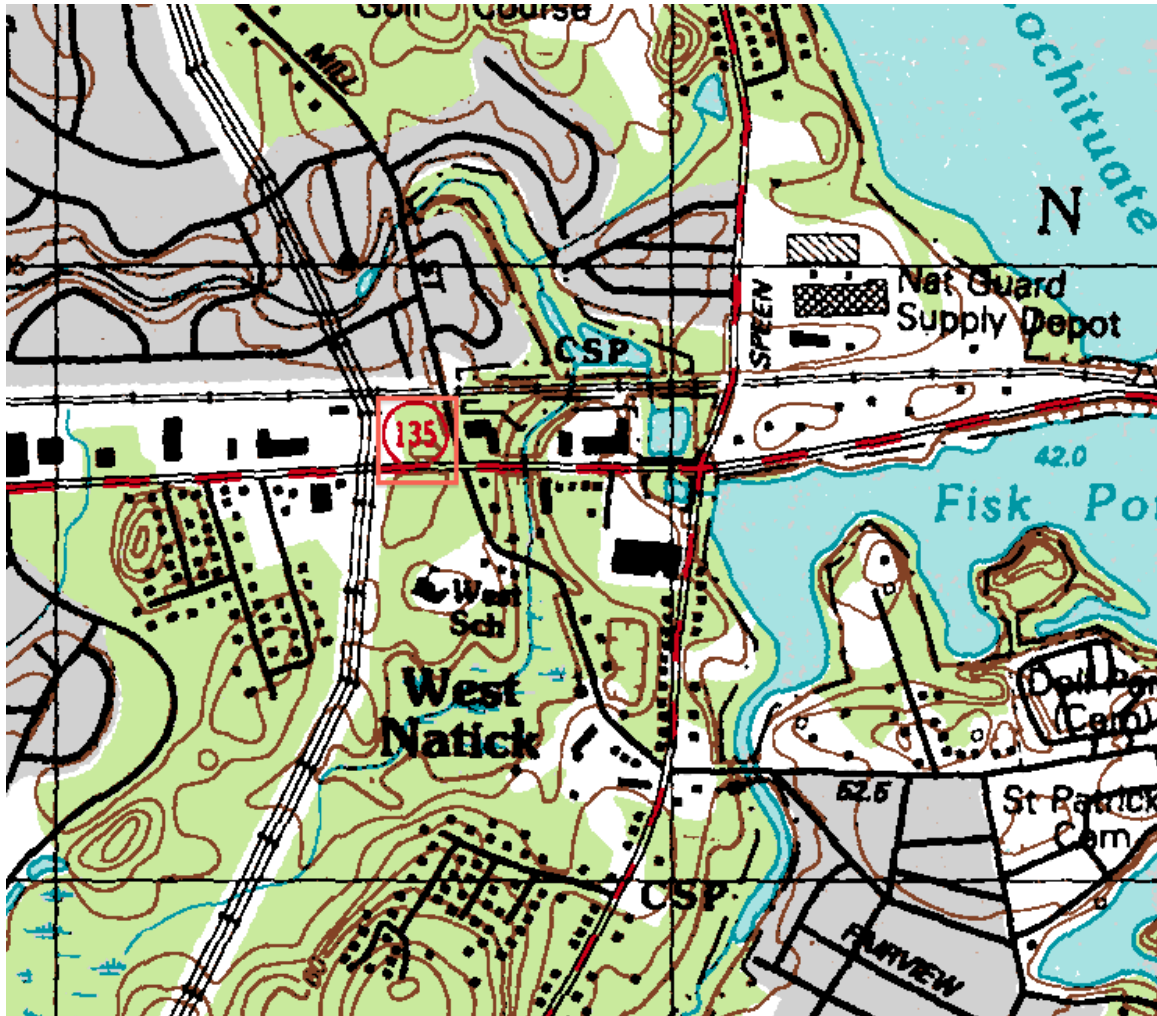
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Current USGS



End of Addendum #7