



Town of Norwood, MA
Old Parish Cemetery Master Plan

November 23, 2021

Old Parish Cemetery

Located on Washington Street, just north of the Norwood Town Hall, the Old Parish Cemetery was established in 1741, when the area was known as the Second or South Parish of Dedham. At the time, Norwood was a homogeneous settlement of white, Angle-Saxon, primarily Congregationalist families. The Old Parish cemetery was situated on a steep, uninhabitable 3/4 acre piece of land called Sandy Hill in the northern part of the settlement.

Shortly after Norwood was incorporated in 1872, the Old Parish Cemetery was nearing capacity. The Highland Cemetery on Winter Street was opened in 1880.

(www.norwoodma.gov).

Old Parish Preservation Volunteers (OPPV) is an independent non-profit 501 (c) (3) Charitable Organization assisting the Town of Norwood, Massachusetts in caring for this historic treasure. For more details and ongoing research on the Old Parish Cemetery history, see www.oldparishpreservationvolunteers.com.

Acknowledgments

The Old Parish Cemetery Master Plan was completed with contributions from the following individuals and organizations.

Town of Norwood

Mark Ryan, Director of Public Works
Paul Ranalli , Cemetery Foreman

Old Parish Preservation Volunteers

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Town of Norwood, MA

Old Parish Cemetery Master Plan

November 24, 2021

Prepared for

The Town of Norwood

and

The Old Parish Preservation Volunteers

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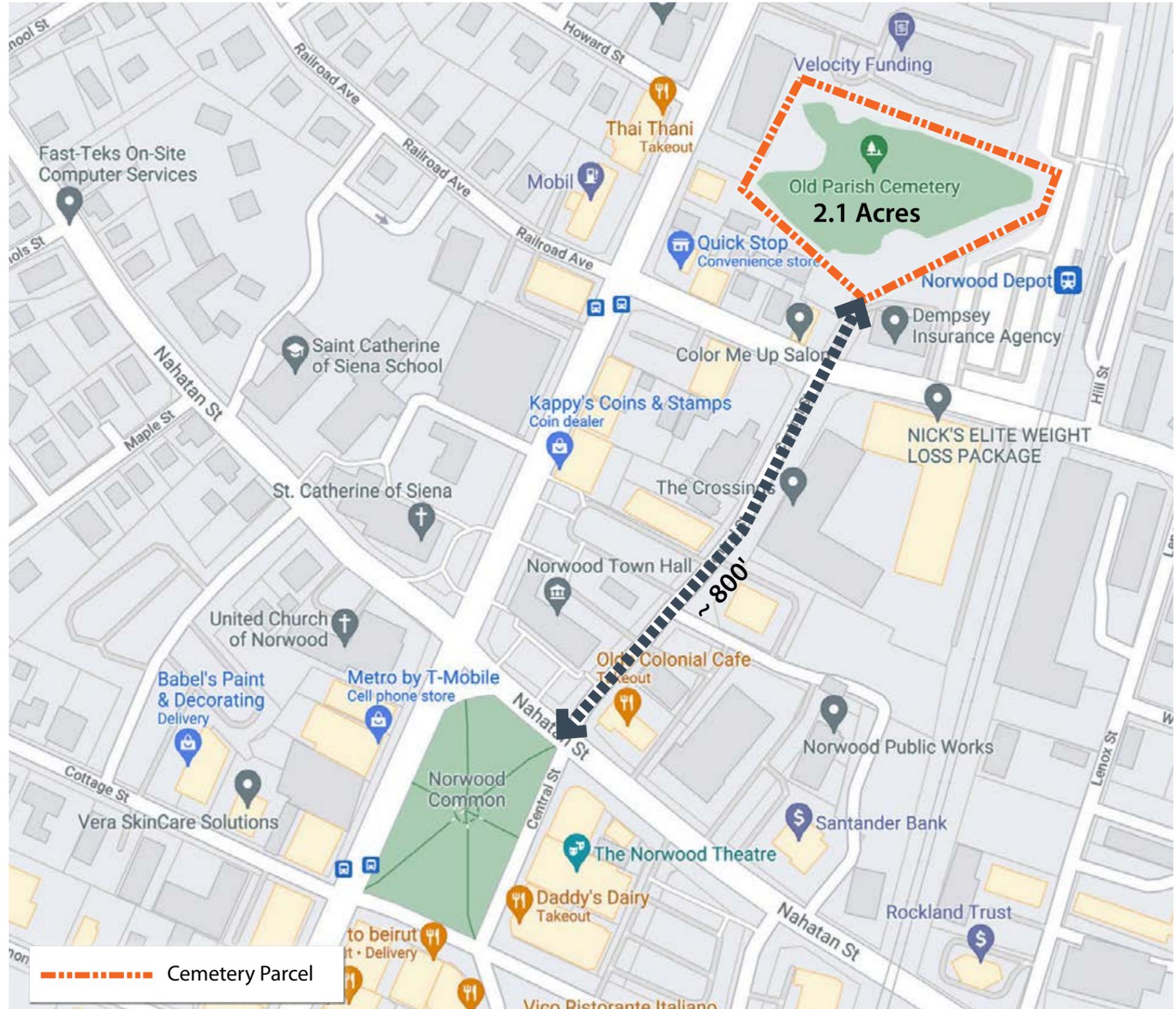
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Part 1
Site Inventory and Analysis

Location and Context



Old Parish Cemetery At a Glance

- 2.1-acre parcel surrounded by commercial uses and railroad facilities.
- Located a short walk from Norwood Town Hall and the Common.
- Established in 1741, when the area was known as the Second or South Parish of Dedham, on a steep, uninhabitable 3/4 acre piece of land called the Sandy Hill.
- By 1872 when Norwood was incorporated, it already neared capacity. Burials largely ceased after Highland Cemetery opened in 1880.
- Today the cemetery is owned and maintained by the Town of Norwood.
- Old Parish Preservation Volunteers (OPPV), assists the Town to: Recover, Restore, Research, and Respect this historical asset.

Site Inventory and Base Map



- CAD base prepared from several resources:
 - Town of Norwood GIS info
 - MassGIS Orthophotos
 - Old Village Cemetery plot plan.
- On-site observation helped refine the base.

OLD PARISH CEMETERY
NORWOOD, MA

BASE MAP

HALVORSON | TIGHE & BOND STUDIO
06/15/2021

Site Features

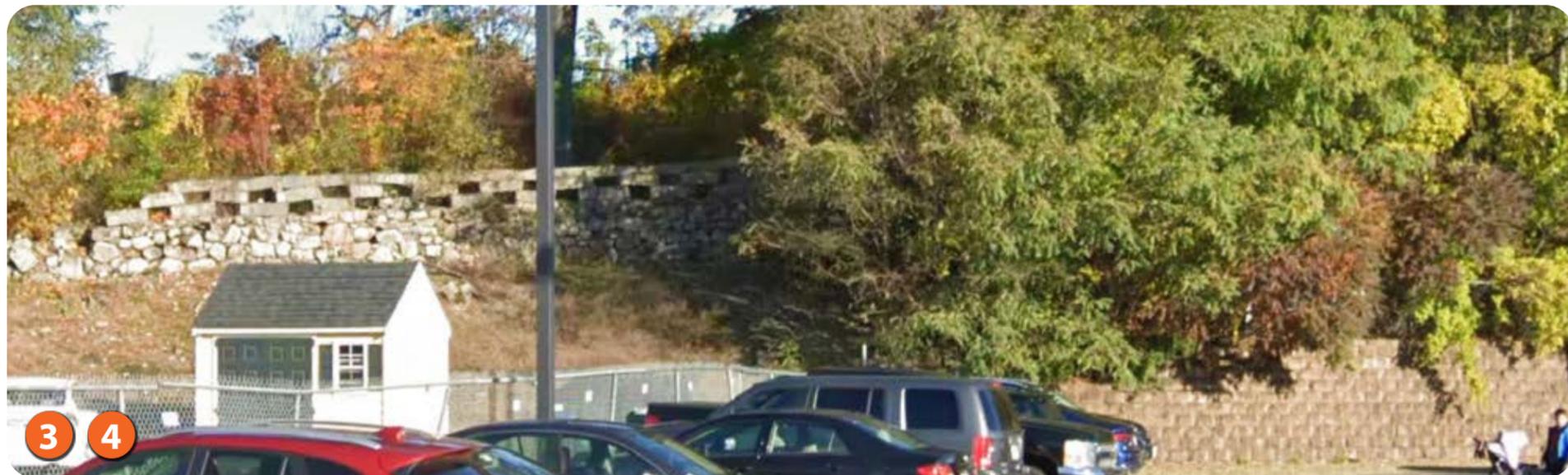


1-7 Map Key

1. Railroad Ave. Gate
2. Washington St. Gate
3. Stone rubble wall
4. Segmental concrete wall
5. Stone tomb
6. Sumner tomb - in poor condition
7. Bird tomb - in poor condition
8. Veterans Memorial

-  Family burial lots
-  Individual burials area
-  Entrance
-  Cemetery parcel
-  6' ht chain link fence w/ extended posts
-  Gaps in stone rubble wall
-  Parcel owned by the Town of Norwood
-  Utility pole w/ spot light
-  Water spigot

Site Features



What We've Learned

- Old Parish Cemetery occupies a prominent location in the center of town, overlooking the Norwood Depot station.
- It is surrounded by commercial uses on south, west and north, some of which make it "invisible" from the Washington St. corridor.
- The cemetery is encircled by a tall and deteriorated chain link fence, which until recently had barbed wire - a remnant of a past times when vandalism was an issue.
- Along the perimeter there is an almost continuous rubble wall. On the south side the wall has a unique build-up of rectangular stone blocks in a chequered pattern.
- Site amenities include new water spigots mounted on granite posts; and utility poles with spot lights for safety.
- The Old Parish Preservation Volunteers have been helping to clean and reset the monuments over the years: the general monument condition is good.
- Sumner and Bird tombs appear in need of structural restoration.

Vegetation



Existing Vegetation Types

- Lawn
- M Meadow on slope
- W Wooded area on steep slope - invasive species present
- Tree coniferous
- Tree deciduous
- Approximate location of former flower garden (from 1890 map)
- Invasive species at fence line
- Areas of erosion
- Steep slopes challenging to lawn maintenance

Vegetation



The Old Parish Cemetery landscape throughout the seasons.

What We've Learned

- The landscape character is defined by a continuous lawn ground plane with a few specimen trees of high landscape value.
- The trees are mature; some have been lost in recent years.
- The landscape is maintained by the Town's cemetery staff. Challenging areas include:
 - Lawn establishment and maintenance on steep slopes.
 - Invasive plants along the fence lines.
 - Wooded slope to the east is inaccessible, steep and dense with invasive vegetation.

Opportunities

- Entrances would benefit from planting improvements to make the arrival more welcoming.
- Landscape interventions along the edges can help soften visually distracting views.

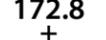
Challenges

- Need to preserve the landscape character as the trees reach end of life - but tree replacement may interfere with existing graves.
- The wooded slope is a difficult area to maintain. At the minimum invasive plants should be controlled.
- Tree roots are intertwined with the rubble walls, which might make the wall restoration difficult.

Topography & Drainage



Map Key

-  High point
-  Existing catch basin in the vicinity
-  Ridge line
-  Direction of overland flow
-  Areas of erosion
-  Steep lawn slopes 2L:1H
-  172.8+
Approximate spot elevation
-  6%
Pavement slope - Accessibility issue

Topography & Drainage



Topography is a defining character feature of the landscape.



Eroded area along the north perimeter.



Steep slopes make it difficult to establish lawn.

What We've Learned

- The site's rolling topography is a defining landscape character feature.
- There is no drainage infrastructure in the cemetery; the site runoff goes to catch basins on adjacent properties and roads.
- Along the north perimeter, the runoff has contributed to erosion and wall deterioration where the concentrated flow leaves the site.
- Both cemetery approaches appear to be exceeding ADA accessibility thresholds.

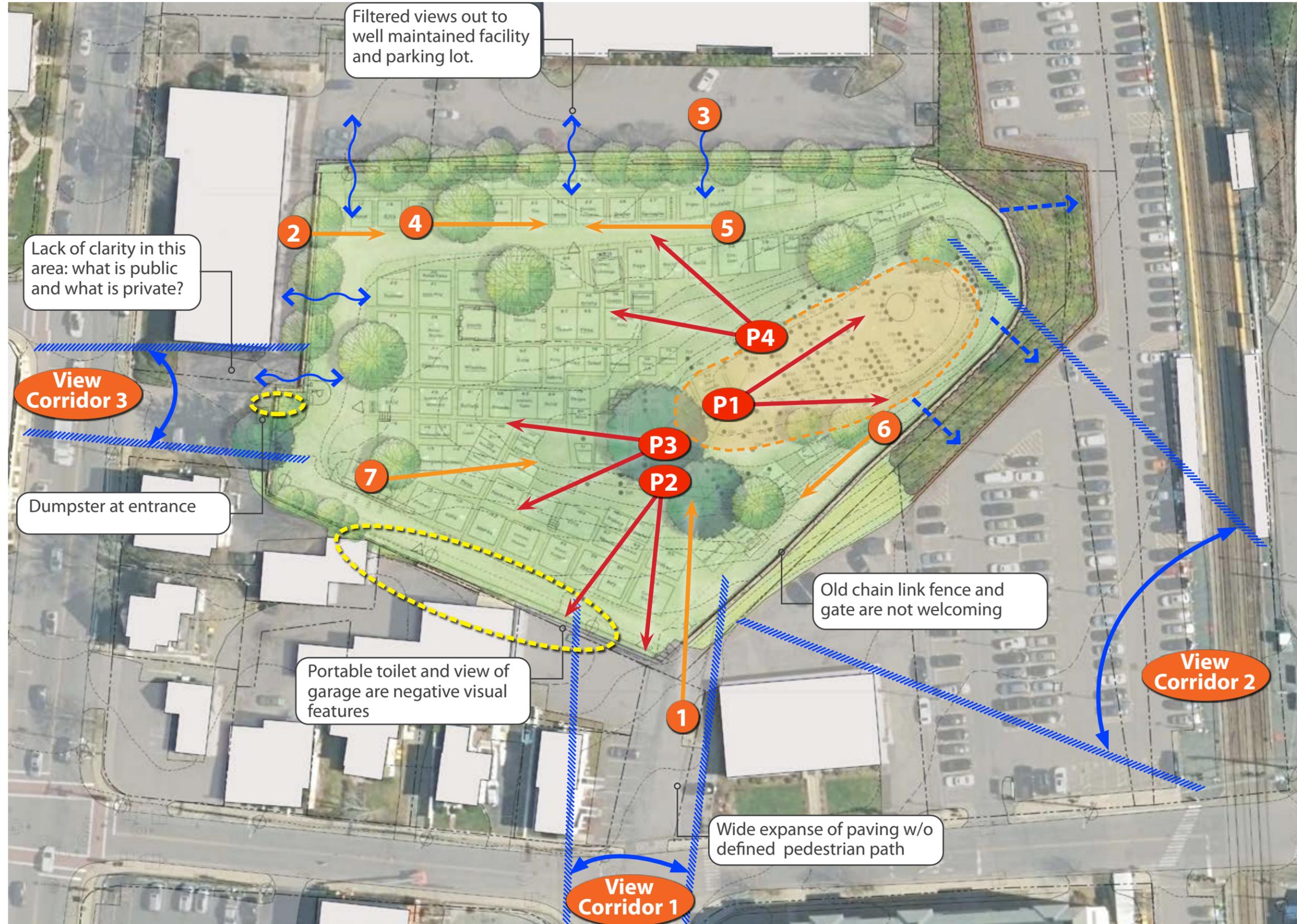
Opportunities

- Consider landscape-based storm water solutions to alleviate erosion and impact to abutters.

Challenges

- ADA accessibility to the cemetery might not be possible to achieve fully due to existing topography.

Views & Vistas



Map Key

- Important view corridors
- Elevated plateau with panoramic views
- Views into and within cemetery
- Panoramic views out
- Views filtered by trees along edges
- Views screened by dense vegetation
- Negative visual element or area

Views Towards / Into Cemetery



View corridor from Central St.



Railroad Ave entrance view.



View from Norwood Depot station platform is dominated by the dense wooded slope.



Washington St entrance view - entrance is tucked in the corner, the dumpster is a negative visual element



Attractive view in from alley along west perimeter.

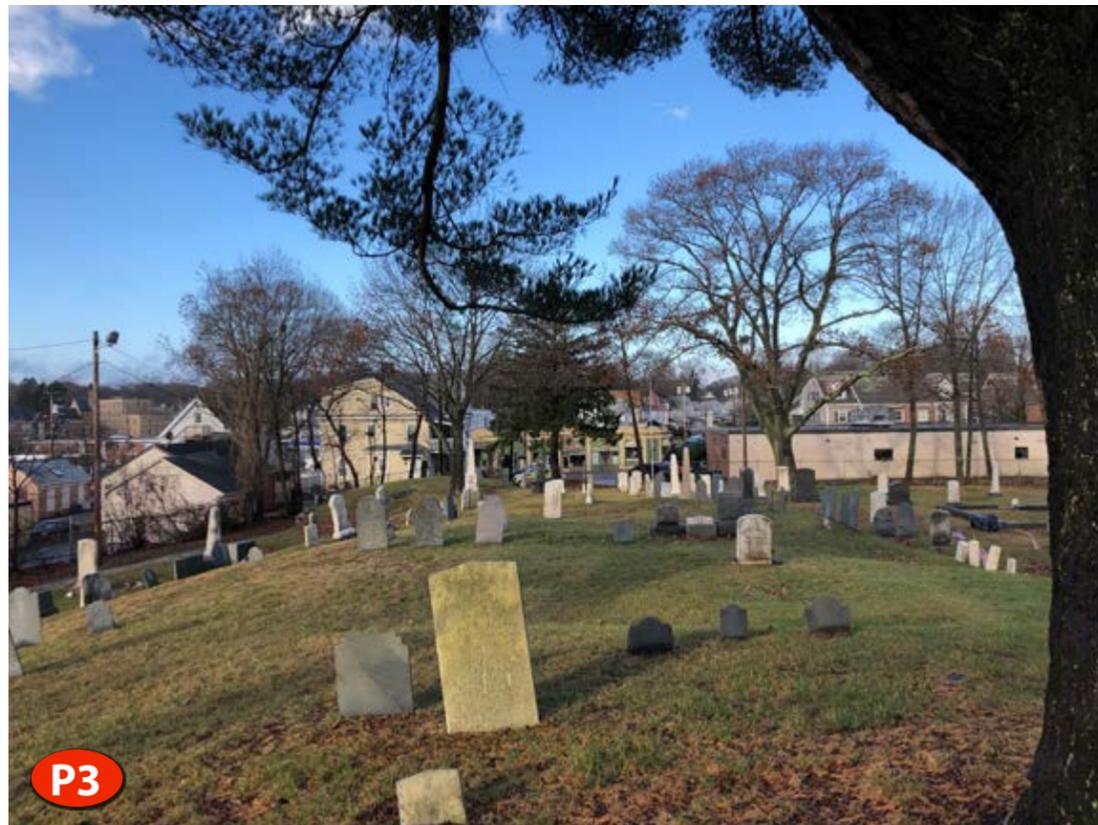


Attractive view in from parking north of cemetery

Views Within the Cemetery



Panoramic Views From the Top



Challenging Views Out



Abutter's garage and portable toilet are visual distractions.



Views down to train station are screened by dense vegetation.



The blank abutter's facade and parking lot view could be softened with smaller ornamental trees and shrubs for filtered views.

What We've Learned

- The most prominent views to the cemetery are from Railroad Ave / Central St.
- The Washington St. entry is set back and the cemetery concealed by abutter buildings. There are picturesque views into the cemetery from the back alley.
- The top of the cemetery hill has attractive panoramic views and vistas.
- Views to and from Norwood Depot station are screened by the wooded slope.

Opportunities

- Railroad Ave entry has the best potential as the main arrival due to its prominence.
- The white pines near the top of the hill are a serene overlook that could be made into a sitting node.

Challenges

- The vistas offered by the top of the hill are not accessible.
- Along the south edge there is little space for a vegetated buffer to screen the visual distractions present.