CHCs and Historic Cemeteries: A Framework for Preservation

Part 2: Connect

A Suggested Framework for County-Wide Cemetery Preservation

1. Identify all cemeteries in county.
2. Determine who is working with each cemetery.
3. Determine what each cemetery needs.
4. Determine how the CHC can help preserve the cemetery itself or help others preserve the cemetery. Take action accordingly.

www.thc.texas.gov/chc-cemeteries

CONNECT:
Suggested Activities

CHCs know who (if anyone) is responsible for each cemetery, or who’s already working with the cemetery, and how to contact them.

- Identify responsible party for each cemetery; keep current contact information for each.
- Regularly contact these people to keep tabs on upcoming activities and meetings.
- Encourage posting signs at each cemetery with contact information.
- Conduct deed or other research to determine ownership/authority of abandoned or neglected sites.
Identify responsible party for each cemetery; keep current contact information for each.

Municipal Cemeteries
- Dedicated Department, or not
- Parks and Recreation Dept.
- Community Services Dept.
- Support Organizations, “Friends”

County Cemeteries
- Rarely has a distinct department or division
- Precinct Office
- County Clerk
- County Judge
CONNECT: Identify responsible party

Religious Cemeteries
- Individual congregation
- Or a conference, diocese, etc.

Private Family Cemeteries
- Board of Directors
- Point Person

Cemetery Associations
- Incorporated
- Unincorporated
- May or may not have federal tax-exempt status
Identify responsible party

Make regular contact

Regularly contact them to keep tabs on upcoming activities and meetings.
- Connect them with one another
- Communicate CHC’s willingness and capacity to assist
- Connect them with preservation resources

Remember! Their priorities might not be the same as yours—and that’s okay.
- Introduce yourself
- Show interest in their work
- Educate about local history
- Be an advocate and resource for preservation
- Facilitate connections
Make it easier for stakeholders to make connections:
Post signs with contact information (and more).

CONNECT:
Make contact info available

Posting contact info makes it easier for people to:
• Donate
• Volunteer to help
• Report a problem
• Connect with others who care

CONNECT:
Post a sign with contact info

• Name of Cemetery
• Contact Person
• Contact phone or email or website
• Address – physical and mailing
• Hours of visitation
• Dates – meetings, clean-ups, etc
• Rules
• Updates
CONNECT:
Post a sign with contact info

- Easy to read
- Clear message
- Readily visible
- Regularly maintained
- Appropriate scale
- Sensitive design

CONNECT:
Make contact info available

CONNECT:
Or not?

With Caretaker
No Caretaker
Conduct deed or other research to determine ownership or authority of abandoned or neglected sites.

Sources to Research:
- DEEDS – everything else should lead you back here
- Appraisal district records
- Secretary of State (incorporated associations)
- County Clerk (early or unincorporated associations)
- Probate records and wills
- General newspaper research, local history books, oral histories, etc.

CAD shows separate parcel:
- It was set aside or dedicated specifically for cemetery purposes at some point in the past, or
- It was never formally set aside, but it was left out when all the other land around it got sold off, or
- It means neither of these things
CONNECT: Determine authority of abandoned sites

CAD shows integral within a larger parcel:
• It was never separated from the larger parcel; conveyed from one owner to the next
• It was set aside at some point in the past, but subsequent deeds lack that reference

CONNECT: Determine authority of abandoned sites

Researching Deeds:
• Index – Direct/Reverse; Grantor/Grantee
• Special index for cemeteries in some counties
• “Save and except” clause
• Trace forward or backward; be thorough

CONNECT: Determine authority of abandoned sites

Possible Owners:
• Current land owner
• Past land owner(s)
• Church
• School district
• County judge
• “Community”
• Cemetery association
• Others
CONNECT: Suggested Activities

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Cemetery Preservation Program

www.thc.texas.gov/cemetery

Jenny McWilliams
Program Coordinator
512-475-4506
Jenny.mcwilliams@thc.texas.gov

Carlyn Hammons
Program Specialist
512-463-6044
Carlyn.hammons@thc.texas.gov