

# MOUNT HOPE CEMETERY

## CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT

### TREE INVENTORY & MANAGEMENT PLAN



## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION, SCOPE OF WORK & METHODOLOGY

### A. INTRODUCTION TO THE LANDSCAPE OF MOUNT HOPE CEMETERY

Mount Hope Cemetery was established in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when perceptions, use, and character of burial grounds shifted dramatically from small church-side burial yards to expansive, scenic cemeteries. This shift in character, known as the rural cemetery movement, resulted in the emergence of several Victorian-style cemeteries in the United States and abroad. As existing cemeteries became overcrowded and concern arose regarding potential disease and contamination from burial grounds located within dense urban cores, the City of Rochester sought open land away from the city to establish a cemetery that embodied the character and feel of the emerging rural cemetery type.

Approximately 1½ miles south of the center of Rochester along the east bank of the Genesee River, an undeveloped tract of land was selected for the site of the new city cemetery. Although a number of farms and modest houses were located in the surrounding area, the new cemetery ground had not been developed because of its rugged landscape, characterized by dramatic peaks and valleys covered with dense woodlands.<sup>1</sup> As the cemetery landscape was improved, the undulating topography and much of the woodland canopy were retained, emphasizing the picturesque quality of the cemetery grounds. Curvilinear carriage drives were laid out to wind through the landscape, creating a pleasant public ground that was perceived not only as a cemetery, but as valuable parkland. (See Figures I.1 and I.2.) When complete, Mount Hope Cemetery became the first municipally-owned Victorian-style cemetery in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Shortly after Mount Hope Cemetery was established, the burgeoning city of Rochester enveloped the surrounding land. Public parklands and a residential community influenced by the nationally prominent Mount Hope Nurseries, owned by George Ellwanger and Patrick Barry, continue to surround much of the cemetery today. The University of Rochester River Campus neighbors the cemetery, separating Mount Hope from the Genesee River to the west. (See Figure I.3.)

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The City of Rochester has a rich, intriguing history. Mount Hope Cemetery is a valuable part of the public historic landscape of Rochester. Today, the cemetery accommodates active burials while it also serves as a type of public park, offering numerous natural resources and recreational opportunities. The striking character and history of the Mount Hope Cemetery landscape also has strong interpretive opportunities, providing a unique glimpse into the rural cemetery movement and the history of Rochester and its many notable residents.

## B. CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

The Scope of Work for the Mount Hope Cemetery Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) identifies the intent of this project to document the cultural value and outline a preservation treatment and management strategy for this historic cemetery landscape. As federally defined, a CLR is a broad planning document that serves as a framework and starting point for future projects and work to be performed in the cultural landscape. The planning effort undertaken for this landscape seeks an appropriate balance of historic integrity, public and visitor uses, functionality, and maintainability to frame a vision for the future of the landscape that is harmonious with its past. It should be noted that while the focus of the project is the 86 acres located north of Grove Avenue, the character and evolution of the entire cemetery landscape will be discussed, giving context to the site as an element within a broader, designed landscape. (See Figure I.4.)

The scope further specifies that the report process includes historical documentation research, field documentation, existing conditions mapping, and analyzing continuity, change, and historic integrity of the landscape. The discussion of landscape integrity helps to develop an understanding of the similarities and differences between the historic and existing character of the Mount Hope Cemetery cultural landscape. From this multi-level foundation, strategies for landscape preservation treatment and management are presented that respect the historic character and unique identity, address current issues and needs, and envision a dynamic future for the landscape.

A variety of relevant materials including newspaper articles, published and unpublished documents, photographs, aerial photographs, plans, and maps provided evidence of physical conditions, property character, and land uses over time. Study of these materials revealed the early character and continued evolution of Mount Hope Cemetery, constituting the basis for the landscape history. Historic plans and images reveal details of the evolving landscape character, serving as references for the landscape history.

Heritage Landscapes performed reconnaissance of the existing physical conditions at Mount Hope Cemetery noting remnant historic features, dominant woodland vegetation species, and existing landscape elements. The project has been undertaken in conjunction with a tree



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inventory performed by Wendel Duchscherer. From the fieldwork, tree inventory mapping, and recent aerial photographs, an existing conditions plan graphically presents the character of the cemetery landscape.

Based on review of chronological mapping, aerial photographs and site investigation of Mount Hope Cemetery, Heritage Landscapes identified six distinct landscape areas or zones within the Mount Hope Cemetery landscape to communicate the character of the property through time. Boundaries of landscape areas may be loosely delineated by vegetation or slopes, or clearly defined by physical features such as a wall, path, or road. Some of these features remain constant while others change over time. The boundaries of the landscape areas were defined during the period of time when Mount Hope was in its as-built condition in circa 1930. The six landscape areas for Mount Hope Cemetery are:

- *Landscape Area 1: Cemetery Entrance* – The Cemetery Entrance area is located near the northeastern cemetery edge and fronts on Mount Hope Avenue. The North Cemetery Edge & Maintenance Yard area borders it to the north; the Cemetery Core area extends to the north, west and south. This area includes the original cemetery entry drive. The historic gatehouse, gazebo, fountain, and chapel set at the edges of the area with lawn, curving drives, and vegetation organize and visually define the space. Area 1 is defined by Mount Hope Avenue to the east, the toe of the adjacent slopes to the north and south, and top of the adjacent slope to the west.
- *Landscape Area 2: Cemetery Core* – The Cemetery Core area encompasses the largest portion of Mount Hope Cemetery north of Grove Avenue, extending from the Cemetery Entrance area and Mount Hope Avenue to the west cemetery edge. Winding drives, dense woodland canopy, steeply sloping ground plane, and open turf interspersed with plantings characterize the area. The boundaries of the area are defined by Mount Hope Avenue and Fifth Avenue to the east, Cedar Avenue to the south, and Glen Avenue, Buell Avenue, and sloping topography to the west.
- *Landscape Area 3: North Cemetery Edge & Maintenance Yard* – The North Cemetery Edge & Maintenance Yard area is located north of the Cemetery Entrance area and extends to the northwest property edge. This area is more level than much of the cemetery grounds and is relatively open. A historic brick barn is located at the central north edge and is used today for cemetery maintenance. A chain-link fence separates the maintenance barn and yard from the cemetery. The area is defined by Mount Hope Avenue to the east, the cemetery property boundary to the north and west, and sloping topography and vegetation to the south.
- *Landscape Area 4: West Cemetery Edge & River Frontage* – The West Cemetery Edge & River Frontage area is located west of the Cemetery Core area and north of the Cemetery Public Grounds & Street Frontage area. Sited at the west edge of the cemetery,

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historically the ground between the cemetery and Genesee River remained open with minimal improvements. Today the University of Rochester River Campus acts as a barrier between the cemetery and the winding river bank. This area slopes toward the west with partial views of the surrounding landscape. Glen Avenue forms the east edge of the area, Cedar Avenue forms part of the southern edge and an unnamed gravel road forms part of the northern edge. The west edge is formed by the cemetery property boundary.

- *Landscape Area 5: Cemetery Public Grounds & Street Frontage* – The Cemetery Public Grounds & Street Frontage area extends from the west cemetery edge, along Grove Avenue and north along Mount Hope Avenue. This area also fronts on the southern half of the cemetery, acting as a transition between the dramatic, picturesque landscape to the north and the open, lawn-type cemetery to the south. Historically, much of the southern edge of this area was designated public grounds, where those too poor to purchase family plots were buried. A number of group burial plots are also located here, including the University of Rochester plot and the Rochester Orphan Asylum plot. The boundaries of Area 5 are formed by Mount Hope Avenue to the east, Grove Avenue to the south, topography and the cemetery property line to the west, and Cedar Avenue and Fifth Avenue to the north.
- *Landscape Area 6: Western Slopes & Fields* – The Western Slopes & Fields area defines much of the western cemetery edge, extending north of Areas 4 and 5 to the north cemetery boundary. This area also fronts on the scenic Genesee River. This area was purchased by the City of Rochester in 1865 for inclusion in the cemetery grounds. However, the sloping, riverfront area was not developed as part of the cemetery. Today, it no longer remains part of the Mount Hope Cemetery landscape. Instead, it is owned by the University of Rochester and includes student housing, a large parking lot, and tennis courts.

In addition to landscape areas, cultural landscapes can be subdivided into character-defining features. Federal guidance including the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* and *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques* refer to and define the character-defining features of a landscape.<sup>3</sup> Character-defining features are identified and enumerated in the CLR as a series of interrelated, specific aspects of the cultural landscape. They include:

- *Spatial Organization, Land Patterns, Land Use & Visual Relationships* – These features address the three-dimensional organization and patterns of spaces in the landscape, land uses, and visual relationships, as shaped by both cultural and natural features; the uses of the land and the views and visual relationships that organize the landscape as defined by topography, vegetation, circulation, built elements; and often a combination of these character-defining features to create the overall patterns of the landscape. At Mount

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Hope Cemetery, the organization of the glacial landform, winding drives, and patterns of grave markers are dominant features that define spatial and visual relationships.

- *Topography & Natural Systems* – Topography is the shape of the ground plane and its height or depth. Topography occurs in relation to natural systems and as a result of human manipulation. Natural systems include landforms, watershed systems, climate, surface and underground flows, and their effects. The topography of the Mount Hope Cemetery landscape is a dramatic feature that greatly contributes to the overall character. Steep slopes and glacial eskers and kettles define the northern 96 acres of the cemetery.
- *Vegetation* – Vegetation can include groups of plants, individual plants, agricultural fields, planting beds, formal or informal tree groves, woodland, meadow, or turf. Vegetation at Mount Hope Cemetery is dominated by the deciduous and evergreen trees that define a relatively dense canopy. Many of the trees predate the late nineteenth century landscape and several trees were donated in 1847 by the Ellwanger & Barry nursery. More recently, plantings beds have also been laid out throughout the cemetery landscape by cemetery volunteers and the Friends of Mount Hope.
- *Circulation* – Circulation features may include roads, drives, trails, paths, and parking areas individually sited or linked to form a network or system. Alignment, width, surface and edge treatment, and materials contribute to the character of circulation features. Both vehicular and pedestrian circulation is accommodated at Mount Hope Cemetery along curving paths. Many of the drives have been paved with asphalt although a few remain gravel or cobble stone.
- *Water Features* – Features of water systems may be aesthetic as well as functional components of the landscape. Water features may include fountains, pools, cascades, irrigation systems, streams, ponds, lakes, and aqueducts. Three prominent water features are present in the Mount Hope Cemetery landscape and include the circa 1875 Florentine fountain, a large kettle known as Sylvan Waters, and the Genesee River.
- *Structures* – Landscape structures are non-habitable constructed elements such as pavilions or features such as walls, bridges, arbors, terraces, steps, and fences. Numerous structures are placed throughout Mount Hope Cemetery, including mausoleums, retaining walls, iron and chain-link fences, gates, and steps.
- *Site Furnishings & Objects* – Site furnishings such as signage and light fixtures are generally considered small-scale elements in the landscape while items such as garbage cans and benches are considered landscape objects. The Mount Hope Cemetery landscape incorporates numerous site furnishings and objects, including signs, lights,



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railings, and benches. Grave stones and monuments are also included and contribute to the overall landscape character.

These landscape character-defining features are used in the report to focus on the definition and details of the Mount Hope Cemetery cultural landscape as it evolved through time to the present. The same vocabulary is used throughout the landscape analysis and preservation treatment approach.

Heritage Landscapes approached the Mount Hope Cemetery CLR in accordance with federal guidance for cultural landscape preservation. Relevant professional guidance includes the following: *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, *National Park Service Cultural Resource Management Guideline 28*, *National Register Bulletin 18: How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes*, *National Register Bulletin 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes*, *NPS Preservation Brief 36 Protecting Cultural Landscapes*, *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques*, and *National Park Service Director's Order #28: Cultural Resource Management*.

The Mount Hope Cemetery CLR is organized into six chapters. Chapter I: Introduction, Scope of Work & Methodology offers an introduction to the project scope and implemented methodology. Chapter II: Mount Hope Cemetery Landscape History details the history and evolution of the landscape from its origins in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century through recent times. The existing conditions are presented in Chapter III: Mount Hope Cemetery Landscape Existing Conditions. The findings of the tree inventory are presented in Chapter IV: Mount Hope Cemetery Tree Inventory. Chapter V: Mount Hope Cemetery Landscape Context & Analysis compares findings from the site history and existing conditions to analyze continuity and change through time. Chapter V also includes a discussion of the landscape integrity of Mount Hope Cemetery following National Register of Historic Places guidance. Recommendations and strategies to guide the future of the Mount Hope Cemetery are presented in Chapter VI: Mount Hope Cemetery Landscape Preservation Treatment & Management. The Appendices provide reference materials for the CLR.

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## CHAPTER I: ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Richard O. Reisem and Frank A. Gillespie, *Mount Hope: America's First Municipal Victorian Cemetery*, Rochester, New York: Landmark Society of Western New York, 1994: 7.

<sup>2</sup> Reisem and Gillespie, *Mount Hope: America's First Municipal Victorian Cemetery*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Robert R. Page, Cathy A. Gilbert, Susan A. Dolan, *A Guide to Cultural Landscape Reports: Contents, Process, and Techniques*, Washington DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, NPS, Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships, Park Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes Program, 1998.

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Figure I.1. A late 19<sup>th</sup> century colored engraving, this view provides a panorama from Mount Hope Cemetery looking toward Rochester. The cemetery ground was separated from the city core, providing a peaceful landscape. City residents could stroll along the curving drives and gain shifting views of the city and Genesee River. Courtesy Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County. (R-MTH-RPL-ViewofRochester-c1880.jpg)

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Figure I.2. The distinctive hill and valley topography and shade tree canopy over burial plots is seen in this circa 1839 etching of the Mount Hope Cemetery landscape. At this early date a wooden post and rail fence separated the cemetery from surrounding properties. Courtesy Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County. (R-MTH-RPL-Entrance-1839.jpg)



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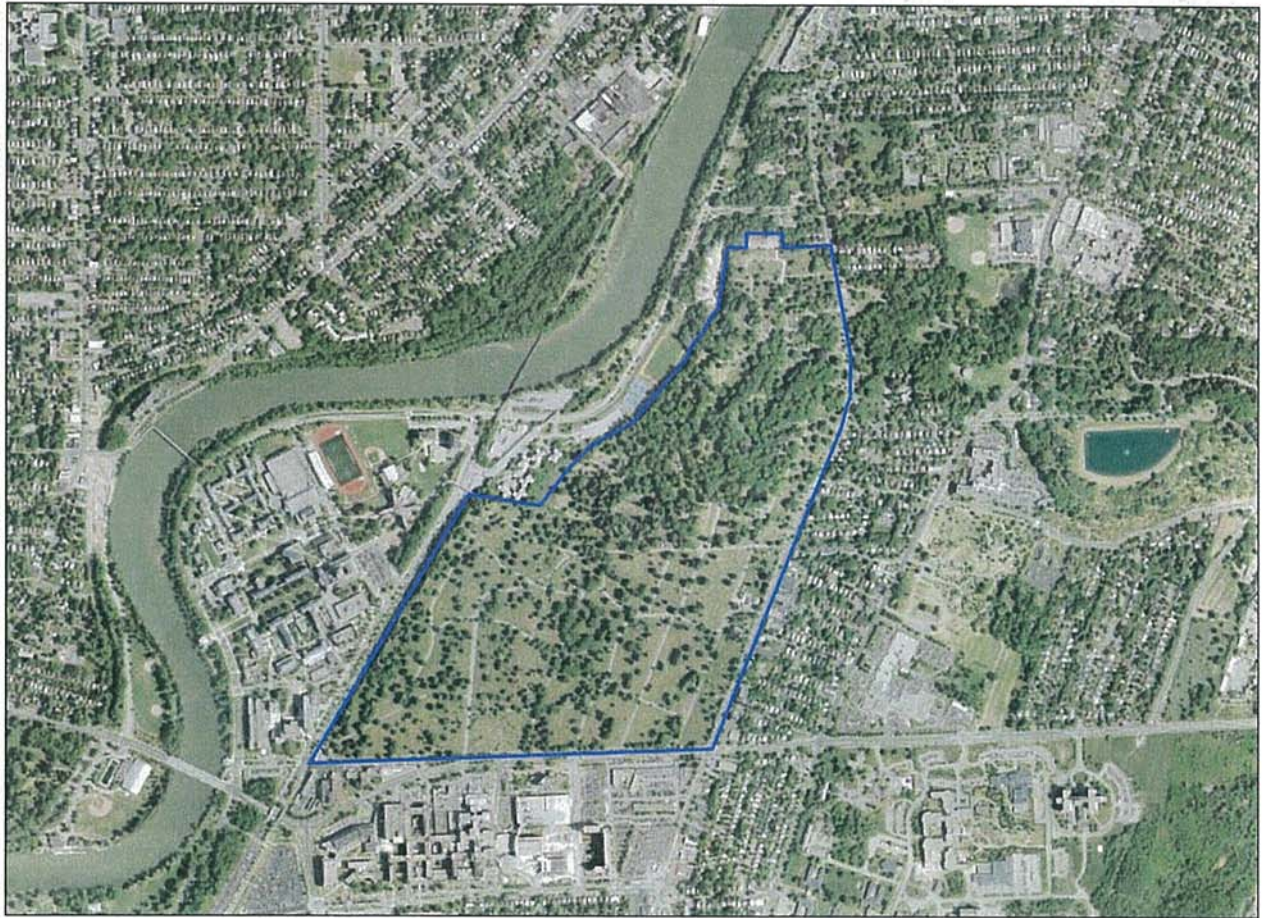


Figure I.3. Mount Hope Cemetery, outlined in blue, is shown in context with the surrounding neighborhood in this contemporary aerial. To the west are the University of Rochester River Campus and the Genesee River. To the east are residential areas and Highland Park identified by its reservoir. Commercial development and Strong Memorial Hospital are to the south. Courtesy Microsoft LiveMap, annotated by Heritage Landscapes. (R-MTH-HL-LiveMap-CurrentAerial-Context.jpg)



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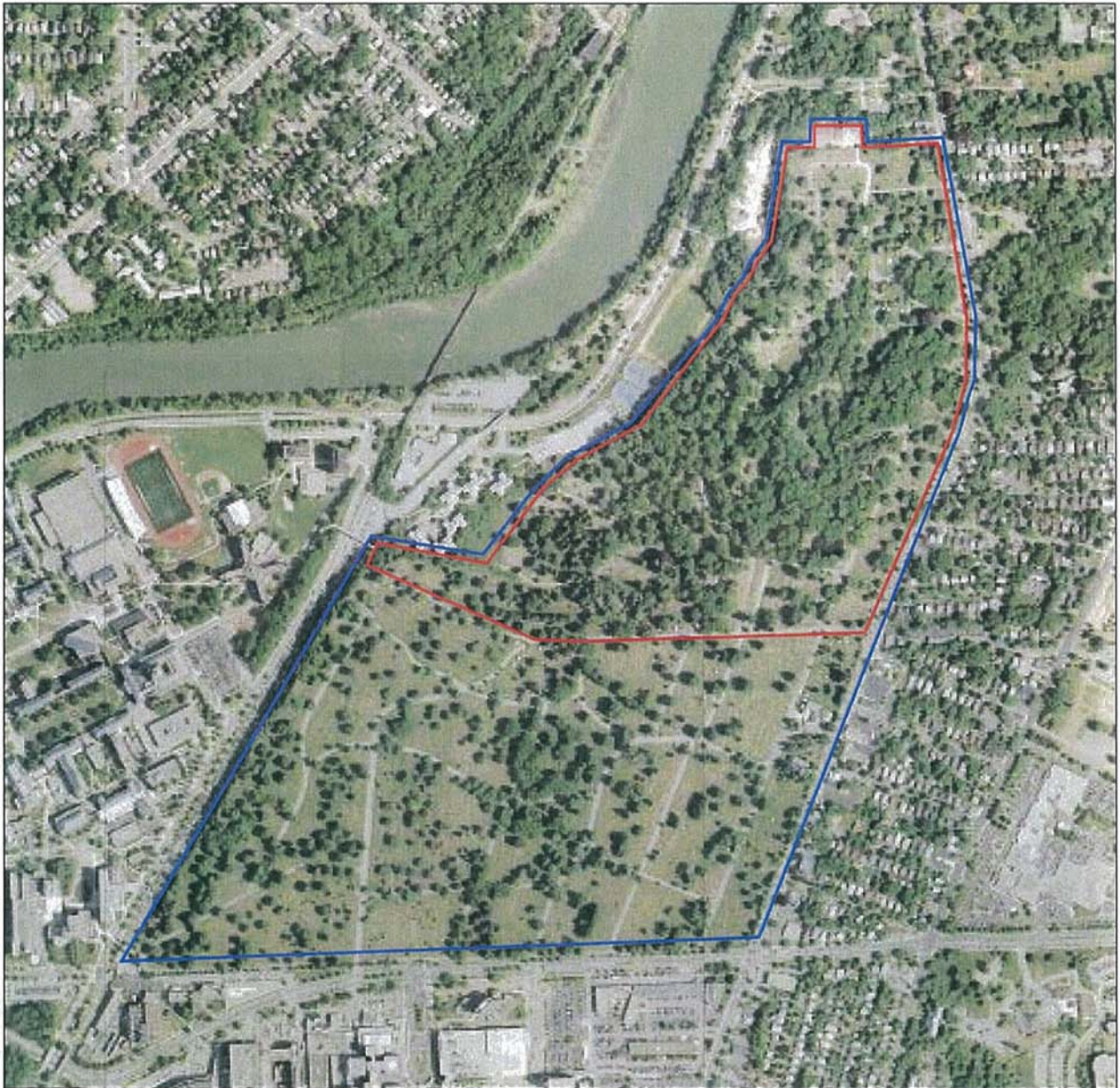


Figure I.4. Mount Hope Cemetery encompasses 196 acres of land south of downtown Rochester, cemetery boundaries shown in blue. The first areas of the cemetery to be developed were located north of Grove Avenue in the zone outlined in red. The CLR focuses on these 96 northern acres, outlined above in red. The distinct difference in tree canopy cover is evident in this aerial. The southern part of this landscape is distinctive in the level topography, more open character, and fewer trees, which distinguish this area from the older, northern section. Courtesy Microsoft LiveMap, annotated by Heritage Landscapes. (R-MTH-HL-LiveMap-CurrentAerial-crop.jpg)