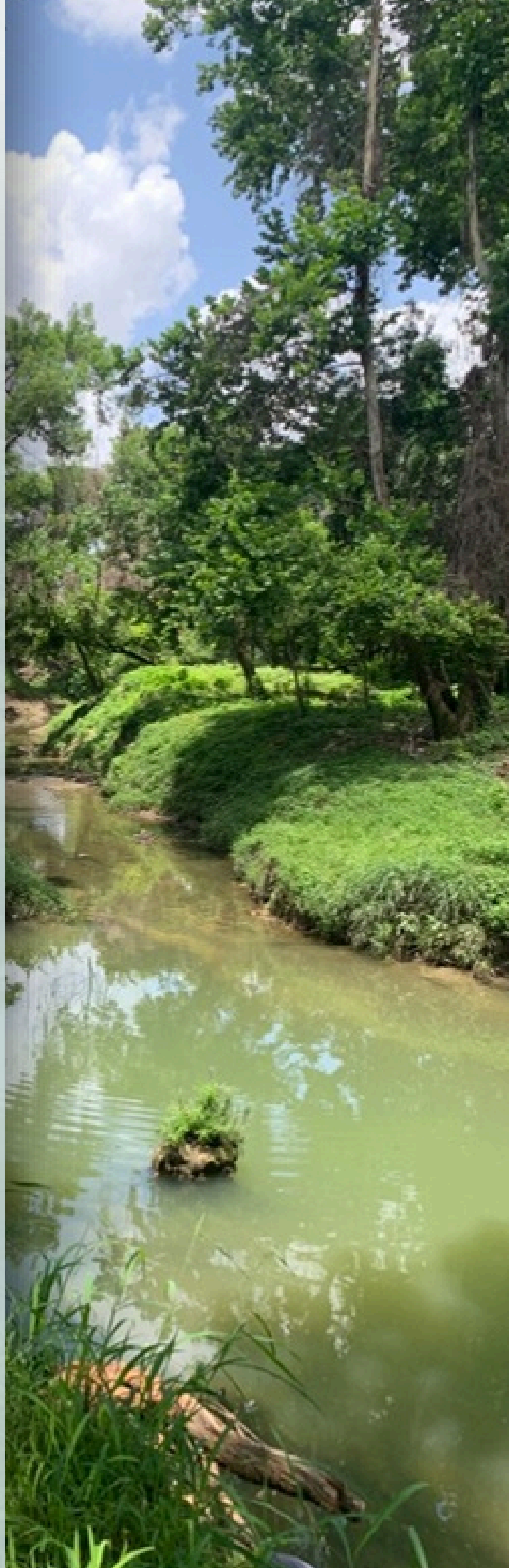
BAYOU PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

DAWSON LUNNON MASTER PLAN



CREATED BY BAYOU PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION, FRIENDS OF DAWSON LUNNON, AND THE HERITAGE PRESERVE TASKFORCE COMMITTEE

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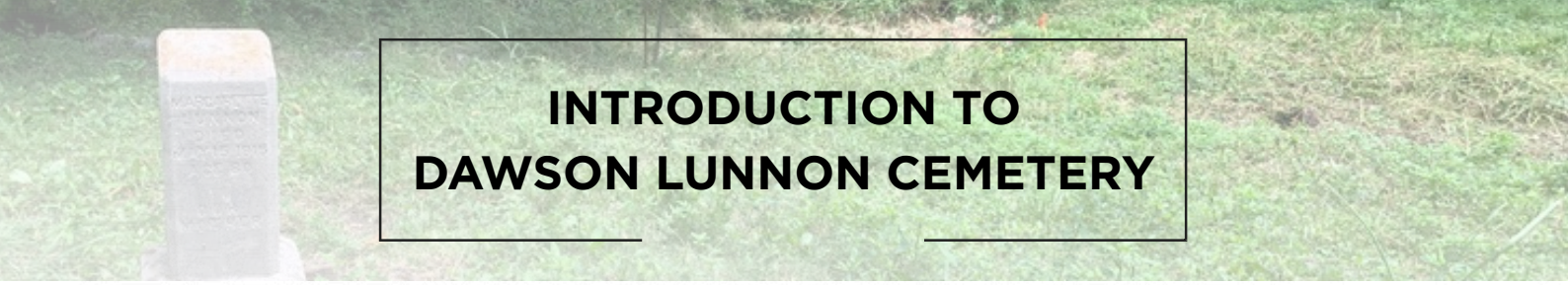


INTRODUCTION TO DAWSON LUNNON CEMETERY

BACKGROUND

Established in 1915, Dawson Lunnon Cemetery holds a deep and multifaceted history that extends well before its formal founding. Over the years, it has been known by several names, including Rosebud Cemetery and Lunnon Cemetery, but today it bears the name of Dawson Lunnon, the eldest son of Mike Lunnon, who purchased the property in 1891 from Col. John Thomas Brady within the S.M. Williams League.

Originally encompassing nine acres, the land served numerous community purposes. It provided space for homes and became the site of Mount Gilead Missionary Baptist Church, which also functioned as an elementary school. The Lunnon family, along with extended relatives and neighbors, made this land a vibrant gathering place for worship, education, and fellowship.

Even in death, the grounds became a refuge for dignity and belonging, offering African Americans in the community a sacred place of rest during an era when racial segregation extended even into burial practices. Following Mike Lunnon's passing, his wife Margarette Lunnon and their children inherited the estate, maintaining its role as a cornerstone of community life for years to come.

PAST EFFORTS

Over time, portions of the original property were sold to various owners, leaving the current site composed mainly of the former church grounds and cemetery. As families moved away and descendants dispersed, the cemetery eventually lost an active caretaker.

Recognizing its cultural and historical importance, Virginia Hancock, a former neighborhood resident, took the initiative to protect and honor the site. She founded the Friends of Dawson Lunnon Cemetery and, through collaboration with community partners and historic preservation advocates, successfully obtained historic designation for the cemetery. Her work ensured that this once-forgotten landmark regained recognition as a vital part of local African American heritage.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

As ongoing research continues to uncover the stories of the descendants, community members, and institutions connected to Dawson Lunnon Cemetery, efforts are focused on:

- Preserving and protecting the physical site through conservation, documentation, and maintenance.
- Expanding historical research to trace family lineages, community networks, and the social significance of the land.
- Building community engagement through storytelling, education, and partnerships that highlight the cemetery's role in regional African American history.
- Honoring the legacy of those buried at the site by creating interpretive materials, historical markers, and accessible records that ensure their stories endure.

These efforts aim not only to safeguard the cemetery as a place of remembrance but also to celebrate it as a living testament to resilience, community, and heritage.

CONSERVATION PLAN

This Conservation Plan establishes a framework for the long-term protection and management of the Dawson Lunnon Cemetery, with particular emphasis on its cultural, archaeological, and natural resource values. The plan highlights the significance of cultural resources associated with the historic cemetery, including the need for documented surveys and consideration of potential archaeological features that contribute to the site's heritage value. In parallel, the plan addresses natural resource conservation, with a focus on vegetation management and the health of the adjacent bayou system. Together, these efforts aim to preserve the cemetery's historical integrity while promoting ecological stability, enhancing native vegetation, and supporting the site's overall environmental resilience.

CONDITION ASSESSMENT AND MAPPING

SURVEY METHODS

Using the NCPTT Cemetery Survey Form, BPA staff and Task Force members began a detailed site survey to document burial markers, boundaries, vegetation, and structural features. Ongoing visits are planned to continue monitoring headstone conditions, environmental changes, and maintenance needs. Data collection will include GPS coordinates, photographic documentation, and field notes to establish a consistent baseline for tracking future conservation work.

To identify potential unmarked burials, non-invasive archaeological methods such as ground-penetrating radar (GPR) will be explored in collaboration with university partners and community volunteers. This work will refine existing maps, confirm interment locations, and support respectful preservation practices.

LIMITATIONS AND ACCESSIBILITY

The cemetery's accessibility is currently limited by overgrown vegetation, uneven terrain, and deteriorating pathways bordered by aging railroad ties. Trash accumulation in concealed areas, particularly along the western edge, poses safety concerns and obscures the landscape. Environmental factors such as soil erosion from the adjacent Country Club Bayou and exposed tree roots have contributed to site instability. Future work will prioritize safe access routes, erosion control, and the stabilization of high-traffic and flood-prone zones.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Dawson Lunnon Cemetery holds significant historical value as one of the earliest African American burial grounds in the area. Of the **32 confirmed interments**, only a few original markers remain intact, with others historically identified by lilies or temporary indicators. Continued documentation and potential GPR analysis will help identify unmarked graves, offering insight into burial customs and community history.
Partnerships with local historical societies and descendant families will ensure that archaeological investigations respect cultural traditions while enhancing understanding of the site's heritage.

BURIAL MARKERS AND PLOTS

There are a limited number of headstones still present, including one belonging to Margaret Lunnon, as well as two family plots. Although they are in relatively good condition, they require careful cleaning and the removal of surrounding vegetation to prevent further deterioration. All inscriptions remain legible and surrounding stones define informal grave boundaries. Routine maintenance should follow best practices recommended by the **Texas Historical Commission**, including the use of non-abrasive cleaning agents and participation in conservation training workshops.

MT. GILEAD MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH PLOT

The **Mt. Gilead Missionary Baptist Church**, constructed in 1914 and demolished in 1979 was a cornerstone of the East End community. Though only fragments of the original foundation remain, the preserved front steps serve as a tangible link to the site's history.

Plans include reconstructing the church's primary frame as a **symbolic interpretive structure** and educational kiosk. Current efforts involve replacing deteriorated railroad ties, removing weeds, and stabilizing the perimeter through landscaping and structural repairs.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Dawson Lunnon Cemetery sits amid a highly industrial and urbanized landscape, providing a rare pocket of green space that supports wildlife and pollinators. Our goal is to strengthen the site's ecological value by enhancing its natural features to benefit both local wildlife and the surrounding community. Through thoughtful, nature-based solutions, we aim to preserve the cemetery's integrity while creating a more resilient, multifunctional landscape.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

TREES AND SHRUBS

Dawson Lunnon Cemetery contains a diverse assemblage of native and naturalized vegetation that contributes to site stability, ecological function, and visual continuity. The existing tree canopy is composed of Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), Sugarberry (*Celtis laevigata*), Pecan (*Carya illinoinensis*), White Oak (*Quercus alba*), Water Oak (*Quercus nigra*), Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*), and American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*). These species provide critical ecosystem services, including shade, erosion control, stormwater interception, and soil stabilization, while supporting habitat connectivity and preserving the historic landscape character of the cemetery.

The shrub and understory layer includes Sago Palm (*Cycas revoluta*) and American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*), which contribute to structural diversity and wildlife support. To enhance species diversity and ecological performance, the introduction of partial shade–tolerant, drought-adapted perennials is recommended. Shrubs that meet these criteria include Red Cardinal (*Erythrina herbacea*), Purple Sage (*Leucophyllum frutescens*), Rock Rose (*Pavonia lasiopetala*), and Brasilwood (*Condalia hookeri*), all of which are ideal for pathway edges and understory infill areas. Their incorporation will increase habitat complexity, improve pollinator resources, and support long-term landscape sustainability while minimizing maintenance and irrigation requirements.

To maintain the integrity and health of the trees at the site, the following is recommended.

- Maintain **mulch rings** and reduce soil compaction around roots.
- Conduct **selective pruning** during dormant months.
- Gradually remove invasive **Ligustrum (Waxleaf Privet; *Ligustrum japonicum*)** and replace it with native species such as **Yaupon Holly (*Ilex vomitoria*)**, **Possumhaw (*Ilex decidua*)**, and **American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*)**.

GROUND LAYER AND GRASSES

A primary landscape maintenance concern at the site is the management of overgrown turf grass and invasive or opportunistic weeds. Existing conditions require frequent mowing and active control measures to maintain accessibility and visual order. Transitioning select areas from conventional turf to native prairie grasses will reduce long-term maintenance demands while improving ecological function. Recommended species include Buffalo Grass (*Bouteloua dactyloides*), Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), and Sideoats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), which function effectively as low-maintenance groundcovers and are well adapted to local climate conditions.

Additional species such as Texas Frogfruit (*Phyla nodiflora*), Purple Tridens (*Tridens flavus)*, and Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) are recommended to increase plant diversity and ground-layer resilience. These species contribute to soil stabilization, reduce erosion, and improve stormwater infiltration, while providing forage and habitat for pollinators and other beneficial wildlife. The incorporation of native groundcover and grass species will support sustainable site management practices and reduce long-term mowing, irrigation, and chemical input requirements.

POLLINATOR AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

Existing trees, shrubs, and ground-layer vegetation at the site provide important habitat for pollinators and wildlife species. Hackberry trees (*Celtis spp.*) support pollinators such as the Hackberry Emperor butterfly (*Asterocampa celtis*), while other observed pollinator species include the Roseate Skimmer (*Orthemis ferruginea*), Tawny Emperor (*Asterocampa clyton)*, and Io Moth (*Automeris io*). These observations indicate functional habitat conditions and highlight the role of diverse vegetation layers in supporting insect life cycles and food webs.

Two garden beds near the center of the cemetery require ongoing maintenance to prevent weed encroachment and to support pollinators and wildlife. One bed, located around the grave of Lottie Simpson, is primarily planted with Swamp Lilies (*Crinum americanum*) and several trees; during a recent cleanup, volunteers added native flowering species, including Green Milkweed (*Asclepias viridis*), Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), and Indian blanket (*Gaillardia pulchella*) to enhance habitat value. The second garden bed had been overtaken by Beggar-ticks (*Bidens* spp.) and Ragweed (*Ambrosia* spp.); these species were removed, and the area was covered with plastic sheeting to solarize the soil in preparation for future planting. Planned native plantings include Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), Purple Prairie Clover (*Dalea purpurea*), and Texas Bluebonnet (*Lupinus texensis*). These improvements will enrich the environment, which is frequently used by pollinators and wildlife, by serving as a vital green corridor that connects surrounding habitats.

In addition to native plant use, management practices such as retaining leaf litter and fallen woody debris, where feasible, will further support site biodiversity. Avoidance of pesticides and overapplication of chemical fertilizers is recommended to protect beneficial insects, amphibians, and avian species, including the Gulf Coast Toad (Incilius nebulifer) and Yellow-crowned Night Heron (Nyctanassa violacea), both of which are indicative of a healthy wetland-edge environment. Additional wildlife observed on-site includes Pond Slider (Trachemys scripta), Rough Earthsnake (Virginia striatula), and Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (Dendrocygna autumnalis). Ongoing vegetation management will prioritize preserving native species, controlling invasive species, and enhancing habitat to reinforce the site's ecological function and cultural landscape identity.

BAYOU HEALTH

The **Country Club Bayou** bordering the cemetery is integral to the site's drainage and ecosystem. However, the bayou is impaired and faces environmental challenges such as **trash accumulation, illegal dumping, stormwater runoff, and bank erosion.**

Threats

- **Dumping and Runoff**: Introduces pollutants that degrade water quality and harm aquatic life.
- **Erosion and Sedimentation**: Reduces water flow efficiency and destabilizes the banks.
- **Wildlife Impacts**: Contaminants threaten wading birds, amphibians, and other species dependent on the bayou.

COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS

- **Litter Removal**: Conduct periodic cleanup events with community partners.
- **Education and Outreach**: Install signage to discourage dumping and explain watershed connections.
- **Vegetative Buffers**: Plant riparian species such as Baldcypress, Water Oak, and Switchgrass to stabilize banks and filter runoff.
- **Partnerships and Analysis**: Collaborate with the City of Houston and local watershed organizations to conduct a hydraulic analysis and, where necessary, explore hardscape stabilization.

Protecting Country Club Bayou supports both the landscape integrity of Dawson Lunnon Cemetery and the health of the broader watershed connecting adjacent neighborhoods. Long-term water-quality monitoring conducted by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) at monitoring site TCEQMAIN-16651 provides valuable baseline data for this tributary, including indicators such as nutrients, bacteria, and dissolved oxygen. The data provides essential context for assessing current conditions, identifying trends, and informing future restoration or management efforts within the bayou's reach.

Dense riparian vegetation along the bayou banks helps stabilize soil and control erosion; however, limited access to some areas has also led to localized dumping and disturbance. By leveraging existing monitoring data and fostering partnerships with local government agencies and community stakeholders, it is possible to enhance restoration outcomes and improve water quality. Recommended strategies include targeted bank stabilization using live stakes, supported by rock-based hardscape where necessary, and expanding riparian plantings beyond existing Pecan and Baldcypress trees. Introducing additional species with higher stability ratings will strengthen bank integrity, improve riparian zone function, and enhance the overall resilience and ecological condition of the Country Club Bayou–Yates Gully–Brays Bayou system.

MAINTENANCE PLAN

Maintaining the cemetery's health and appearance requires consistent care and strategic planning. Routine Maintenance focuses on Stewardship, ensuring the site remains well-kept, and Outreach and Collaboration, engaging partners such as landscape companies, conservation groups, and local services to support ongoing efforts. Complementing this, Planning and Design guides long-term improvements through thoughtful Landscape management and targeted Reconstruction of aging or damaged features, keeping the site ecologically balanced and historically preserved.

STEWARDSHIP

ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

The Friends of Dawson Lunnon have established a maintenance contract with Evergreen to provide consistent landscape and grounds care for the cemetery. Existing maintenance challenges include the rapid growth of opportunistic and invasive vegetation, such as beggar ticks and ragweed, particularly around garden beds and the former church site.

Key routine maintenance tasks include

- Remove invasive vegetation and replace it with native grasses to improve soil stability and habitat.
- Perform routine landscape care, including mowing, trimming, and edging
- Clearing the pathway of weeds, mulching, and removing any litter.
- Inspect grave markers and site features quarterly, with rapid assessments after storms, to identify maintenance needs.

Support from the Texas Conservation Corps has already contributed to these essential maintenance activities, reinforcing long-term site stewardship.
Ongoing services by Evergreen Outdoor Services, combined with volunteer and partner support, will ensure continuity of routine upkeep. Regular monitoring, inspections, and proactive vegetation management will protect cultural resources, enhance ecological function, and sustain the overall operational and aesthetic integrity of the cemetery landscape.

LONG-TERM MAINTENANCE

Over time, management efforts should aim to shift away from the cultural expectation of a highly manicured cemetery appearance. Historically, many cemeteries in Texas were prairie-style landscapes, intended to reflect the natural ecology. Reducing mowing frequency by planting wildflowers and native grasses will conserve funding and promote biodiversity. Consultation with local agricultural extension offices, Master Naturalist chapters, or the Native Plant Society of Texas can help identify species best suited for this site's conditions.

CLEANING AGENTS

All cleaning materials for grave markers shall be EPA Safer Choice–certified products, which meet federal standards for biodegradability and low aquatic toxicity. Only non-acidic, non-abrasive solutions approved for use on stone or metal surfaces shall be applied. These practices minimize potential impacts on surrounding soils, vegetation, and waterways while supporting sustainable, environmentally responsible maintenance.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

All maintenance crews and volunteers should receive training in sustainable landscaping practices, native species identification and care, and historically appropriate preservation methods. Guidance from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, the Native Plant Society of Texas, and local Master Gardener programs should inform plant selection, vegetation management, and long-term maintenance strategies. When invasive species cannot be managed by mechanical or manual means and chemical treatment is required, herbicide application must be conducted exclusively by certified applicators using products approved for use in or near waterways, in accordance with state and federal regulations.

The care and maintenance of monuments, headstones, and other funerary features must follow preservation-sensitive practices to prevent damage to historic stonework. Cleaning methods and materials should align with established conservation standards and avoid abrasive or chemically aggressive techniques.

To support these efforts, the National Park Service's National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT) provides comprehensive resources, including courses, guidelines, articles, and webinars focused on historic cemetery preservation. All Task Force members have completed the NCPTT Cemetery Preservation training. These materials, along with guidance from the Texas Historical Commission, have served as essential references throughout the planning and stewardship process and will continue to inform future site

OUTREACH AND COLLABORATION

To foster community engagement and long-term stewardship, the cemetery will implement outreach initiatives centered on building awareness, connection, and shared responsibility. This will include hosting public events such as guided walks, genealogy workshops, clean-up days, and more, showcasing the cemetery's historical, cultural, and ecological significance. These gatherings will strengthen community ties, attract new volunteers, and raise awareness of preservation needs, complemented by partnerships with local historical societies, environmental organizations, and civic groups.

Additionally, we aim to engage youth and young adults in environmental stewardship through community cleanups and form partnerships with university students, who can assist with mapping the area and documenting its historical and ecological features. This collaborative approach provides valuable learning experiences for students while fostering a sense of responsibility and connection to the heritage and landscapes of their community.

PLANNING AND DESIGN

LANDSCAPE AND IRRIGATION

The cemetery's landscape approach emphasizes sustainability by prioritizing plant species adapted to full or partial sun and requiring minimal supplemental irrigation once established. Drought-tolerant native species are selected for their compatibility with local soil and rainfall conditions, reducing long-term maintenance requirements. During plant establishment or periods of extended drought, low-flow or drip irrigation systems are recommended to minimize water use, reduce runoff into Country Club Bayou, and support sustainable landscape management objectives.

PLANT BEDS

Plant beds should incorporate a mix of native grasses, perennials, and flowering species to provide seasonal color, pollinator habitat, and low-maintenance aesthetic value. Beds should be mulched or planted with groundcovers to suppress weeds, retain soil moisture, and prevent erosion, particularly along slopes and adjacent to the bayou.

NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS AND TRAILS

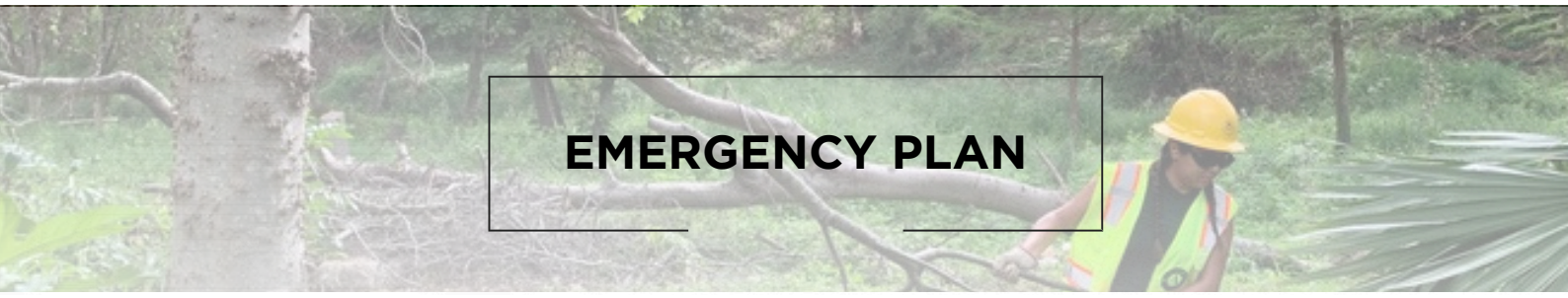
Deep-rooted native vegetation will enhance soil stability, strengthen the connection between the cemetery and Country Club Bayou, and support broader watershed health. Trail and accessibility improvements should follow sustainable design principles. Existing natural pathways descending into the cemetery center can be stabilized with permeable materials and bordered with native plantings, providing safe, inclusive access while maintaining environmental sensitivity.

RECONSTRUCTION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Preservation of the cemetery's historic fabric is central to reconstruction and design planning. The border of the former Mount Gilead Missionary Baptist Church, which remained intact following its demolition in the 1970s, should be stabilized and incorporated into interpretive signage or partial reconstruction, such as rebuilding the foundation or frame footprint. Similarly, the stone stairwell along the pathway requires assessment and restoration to ensure visitor safety and functionality. Collaboration with a qualified landscape designer is recommended for all reconstruction efforts.

INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE

Interpretive signage installed at the site provides educational context regarding the cemetery's cultural and historical significance. Both the signage and historical marker were installed during a cleanup event in collaboration with the Friends of Dawson Lunnon and the Houston Bar Association, supporting community engagement and heritage preservation.



EMERGENCY PLAN

The Emergency Preparedness Plan is vital for safeguarding Houston's historic sites against the city's increasingly severe climate threats. Recognizing that both recurring and future hazards jeopardize irreplaceable resources, the plan establishes emergency protocols, strategic communication channels, and coordinated planning, ensuring the site's stewards can respond swiftly and effectively when disasters strike. Equally crucial, comprehensive post-disaster assessment and recovery procedures provide a structured framework for evaluating damage, prioritizing stabilization, and guiding restoration, thereby protecting the site's legacy for generations to come.

REGIONAL CLIMATE AND EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

REGIONAL CLIMATE

Houston's climate exposes the site to a variety of natural disasters that jeopardize environmental stability and public safety. Seasonal tropical storms and hurricanes, most common from June through November, have repeatedly affected the area by causing trees to uproot and fall, damage branches, and block pathways across the property.

Flash flooding is also prevalent, with rapid stormwater buildup leading to soil erosion, exposed roots, and unstable slopes. These factors heighten the risk of tree failure and further threaten site accessibility and integrity. In every emergency, personal safety is paramount; no assessment or restoration work should begin until qualified personnel or authorities have declared the conditions safe.

EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS

This emergency protocol provides a framework for preparing, responding to, and recovering from hazardous conditions at Dawson Lunnon Cemetery. Given the cemetery's low-lying landscape and proximity to surrounding urban infrastructure, the protocol places particular emphasis on risks from flash flooding and field-related hazards, including downed power lines and fallen trees. These procedures are intended to safeguard visitors, volunteers, and staff while supporting the protection and long-term stewardship of the site's resources**.**

FLASH FLOODS

Dawson Lunnon Cemetery is vulnerable to flash flooding during heavy rainfall events. Floodwaters may rise quickly and obscure ground conditions and disturb graves, headstones, or debris. When heavy rain or flood warnings are issued, all scheduled site activities should be postponed. If flooding occurs while individuals are on site, work must stop immediately.

Personnel should move to higher ground and exit the cemetery via the safest, most accessible route, avoiding standing or flowing water. Floodwaters may conceal hazards such as open ground, sharp debris, or displaced markers. Vehicles should not be driven through flooded areas. Once floodwaters have receded, reentry to the site should only occur after a visual safety assessment confirms that paths, ground surfaces, and structures are stable.

Following a flood event, a post-disaster assessment should document erosion, displaced markers, sediment deposition, vegetation damage, and any impacts on graves or infrastructure before restoration or cleanup begins.

DOWNED POWER LINE

Downed or low-hanging power lines present an extreme and potentially fatal hazard. If a power line is observed on or near the cemetery grounds, all individuals must maintain a safe distance and avoid contact with the line, nearby vegetation, fences, or standing water that may be energized.

The area should be cleared immediately, and no attempt should be made to move debris or secure the site in the vicinity of the line. Emergency services and the local utility provider should be contacted as soon as possible. The hazard should be clearly communicated to the cemetery association or site coordinator, who will restrict access until the line is confirmed de-energized and removed by professionals. Activities may resume only after the area has been officially declared safe.

TREE DEBRIS

Severe weather or soil instability may cause trees or large limbs to fall, potentially damaging headstones, graves, fences, or pathways. If a fallen tree or unstable limb is identified, individuals should keep a safe distance and avoid walking beneath partially suspended or leaning trees. Work in the affected area should stop immediately. The site coordinator should be notified to assess the hazard and determine whether professional tree removal or arborist services are required. Volunteers and staff should not attempt to cut, move, or stabilize large trees or limbs. Any damage to historic features should be documented with photographs and written notes prior to removal or repairs, when it is safe to do so.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

In the event of an emergency or hazardous condition, appropriate authorities should be contacted immediately:

- Law Enforcement: Harris County Constable Precinct 6 or the Houston Police Department (nearest substation)
- Fire and Rescue Services: Houston Fire Department, Station 20 or Station 18
- Environmental or Infrastructure Concerns: City of Houston Service Helpline – 311

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE:
In a medical emergency or injury, call emergency services immediately if it's serious or life-threatening. Basic first aid may be administered by trained individuals if conditions are safe. The injured person should not be moved unless necessary to prevent further harm. Other site participants should clear the area to allow first responders access. All incidents should be reported to the cemetery association or site coordinator and documented for future safety planning.

- Non-Emergency Medical Services: Legacy Community Health – Santa Clara
- Emergency Medical Response: Call 911 in the event of severe injury or life-threatening situations

Friends of Dawson Lunnon

- In any event, the Friends of Dawson Lunnon should also be notified
- Determine an Emergency/Disaster Coordinator as a point of Contact

All emergency calls and incident reports should be documented in the site's Emergency Response Log for recordkeeping and post-incident analysis.

EVACUATION AND ASSEMBLY PROCEDURES

Should on-site evacuation be required, personnel and visitors should proceed to the nearest designated assembly area:

- Primary Assembly Area: Clearing 200 ft west of the cemetery
- Secondary Assembly Area: Family Thrift Store, located at the intersection of Polk Street and State Highway 90
- Tertiary Evacuation Point: Magnolia Multi Service Center, located at the intersection of Capitol Street and South 71st Street, 1.3 miles from the site

Supervising personnel should confirm attendance, identify missing individuals, and communicate with emergency services from these safe locations.

POST-DISASTER ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSE

Once a disaster event has concluded, post-disaster recovery efforts should be initiated in a coordinated, systematic, and safety-focused manner. Initial actions should prioritize assessing site accessibility and identifying potential hazards, in coordination with appropriate emergency authorities and the cemetery association. A comprehensive documentation of site conditions should then be conducted to record damage to landscape features, infrastructure, and historic resources. Following assessment and documentation, stabilization measures, restoration activities, and necessary repairs may proceed to protect public safety, prevent further deterioration, and preserve the overall integrity of the cemetery.

EMERGENCY SITE ACCESS

Following a disaster, an assessor should evaluate access to the cemetery to ensure safe entry and operations. Using sound judgment and established safety protocols, the assessor should consider environmental factors, such as fallen trees, flooding, or unstable ground conditions, as well as mechanical or artificial hazards, such as downed power lines, damaged structures, or chemical spills, that may block or endanger the access route from Kemp Street.

If access is obstructed, coordination with local emergency management agencies, certified tree removal services, or the appropriate utility company may be required to safely remove hazards and secure the area. Collaboration with neighboring property owners and community members can further support efforts to clear debris, restore entry routes, and maintain safety during recovery operations.

DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

A rapid site assessment should be conducted to determine accessibility and safety following a disaster. This assessment identifies the extent of damage to the site and helps guide immediate response actions. Thorough documentation, including detailed notes and labeled, captioned photographs, should be maintained to create accurate records that can be shared with the cemetery association.

Local environmental firms that specialize in post-disaster recovery can assist with site assessments and provide guidance on restoration and repair efforts to ensure the site's preservation and safety.

RESTORATION AND HAZARD MITIGATION

Following an assessment, engage qualified vegetation management firms to conduct tree removal and pruning as needed to address debris and damaged vegetation. Coordinate with additional contractors to manage structural hazards, implement erosion control, and stabilize soils in areas affected by flooding or washouts.

Contact Harris County Flood Control and environmental firms as necessary to support vegetation restoration, report drainage and waterway concerns, and overall site recovery. Previous restoration efforts have utilized tree landscaping companies, Texas Conservation Corps crews, and BPA staff to safely remove debris and restore site conditions.
All work must adhere to established safety standards and preservation best practices to maintain the long-term stability and integrity of the site.

REPAIRS

Begin phased site restoration activities according to best management practices to enhance environmental recovery and safeguard cultural resources. Any damaged structures or site boundaries will be repaired or replaced as necessary.

Consulting with a cultural resource specialist and trained personnel is essential for maintaining these burial markers. They can provide guidance and perform repairs, as well as recommend proper cleaning methods in the National Park Service and the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training (NCPTT).

Volunteers can help with minor repairs and cleaning under the guidance of specialists by participating in educational workshops. This hands-on experience ensures that proper procedures are followed and that no harm is done during the process. However, graves that are more severely damaged, such as those with cracks in the markers, sinking, or significant leaning, will need to connect with local partners with professional experience in restoring grave markers.

TIMELINE

With the implementation of a comprehensive Master Plan, the goal is to preserve and steward Dawson Lunnon Cemetery for generations to come. The following timeline outlines the phased approach for planning, restoration, and long-term care of the site.

Phase 1: Foundation and Planning
- Assemble a multidisciplinary Task Force representing a range of professional backgrounds and expertise
- Install educational and historical signage
- Establish a routine maintenance schedule

Phase 2: Site Assessment and Protection
- Remove invasive plant species
- Map the site and identify burial locations and remaining features

Phase 3: Restoration and Stabilization
- Implement planting and landscape beautification efforts
- Conduct an engineering assessment and address erosion control needs

Phase 4: Long-Term Stewardship
- Develop a long-term stewardship and management plan
- Establish an endowment to support ongoing care and preservation

Phase 5: Master Plan Completion
- Finalize and submit the Master Plan
- Continue stakeholder engagement and partner collaboration to refine and advance preservation goals

As stakeholder involvement and partnerships continue to grow, the Master Plan will remain a living document, evolving to reflect community input and best practices for preservation. With generous funding from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the collaboration of Friends of Dawson Lunnon Cemetery, project partners, and community contributors, meaningful progress has already been made. This effort honors those interred at Dawson Lunnon Cemetery while strengthening the connection between history, nature, and people. Preserving this sacred and historic place is both a responsibility and a privilege.

CONTRIBUTORS

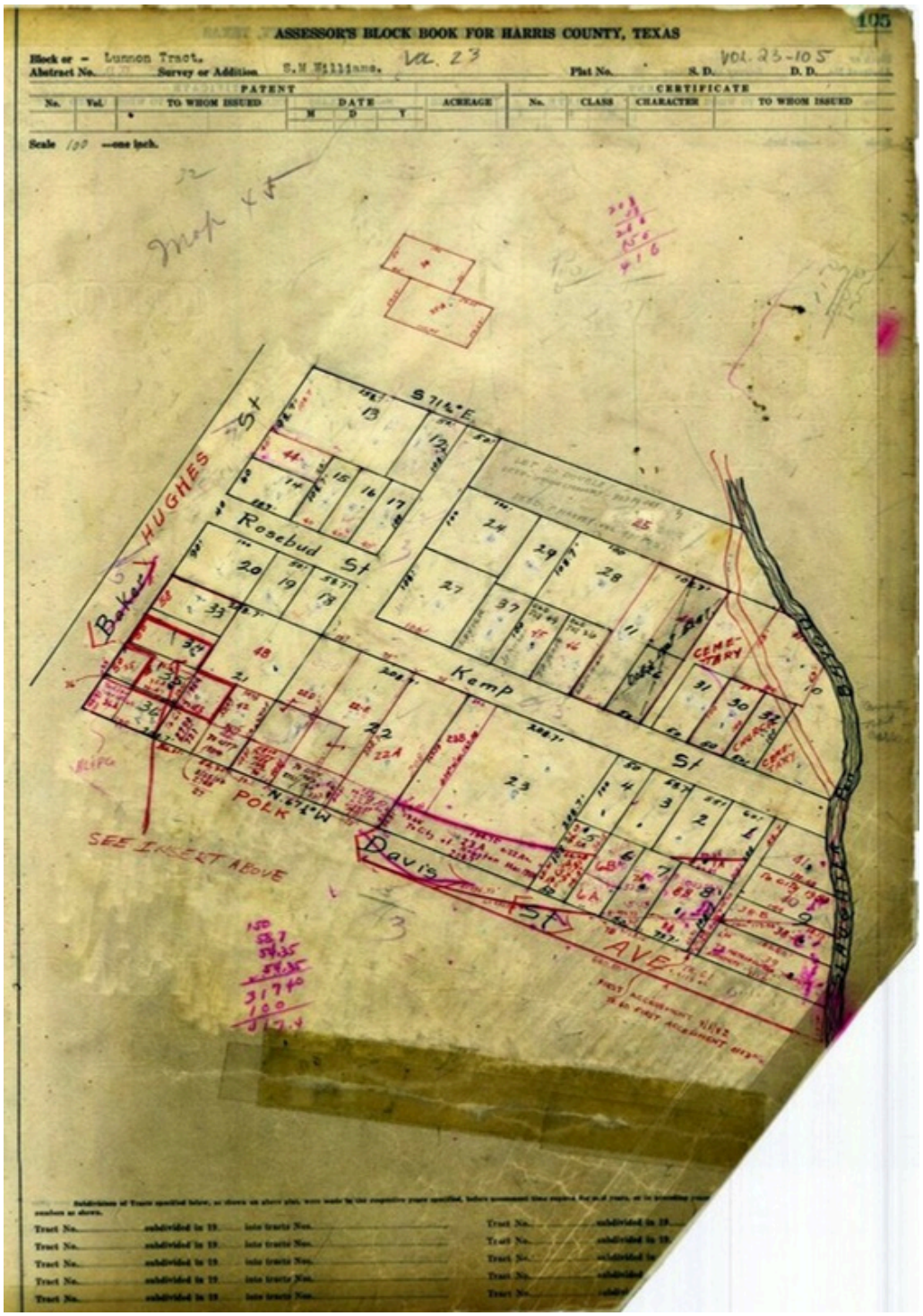
This initiative owes its progress to the guidance, resources, and funding provided by the following organizations and their members. We are eager to continue collaborating with current partners and to broaden our network by establishing meaningful relationships with new stakeholders.

- Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society's Houston Chapter
  - https://htown.aahgs.org/content.aspx?_page_id=22&club_id=623005&module_id=657991
- Buffalo Soldiers Museum
  - https://buffalosoldiersmuseum.org/
- City of Houston Recycling Center
  - https://houstontx.gov/solidwaste/recycling_centers.html
- David Janowitz
- Evergreen Negro Cemetery
  - https://houstonhistoricevergreennegrocemetery.com/
- Evergreen Outdoor Services
  - https://evergreenlawncaretx.com/
- Friends of Dawson Lunnon
  - https://www.facebook.com/groups/909983083461502/
- Glenwood Cemetery
  - https://www.glenwoodcemetery.org/
- Harris County Flood Control
  - https://www.hcfcd.org/
- Houston Archeological Society
  - https://www.txhas.org/
- Houston Bar Association
  - https://www.hba.org/
- Jera Americas
  - https://jeraamericas.com/
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
  - savingplaces.org
- Native American Seed
  - https://seedsource.com/
- Native Plant Society
  - https://www.npsot.org/
- Olivewood Cemetery
  - https://www.descendantsofolivewood.org/
- Signs.com
- Texas Conservation Corps
  - https://americanyouthworks.org/

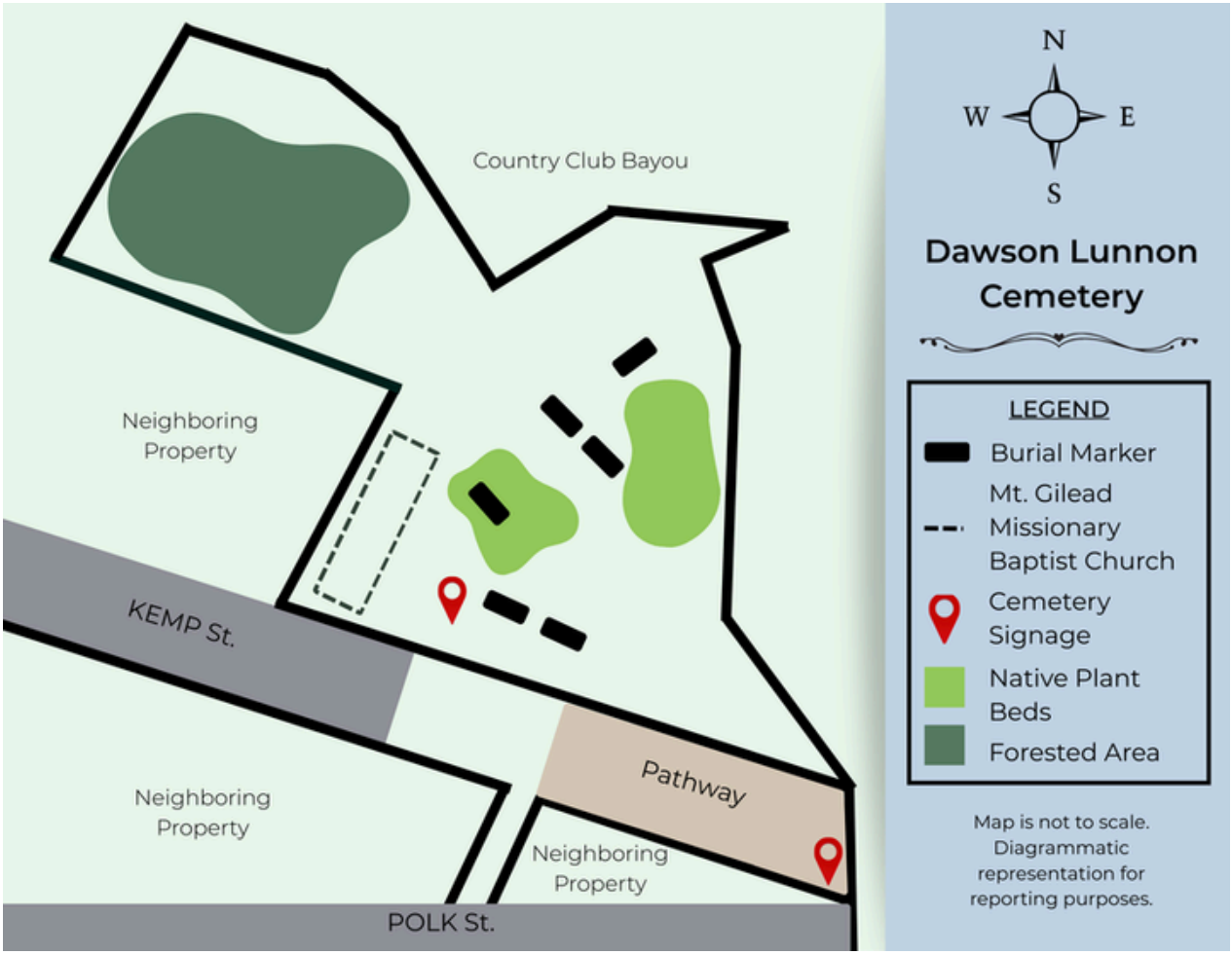
MAPS AND PHOTOS

MAPS

This page from the Assessor's Block Book for Harris County, Texas, shows the surrounding plots around Dawson Lunnon Cemetery and markings in red.



MAPS CONT.



PHOTOS

The site serves as a valuable learning environment, where Texas Conservation Corps stewards observe the bayou and learn about watershed health during Texas Stream Team training.

PHOTOS CONT.

In observance of Juneteenth, visitors toured the cemetery to honor those laid to rest there.

The historical marker for Dawson Lunnon Cemetery was installed during a community cleanup held on Saturday, September 27, 2025.

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WE EXTEND OUR SINCERE GRATITUDE TO THE VOLUNTEERS, PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS, AND SPECIALISTS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO DAWSON LUNNON AND THE PRESERVATION OF THIS HISTORIC SITE; THIS WORK WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THEIR COLLECTIVE EFFORTS.

RESOURCES

There are numerous resources available to support preservation, conservation, and planning efforts for historic sites. While the following list is not exhaustive, these resources were particularly valuable in informing the research, assessment, and planning processes for the Dawson Lunnon Cemetery. They provided guidance on best practices, regulatory considerations, and long-term stewardship strategies essential to the site's preservation.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

- Arches Project (Archaeological and Heritage Management System)
  - https://www.archesproject.org/what-is-arches/
- Association for Gravestone Studies (AGS)
  - https://www.gravestonestudies.org/welcome/about
- Gaitz Memorial, Monument Repair and Conservation
  - https://gaitzmemorials.com/monument-repair/
- National Alliance of Preservation Commissions, Resources
  - https://www.napcommissions.org/resources
- National Park Service (NPS), Cemetery Preservation Course
  - https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/cemetery-preservation-course-master-plan.htm
- National Park Service (NPS), Preserving Grave Markers in Historic Cemeteries (Preservation Brief 48)
  - https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-48-grave-markers.pdf
- Texas Historical Commission (THC), Cemetery Disaster Plan Guidelines
  - https://thc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/HTC_Webinar3_Pre_Disaster_Plan.pdf
- Texas Historical Commission (THC), Cemetery Preservation
  - https://thc.texas.gov/preserve/preservation-programs/cemetery-preservation
- Texas Historical Commission (THC), Guide – Locating Unmarked Graves (PDF)
  - https://thc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2024-06/HTC_Locating_Unmarked_Graves.pdf

NATURAL RESOURCES

- Buchanan's Native Plants
  - https://buchanansplants.com/
- Harris County Flood Control
  - https://www.hcfcd.org/
- iNaturalist
  - https://www.inaturalist.org/
- Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
  - https://www.wildflower.org/
- Soil Solarization for Gardens & Landscapes
  - https://ipm.ucanr.edu/home-and-landscape/soil-solarization-for-gardens-landscapes/
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
  - https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu/

NATURAL RESOURCES CONT.

- United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), How's My Waterway
  - https://mywaterway.epa.gov
- Xerces Society, Habitat Assessment Guide for Pollinators in Yards, Gardens, and Parks
  - https://xerces.org/publications/habitat-assessment-guides/habitat-assessment-guide-for-pollinators-in-yards-gardens
- Xerces Society, Urban Habitat Checklist
  - https://xerces.org/sites/default/files/publications/19-050_02_Xerces-Urban-Habitat-Checklist_web.pdf

RECORDS AND DATA

- Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research
  - https://houstonlibrary.org/fhrc
- Fondren Library, Rice University (Special Collections and Archives)
  - https://archives.library.rice.edu/repositories/2/archival_objects/263297
- Harris County Archives
  - http://www.harriscountyarchives.com/
- National Archives
  - https://www.archives.gov/
- Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO)
  - https://txarchives.org/search/subject_topics=%20Tuberculosis&subject_topics=Health%20care%20and%20medicine
- The Portal to Texas History
  - https://texashistory.unt.edu/
- United States Census Bureau
  - https://data.census.gov/

FORMS

- NCPTT Cemetery Survey,
  - https://link.edgepilot.com/s/06dda005/uXw8cl9XS06uveyO-_Ro_A?u=https://www.nps.gov/subjects/ncptt/upload/NCPTT-CEMETERY-SURVEY-FORM.pdf
- NCPTT's Rapid Cemetery Assessment Form,
  - https://thc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/HTC_Webinar4_NCPTT_Rapid_Cemetery_Assessment.pdf
- Conservator Report (or Treatment Report),
  - https://thc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/2023-12/HTC_Webinar5_Conservator_Form.pdf