



## **Chatham County Historical Association, Inc.**

P. O. Box 93 / Pittsboro, NC 27312 / [chathamhistory.org](http://chathamhistory.org) / [history@chathamhistory.org](mailto:history@chathamhistory.org)

### **CCHA Suggested Historical/Cultural Inventory Checklist** **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 their online database HPOWEB <https://nc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=79ea671ebd45639f0860257d5f5ed7> 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 EIA should review current and historical aerial photos of the property(s) to identify roads, structures, disturbed areas, etc. Aerials dating back to 1997 are on the Chatham County GIS, and reputable firms will have access to older files. Please share your findings with the CCHA, pointing out anything that should be brought to the CCHA’s attention.
4. **Professional 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.
5. **Artifacts** – Any artifacts (e.g., arrowheads, pottery shards, bottles, wagon wheels) discovered during development activities (e.g., 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.

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/>