



# North Main Street Reconnaissance-level Survey

Phase 1

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9/22/22

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## **Introduction**

This is the first phase of a two-phase reconnaissance-level survey of North Main Street, Meridian Idaho. The objective of the survey is to identify eligible, or potentially eligible, properties for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). This survey is part of Meridian's continued historic preservation efforts as outlined in Goal 2 *Locate and identify historic and archeological resources significant to Meridian's past* as outlined in the City of Meridian Preservation Plan, 2014.

## **Survey Area and Setting**

The North Main Street Reconnaissance survey area in its entirety includes approximately 37 city blocks located south of Cherry Lane/Fairview, west of E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street Avenue, north of Broadway Avenue, and east of NW 1<sup>st</sup> Street.

The Phase 1 boundaries extend north to south from Carlton Avenue to Broadway Avenue and east to west from E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to NW 1<sup>st</sup> Street. The area along Broadway Avenue is changing as new construction is filling in the area once filled with railroad sidings.

## **Methodology**

TAG conducted limited research including a review of Idaho Historic Sites Inventory (IHSI) forms, online newspapers, and previous surveys. The Ada County Assessor's Office was accessed to obtain parcel numbers and construction dates. TAG requested a Record Search from the SHPO office to identify previously recorded sites and surveys. The results of Record Search 22410, received on August 8, 2022, identified 119 previously recorded historic sites within or near the survey area.

Most of the previously recorded historic sites were documented by two surveys of downtown Meridian and surrounding streets. From July 1987 to May 1988 a reconnaissance-level survey of properties constructed before 1926 was undertaken by Lila Hill and a team of volunteers for the Meridian Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC). 1926 was selected because at that time the City of Meridian installed its first sewer system, providing a record of ownership through recorded assessments and sewer hookups. The MHPC project documented 151 structures with photographs, maps, and information recorded on a survey form. The sites were not evaluated for National Register of Historic Places eligibility, but the forms include dates of construction, historic names, and location information.

In 2005, architectural historian Emily Peeso completed the Meridian Reconnaissance Survey Phase 1 for the MHPC, documenting a few sites within the project area for the N. Main Street Survey.

Phase 1 of the current project was completed in a brief period of approximately one month, which was achieved by adopting the following methodology:

- Previously recorded properties determined ineligible in the 2005 survey were not re-recorded.
- Previously recorded sites which were not evaluated were re-recorded with a determination of eligibility.
- Properties 45 years or older were recorded as well as new construction which replaced previously recorded properties.

## Fieldwork

A Reconnaissance-level Survey (RLS) is designed as a “first look” at a broad group of historic resources and records basic information that is collected from the exterior of a building only, such as an address, height, siding, and building materials, architectural style, and potential eligibility for listing in the National Register either individually or as a contributing resource to a historic district.<sup>1</sup>

A contributing property to a historic district does not have to meet the threshold for individual significance, but it must contribute to the district’s area of significance. Properties contributing to a district’s significance for architecture must retain a higher degree of architectural integrity than in a district significant for association with an important individual or with historical events or patterns of history.

Fieldwork took place from August 15 -August 30, 2022. The reconnaissance-level survey included digital photography and an exterior visual inspection of the sites. Properties were evaluated consistent with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office Idaho Historic Sites Inventory Requirements and Standards for Documentation. Photography meets the requirements of the NRHP and SHPO with at least two images of each property when possible. Buildings were recorded from the public right-of-way.

The reconnaissance-level survey included limited property research in the sources identified above. Field analysis led to the identification of potentially eligible and ineligible resources by *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*.

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<sup>1</sup> A historic district is a section of a city that contains older buildings that together form a historically or architecturally significant area.

Listing in the NRHP requires a property to meet criteria of historic significance and retain historic integrity. Those conditions are met by the following:

### Historic Significance

To be listed in the NRHP, individual properties and historic districts must demonstrate significance in at least one of the following criteria:

- A Association with events, activities, or broad patterns of history.
- B Association with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Embody distinctive characteristics of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values; or represent a significant or distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- D Have yielded or be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

### Historic Integrity

The NRHP defines seven physical aspects of historic integrity, which is defined as “the authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s historic period.”<sup>2</sup> The seven aspects of integrity are:

Location  
Design  
Setting  
Materials

Workmanship  
Feeling  
Association

### **Historic Context**

*Some of the following information is excerpted from the Meridian Reconnaissance Survey, 1987-1988, and the City of Meridian Historic Preservation Plan, 2014.*

Located in the high desert of southwest Idaho, Meridian is situated on a broad, flat plain in the north-central part of the Boise Valley. The Rocky Mountain foothills rise to the northeast and the Owyhee Mountains are to the southwest. To the north of the city, the Boise River a tributary of the Snake River flows through the valley.

Euroamerican settlers displaced Native Americans in southwestern Idaho beginning in the 1860s, spurred by mining. The discovery of gold in 1862 in the Boise Basin, northeast of the Boise Valley, brought an influx of prospective miners. Farming settlements quickly appeared on

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<sup>2</sup> National Park Service, National Register Bulletin: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1977)

the river bottoms where abundant water was easily accessible from the Boise River. Farmers grew vegetables, grains, and fruits to supply to the miners. Initially, settlers who farmed land adjacent to the river simply dug ditches from the river or stream to lead water onto their lands. As additional farms were established, ditches were enlarged to accommodate them. When the land closest to the river was taken up, settlers began to move to the bench land above the river bed. Community efforts, private enterprise, and federal involvement resulted in the construction of larger ditches and canals, which opened up the bench lands to agricultural development.<sup>3</sup>

Meridian's history, like the history of many southwestern Idaho towns, is linked directly to irrigation and the development of productive farmland from arid lands. The first settlement in the area was at Five Mile Creek, the closest source of water, but settlers were soon also located along Ten Mile Creek. By 1895, there were enough people in the area to support a school. The Idaho Central Railway constructed a line from Nampa to Boise in 1887. The following year, the U.S. Postal Service established a mail drop on the railroad at a point midway between Nampa and Boise. The drop was named "Hunter," after John Hunter, who was superintendent of the Idaho Central Railroad. A trading center began to develop at the mail drop. In August of 1893, C.G. Zenger filed a plat for a new town, to be named "Meridian," after its location on the Boise Meridian. The name of the post office was changed to Meridian in April 1894.<sup>4</sup>

As the community grew, so did efforts to bring water to the farms. The Settlers Ditch Company was established on October 30, 1884. The original locators of the canal and water rights were Christian R. Purdum, Adolphus Purdum, and William H. Smith. They made their filing on October 17, 1884, claiming water to irrigate land west of Boise City. It was not until 1886 that the ditch began to take shape. Initially, the ditch was constructed by the farmers settling in the western part of Ada County. Unfortunately, the settlers were unable to complete the work themselves. In 1885, they signed a contract with Alexander McGee and James Stewart, organizers of the Phyllis Canal Company for the construction of the ditch. McGee and Stewart failed to complete the work and the farmers took the ditch back. They were able to persuade a few local businessmen to purchase stock in the canal company. In 1887, John Lemp took over the direction of the Settlers Ditch, which then became known as the Lemp Canal.<sup>5</sup>

Under Lemp's ownership, the main gate was completed in 1891 and a system of laterals was constructed to furnish water to the farmers. By 1896, so many settlers had taken up land under the Lemp Canal that even when running to its full capacity, it was no longer able to meet the water demand. In 1901, Lemp sold the project to the newly organized Settlers Canal Company

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<sup>3</sup> The Arrowrock Group, Inc, *Patterns of the Past* 4-6. Ada County Historic Preservation Council. Boise, Idaho.

<sup>4</sup> City of Meridian Preservation Plan. TAG Historical Research & Consulting, 2014 p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Belinda Davis. *A Study of Irrigation and the Development of Ada County*. 1990.

Ltd. which continued its operation and changed the name of the main canal back to Settlers Canal.

The Nampa Meridian Irrigation District (NMID) was formed in 1904 following the passage of a law in 1899 by the Idaho Legislature providing for the organization of irrigation districts to manage water delivery systems. Under the law, each district was given the authority to construct, purchase or otherwise obtain the necessary water rights, irrigation works, canals, and ditches including those built or in the process of construction by private owners, and to provide landowners with sufficient water for irrigation. NMID is the source of most of the irrigation in the immediate area. The original townsite of Meridian is served by the Hunter lateral which extends from the Ridenbaugh Canal northwest through Meridian Cemetery and continues to the north where it meets the Settlers Canal. As more sophisticated irrigation systems were developed, settlers from Missouri, Iowa, and other midwestern farm states flocked to the open land around Meridian where they established new farms.<sup>6</sup>

Meridian was incorporated as a village in 1903 with a population of approximately 200. The village was served by a variety of businesses, with as many as two or three competing drug stores, general stores, hotels, lumber yards, saloons and telephone companies. Villagers had their choice of churches and fraternal organizations. Professional services were provided by one attorney, two physicians, and a realtor.<sup>7</sup>

As the population of southwestern states grew in the early 20th century, so did the demand for dairy products. The increased demand came at the same time as the introduction of concrete silos and other technological advances, which in turn brought more farmers turned to dairy production. Meridian's location near both the Oregon Short Line and the interurban electric railways (connecting communities from Boise to Caldwell) was a great benefit to the dairy industry. Farmers used both the railroad and the interurban lines to ship their milk to creameries and cheese factories.

Meridian was the site of a creamery as early as 1897 when the Meridian Creamery was incorporated, and a cheese factory was established in 1913, part of an agricultural boom that continued into the years of World War I. When the war ended, prices fell dramatically for grain, cattle, and sheep, but farmers persevered. Meridian historian Lila Hill notes that the Ada

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<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Stevens. Water in the Valley: A History of the Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District. 17-18

<sup>7</sup> Lila Hill. Meridian Reconnaissance Survey, 1988-1989. n.p.

County Dairymen's Association creamery was the center of the area's economy from 1929-1970. Buildings-related to the ACDA creamery formed the core of downtown Meridian.

According to Lila Hill, many of the homes built before 1926 were built as rentals for the workers in the fruit and dairy industries in Meridian when those industries were booming. Many of the early structures, some of which are still extant, were one-story square buildings with a pyramidal roof and central chimney.

World War II brought another boom to Meridian. Some returning veterans used the loan programs of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944 (popularly known as the GI Bill) to purchase existing farms where they raised cattle feed for their dairy herds and sold milk. By the mid-1950s, in addition to being a thriving agricultural center, Meridian was also home to several industries: The ACDA creamery, two lumber processing plants – Brock Lumber and Meridian Molding--and the Storey Hatchery. Agricultural and industrial growth also led to a housing boom. Five new subdivisions were added to the city between 1948 and 1950.

During the early 21st century, Meridian's character changed from an agricultural community to a sophisticated urban center. It had grown from a rural center to a thriving commercial, social, and residential urban community.

## Findings

A complete list of the properties recorded for this project and maps showing the previously recorded properties and the newly recorded properties follow this section of the report.

Two earlier surveys encompassed some buildings in Phase 1, the 1987-1988 Meridian Historic Survey of Properties built before 1925 and a 2005 Reconnaissance-level survey of neighborhoods surrounding downtown. Several buildings documented in these earlier surveys have been demolished, including the Meridian Exchange Bank, 109 NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, designed by Tourtellotte and Hummel and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984 as Site #45 in Tourtellotte & Hummel Architecture in Idaho.

134 properties were surveyed for this survey during August. Of those fifty-three were previously surveyed. Five are potentially eligible for the NRHP. Ninety-five are not eligible due to age (less than 45 years old), renovations, and/or additions that impact the integrity of the site, rendering them ineligible to the NRHP. This preliminary survey identifies thirty-five buildings that contribute to potential historic districts. A concentration of commercial buildings on E. Idaho Avenue retain sufficient integrity to contribute to a historic business district. Residential houses on E. Carlton Avenue, E. State Avenue, East Idaho Avenue and NW 1<sup>st</sup> Street

retain sufficient integrity to contribute to a district of residential properties, including small dwellings from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. After Phase 2 is completed, boundaries for potential historic districts will be identified and described.

## LAND USE

The survey area is intersected by two north-south arterial roads, North Main Street and Meridian Road, and encompasses residential streets as well as commercial/professional office centers. Most of the properties recorded are classified as dwellings, with some representation of commercial, professional, educational, and religious properties.

## ARCHITECTURAL STYLES

Building styles include the Queen Anne style which was common in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Queen Anne houses have irregular floor plans, large porches, and elaborate decoration on exterior surfaces. Queen Anne styles can be large houses featuring an abundance of decoration but modest homes or cottages also feature elements of the style. Cottages, like



the one shown at left, located on East Pine Avenue, are often one or one-and-a-half stories in height with a hip and gable roof, sawn wood ornamentation, and front porches with turned or rounded wood porch supports.

The Craftsman/Bungalow style was popular from 1900 until the 1930s. Craftsman/Bungalow houses are characterized by their low-pitched gable roofs with wide roof overhang and exposed rafter tips, decorative knee braces, and full or partial width front porches.







Minimal Traditional and Ranch housing styles are also found in the survey area. The Minimal Traditional style house commonly built from 1935 until about 1950 were small one-story (usually) gable houses with few embellishments. Meant to be inexpensive to build and affordable, these homes are found in communities throughout the United States. The example at left is on N@ 1<sup>st</sup> Street.

The Ranch style, popular in the 1950s and 1960s, was another effort to develop an affordable home design. Characteristics of the ranch style include one-story, low-to-the-ground, low-pitched roof without dormers, a moderate-to-wide roof overhand; front entry usually located off-center under the main roof of the house; an attached garage; a large picture window.



The modest hipped roof cube with central chimney is a common house form found in the survey area. These boxy, one-story houses are recognized by their distinctive roof, which can either be a true, four-equal-sided pyramid shape, or a hip-roof with a short ridge at the peak. It was a popular type of small house for working-class families at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

## Recommendations

A reconnaissance-level survey planned for Phase 2 will complete the total project area identified earlier. The completion of Phase 2, combined with the results of Phase 1 will help determine the existence and location of any potential local historic district(s) as well as additional potentially individually eligible properties within the North Main survey area. Following the completion of Phase 2, we recommend that the MHPC consult with SHPO

regarding the selection of an individual property or historic district for possible nomination NRHP.

The rapid population growth of the late-20<sup>th</sup> and early-21<sup>st</sup> centuries has radically changed Meridian's landscape. These surveys will help future historic preservation efforts as well as provide vital documentation of the rapidly changing built environment in Meridian, the fastest growing community in Idaho,

## **Selected References**

Ada County Assessor's Office

Hill, Lila, and Earl Hill. Report 1989/7869, "Survey of pre-1926 Buildings in Meridian area. Prepared for the Meridian Historic Preservation Commission." Meridian Certified Local Government, 1988.

Longstreth, Richard. *The Buildings of Main Street*. The Preservation Press/National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington D.C., 1987.

McAlester, Virginia, and A. Lee McAlester. 2019. *A field guide to American houses: the definitive guide to identifying and understanding America's domestic architecture*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, New York, 2019.

Meridian Reconnaissance Survey. July 1987- May 15, 1988

*National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*

*National Register Bulletin 16 A: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*

Peeso, Emily. Report 2019/353 "Meridian Reconnaissance Survey Phase 1. Prepared for City of Meridian Historic Preservation Commission." City of Meridian Historic Preservation Commission, 2005.

TAG Historical Research & Consulting. *City of Meridian Historic Preservation Plan, 2014*. Meridian Historic Preservation Commission.

**Attachment A**

Inventory List

Eligible/Contributing Properties Phase 1

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Inventory List to be Added

## Attachment B

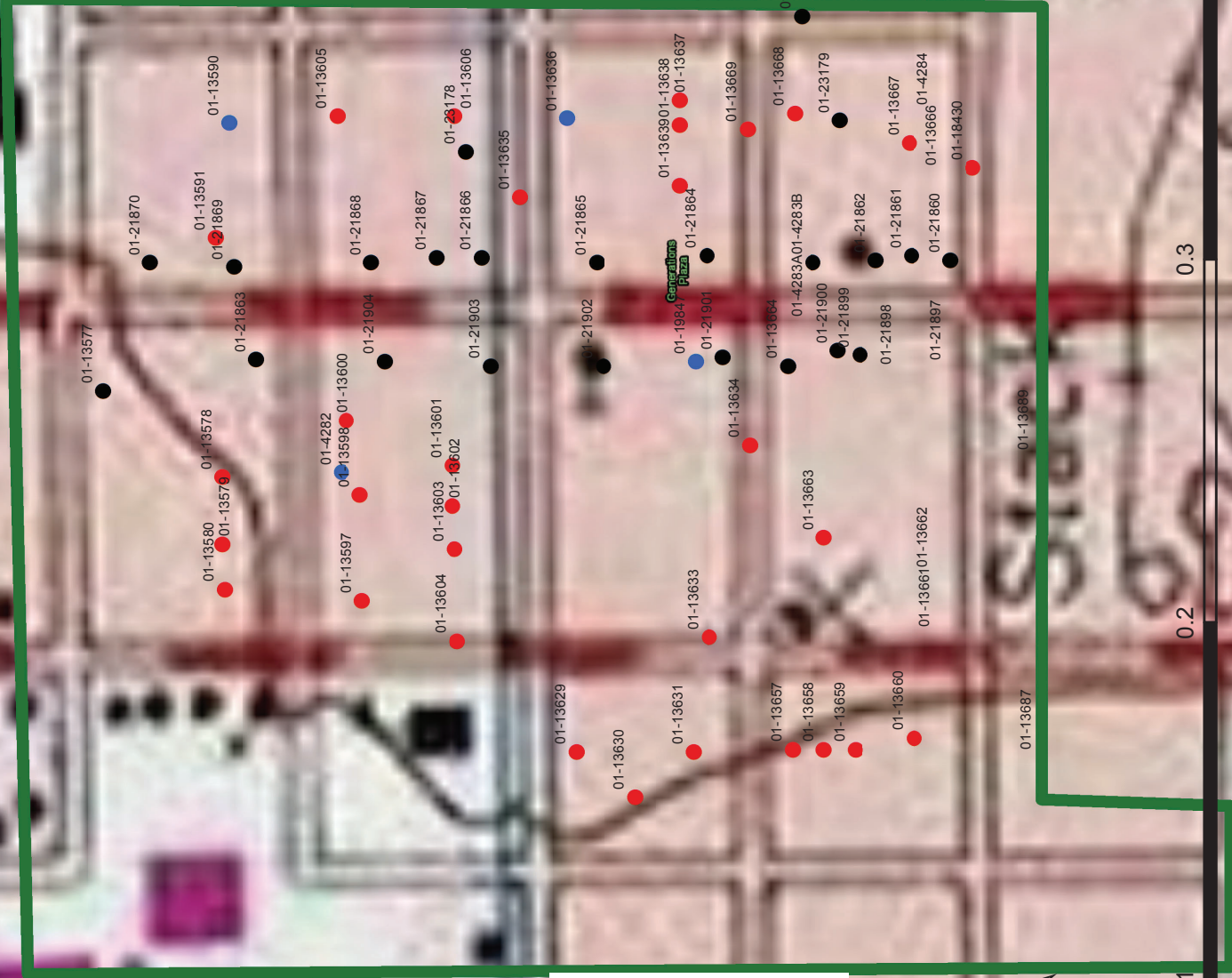
Map 1 Previously Recorded Properties

Map 1 Newly Recorded Properties

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# Map 1 - Previously Recorded Sites, Meridian, Idaho: Phase 1

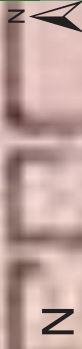
Meridian Elementary School



## Previously Recorded Sites

### Eligibility

- Unevaluated
- Ineligible
- National Register Listed
- Phase 1 Survey Area



0

0.05

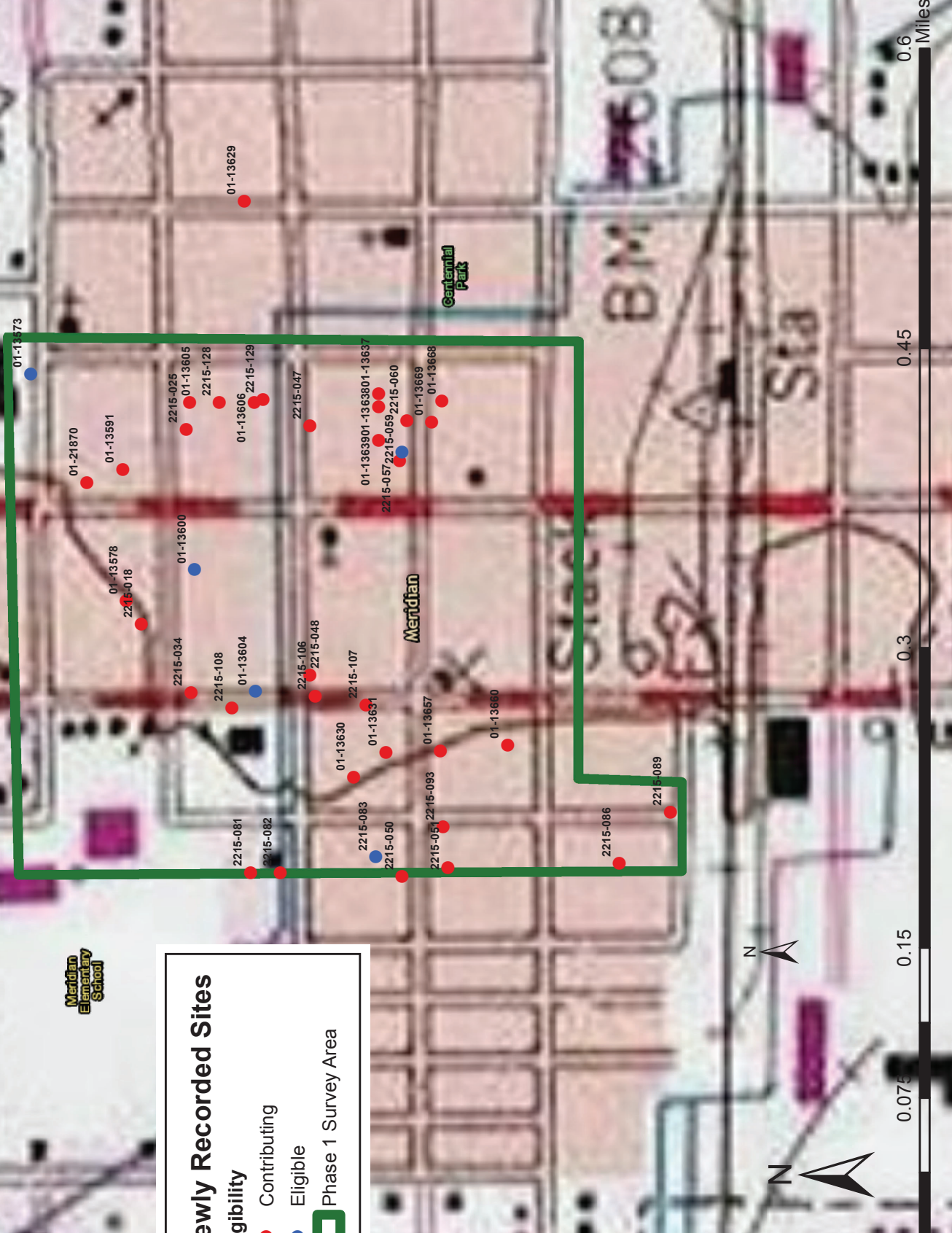
0.1

0.2

0.3

0.4 Miles

Map 2 Newly Recorded Sites



**Newly Recorded Sites**

**Eligibility**

- Contributing (Red dot)
- Eligible (Blue dot)
- Phase 1 Survey Area (Green outline)