

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****August 16, 2022**

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SUBJECT: HISTORIC CEMETERIES IN FORT WORTH

This report provides an overview of historic cemeteries in Fort Worth, the City's role with historic cemeteries, and options for protecting historic cemeteries for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

A cemetery is eligible for historic designation if it is at least 50 years old and is deemed worthy of recognition for its historical associations, according to the Texas Historical Commission (THC). There are 34 historic cemeteries within Fort Worth city limits, all of which are privately owned. The oldest cemetery in Fort Worth is Pioneers Rest Cemetery, which was established in 1850, shortly after Fort Worth was founded. Most of the historic cemeteries in Fort Worth are located within Loop 820.

Enforcement responsibility of cemetery laws belongs to county and municipal governments. If a cemetery is more than 50 years old, then any Texas county commissioner's court can use public funds, employees, and county inmates to help maintain the cemetery as long as the cemetery is not a perpetual care cemetery and not owned by a religious or fraternal organization. In Tarrant County, the Tarrant County Historical Commission maintains cemetery maps and a complete list of cemeteries in the county. It advises historic preservation groups and local government entities on state laws that protect historic cemeteries, and promotes the protection and maintenance of neglected burial sites in Tarrant County.

Texas state law grants a city the authority to acquire and improve cemeteries in the county where the city is located. The City of Fort Worth does not own or maintain any historic cemeteries. New cemeteries are not allowed in the City, but an existing cemetery may be expanded.

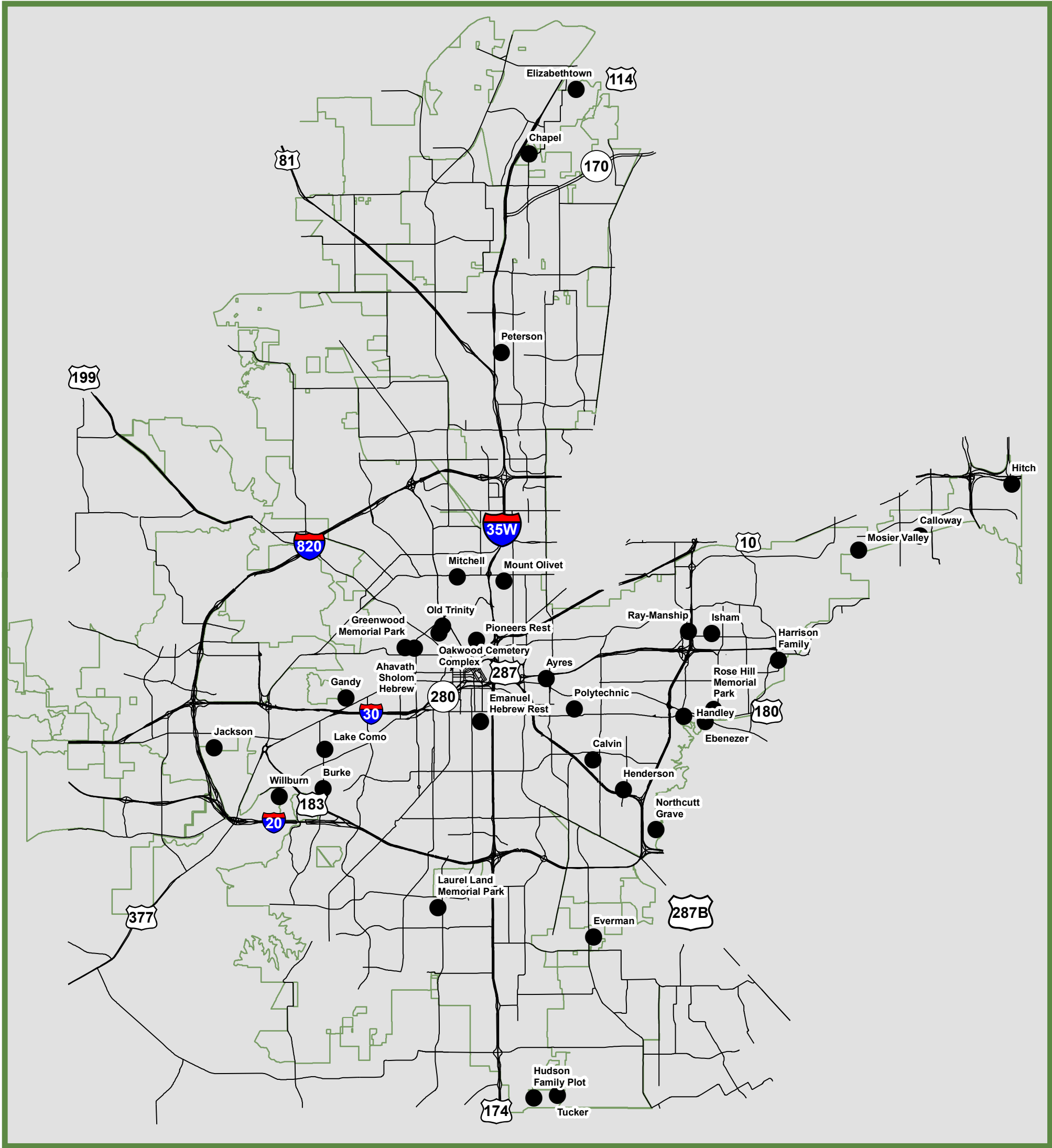
Historic cemeteries can be protected through historic designation on several levels. All cemeteries over 50 years old are eligible for local City historic designation, so long as they meet at least two of the criteria for significance and the criteria for integrity. Some cemeteries have a local historic designation, such as Mount Olivet Cemetery, which is designated Demolition Delay. Other cemeteries are listed in the National Register of Historic Places due to their national significance, such as Pioneers Rest Cemetery. However, listing a historic cemetery in the National Register does not confer the same protections as a local Historic & Cultural Landmarks designation.

THC grants are available to assist with maintenance, rehabilitation, and preservation of historic cemeteries. The THC awards matching grant funds from the Texas Preservation Trust Fund (TPTF) for acquisition, survey, restoration, preservation, planning, and heritage education activities leading to the preservation of historic properties. Also, since the City of Fort Worth is a Certified Local Government (CLG) within the Texas Historical Commission's CLG program, historic cemeteries are eligible for matching CLG grant funds each year. One recent example of a CLG grant was given to a historic cemetery in 2019 in Nueces County. Nueces County and the Friends of Old Bayview Cemetery Association partnered with a preservation consultant to complete a National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Old Bayview Cemetery. Listing in the National Register of Historic Places brings awareness to historic cemeteries, and also makes them eligible for other preservation grant opportunities.

If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Leal – Zoning and Design Review Assistant Director at 817-392-6214 or Justin Newhart – Historic Preservation Officer, at 817-392-8037.

David Cooke
City Manager

Cemeteries in the City of Fort Worth



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