

Standards for Preservation of Historic Cemeteries

The following standards are adapted from the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties:

1. Identify and inventory all features, materials, spaces, and spatial relationships that are important in defining the historic character of the cemetery. Features can include gravemarkers, sculpture, grave decorations, curbing, fences, walks, roads, lights, benches, fountains, pools, land forms (terracing, berms, grading), and vegetation (trees, shrubs, other historic plant material).
2. Preserve distinguishing original qualities that reflect the integrity of the cemetery. Avoid removing or altering any historic material or distinctive landscape features.
3. Historic structures contribute to the cultural landscape of a cemetery.
4. Recognize that landscape features are products of their own time. Alterations that have no historic basis and that seek to create an earlier appearance should be discouraged.
5. Recognize that changes over time are evidence of the history and development of the cemetery. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance should be respected.
6. Repair, rather than replace, deteriorated cemetery features when feasible. If replacement is necessary, match the material being replaced with similar composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Replacement of missing features should be substantiated by historical, physical, or pictorial evidence rather than by relying on conjectural designs or on elements copied from other cemeteries.
7. Use the gentlest means possible to clean the surfaces of features in the cemetery. Avoid sandblasting and harsh chemicals that will damage historic materials.
8. Plan new construction so it will not destroy the historic character of the site. Differentiate new elements from the old, but ensure they are compatible with the general massing, size, and scale in order to protect the historic integrity.
9. Make every reasonable effort to protect and preserve cemetery features, including unmarked graves affected by or adjacent to any proposed work. Contact the History Programs Division at 512-463-5853 if you have concerns about the likelihood of unmarked graves or encounter evidence of disturbed graves during the course of your cemetery preservation project.

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