

The Silver Maple Forest (Belmont Uplands) & The Impact of Development

Charles J. Katuska, MFS, PWS

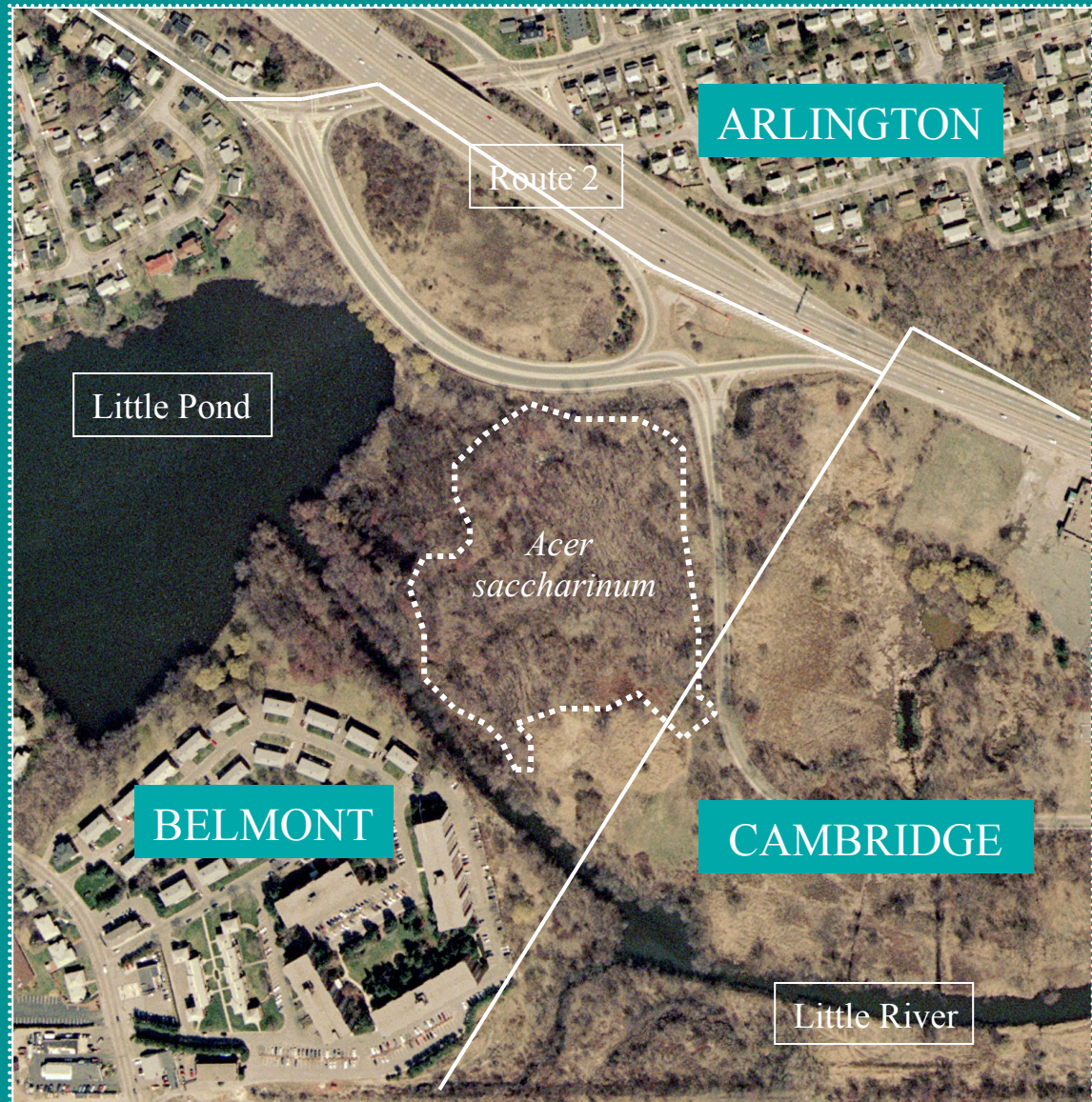
Consulting Ecologist

“The aesthetic, wildlife, watershed protection, and wood production values of these (suburban) woods will increase in every future decade” - Lloyd Irland

What Is It ?

- The Belmont Silver Maple forest is a mixed association of various wetland and upland plant communities on about 15 acres.
- Silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*) dominates the central core of the site.
- Unusual, relict forest community in this context

The Belmont Silver Maple Forest



The Belmont Silver Maple Forest

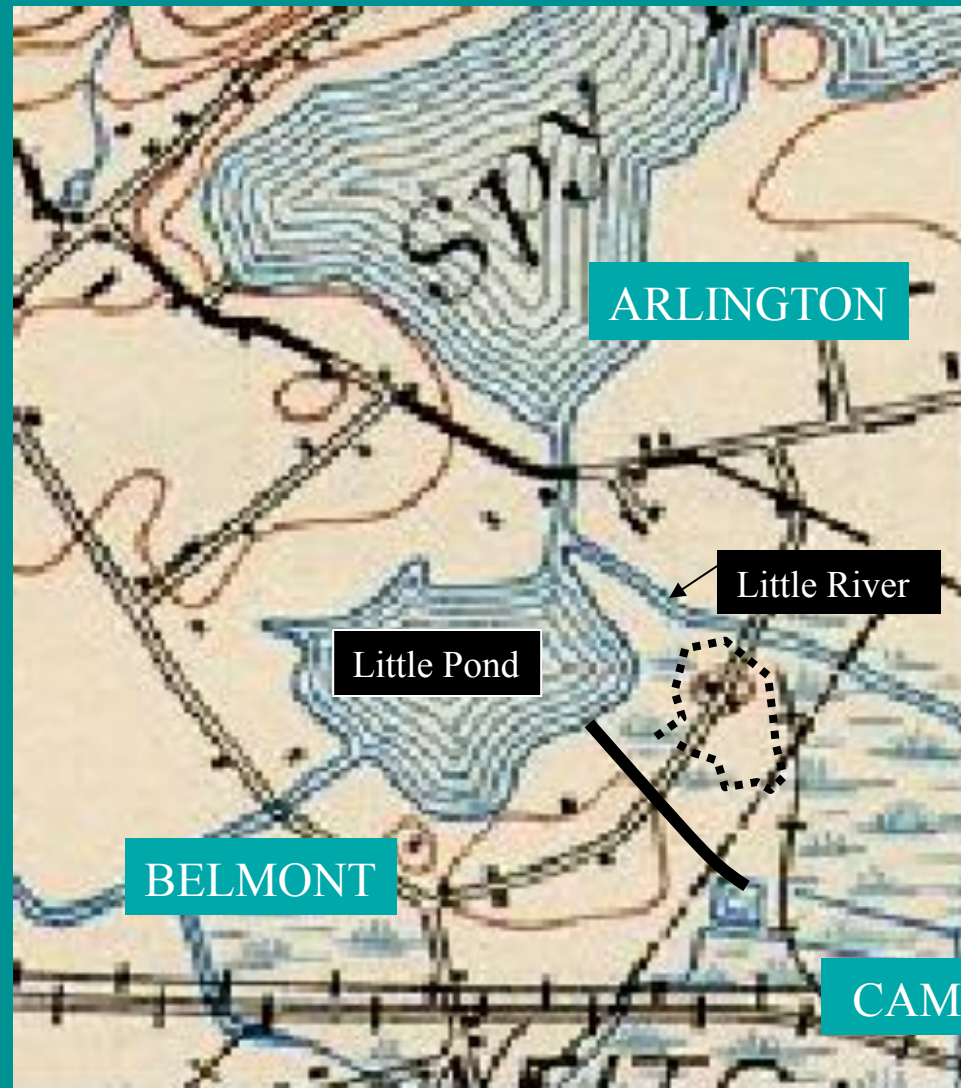
Prior to 1903, the original forest at this site was -

- Cleared (for agriculture ?)

Since 1903, the landscape has been -

- Significantly Altered Hydrologically
- Extensively Filled
- Invasive Plant Species

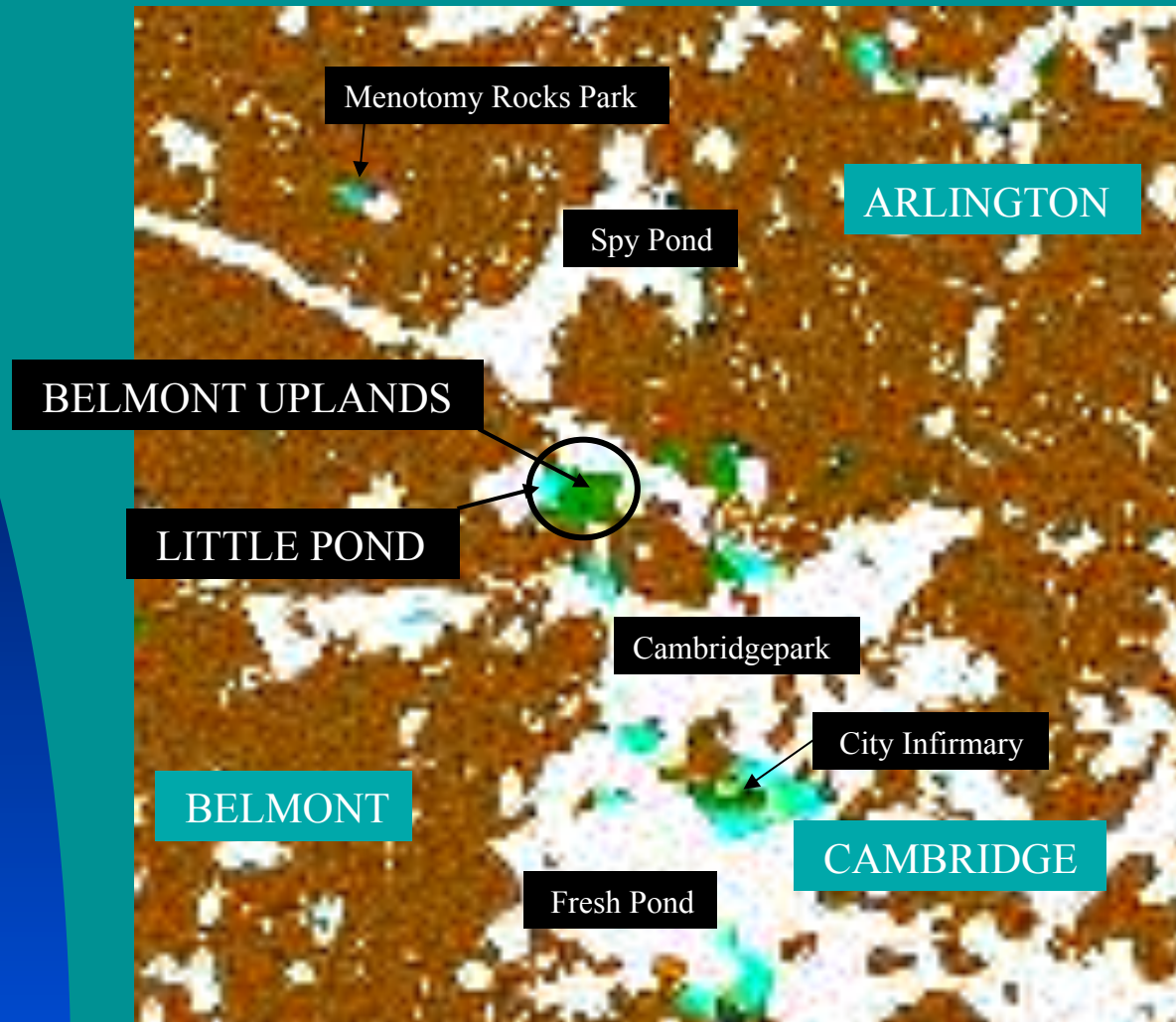
The Belmont Silver Maple Forest (1903)



Yet, this altered site has recovered ecologically to produce a well-grown, diverse, and locally unique forest stand



Locally Unique Forest Context (USGS GAP Analysis for Biodiversity)



Forest Values:

The Silver Maple Forest Site has value (or potential value) to the community for -

- Watershed Protection
- Wildlife
- Recreation
- Aesthetics
- Education
- Timber Production

Now, the Belmont Silver maple Forest is the site of a substantial development proposal -



How would the Development (commercial or residential) of the Silver Maple Stand affect Forest values ?

- Add pollutants and additional stormwater volume to an already stressed receiving water system
- Directly eliminate wildlife habitat and reduce the quality of remaining habitats
- Eliminate the opportunity for recreation in the development area itself and reduce the quality of the recreation experience in undeveloped portions of the site
- Eliminate the locally unique and regionally significant floodplain forest aesthetic experience
- Drastically decrease or eliminate any potential for long-term timber management for production

Final Considerations

- The forest values of the Belmont Silver Maple Stand are not solely related to the production of forest products.
- Potentially significant forest values do not flow to the community under current private ownership.
- The development of the Belmont Silver Maple Stand will substantially eliminate its forest values and will degrade the forest values of the remaining land and the adjacent public open space.