

Recommendations & Implementation

Recommendations are consistent with practices outlined in the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Documentation, and the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works.

It is recommended that this cemetery plan be re-evaluated at least every five years. Additionally, it is also suggested the recommendations be prioritized (1-2 years, 3-5 years, 5-7+ years) for projects and phasing, as well as identifying who the responsible entities are for carrying out the recommended actions. The following recommendations could potentially be applicable to other historic cemeteries owned and operated by the City of Bradenton.

Improve Documentation

- Have georeferenced coordinates for known plots/headstone and incorporated into City's GIS.
- Consider nomination to National Register of Historic Places

Coordinate with the City of Bradenton

- Address cemeteries in City of Bradenton Historic Preservation Element of Comprehensive Plan.
- Change future land use and zoning to better align with current and future use and preservation.
- Consider including cemeteries under City ownership in local historic districts.
- Implement cemetery rules and regulations and include in City Code.
- Work with City of Bradenton Police Department to ensure regular patrols.

Provide Better Information Management

- Identify any City resolutions and ordinances related to the Burying Ground.
- Identify long-term document and record management strategy and who formal record keeper will be.

Implement Operations/Maintenance & Preservation Plans

The maintenance program for an historic cemetery is much different than that for a modern cemetery. To avoid damaging funerary materials, a historic cemetery requires that much of the maintenance work be done by hand. This, in turn, involves longer hours and higher costs. However, if proper maintenance of a cemetery is neglected, and the special requirements of funerary artifacts are disregarded, the time and money invested to restore the site will, essentially, have been wasted. Proper maintenance of historic cemeteries should be performed at best monthly; however, a quarterly schedule is acceptable. Routine maintenance allows for more projects during the year and cuts down on expenses.

- Implement preservation and cleaning techniques in accordance with The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC); a conservator governed by the AIC Code of Ethics and familiar with

common cemetery and funerary materials. The CRPT program through Florida Public Archaeology Network is also a recognized organization in the state of Florida that teaches approved cleaning methods.

- Focus on preservation/restoration of remaining stones.
- Possible reconstruction/restoration of plot fencing where visible.
- Add Standing Committee of MCHC for cemetery.
- Provide appropriate staffing levels to maintain the cemetery.
- Implement City maintenance Standard Operating Procedures.
- Provide appropriate training for cemetery staff (office and field).
- Consider infrastructure: walking path, informational kiosk, benches for seating.
- Update City Code to allow for City to maintain structures/markers/stones after 50 or 70 years after last burial and diligent search fails to produce owner of lot.
- Prohibit gravestone rubbing.
- Increase security in the Burying Ground – consider installing trail cameras and have regular police presence.

Evaluate Funding

- Identify grant opportunities and/or potential funding sources for projects within the Burying Ground.
- Consider annual fundraiser or other fundraising/capital campaigns for improvements.

Implement Wayfinding System

- Look at other cemeteries for examples of signage and wayfinding.
- Create brochures with information on the interred and/or a walking tour (heritage trail, tree trail, etc.).
- Explore placement of kiosk near entry that helps explain how to navigate the Burying Ground.

Protect Landscaping, Tree Canopy, & the Environment

Mowing

Mowers used to cut grass and trim around grave markers and plot enclosures can cause a great deal of damage in a cemetery. Any mower, whether the hand-pushed or riding type, is difficult to control around grave markers and plot copings. Gravestones are particularly vulnerable to damage. Once the face of a stone is scraped or chipped, moisture can move through its layers and eventually cause delamination of the marker. Scrapes and chips also weaken gravestones and can cause them to eventually break and fall. Riding mowers should not be used in small cemeteries, or in any area where markers and other funerary materials are spaced closely together.

Hand pushed mowers should be used in areas where there are markers and other items associated with graves; and should be equipped with rubber bumpers to prevent accidental damage of funerary items. Trimming around copings, above-ground vaults, and gravestones should be done with a hand-held trimmer that uses a monofilament line. The line should not have a wire core. If individual stones or bases are fragile, trimming should be done with a hand clipper.

Tree Trimming and Removal

Tree and shrub branches that might fall and damage gravestones and other materials should be trimmed. Periodic inspections should be made of the grounds, particularly after storms, to make sure that any threats are immediately removed. A tree health assessment should be performed at least every two years and local foresters, or a certified arborist should be employed to perform these tasks.

Groundcovers

To reduce maintenance and lower the risk to stone from mower damage, groundcovers other than grass should be considered. Groundcovers that are small-leaved and low-growing are an alternative to the labor-intensive care required by a grass lawn. Selected groundcovers should grow well without fertilizer because chemicals can be harmful to stones, especially marble, causing discoloration and streaking.

No Chemicals

Herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers should not be used near gravestones, plot curbing and/or foundations, nor should they be used near above-ground structures. Chemicals can cause discoloration of stone (especially marble) and masonry work and can also stain and discolor markers.

Maintenance Training

All persons involved with the maintenance of historic cemeteries, whether professional staff or volunteers, should be trained regarding the proper care of the markers and the landscaping elements. If firms are hired to care for a historic cemetery site, specifications regarding both the routine cemetery maintenance and marker care should be included in contract requirements.

Historic Landscape Preservation

Retaining historical plantings is an integral part of cemetery preservation. Plant materials are sometimes the only markers that remain at a gravesite. Flowering bulbs and perennials, shrubs, and trees were often placed by grounds crews in response to landscape plans intended to beautify the cemetery. Many plants symbolize religious beliefs that are associated with death and resurrection.

Grave Plot Plantings

All bushes and shrubs, perennial and bulb flowers, and trees (especially cedars) that have been planted at grave plots should be retained. Each plant should be given the care it requires on a seasonal basis (such as trimming or cutting back during the appropriate time of growth cycle).

Retention Canopies

Canopies of oak and palm trees should be maintained and preserved for as long as possible, both because of they are part of the funerary material of a specific burial site, and because they greatly contribute to the setting and character of the site.

Historical Vegetation vs. Grave Markers

The roots of trees and shrubs can greatly disturb gravestones, plot copings, and fences. Whether to preserve the funerary artifact or the plant is something that must be decided on a case-by-case basis, particularly if the plant has some historical significance. However, the priority is to keep a grave marker in its original position. When possible, vegetation can be moved to a place where it will not interfere with funerary materials. Moving either plant or a marker involves evaluating the historical significance of both the vegetation and marker and determining how the landscape will look if physical changes are made to the grave plot.

Drainage

It is recommended that any cemetery that has been repeatedly impacted by highwater tables, and/or inundation of flood waters, should be investigated by a qualified Civil Engineer. Recommendations to improve drainage must comply with the Secretary of Interior's Standards, have the least possible visual impact on the cemetery, and do no damage to historic features. It is also recommended that any drainage study be conducted and required changes to the subsurface of a cemetery be made, prior to any historic landscape restoration or other improvements being initiated.

- Have landscape plan created for the entire Burying Ground by a landscape professional.
- Coordinate with the City regarding tree replacement and removal mitigation efforts.
- Install measures to prevent further ponding and an improved stormwater system.
- Create pre-disaster and post-disaster plan for cemetery.
- Identify sea-level rise mitigation options.
- Establish partnerships with local environmental and tree advocacy groups.
- Partner with FPAN for Heritage Monitoring Scouts post-disaster evaluations.

Create Programming & Outreach

- Better share information with the community.
- Consider regularly scheduled events that help encourage community stewardship.
- Identify partnerships with community organizations for help in maintenance and care of the cemetery.
- Consider establishment of volunteer/conservancy/friends group.
- Consider adding Manatee County Historical Committee Burying Ground subcommittee.
- Donations/fundraising – for example, a memorial bench or tree program.
- Establish Day of Service and Memorial Day celebrations.
- Explore partnerships with neighbors, such as Manatee Elementary School, Master gardeners/naturalists, churches, Boy/Girl Scouts, 4H, local landscapers, etc.
- Have Manatee Burying Ground included on the existing Walk Bradenton map (<https://walk.realizebradenton.com/bradenton>)
- Partner with Bishop Museum of Science and Nature on an exhibit about ground penetrating radar, cemetery documentation technology, etc.
- Implement an Adopt a Plot program.
- Utilize City and Manatee Village Historical Park website to provide more information on the cemetery.
- Continue to have FPAN cemetery protection training workshops.
- Conduct oral histories.
- Encourage use of the cemetery for passive activities like photography, bird watching, history or nature walks, etc. A watched cemetery is a protected cemetery!

Bibliography

Manatee Burying Ground Request for Proposals

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