

A MASSIVE UNDERTAKING

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THE DAVIDSON COUNTY CEMETERY SURVEY AND PRESERVATION PLAN



Purpose and Background

The current Davidson County Cemetery Survey (DCCS) is a grant-funded endeavor of the Nashville Metropolitan Historical Commission (MHC) to survey and document over 600 historic cemeteries in the Nashville Metropolitan area.

This work builds on a volunteer-led survey initiated in 1999 that grew into a countywide effort and documented 465 sites with 12,237 markers over about 5 years.

As one of the fastest growing cities in the U.S., Nashville has experienced dramatic changes to its landscape in recent years. Formerly rural areas are seeing rapid, unprecedented changes, resulting in major threats to historic cemeteries.

Over multiple phases of survey, teams of MHC and New South Associates' (consultant) staff are systematically revisiting the previously surveyed sites while gathering new information from the public about unrecorded burial grounds.

The ultimate goal of this effort is to create the first county-level cemetery preservation plan in the state of Tennessee.

This project is supported in part by a grant from the Historic Preservation Fund, administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, and the Tennessee Historical Commission (THC).

Scope and Methodology

The geographic scope of the project includes Nashville, six satellite cities, and rural Davidson County. Metropolitan Nashville contains 14 community subareas as designated by the Metro Planning Department. Each phase of the survey focuses on four subareas totaling a roughly equal number of sites (approximately 120) per phase.



Project Startup

- Identify the Need
- Define the Scope—worked with the THC
- Get the Grant
- Get Organized
- Gather Data Sets
- Spread the Word

Sample Timeline (Phase I)

- Grant Application: January 2021
- Grant Award: June 2021
- Scope Design: Summer 2021
- Contract Approvals: July-September 2021
- Phase I Contract Start: October 2021
- Metro Procurement Process Initiated: November 2021
- Call for Proposals: February 2022
- Consultant Contract Executed: May 2022
- Phase I Fieldwork: May-August 2022
- Public Meeting: July 2022
- Deliverables and Phase I Contract End: September 2022

Phase I Findings

PHASE 1 CEMETERY SURVEY SUMMARY

Total Visited	117
Verified	113
Not verified	4
Removed or Lost	0

Phase II Findings

PHASE 2 CEMETERY SURVEY SUMMARY

Total Visited	127
Verified	117
Not verified	10
Removed or Lost	0

What Are We Finding?

Cemetery Types: single burials, Euro American, African American, family, church, and large commercial cemeteries

Cemetery Status: Forgotten, Abandoned, Damaged, Protected, Cared For, Well-Managed

Threats: Abandonment, Urban Encroachment, Residential and Commercial Development"



Project Challenges

- Legal Issues
- Ownership
- Access
- Metro procurement delays
- Ethnographic data is hard to determine
- 1 year grant period on contract
- Field schedule does not often align with leaf-off conditions
- State-required survey forms are not optimized for cemeteries
- Significant program- required local matching funds

Deliverables by Phase

- Detailed data set for integration with original DCCS database
- THC-required survey forms and photographs
- Brief phase report with endangered sites summaries
- Geospatial data set, including site boundaries and center points
- Final phase will create countywide cemetery preservation plan

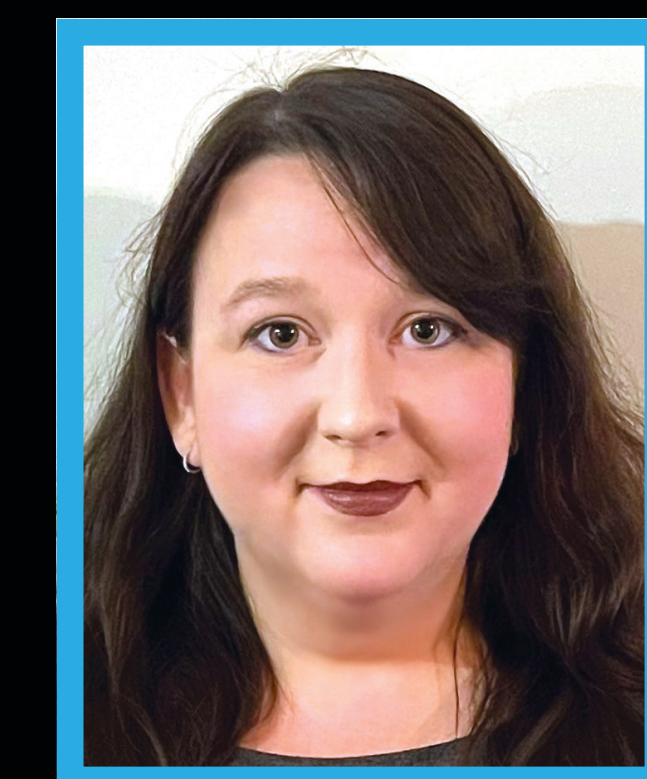


Data Applications

- Model for other communities' preservation planning
- Centralizes cemetery data for developers, property owners, and researchers
- Starting point for genealogical and historical research
- Determines repair and maintenance needs
- Provides recommendations for targeted site-specific efforts
- Engages public with the goal of documenting as many sites as possible



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