

**Phase I Archaeological Survey of the  
Proposed Sparta Business Park  
Monroe County, Wisconsin**

**Prepared for:**

**City of Sparta  
Community Development  
201 W. Oak Street  
Sparta, WI 54656**

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**ABSTRACT**

In July of 2016, personnel from the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center (MVAC) conducted a Phase I archaeological survey of approximately 180 acres for the proposed Sparta Business Park in the City of Sparta, Monroe County, Wisconsin. The project area lies on the southern end of the city, south of IH 90 and east of STH 27 in Section 26 of T17N-R04W. Pedestrian survey was undertaken in the cultivated fields on the property, with walkover conducted over previously disturbed areas of an abandoned sand mine. Shovel testing was conducted throughout the fallow fields, around the farmstead, and wooded areas on the property. No cultural materials were recovered from the Sparta Business Park project area; therefore, no further investigations are recommended.

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## INTRODUCTION

In July of 2016, personnel from the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center (MVAC) conducted a Phase I archaeological survey of approximately 180 acres for the proposed Sparta Business Park project area. The project lies in Section 26 of T17N-R04W in the City of Sparta, Monroe County, Wisconsin (Figure 1). Shovel testing and pedestrian survey were conducted throughout the project area. Walkover was conducted over areas of previous disturbance within an abandoned sand mine in the project area. No cultural materials were recovered during the Phase I testing of the Business Park project area; therefore, no further investigations are recommended for the project.

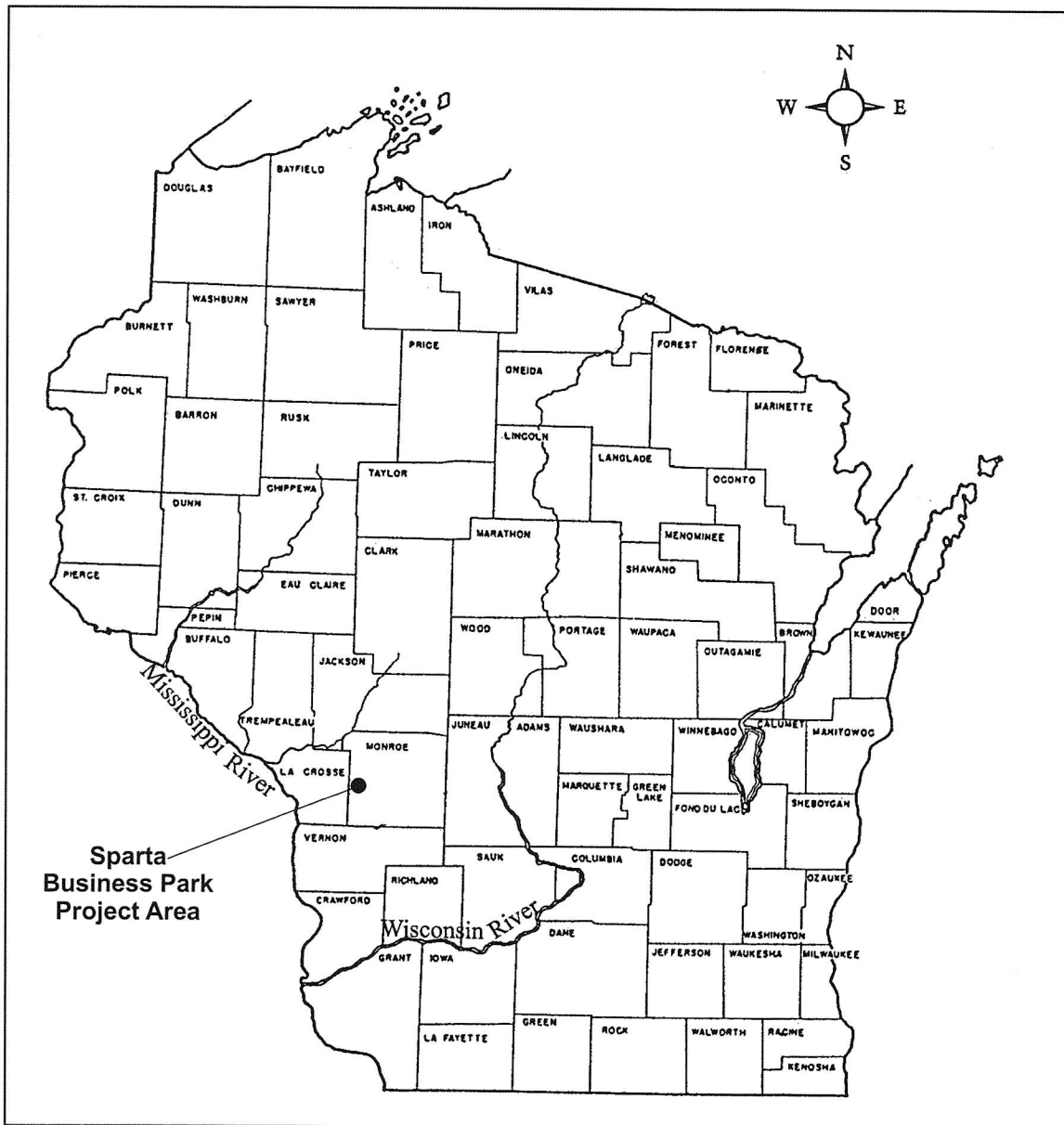


Figure 1. Project location within the State of Wisconsin.

## **GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING**

### **Project Area and Area of Potential Effect (APE)**

The proposed Sparta Business Park project area is located within the City of Sparta in Monroe County, Wisconsin. The project lies south of IH 90, east of STH 27, and west of Ideal Road. The project area lies in Section 26 of Township 17 North - Range 4 West. The project APE consists of approximately 180 acres of natural wood lots, cultivated fields, abandoned farmstead, and defunct sand mine.

### **General Geographical Location**

Monroe County, situated in western Wisconsin (Figure 1), lies within the "Driftless Area," which encompasses southwest Wisconsin, as well as southeast Minnesota, northeast Iowa and northwest Illinois. The Driftless Area is characterized by deeply dissected uplands with numerous river valleys. Most of the 15,000 square mile region remained uncovered by Pleistocene glaciers during the most recent glaciation of the Wisconsinan (75,000 - 12,500 years before present [B.P.], Paull & Paull 1977).

The project is located within Wisconsin's Western Upland geographic province, characterized by thoroughly dissected, moderately broad uplands with well-developed rivers (Martin 1965). It is an area of wide topographic contrast, with sandstone and limestone outcrops, cliffs, steep-sided valleys and caves. The project area lies within that portion of the Western Upland which has been dissected into a system of ridges and valleys, with practically no upland area remaining. The hilltops do not exceed 1100 to 1300 feet above sea level (Martin 1965).

### **Drainage**

The project location is in west-central Monroe County, at the southern end of the Sparta city limits. The Little La Crosse River lies 1.2 miles west of the project area, while an unnamed intermittent stream runs through the southeast corner of the project area.

The Little La Crosse joins the La Crosse River 3.5 miles west of the project area, northeast of the unincorporated Village of Rockland. The La Crosse River valley is rather wide in the headwater region north of Sparta, but once in the Sparta area it narrows to one to two miles wide (Martin 1965). The main channel of the La Crosse River travels west past Bangor and West Salem, and enters the Mississippi River at the City of La Crosse.

## Vegetation

Early vegetation near the project area prior to Euro-American development was mapped in 1852 as part of the Government Land Office surveys. Vegetation within the project area is recorded as oak savanna consisting of white, black and red oaks (Cottam and Loucks 1965). A 1939 air photo of the project area (Figure 2) shows over half of the project area was under cultivation, it appears less wooded, and the far western side appears to be covered in prairie grass or a grass cover crop such as alfalfa (WHAIFinder 2016). Note that this photo was taken prior to the construction of IH90.

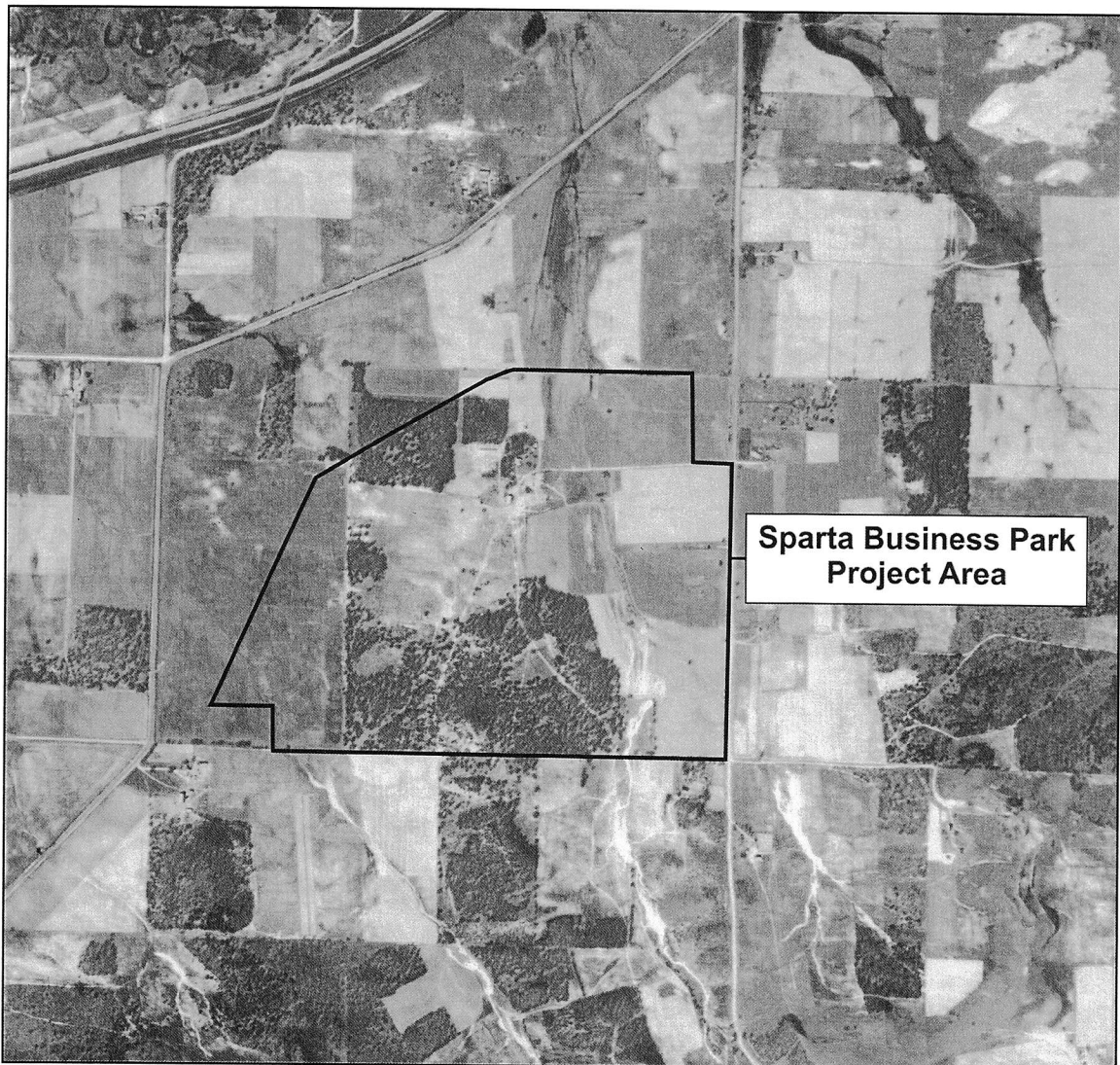


Figure 2. 1939 of the Sparta Business Park project area, indicating a working farm with cultivated fields, woods and grassy areas (WHAIFinder 2016).

## Soils

The United States Department of Agricultural Natural Resources Conservation Service maps the project area as Boone sand, Mindoro sand, Tarr sand, Tint sand, Boone-Tarr sands, and Newlang muck. The majority of the project area (76%) lies in Tarr sand (1 to 15% slopes) while 13% of the project area lies in Tint sand (0 to 3% slopes), with the remaining types less than 5% coverage [USDA 2016]. Soils in the southern wooded area, far western end and central field are classified as Tarr sand. These soils are found on the tread of pediments, glacial lakes, and stream terraces; are formed in siliceous sandy alluvium and/or siliceous sandy lacustrine deposits derived from sandstone; and are moderately well drained (USDA 2016).

## CULTURAL CONTEXT

Native American occupation of Wisconsin began around the end of the Pleistocene epoch, when groups of hunter-gatherers moved into the region after the retreat of the last glacial advance. Archaeologists have currently established the basic broad chronology of Native American cultural traditions in the region as follows (Green et al. 1986, Birmingham et al. 1998, Theler and Boszhardt 2003):

- Paleoindian Tradition, ca. 12,000-8,000 B.P (before present)
- Archaic Tradition, ca. 8,000-2,500 B.P
- Woodland Tradition, ca. 2,500-700 B.P
- Mississippian/Oneota Tradition, ca. 800-350 B.P
- Early Historic, 350-150 B.P
- Late Historic, 150 B.P-Modern Era

These traditions define broad patterns of material culture and are organized by relative and chronometric dating. In general, these periods are somewhat arbitrary as they represent a continuum of changes that occurred over long periods of time. They are distinguished by differences in settlement and subsistence patterns, changes in styles and design of stone tools, the appearance of ceramic technology and subsequent changes in ceramic style and design as well as the construction and design of various types of earthen mounds.

It is important to note that these changes did not occur at the same time everywhere. They are considered time transgressive, originating in one area and spreading from there at varying rates. Most of the significant cultural changes, such as the adoption of horticulture/agriculture, occurred to the south of the state and gradually worked their way north. Therefore, some of these cultural periods occurred at later dates in northern Wisconsin as opposed to those from the southern portion of the state. In some cases, such as the adoption of intensive agriculture, the cultural changes never reached the northern portions of the state as they were subject to environmental constraints.



Paleoindian Tradition (ca. 13,500-8,000 B.P):

Paleoindian peoples are the earliest known inhabitants of Wisconsin. Paleoindian groups are generally believed to have entered the state from the south and southwest in small numbers, gradually migrating to the north and east corresponding to the retreat of the glacial ice (Mason 1997:80). Paleoindians likely lived in small, highly mobile bands who hunted and gathered across a wide territory, adapting to a range of changing environments with a climate that was somewhat colder than today's.

Archaic Tradition (ca. 8,000-2500 B.P):

The Archaic Tradition is characterized by a broad trend toward technological, cultural and ideological diversification in the period following the earlier Paleoindian Tradition. The Archaic Tradition is marked by an increasingly diversified exploitation of the environment, the development of plant processing technologies and a broader-based spectrum diet dependent on hunting and fishing. The development of large corporate cemeteries, often placed on natural knolls and/or terraces may indicate developments in the social organization of Archaic Tradition peoples. New technologies such as the extensive use of ground-stone tools and native copper manufacture also are first identified during this period. In addition, a trend toward increased regionalization, perhaps related to the more limited mobility of broad-based subsistence strategies and increased population growth, is suggested by the greater diversity of projectile point styles recovered from sites of this period.

Woodland Tradition (ca. 2500-700 B.P):

The Woodland Tradition is marked by a series of important sociological, economical and technological innovations (Stevenson et al. 1997). This period saw the first development of ceramic technology, burial of the dead in earthen mounds and an increased reliance on plant cultivation and horticulture, supplemented by continued hunting and gathering of wild foods. The Woodland Period also witnessed the introduction of the bow and arrow, a development which greatly impacted methods of warfare and hunting techniques (McElrath et al. 2000:12). Settlement pattern changes associated with the Woodland Tradition include a general pattern of greater geographic and topographic diversity in site location and resource use. A trend toward decreased settlement mobility and an associated increase in sedentary or semi-sedentary life-ways, linked to population growth and increased reliance on domesticated crops, is also typical of the period (Green 1986). Woodland peoples followed a mobile, hunting and gathering lifestyle. In addition to deer, bear and smaller animals, fish and wild rice and other plants were available as food resources (Stevenson et al. 1997).

Mississippian/Oneota Tradition (ca. 800-350 B.P):

The Mississippian/Oneota Tradition represents the post-Woodland cultures that are characterized by the development of nucleated agricultural villages that contained increasingly larger populations, used shell-tempered ceramics and were dependent upon maize agriculture. The Mississippian Tradition is here equated with both the initial expansion of the Mississippian Tradition from the American Bottom known as the Middle Mississippian Culture and the secondary influence of the Mississippi tradition on primarily local populations that led to the

development of the regional Oneota Culture. The Middle Mississippian Culture (ca. 1000-800 B.P) was initially focused at large ceremonial and population centers such as the Cahokia site, near modern day St. Louis.

Middle Mississippian centers such as Cahokia often feature flat-topped pyramid shaped mounds that may have served as ceremonial centers or elite residences. These sites show evidence of craft specialization and the presence of social and political hierarchies typical of ranked societies. At the height of the Middle Mississippian Cultures power between 1000-1200 A.D., several sites in the Upper Mississippi Valley and surrounding regions show evidence of influence and contact with the Middle Mississippian people of Cahokia and other centers (Green 1997). Aztalan is a Middle Mississippian outreach up the Mississippi Valley in eastern Wisconsin (Theler and Boszhardt 2003). The site consisted of two platform mounds which overlooked a palisaded village with a central plaza and rectangular houses.

The Oneota Culture (ca. 900 B.P-350 B.P) is represented by a series of Mississippian Tradition occupations that differ from Middle Mississippian cultures. Oneota sites are typically sedentary nucleated villages focused on the use of maize agriculture supplemented by hunting and gathering. However, Oneota villages typically lack evidence for social ranking and pyramidal or platform mounds. Oneota ceramics are typically globular, shell-tempered vessels decorated with a combination of punctates, chevrons, finger and tool-trailed designs. Like the Late Woodland people that preceded them, Oneota peoples used small, un-notched triangular arrow-points such as the Madison Triangular type.

### Historic Period

Wisconsin was continually occupied by various Native American nations throughout the Early and Late Historic Periods up until the present day. Notable Native American nations that maintained a presence in Wisconsin during the historic period include the Santee Dakota, Mesquakie, Sauk, Ojibwe, Huron, Ho-Chunk, Ioway, Kickapoo, Mascouten, Miami, Illini, Potawatomi, and Ottawa nations (Tanner 1987). Due to the flexibility of Native American political boundaries, the general paucity of written records and the general political and economic turbulence of the historic period it is nearly impossible to accurately distinguish the territories controlled by each of the tribes during the Early Historic period.

In eastern Wisconsin, the arrival of Algonquian groups in the mid-seventeenth century, following the Iroquois Wars, marked the westward movement to the Rock River Drainage where they maintained territory until final U.S. government land acquisitions in the 1830-1840's. The Algonquian groups originally settled along the Lake Michigan shoreline in multi-tribal villages near Milwaukee and other settlement areas. As time went on the Potawatomi became the dominant Algonquian tribe in the southeastern Wisconsin area, controlling most of the area between the Rock River and Lake Michigan by 1750 (Bieder 1995) and maintaining this control into the 1830-1840's.

## PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS

A literature search for the proposed Sparta Business Park project was conducted using the Wisconsin Historic Preservation Database (WHPD), an internet application which serves as an interface to the Archaeological Reports Inventory (ARI), the Archaeological Sites Inventory (ASI), and the Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) maintained by the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison. The ASI indicated no previously recorded archaeological sites within the project area, with 22 sites reported within one mile of the project area (Table 1). The sites plotted closest to the project area appear in Figure 3.

Four archaeological surveys have been conducted within Section 26, all of which lie north of IH90. According to the AHI, there are no previously surveyed historic buildings or structures within Section 26 of T17N-R04W.

Archaeological campsite/village sites with known prehistoric cultural affiliation include one Late Paleoindian/Archaic, one Archaic, one Archaic/Woodland, one Woodland, and one Archaic/Woodland site with a workshop component. One Late Archaic workshop site is also recorded. Prehistoric sites with unknown cultural affiliation include 12 campsite/villages and one lithic scatter. Historic Euro-American sites include three cemetery/burial sites.

The 3 sites closest to the project area are the H.R. Schmidt site (47Mo-66), the Kurtzweil site (47Mo-79), and St. Patrick's Cemetery (BMO52). The H.R. Schmidt site is a campsite/village of unknown prehistoric affiliation located one-quarter mile northeast of the project's northeast corner, with the bulk of the site within the IH90 corridor. Surface survey and test excavations were completed. Test units produced 24 flakes from less than 16 inches below surface. Artifacts recovered included over 2000 flakes, knife fragments, and a biface. Since the site had been under heavy cultivation, it was stated the undisturbed portion is probably negligible (WHPD 2016). The Kurtzweil site is located immediately north of the project area's northeast corner, on a sandy knoll near stake #1385 within the IH90 right-of-way. The site is a campsite/village of unknown prehistoric affiliation, defined by a few flakes found on top and along the north side of the knoll (WHPD 2016). Both the H.R. Schmidt and Kurtzweil sites were reported in 1965 as a result of a highway survey project conducted by the Wisconsin Historical Society's Museum Archaeology Program. St. Patrick's Cemetery is an active Historic Euro-American cemetery located on the east side of Ideal Road, 335 feet east of the northeast corner of the project.

**Table 1. Previously recorded sites within one mile of the Sparta Business Park project.**

Site No.	Site Name	Site Type	Cultural Affiliation	TRS
47Mo-66	H. R. Schmidt	campsite/village	unknown prehistoric	1704W-25
47Mo-67	A.C. Schmidt	campsite/village	unknown prehistoric	1704W-27
47Mo-71	Jackson	campsite/village	L. Paleo, Archaic	1704W-25
47Mo-72	Niefeldt	campsite/village	unknown prehistoric	1704W-27
47Mo-79	Kurtzweil	campsite/village	unknown prehistoric	1704W-26
47Mo-133	Oak Meadows	campsite/village	unknown prehistoric	1704W-26
47Mo-139	La Crosse River Trail	workshop	Late Archaic	1704W-26
47Mo-154	Trailer Park Fill Site	lithic scatter	unknown prehistoric	1704W-26
47Mo-202	MO-A	campsite/village	Archaic	1704W-13, 24
47Mo-208	MO-Q	campsite/village	unknown prehistoric	1704W-23
47Mo-209	MO-H	campsite/village	unknown prehistoric	1704W-24
47Mo-210	MO-J	campsite/village	unknown prehistoric	1704W-26
47Mo-211	MO-K	campsite/village	L. Archaic, E. Woodland	1704W-27
47Mo-422	Levering	campsite/village	unknown prehistoric	1704W-26
47Mo-423	Sparta	campsite/village	unknown prehistoric	1704W-23
47Mo-444	MO-B	campsite/village	unknown prehistoric	1704W-13, 24
47Mo-821	JAC 01	workshop, campsite	L. Archaic, Woodland	1704W-27
47Mo-822	JAC 02	campsite/village	L. Woodland	1704W-27
47Mo-823	JAC 04	campsite/village	unknown prehistoric	1704W-27
BMO52	St. Patrick's Cemetery	cemetery/burial	Historic Euro-American	1704W-25
BMO53	St. John's Cemetery	cemetery/burial	Historic Euro-American	1704W-23
BMO101	Old St. Patricks' Church Cemetery	cemetery/burial	Historic Euro-American	1704W-24

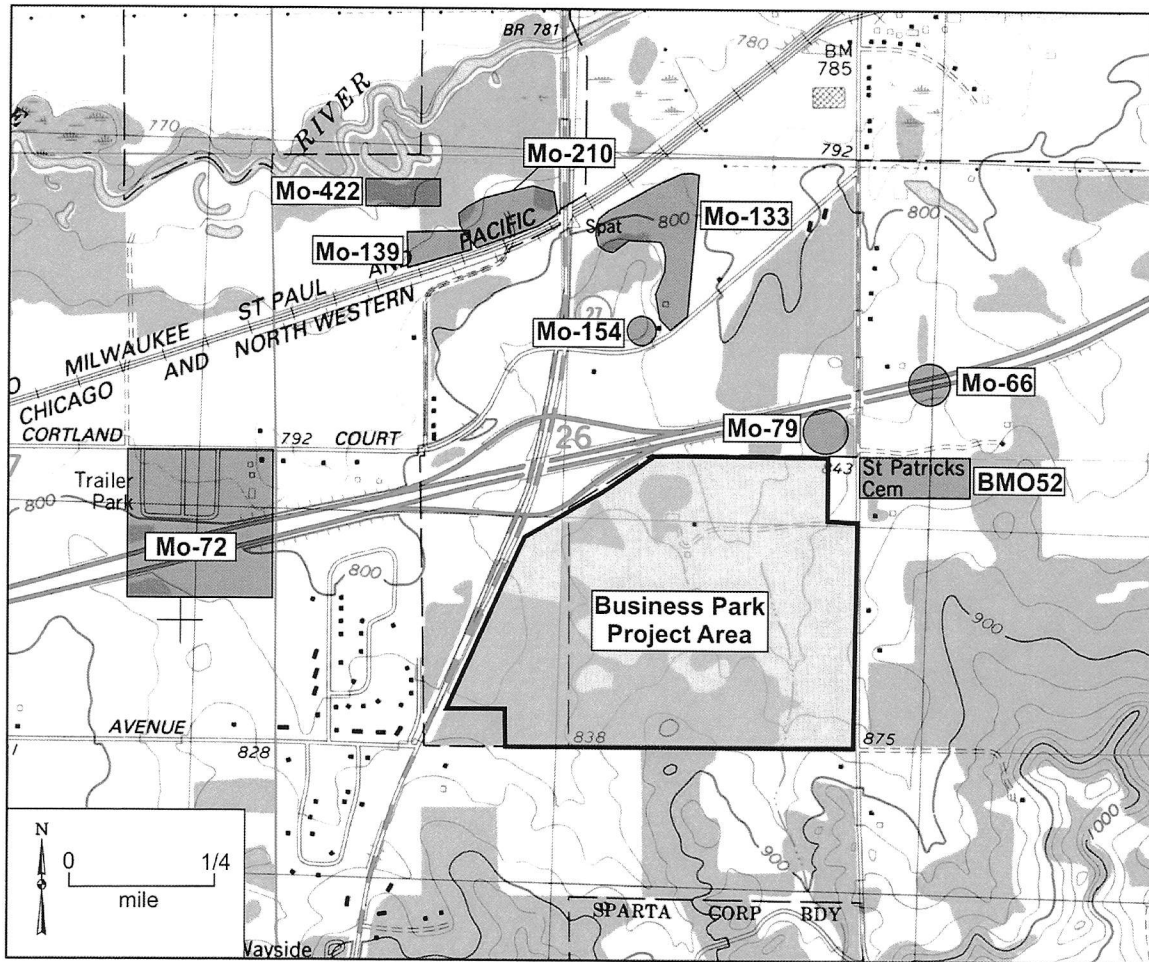


Figure 3. Previously recorded sites closest to the Business Park project area in Sparta, Wisconsin. Sparta 7.5' USGS topographic map.

## SURVEY METHODS AND RESULTS

The proposed business park project area is located on the southern edge of the City of Sparta in Section 26 of Township 17 North - Range 4 West. The project is bounded by STH 27 and a commercial business to the west, IH90 to the north, a private residence and Ideal Road to the east, and private residences and woods to the south. Entrance to the project area was gained from Ideal Road, over the farmstead driveway. The project Area of Potential Effects (APE) consists of approximately 80 acres of cultivated fields and 100 acres of woods, farmstead, fallow fields and scrub brush, and an old sand mine (Figure 4).

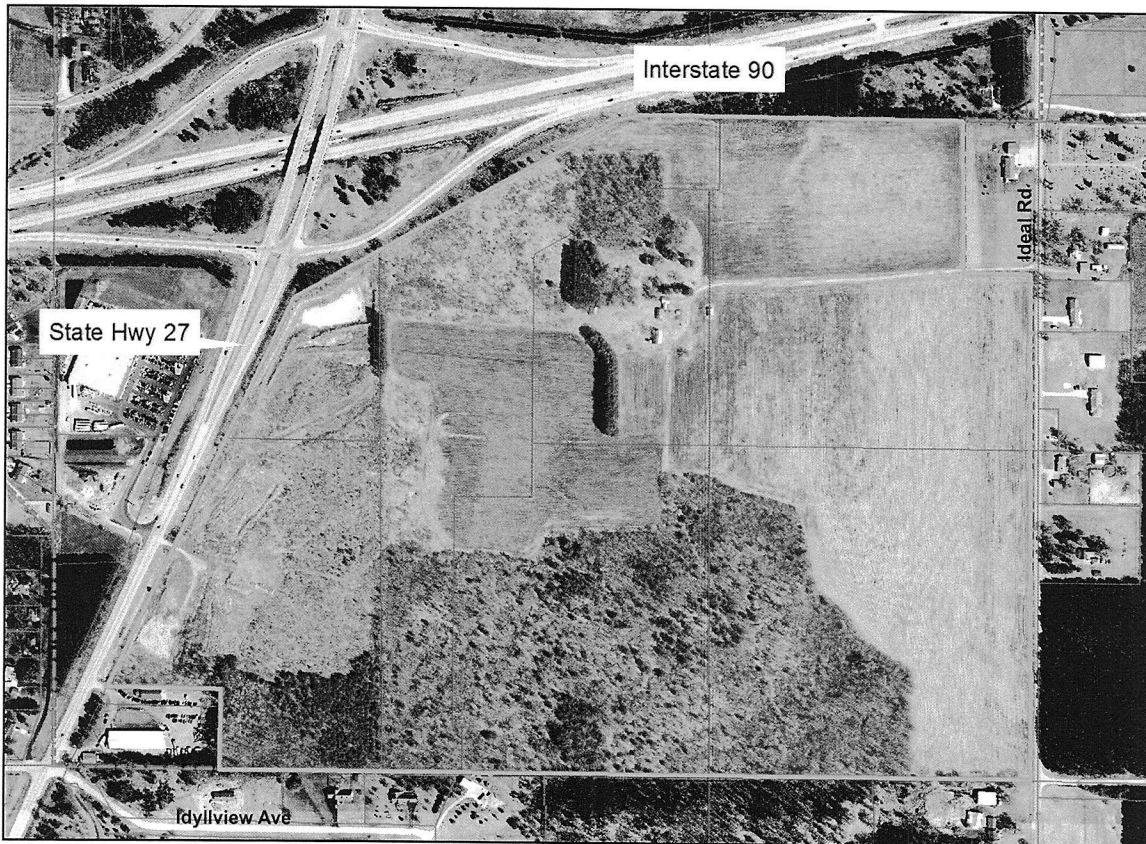


Figure 4. The Business Park project's Area of Potential Effect. Provided by the City of Sparta, 2016.

The Phase I archaeological survey was conducted in two parts, with pedestrian survey of the cultivated fields undertaken in mid-July, while shovel testing and walkover of the remainder of the project area was completed at the end of July.

### Cultivated Fields

Pedestrian survey of the cultivated fields was conducted on July 13, 2016. Soybeans had been planted in all of the fields, and were about calf-high during the survey. Surface survey was conducted at 15 meter intervals with 20% to 40% visibility (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Pedestrian survey in the soybean field south of the farmstead. View facing northwest.

### Abandoned sand mine

The abandoned sand mine lies along the western edge of the project area, with a separate access from STH 27. Based on the 1939 air photo, the sand mine locale appears to lay in prairie or planted in a type of grass crop such as alfalfa (see Figure 2). By 1999, this area appears to have grown up in trees, with some possible logging roads evident (Google Earth 2016). A 2005 Google Earth image of the project area indicates the sand mine was in operation at this time. Between 2006 and 2008, the mine appears to have expanded to its highest utilization, with additional areas opened north and south of the STH 27 access road (Figure 6). At the time of the 2016 survey, it did not appear the mine was currently in use.

Shovel testing within the former sand mine was limited to those areas which appeared less disturbed from mining activities, such as the setback from the rim of the pit and wooded areas which had not been torn up by heavy machinery. Logging roads and borrow pits were not shovel tested. Exposed areas within the pit were visually inspected for artifacts in the profile walls (Figure 7, 8).

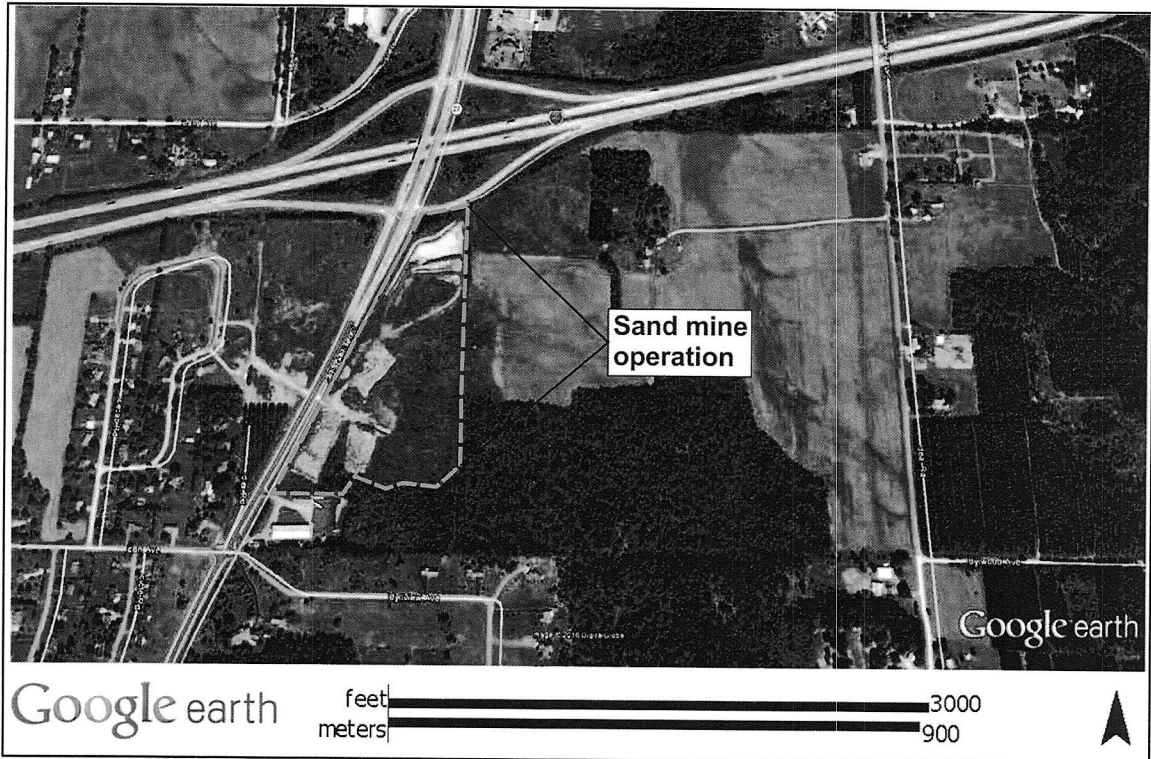


Figure 6. 2006 image of the sand mine locale on the west side of the project area. Google Earth 2016.

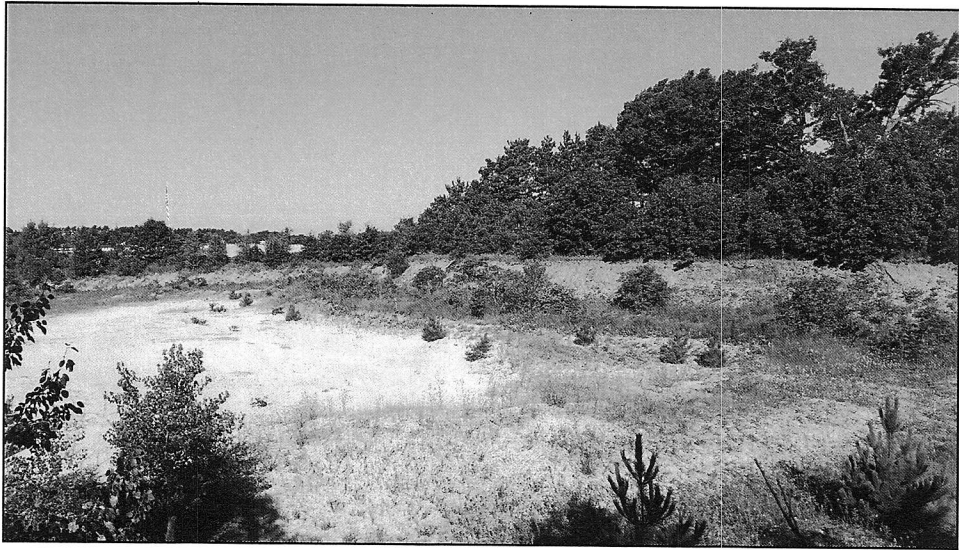


Figure 7. Former sand mine on the west side of the Business Park project area. View facing west.





Figure 8. Visual inspection was undertaken along the exposed profile walls within the mine pit.

#### Woods, fallow fields, farmstead

Shovel testing was conducted throughout the remainder of the project area at 15 meter intervals. These areas include the overgrown lawn and tall grass surrounding the farmstead (Figure 9), fallow fields west of the farmstead and east of the sand mine, and the wooded areas north of the farmstead and along the southern property boundary (Figure 10). A plan map of the survey is shown in Figure 11.

Soils throughout the majority of the project area were dark brown (10YR 3/3) over yellowish brown (10YR 5/6) silty sand. An exception to this were the soils around the farmstead and the fallow field immediately to its west, which were loamy sand and more difficult to screen. Depths of shovel tests ranged from 35 cm below ground surface in the wooded areas to 50 cm below ground surface in the fallow fields and farmstead. Shovel tests were excavated at 15 meter intervals down to the subsoil and all soils were screened through one-quarter inch hardware cloth, in accordance with Wisconsin Archaeological Survey guidelines (Dudzick et al. 2012). No cultural resources were recovered during investigations of the Business Park project area.



Figure 9. Shovel testing west of the farmstead. View facing north.



Figure 10. Shovel testing in the woods south of the farmstead at the Sparta Business Park project area. View facing southwest.

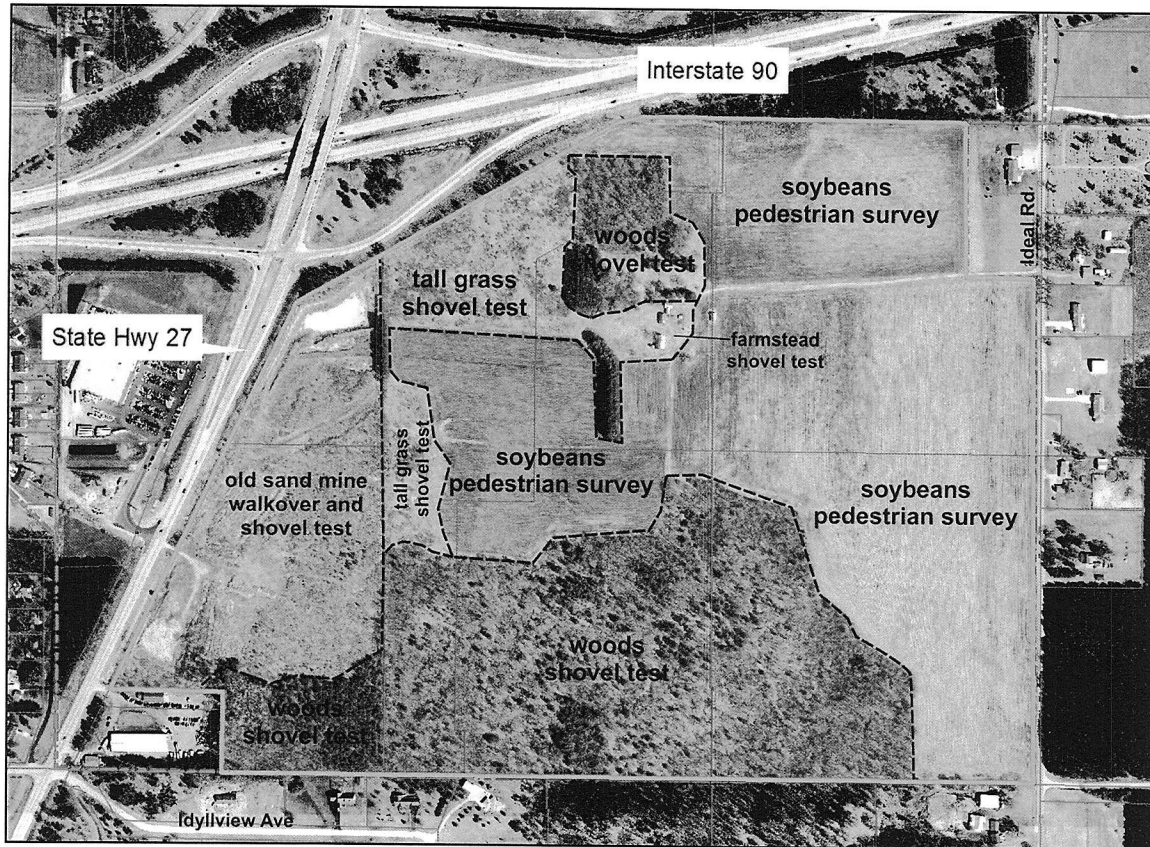


Figure 11. Plan map of the Phase I archaeological survey for the proposed Sparta Business Park. Base map provided by the City of Sparta, 2016.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Under contract with the City of Sparta, the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center conducted a Phase I Archaeological Survey of approximately 180 acres for the proposed Sparta Business Park located on the southern edge of the city. The proposed project area consists of approximately 80 acres of cultivated fields and 100 acres of woods, farmstead, fallow fields, and a former sand mine. Pedestrian survey of the cultivated fields was conducted at 15 meters intervals. Shovel testing was conducted in the woods, farmstead area, fallow fields, and portions of the mine. Walkover was conducted over the areas of obvious previous disturbance within the sand mine. No cultural resources were recovered, and no additional archaeological investigations are recommended for the Sparta Business Park project.

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Wisconsin Historic Aerial Image Finder

2016 *Sparta Aerial Photograph*. Electronic document accessed August 2016:  
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Wisconsin Historic Preservation Database

2016 *Archaeological Site Inventory* forms from the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison.

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORTS INVENTORY FORM

WHS PROJECT # COUNTY Monroe

AUTHORS: Jean Dowiasch

REPORT TITLE: Phase I archaeological survey for the proposed Sparta Business Park  
in Monroe County, Wisconsin

DATE OF REPORT (MONTH AND YEAR): August 2016

SERIES/NUMBER: 1081

PLACE OF PUBLICATION: Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center

LOCATIONAL INFORMATION [LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF SURVEY AREA (T-R-S)]  
T17N-R04W Sec. 26

U.S.G.S. QUAD MAP(S): Sparta 7/5'

SITE(S) INVESTIGATED: n/a

ACRES INVESTIGATED: 180 AGENCY #

## INVESTIGATION TECHNIQUES COMPLETED (Check all that apply.)

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avocational Survey                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Chance Encounter                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Historical Research  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faunal Analysis                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Floral Analysis                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Interview/Informant  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Literature Background Research | <input type="checkbox"/> Major Excavation/Phase III             | <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Stripping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Osteological Analysis                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Geomorphology        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Records/Background             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Surface Survey              | <input type="checkbox"/> Soil Core            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remote Sensing                            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shovel Testing/Probing      |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Test Excavation/Phase II                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Traditional Knowledge                  |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Underwater                                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Walk Over/Visual Inspection |   |

ABSTRACT:  Included in report  Written in space below