



Technical Memorandum Metacomet Country Club East Providence, Rhode Island

Cultural Resources Due Diligence

November 2023

Submitted to:

Metacomet Property, LLC.
950 Warren Avenue
East Providence, RI 02914

Metacomet Property, LLC (MP LLC) is proposing to redevelop the existing Metacomet Country Club 18-hole golf course in East Providence, Rhode Island. The proposed project will consist of a 9-hole course and mixed development. The Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) has commented that the golf course property may contain evidence of a nearby archaeological site, the Jones Pond Site (RI 0230) that was investigated by an amateur archaeologist in the 1930s and included a burial (Brown 1939). The RIHPHC has described the Jones Pond Site as being part of a large village and that burials can be found anywhere within such a village, and recommended a comprehensive survey of the project area.

MP LLC contracted with The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL) to conduct a cultural resources due diligence to assist with Project planning by providing information on historic properties (archaeological sites, historic structures and districts, cemeteries, etc.) in or near the property and to assess the likelihood for unrecorded archaeological sites to be present within the future development area.

Project Description

Metacomet Country Club is an 18-hole, Donald Ross-designed private country club on 105 acres on the east side of the Providence River. Although the club was founded in 1901 on a site in Rumford, R.I., it moved to its current location in 1919. Leonard Byles developed the original layout but Donald Ross was retained in 1924 to redesign the course. Ross is known for retaining the natural contours of the land, creating challenging holes while excavating little terrain. Ross rerouted Metacomet over and against the property's ridges. By 1926, Ross produced a course filled with character, beauty, fun and challenge. In 2019, the club was purchased by a group of investors. One year later, the property was sold to MP LLC which is preserving nine holes (essentially the front nine) while a mixed-use development is proposed for the back nine (Figure 1). To accomplish this, MP LLC proposes a major effort to move materials from elevated areas of the property to fill in low-lying areas (Figure 2).

Area of Potential Effect (APE)

The Project's Area of Potential Effects (APE) is defined as the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist." A historic property is defined as "any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) maintained by the Secretary of the Interior" (36 CFR § 800.16(1)). The APE is defined based on the potential for effect, which may differ for aboveground

resources (historic structures and landscapes) and subsurface resources (archaeological sites). The APE for archaeological sites is any area of ground disturbances that may occur during construction including construction, access roads, and staging areas. The APE for historic architectural properties includes the construction area and areas adjacent to the project where visual impacts may occur.

The study areas established for the purposes of the identification effort were broadly defined to provide information about the types of resources located in and near the Project. For archaeological resources, the study area encompassed a one-half mile band around the Project. For historic architectural properties the study area was established at one-quarter mile. PAL compiled information about previously documented historic properties within the APE and Study Area and reviewed available information about project area conditions to provide recommendations regarding known and potential archaeological sites and historic aboveground properties that may be affected by the project.

Methods

PAL conducted a review of the RIHPC's site files to identify previously recorded historic properties within the Project study area. The town reconnaissance survey report for East Providence (RIHPC 1976) was reviewed, as were secondary histories (Bayles 1891; Bicknell 1920; Conforti 1976; McLoughlin 1986) and historical maps and atlases (Beers 1870; Everts and Richards 1895; Hopkins 1875, 1882) and Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) shaded relief maps.

Reports documenting Cultural Resource Management (CRM) investigations conducted in the vicinity of the proposed Project were reviewed, including surveys at Kettle Point (Pagoulatos 1988; Pagoulatos and Ritchie 1987), Walker Point (Rainey and Ritchie 1992, 1998a, 1998b), Butler Hospital (Glover and Harrison 1991; Harrison and Glover 1994), and Bullock Cove (Thorbahn and Loparto 1979). More wide ranging surveys in East Providence include the Cross Bay Pipeline (Glover and Fitch 1989) and Kerber and Ueki's survey of the coastal zone of the east side of Narragansett Bay (Kerber and Ueki 1981). The Narragansett Archaeological Society of Rhode Island's report on the excavations of the Jones Pond Site was also reviewed (Brown 1939).

Project plans, including boring logs were examined. Finally, Donald Ross' notes and sketch figures for the redesign of Metacomet Country Club, held at the Given Library and Tufts Archive, Pinehurst, South Carolina were reviewed.

A preliminary field review of Metacomet Country Club was conducted on November 8, 2023, followed by a walkover survey of the portion of the project area that is proposed for development on November 13, 2023. During the field review PAL staff photographed existing conditions, inspected areas of exposed soils, and took soil cores in random locations to examine soil stratigraphy.

Results

Environmental Setting

East Providence is located within the Seaboard Lowland physiographic zone. The general topography of this region includes level plains and glaciated upland ridges and knolls that generally run north south and are interspersed with swamps, marshes, and other wetlands (Figure 3). The upland ridges and knolls were formed from stratified deposits of sands, rock, and gravel released from the ice. Soils

within the Project Area include well drained Deerfield sandy loam (DC), Hinckley loamy sand (HkD), and Merrimac fine sandy loam (MmA, MmB) surrounding pockets of poorly drained Scarboro mucky fine sand (SB) and Matunuck mucky peat (Mk) (USDA-NRCS 2023).

Inventory File and Research Review

There is one aboveground resource in the Study Area. Veterans Memorial Parkway, formerly Barrington Parkway, was commissioned by the Metropolitan Park Commission in 1904. The layout of the parkway was designed by the Olmsted Brothers. It was renamed Veterans Memorial Parkway after World War II. Veteran’s Memorial Parkway is potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

No previously recorded archaeological sites or historic properties are located within the APE for direct impacts. The RIHPHC Inventory identifies five archaeological sites in the Study Area. (Table 1).

Site No.	Name	Site Type	Period	Comments	Source
RI 0230	Jones Pond	Midden/Habitation/ Burial	MA, TA, LW	Destroyed	Brown (1939)
RI 0913		area of artifacts	Unknown	No information on file	
RI 1731	Kettle Point	Artifact cluster/ scatter	TA, LW		Pagoulatos and Ritchie 1987
RI 1866	Kettle Point Burial	Burial Site		Reported from Gorton Collection	Cook (1985); Chapin (1927)
RI 2278	Hogpen Point Fort	Artifact cluster/ scatter, fortification	A, LA, 18 th century	Soapstone fragments, projectile points	Fowler and Welt (1955)

Key: A-Archaic, MA-Middle Archaic, Late Archaic, TA-Transitional Archaic, LW Late Woodland.

The Jones Pond Site (RI 0230) is the closest site to the project area and is the focus of the RIHPHC’s concerns. The site was a multicomponent site investigated in 1938 (Brown 1939). It was a shell heap situated in a depression among a series of small, grassed covered hills on the north end of Jones Pond, a natural, spring-fed freshwater resource. In addition to layers of whole and crushed shell the excavation revealed a number of fire pits, hearths, and storage/refuse pits and a single flexed burial. Cultural material included netsinkers, numerous projectile points, scrapers, a polished gouge, slate gorget, bone tools, pieces of soapstone and pottery sherds. Brown interpreted the Jones Pond Site as part of a larger village site located to the north and east. Subsequent development of Pierce Memorial Field has most like destroyed any archaeological deposits associated with a village site and the reconfiguration of Jones Pond has most likely destroyed the Jones Pond Site.

Historic maps reveal the more recent changes to the Metacomet Country Club Project Area. The 1895 and 1917 maps of East Providence of Providence show the relationship between Jones Pond and the Project area (Figure 4 and Figure 5) (Evert and Richard 1895, Richard 1917)). These maps also show the location of two paper streets (Douglas and Shepard avenues) through the project area, as well as the existence of two properties consisting of homes and outbuildings, one of which now serves as the maintenance barn for the golf course. The maps also show a pond within the Project. Ross’ design for the 12th hole includes a note to “drain or fill the pond” and on the 17th hole there is a note to “fill

in the cellar...” The 1935 Providence USGS topographic map shows a much smaller Jones Pond (Figure 6) three years before the excavation of the Jones Pond site. Within the Project area, there is very little change in topography between 1996 and 1935 topographic maps.

Field Review

The project area is a former golf course and is fairly open. Linear stretches of oak, maple, and pine trees line many of the fairways. The nine-hole course occupying the eastern portion of the project area along Watchemocket Cove is well-maintained (Figure 7). The back nine occupying the western portion of the project area has been left fallow and is overgrown (Figure 8). Evidence of the former tee boxes and bunkers is still visible but the greens have been stripped (Figure 9). What is evident from the review of the area of proposed development is that Ross did indeed work with the existing topography. Areas of localized cut and fill were noted but for the most part the existing topography is unchanged. The central portion of the proposed areas of development is depressed and is significantly lower than the surrounding topography (see Figure 3). Examination of exposed topsoil and subsoils in stripped areas revealed a mix of silt and sand topsoil and gravelly subsoils (Figure 10). Soil probes revealed natural soils with little or no evidence of major disturbance.

Archaeological Sensitivity

The results of the inventory file review, background research, and walkover survey are used to develop a sensitivity ranking and predictive statements concerning the potential for the presence of Native American cultural resources. Native American archaeological sensitivity was determined by assessing key environmental attributes, the presence of documented archaeological sites within and adjacent to the project area, and the degree of disturbance. Key environmental attributes are proximity to fresh or salt water, well-drained soils, and level topography.

Using these criteria, portions of Metacomet Country Club to be developed are assessed as archaeologically sensitive. These areas are confined to the level higher elevations of the course that may contain evidence of pre-contact depositions that reflect short-term occupations in the form of isolated chipped stone tools (projectile points, bifacial tool blades), burned rock and/or pieces of chipping debris. Archaeological evidence of more extensive or intensive exploitation of the area could include subsistence-related features (hearths, storage/refuse pits, living areas including post molds). It is unlikely that archaeological deposits would include burials. The low-lying, wet areas are not archaeologically sensitive.

Summary and Recommendations

The proposed redevelopment of Metacomet Country Club will have no impact on Veterans Memorial Parkway. No archaeological investigations are recommended for the golf course as any proposed work is confined to the existing irrigation system.

Based on our review of the project area, the cutting and filling proposed to fill the deep depression in the middle of the proposed development has the potential to impact archaeological resources and our recommendation is that a survey should be conducted within the upper elevations of the Property as shown in Figure 2, where soils will be removed to fill the void. The RIPHPHC has already commented on the proposed project in correspondence to the Coastal Resources Management Commission (CRMC) (letter of September 6, 2023) and the City of East Providence (letters of August

16, 2023, and October 21, 2020). The CRMC’s Assent dated October 5, 2023, allows for the repair and replacement of the existing irrigation system, as needed. This activity will have no impact on archaeological resources.

In their letters to the City of East Providence, the RIHPHC expressed concerns that the Jones Pond Site may extend into the Metacomet project area and recommended “...a comprehensive survey to determine if a significant archaeological site, which may or may not include burials, is present.” The RIHPHC continued that if called upon to review future project plans through a permitting agency they will require a survey.

Table 2. Environmental and Cultural Variables Used to Determine the Archaeological Sensitivity of the Metacomet Country Club Project Area.

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

500 Veterans Memorial Parkway, East Providence, RI
Overall Site Rendering | 10/25/2023



PHASE ZERO
DESIGN
architects interior designers

Figure 1. Proposed development, Metacomet Country Club.

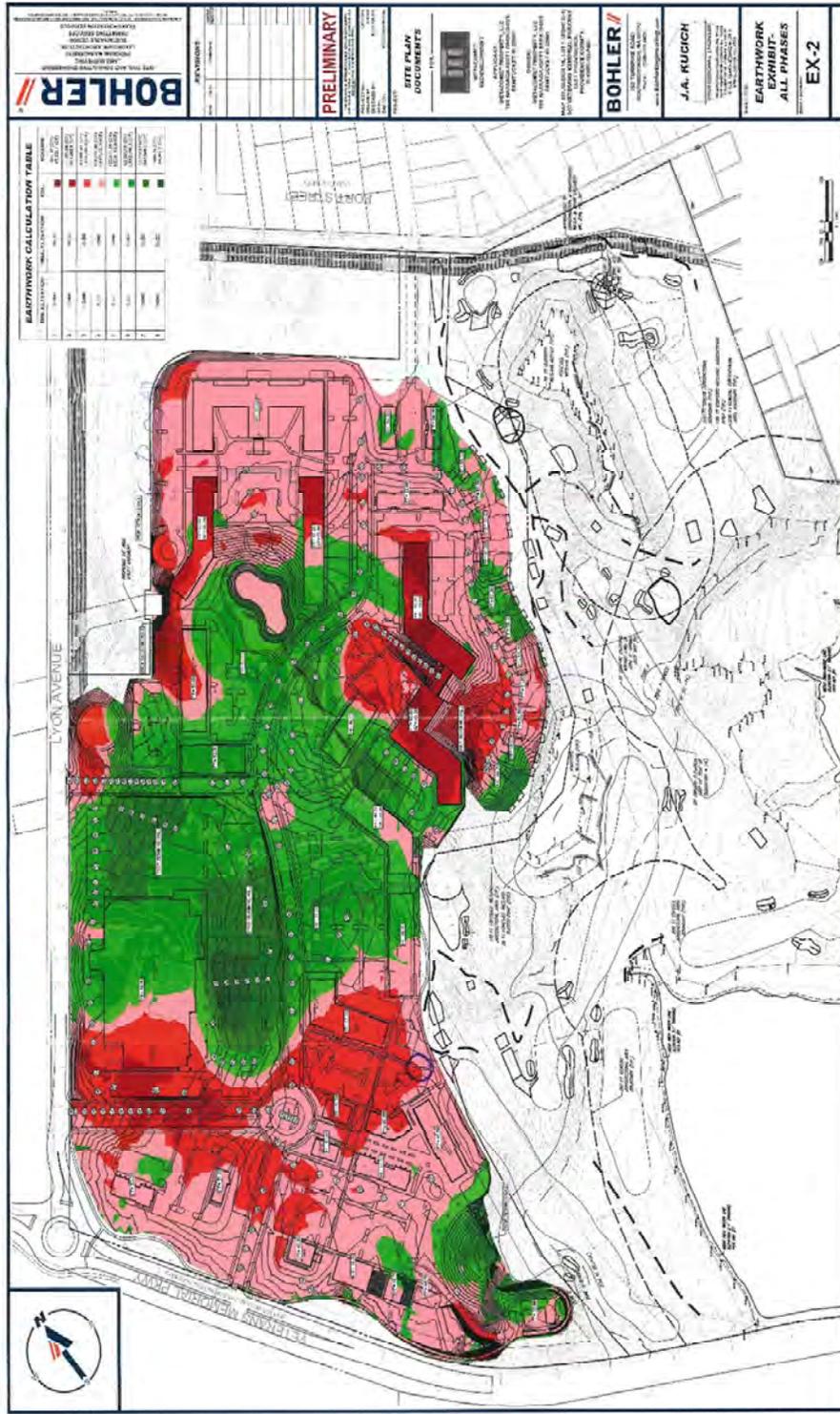


Figure 2. Proposed earthwork depicting location of cut and fill, Metacomet Country Club.



Figure 3. LiDAR image of the Metacomet Country Club.

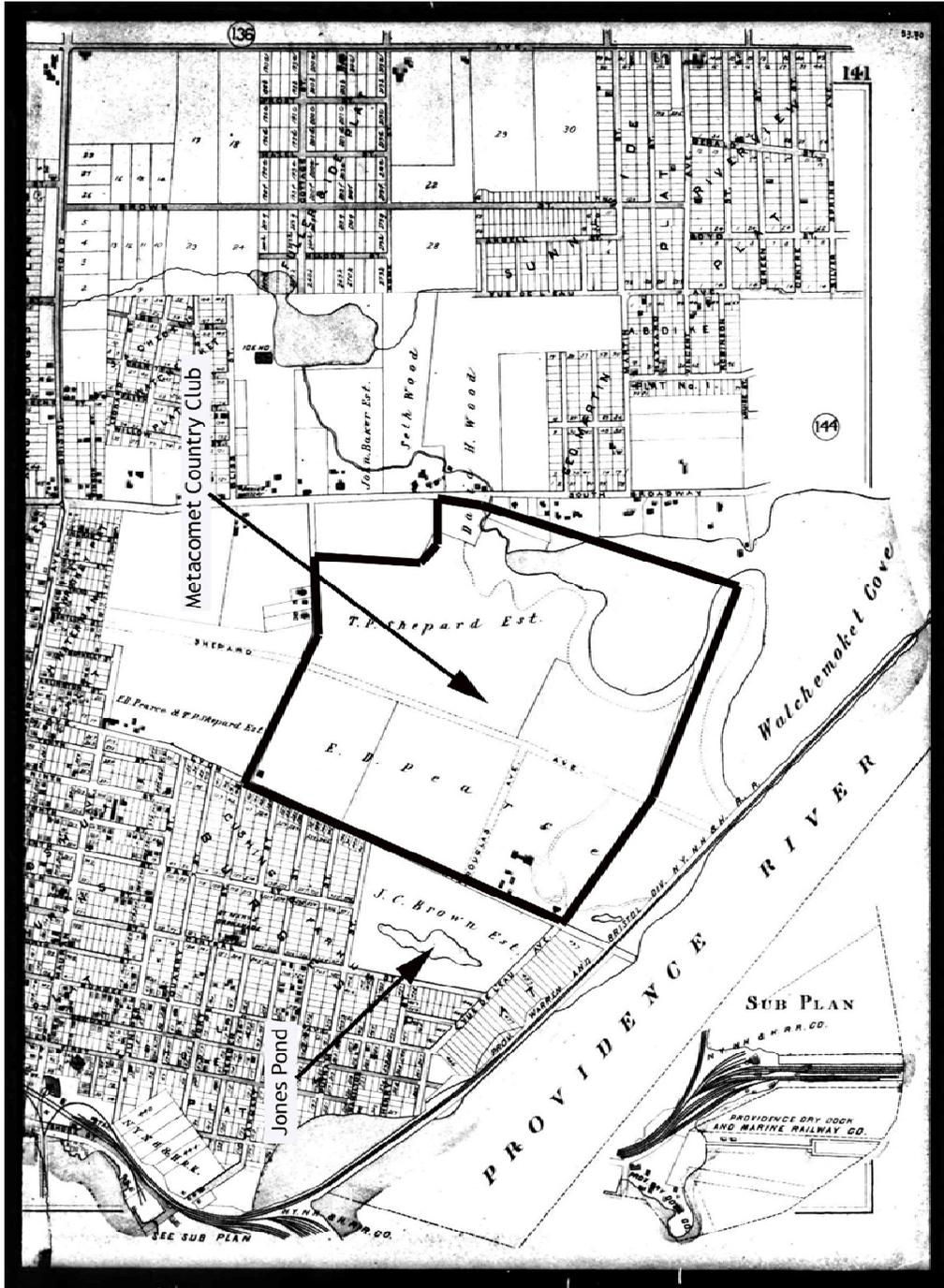


Figure 4. 1895 map of East Providence with the location of Jones Pond and the Metacomet Country Club.

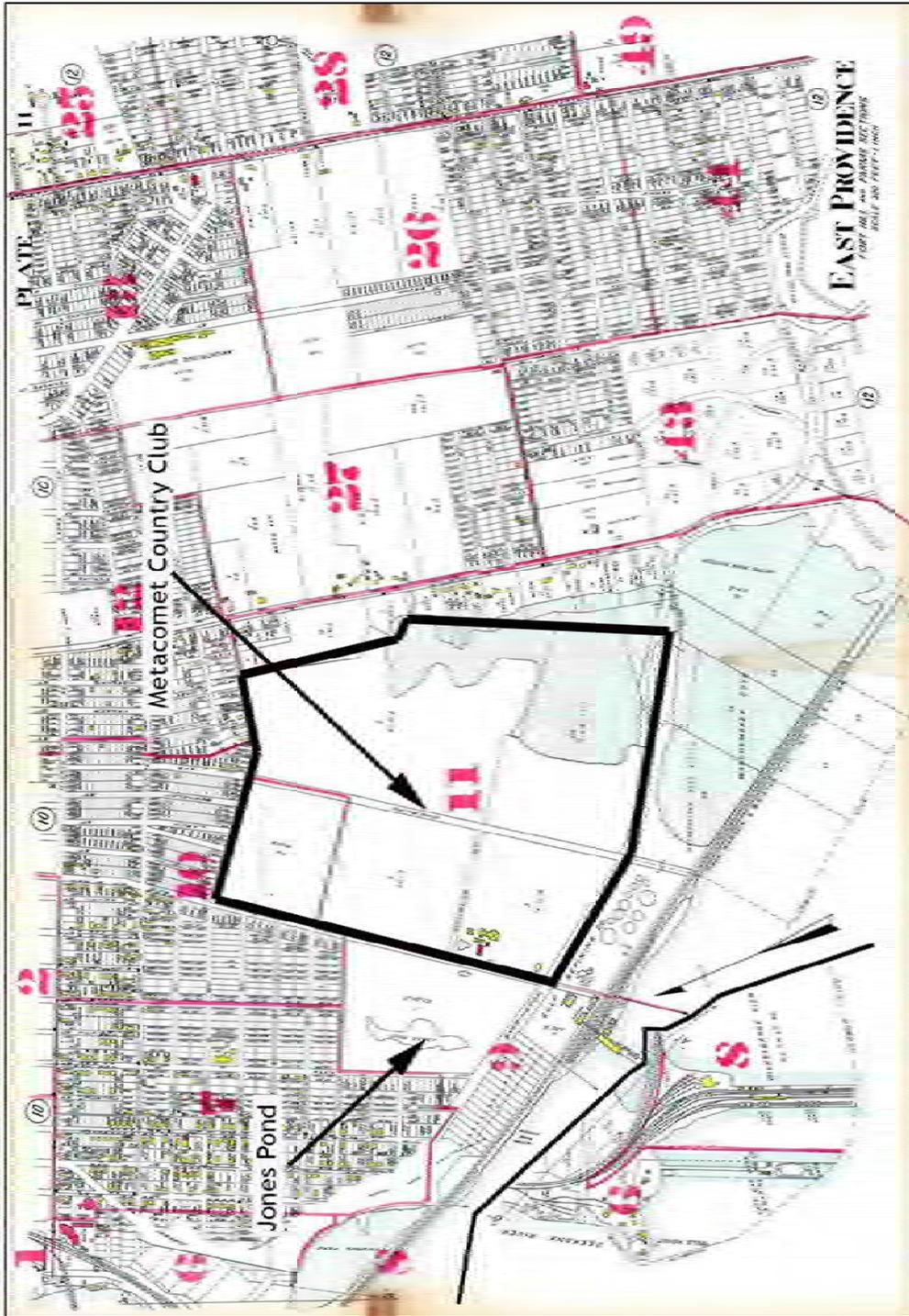


Figure 5. 1917 map of East Providence with the location of Jones Pond and the Metacomet Country Club.



Figure 6. 1935 Providence USGS topographic map.



Figure 7. Representative views of the 9-hole course, Metacomet County Club.



View of 11th hole
from the tee box.

View of
depression/waste
area, 12th hole.



View of 17th hole
from the tee box.

Figure 8. Representative views of area of proposed development, Metacomet Country Club.



Figure 9. Approach to the 15th green, Metacomet Country Club.



Figure 10. Exposed surface, former 13th green, Metacomet Country Club.