

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
Historic Preservation

**Brighton**

## Pioneer Cemetery Historic Landmark Designation

City Council –  
November 1, 2022

Applicant:  
Property Owner:  
City Staff Representative:

Travis Haines - City of Brighton  
City of Brighton  
Emma Lane, Senior Planner – Historic Preservation

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## Strategic Focus Areas

- Recognizable and Well-Planned Community
- Facilities, Amenities, and Open Space



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## Subject Property Location

- The Property is generally located to the east of Bromley Lane, and to the north of East 148th Avenue.



Aerial Map

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## Purpose

- The request is to designate the Pioneer Cemetery as a local historic landmark.

## Process

- The *Land Use & Development Code* allows for a historic landmark designation at the local level.
- Staff used the review criteria outlined in the *Land Use & Development Code* Section 10.03 C. 2. to review the proposal.

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## Background

The Property:

- Was the family cemetery for the James Blundell and Thomas Donelson families.
- Was originally owned by James Blundell, friend and business partner of Thomas Donelson.
- Was owned by Mary E. Black, and was sold to Thomas Donelson in 1891.
- Was annexed into the City in 1987, 100 years after Brighton was incorporated.
- Was in the Donelson family (James and Hattie McCoy) until 2002 when it was sold to the City.



Descendants of James Blundell with his headstone at the Pioneer Cemetery, June 3, 1971. (On the far left is William Blundell, the grandson of the Brighton Pioneer)

History of Brighton Colorado and Surrounding Area (1887-1987)

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## History

- The Blundell and Donelson families made their way to Brighton, arriving in 1860.
- James Blundell and Thomas Donelson staked claims next to each other, with the cemetery on the Blundell property.
- James Blundell's wife Mary was the first to be buried in the cemetery, after passing in 1863. He left the Brighton area in the early 1870s for Southern Colorado. He returned in 1884, after becoming ill, and died shortly after. He passed three years before Brighton was incorporated.
- Thomas Donelson's wife Laura died in 1864 and is the second to be buried in the cemetery. Thomas continued to farm his original claim and also became a brick maker. Buildings in early Denver and Brighton were built with Thomas Donelson's bricks.
- Most of the men, women and children buried in the cemetery were part of the Blundell and Donelson families, or were close family friends.

History of Brighton Colorado and Surrounding Area (1887-1987)

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## Comprehensive Plan

- The Subject Property is designated as Parks & Open Space, which is consistent with the current and future use of the land as a historic cemetery.



Future Land Use Map




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## Comprehensive Plan



- Chapter Two: Current Context and Values**
  - Heritage
- Chapter Four: Citywide Principles, Policies & Strategies**
  - Policy 9.2 - Educate Tourists and Residents on the Availability of Tourism Activities
  - Policy 10.1 - Encourage and Support Historic Preservation and Reuse of Existing Structures

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## Land Use & Development Code

In making its decision, the City Council shall use the following criteria (Section 10.03 A.):

**Policy.** It is the Policy and intent of the City Council to protect and enhance the use of cultural resources having historical and architectural significance for the City's cultural, artistic, environmental, social, economic, political, architectural, historic or other heritage.

**Intent.** This Section is intended to promote the public health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the City while also providing for the orderly and appropriate preservation, protection, development and redevelopment of cultural resources, including historically significant properties, structures and districts in the City. It is also the intent of this Section to create a reasonable balance between private property rights and the public interest in preserving the City's unique historical character.

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## Land Use & Development Code

In making its decision, the City Council shall use the following criteria (Section 10.03 B. 1.):

- Historic Landmark Eligibility.** An individual property may be designated as a historic landmark if it is at least fifty (50) years old and possesses historic and/or architectural significance. If the property is not at least fifty (50) years old, it must possess exceptional historic and/or architectural significance. The finding of historic and/or architectural significance requires that the property meets at least one (1) of the Eligibility Categories. To meet an Eligibility Category, at least one (1) of the criteria must be satisfied. In order to find that a property possesses exceptional historic and/or architectural significance, it must meet at least two (2) of the following Eligibility Categories. The criteria under which the Pioneer Cemetery is eligible are as follows:

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## Land Use & Development Code

- Architectural Category:** In order to be considered significant in the Architectural Category, at least one (1) of the following criteria must be met:
  - exemplifies specific distinguishing characteristics of an architectural period or style; or
  - is an example of the work of an architect or builder who is recognized for expertise nationally, state-wide, regionally or locally; or
  - demonstrates superior craftsmanship or high artistic value; or
  - contains elements of architectural design, detail, materials, construction or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or
  - evidences a style particularly associated with the Brighton area.



Photo Courtesy of Rich Knapfel

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## Land Use & Development Code

- Social and Historic Category:** In order to be considered significant in the Social and Historic Category, at least one (1) of the following criteria must be met:
  - is the site of an historic event that had an effect upon society; or
  - exemplifies cultural, political, economic or social heritage of the community; or
  - represents a built environment of a group of people in an era of history; or
  - has significant character, interest or value, as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, State, or nation; or
  - has an association with a notable person(s) or the work of a notable person(s).



William and Mary (Donelson) Blundell, 1895  
Forgotten Post of Adams County, Vol. II

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## Land Use & Development Code

c. *Geographic and Environmental Category:* In order to be considered significant in the Geographic and Environmental Category, at least one (1) of the following criteria must be met:

1. enhances a sense of identity of the community; or
2. by being part of, or related to, a square, park or other distinctive area which should be developed or preserved according to a plan based on an historic, cultural, or architectural motif; or
3. is unique in its location of singular physical characteristics; or
4. possesses unique and notable historic, cultural or architectural motifs; or
5. is an established and familiar mutual setting or visual feature of the community.



*Photo Courtesy of Rich Krauffer*

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## Public Notice and Comment

- Public Notice was provided in accordance with the *Land Use & Development Code*.
- On August 23<sup>rd</sup>
  - Two signs were posted on the Subject Property.
  - Written notice was mailed to the property owner of the Subject Property.
  - Notice was published on the City's Website.
- Staff has not received any formal comments in advance of this hearing.
- City staff posted information for the public hearing on various social media sites.

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## Summary of Findings

- ✓ Appropriate staff has reviewed this project and recommends approval.
- ✓ Staff finds the Historic Landmark Designation in general compliance with the requirements as outlined in the *Land Use & Development Code*.
- ✓ Staff finds the Historic Landmark Designation in compliance with the goals and objective set forth by the Comprehensive Plan.
- ✓ The Historic Preservation Commission heard the request on September 8, 2022 and recommended approval with a 4-0 vote with one abstaining.

## City Staff Recommendation

- ✓ Staff recommends approval of the Pioneer Cemetery Historic Landmark Designation.

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## Options for the City Council

- ☐ Approve the Historic Landmark Designation as presented via ordinance;
- ☐ Approve the Historic Landmark Designation with changes to the drafted ordinance;
- ☐ Deny the Historic Landmark Designation with specific findings to justify the denial; or
- ☐ Continue the Historic Landmark Designation to be heard at a later, specified date if the Council feels it needs additional information to ensure compliance with the approval criteria as set forth in the *Land Use & Development Code*.

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