



## Chatham County Historical Association, Inc.

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### CCHA Suggested Historical/Cultural Inventory Guidelines For Proposed Subdivisions and Developments

The Chatham County Historical Association (CCHA) is concerned with preserving Chatham County's cultural heritage, which includes historical structures, gravesites, and prehistoric artifacts. The Association's goal is to work with developers to document and, in rare cases, preserve the physical reminders of Chatham County's past, thus maintaining a "sense of place." Many features of local interest will seem ordinary and insignificant to casual observers, but will have historical significance for Chatham County.

Developers are in a unique position to help preserve Chatham's cultural heritage. Standard development processes, such as title searches and surveying – which often reveal evidence of old roads and fences, cemeteries, wells, and foundations – begin the process of documenting local history. The CCHA can often assist in documenting the historical background of structures, cemeteries, gravesites, and artifacts, and will appreciate receiving from developers references to old deeds and plats that identify early owners. Sharing or pooling research results can benefit both the CCHA and the developer, for whom knowing the history of the land can prove useful for public relations and marketing.

In response to concerns about historical properties being lost to development, Chatham County's major subdivision review process has, since 1998, required developers to contact the CCHA when gravesites or structures (i.e., man-made, above-ground objects such as houses, barns, sheds, walls, fences, old roads, chimneys, or the remains of such features) greater than 50 years in age, or having historical significance, are identified on the property, or within 100 feet on adjacent property.

The CCHA has been working with developers in Chatham County for more than two decades. Those who have worked with the CCHA realize that it is not our goal to stand in the way of development, and many have benefitted from knowing the history of the land they develop. The CCHA's goal is simple: to have access to historical features before development begins, which allows the CCHA to document them—saving their histories, if not the features themselves. It is the CCHA's hope that by sharing what it knows or may be able to learn about the site with the developer, local history might become an interesting focal point for future residents.

The CCHA asks for the cooperation of all developers, who can help by involving the CCHA as early as possible. The CCHA will assist by providing additional research. The CCHA hopes that developers will take the following steps to collaborate with the CCHA in the process of researching the history of the land to be developed:

1. **SHPO** – Contact the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, and use the HPOWEB database: <https://nc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=79ea671ebdccc45639f0860257d5f5ed7> which can help in the identification, evaluation, protection, and enhancement of properties significant in North Carolina history and archaeology. The agency carries out state and federal preservation programs, and is a section within the Division of Historical Resources, Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDNCR). Contact with SHPO is a standard procedure for cultural/historical reviews. Please note, however, that many of the features of interest to the CCHA here in Chatham County will not be in SHPO's database. The CCHA will check other local databases for information, and will share any information found with the developer.

2. **Title Search** – Please share the results of your title search with the CCHA. The CCHA will likely go beyond the search required to prove title and, in addition to older deeds, may look at wills and probate files to establish chains of title, and to identify references to graves, roads, railroads, rights-of-way, houses, barns, wells, and any other items of potential interest. If an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for your project, please request that the firm you hire carries out a thorough search of these records to identify prior owners. This information may provide naming opportunities for the project, for sections of the project, for streets, and/or for common areas (such as buildings, parks, playgrounds, nature areas, walking trails, etc.) that tie the new development to the area’s history, and provide points of interest for both new and old residents.
  
3. **Aerial Photo Analysis** – Your site review should include an analysis of current and historical aerial photos of the subject and surrounding properties to identify roads, structures, disturbed areas, etc. Aerials dating back to 1955 are available on the Chatham County GIS: <https://gisservices.chathamcountync.gov/historicalimagery/> and 1938 aerials are available from the State Archives of North Carolina: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/north-carolina-state-archives/sets/72157680105836278/>  
Please indicate the locations of significant features identified in historic aerial photos on a baseline (existing conditions) survey map to be submitted early in the planning process to the municipality, with a copy to the CCHA.
  
4. **Professional Historical/Cultural Resources Field Survey** – An *on-site* field reconnaissance survey of the entire property should be performed by a qualified expert (e.g., a cultural resource firm) to locate any items (or remains of any items) identified in the title search and/or aerial photo analysis, as well as any other items of potential historic or cultural interest, such as graves, evidence of Native American habitation, old foundations, walls, road traces, etc. Please request that your EIA not skimp on this part of the survey. Have someone with expertise identify features. The CCHA would appreciate getting the results of such surveys (field notes, measurements, and digital photos of any features of potential interest) as soon as they are available, and would like to have an opportunity to visit the site to see and document any features and items of interest that are identified. In rare cases, suggestions for preservation may be made by the CCHA. For more information, contact:  
North Carolina Office of State Archeology (<https://archaeology.ncdcr.gov>)  
Melissa A. Timo, M.A., R.P.A., Historic Cemetery Specialist ([melissa.timo@dncr.nc.gov](mailto:melissa.timo@dncr.nc.gov))
  
5. **Artifacts** – Any artifacts (e.g., arrowheads, pottery shards, bottles, wagon wheels) discovered during development activities (e.g., clearing, road grading, lot grading, excavations) should be documented with digital photos, measurements, and site location sketches. The CCHA would appreciate receiving this information (via email at [history@chathamhistory.org](mailto:history@chathamhistory.org)) and would like the opportunity to take possession of such items if the developer has no plans for them. The CCHA reserves the right to retain donated items or use them for fundraising purposes.
  
6. **Cemeteries & Graves** – Cemeteries and graves are **required by state statute** to be protected at all times during development/construction activities, and their preservation and protection should be factored into project plans and well documented in the planning process (see NC General Statute Section 70-29 et seq. and others): <https://archaeology.ncdcr.gov/programs/cemeteries/nclaws>

The CCHA works with the NC Office of State Archaeology, as well as the Chatham County Planning and Mapping Offices to ensure that cemeteries are identified and protected, and that state statutes are followed. CCHA’s cemetery coordinator is available to work with developers on projects encountering cemeteries and graves. Contact: [CemeterySurvey@chathamhistory.org](mailto:CemeterySurvey@chathamhistory.org)

NOTE: *Known Cemeteries*: The approximate locations of known cemeteries are shown on the Chatham County Tax Map GIS. This information should be used to help locate cemeteries that previously have been reported. Note that many cemetery locations were estimated before we had the technology currently available and may not be entirely accurate. Allowance for that possible error should be made in efforts to locate reported cemeteries, and updated coordinates should be provided to CCHA and the County mapping office. Details of each reported site are provided in the CCHA's cemetery census:

<https://cemeterycensus.com/nc/chat/index.htm>

Developers in Chatham County (or in the planning districts for Pittsboro or Siler City) should follow the steps below to ensure that Chatham County cemeteries are properly protected:

**6-1 Immediately secure and clearly mark** any cemeteries or burial sites that are identified so that they are avoided by all on-site activities. **A sufficient buffer** should be allowed to ensure that less obvious graves are included in the protected area. (This applies to previously reported and documented sites, as well as to newly discovered sites.) The Office of State Archaeology (OSA) suggests buffers ranging from 32 to 98 feet, depending on the type of cemetery and whether the cemetery borders have been delineated by a professional archaeologist. The largest buffer size should be used until the site is professionally delineated.

The OSA also notes that **cemeteries should be fully delineated through archaeological investigations before any avoidance measures are recommended**. If a cemetery buffer is defined without an archaeological investigation (GPR or probing) being undertaken, then burials may extend beyond the initial proposed buffer. The OSA buffer recommendations are summarized here:

<https://chathamhistory.org/resources/Documents/PDFs/Preservation/OSA%20General%20Cemetery%20Buffer%20Guidance.pdf>.

Archaeological investigations may include GPR surveys or systematic probe surveys done by experienced practitioners. The developer should consult with CCHA or contact the State Office of Archaeology to determine which delineation strategy and, subsequently, which avoidance/protection measures, are appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Ideally, identification will occur very early in the planning process so that preservation of the cemetery can be considered during planning and before any possible disturbance.

For more information, see pages 20-23 of the OSA Archaeological Investigation Standards and Guidelines <https://archaeology.ncdcr.gov/osa-guidelines/open>.

**6-2 Report to CCHA** as early in the planning process as possible the presence and specific locations of known cemeteries, as well as previously unreported cemeteries and graves discovered during the title search, and those found during initial field assessments and surveys to arrange for CCHA representatives to make an initial **field visit** to document the site. Our Cemetery Project Coordinator will work with you to ensure that the required protections are in place, and that the required documentation is completed. Contact: [CemeterySurvey@chathamhistory.org](mailto:CemeterySurvey@chathamhistory.org).

**6-3 Immediate notify** the State Office of Archaeology, the appropriate county or town planning office, and the CCHA Cemetery Coordinator if graves or cemeteries (or suspected graves or cemeteries) are discovered (but not disturbed) during clearing or construction. **Work must be suspended** in the immediate area of the findings to minimize disturbance until a final disposition can be determined.

**Note: If graves or cemetery features are opened or disturbed, state law requires the immediate notification of local law enforcement (the Chatham County Sheriff's Office, or the Pittsboro or Siler City Police Departments), as well as the other entities noted above, and the suspension of work** in the immediate area of the cemetery until a final disposition can be determined.

**6-4 Document all cemeteries** on the property to be developed—ideally as part of a comprehensive field survey conducted by professional archaeologists (which may be *required* for projects under Section 106 review or any other permit that has triggered an environmental review under the Office of State Archaeology, or projects requiring an EIA for County or Town subdivision planning). The CCHA Project Coordinator is available to provide any information we might have on record about cemetery sites, and will work with consultants on the cemetery part of the EIA. Uncomplicated projects not requiring professional review may be documented with the assistance of the CCHA Cemetery Project Coordinator: [CemeterySurvey@chathamhistory.org](mailto:CemeterySurvey@chathamhistory.org).

The NC Cemetery Site Form [<https://archaeology.ncdcr.gov/media/742/open>] should be completed, with photographs of the site and all markers included. **This information should be submitted to the CCHA Cemetery Project and to the relevant planning office.** CCHA will submit the form to the State Office of Archaeology if that is not done as part of the EIA for the project.

**6-5 Clearly indicate the limits of all cemeteries on the baseline (existing conditions) survey map, and all plats and site drawings, and describe in planning documents how cemeteries will be protected during and after construction activities.** We recommended that avoidance strategies or disinterment/reinterment plans be discussed with the State Office of Archaeology Historic Cemetery Specialist prior to submitting plans to the County/Town Planning Office. Note that state statutes require that cemeteries be accessible to family members and others interested in visiting them, and provisions for this should be included in planning documents.

Cemetery Contact Information:

CCHA Cemetery Project Coordinator: Kelly Gomez: [CemeterySurvey@chathamhistory.org](mailto:CemeterySurvey@chathamhistory.org)  
Telephone number for emergency contact can be obtained from the County Planning Office.

Chatham County Planning Office: Kimberly Tyson  
Phone: (919) 542-8283 Email: [kimberly.tyson@chathamcountync.gov](mailto:kimberly.tyson@chathamcountync.gov)

Pittsboro Planning Office: Randall Cahoon-Tingle, Director  
Phone: (919) 533-5480 (ex. 1006) Email: [rcahoon-tingle@pittsboronc.gov](mailto:rcahoon-tingle@pittsboronc.gov)

Siler City Planning Office: Jennifer Baptiste, Director  
Phone: (919) 726-8626 Email: [jbaptiste@silercity.org](mailto:jbaptiste@silercity.org)

NC State Office of Archaeology: Melissa Timo, Historic Cemetery Specialist  
Office Phone: (919)-814.6562 Work Cell: (919) 723-7633 Email: [melissa.timo@ncdcr.gov](mailto:melissa.timo@ncdcr.gov)

For more detail about the CCHA's goals and interest in documenting local history on land to be developed, see:

<https://chathamhistory.org/Historical-Preservation-Guide-for-Developers/>

<https://chathamhistory.org/History-in-the-Path-of-Growth/>

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