

Archaeological Monitoring of Utilities Upgrades at Forest Park Springfield, Massachusetts

Archaeological and Historical Services, Inc. (AHS) was contracted by the City of Springfield's Department of Capital Asset Construction to conduct archaeological monitoring of utility trench excavations at Forest Park in Springfield, Massachusetts. Forest Park was established in 1884 when philanthropists donated land to the City for the establishment of a park. Four years later additional land was donated, bringing the park to its current size of 735 acres. The park was designed by the renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead and contains a zoo, ice-skating rink, an arena, baseball fields, and various other attractions. The Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) and the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) determined that Forest Park is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Because the project required a permit from FEMA, federal law (Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act) required the project to take into account its effects on historic resources. Archaeological monitoring of the utility project was conducted because the park is an archaeologically sensitive area.

The project involved the installation of electrical, sewer, gas, and water lines in separate trenches. The purpose of the monitoring was to identify buried cultural resources such as pre-colonial and/or historic-period artifact concentrations, structural remains, or subsurface features that might be revealed during the construction-related excavations. The monitoring required the



Archaeological monitoring of utility trenches

on-site presence of an archaeologist to direct the progress of a backhoe as it penetrated the ground and removes soil layers. The trench excavations resulted in the identification of three historic-period features: a brick-lined rainwater collection tank and two small wooden boardwalk features interpreted as informally constructed old walkways to facilitate travel in wet areas. The project area had been heavily disturbed primarily due to past road construction and maintenance, thus no significant archaeological artifact concentrations, structural remains, or subsurface features were found. No additional archaeological investigations were recommended.