

**Proposed Guidelines for Cemetery Interpretation, Local Landmark  
Designation, and/or Acquisition by the Town of Boone**

**Historic Preservation Commission  
October 28, 2021**

***The Boone Historic Preservation Commission shall rely upon these guidelines in determining whether to recommend a gravesite or cemetery for interpretation through a permanent historical marker or panel, for local historic landmark designation, and/or for action by the Town of Boone pursuant to its authority with respect to abandoned cemeteries under G.S. 160A-344***

As described in the attached guidance from the NC SHPO, properties being considered for Local Historic Landmark designation must be able to demonstrate both **significance** and **integrity** in a particular Area of Significance under at least one of four Criteria:

**Criterion A:** A property associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history through either or both of two types of events, i.e., 1) a specific event marking an important moment in American pre-history or history, and 2) a pattern of events or a historic trend that made a significant contribution to the development of a community, a state, or the nation.

**Criterion B:** A property associated with an individual or individuals whose specific contributions to history can be identified and documented as being significant to our past.

**Criterion C:** A property that embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

**Criterion D:** A property that has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history (typically archaeological sites).

In addition, state ordinance requires that a report or study on the proposed property must be prepared using “objective evidence and research” and presented to the local governing authority *before* the property is designated as a Local Historic Landmark.

Generally speaking (with some minor exceptions involving defining characteristics of integrity), the NC SHPO will evaluate proposals for Local Historic Landmark designation based on the same guidelines used to evaluate properties for consideration for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). These NRHP guidelines subsequently identify certain kinds of properties that are not usually

considered for NRHP listing unless they meet special standards called Criteria Considerations (along with the usual requirements for NRHP listing). Two Criteria Considerations have the potential to apply to cemeteries and/or gravesites: Criterion Consideration C (Birthplaces and Graves) and Criterion Consideration D (Cemeteries).

**Criteria Consideration C:** A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance may be eligible if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life.

*Under Criteria Consideration C*, individual graves that are nominated for their association with a merely “significant” person (as defined under Criterion B) who is buried in the grave typically are not eligible for the NRHP. There are three caveats to this rule:

1) A grave located on the grounds of the house where a “significant” person spent his or her productive years is typically considered to be a contributing element of the property if the house is also nominated to the NRHP for its association with that significant individual’s period of significance and productivity.

2) The phrase “a historical figure of outstanding importance” means an individual person who was of outstanding importance in the history of the local area, state, or nation. The grave of an individual who was one of several people merely “significant” to or active in some aspect of the history of a community, a state, or the nation would not be eligible.

3) When a geographical area strongly associated with a person of “outstanding importance” has lost all other properties directly associated with his or her formative years or productive life, a grave may be eligible.

4) A grave may be eligible for its association with important events under Criterion A, its association with the productive lives of OTHER important persons under Criterion B, or its association with design significance under Criterion C. A single grave can also be eligible under Criterion D if it contains important information regarding demography, pathology, mortuary practices, socioeconomic status differentiation, etc.

5) Finally, in some rare cases, a grave may also be eligible under Criteria Consideration F (Commemorative Properties) if the site has established its own significance based on its own value and not as a result of the value of the person being memorialized. Typically, this significance will be based upon design, age, tradition, or symbolic value of the site itself. A good example is a gravesite that has become, in its own right, a pilgrimage site for a cultural group where commemorative events are traditionally held on a regular basis.

**Criteria Consideration D:** A cemetery that derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events.

*Under Criteria Consideration D*, any cemetery that is nominated under Criteria A, B, C, or D must meet the higher standards of Criteria Consideration D. There are several caveats for the application of Criteria Consideration D:

- 1) A cemetery containing the graves of persons of “transcendent importance” may be eligible. To be considered of “transcendent importance,” individuals must have been of great eminence in their fields of endeavor or have had a great impact upon the history of their community, state, or nation.
- 2) A single grave of a “historical figure of outstanding importance” or an individual of “transcendent importance,” located in a larger cemetery that does not otherwise qualify under this Criteria Consideration, should be nominated for landmark designation as a single gravesite, rather than nominating the entire cemetery. A historic cemetery containing the graves of a number of persons who were exceptionally significant in determining the historical course of a community, state, or nation usually would be eligible for nomination in its entirety.
- 3) Cemeteries that have achieved historic significance for their relative great age in a particular geographic or cultural context may be eligible.
- 4) Cemeteries that exhibit design values addressed in Criterion C are typically eligible under this Criteria Consideration. The introduction of modern grave markers that disrupt the cemetery’s ability to convey these design values may be a bar to eligibility.
- 5) Cemeteries associated with specific, important, historic events, or cemeteries associated with general events that illustrate important, broad patterns of history, are typically eligible under this Criteria Consideration. For example, a cemetery with a direct association to a Civil War battle (the battle was fought there, for instance, or it contains exclusively the graves of those killed in that battle) would be eligible. Similarly, a cemetery associated with the settlement of an area by an ethnic or cultural group that had an important impact on the area may be eligible, particularly if other resources associated with that group are no longer extant or no longer retain integrity.
- 6) Cemeteries may be eligible if they have the potential to yield important information (Criterion D), typically in an archaeological manner about demography, pathology, mortuary practices, socioeconomic status differentiation, etc.
- 7) Only that portion of a historic cemetery that retains its historic integrity can be eligible for landmark designation.