Fondren Fellows

Project Title: Olivewood Cemetery Mapping Project

Brief Summary:
We would like to work with a self-motivated student with strong ArcGIS and communication skills. The student will work with the community group Descendants of Olivewood Cemetery to create a basemap of the cemetery via on the ground GIS data collection, marrying this with biographical information collected by the Descendants. Along with a basemap, the final project will include a StoryMap that will highlight the history of those interred.

Project Description:

Olivewood Cemetery is an historic Black cemetery located at 1300 Summer St. It is maintained by volunteers and suffers from the environmental effects of building encroachment and its proximity to White Oak Bayou.

The fellow working on this project will be provided a map of the cemetery, photographs of the grave markers, and a spreadsheet of relevant data related to the residents. Because of the space's size, the fellow will need to use a GPS device or an app via ArcGIS to create the coordinates for each plot. After the ArcGIS map is complete, using the data provided, which includes information like (occupation, veteran status, founders, birth/death dates, political activists, etc.) the fellow will craft a narrative of the cemetery and the descendants using a StoryMap.

At a basic level, this project will enhance people's abilities to find information about relatives located in the cemetery. It also offers the fellow a chance to work with community members. Furthermore, some of Olivewood Cemetery's graves are falling into the bayou. This map will help provide an important snapshot of the cemetery in 2025/2026.

Considering that the map, images of the grave markers, and the data for this project will be close to a finished state by August, this should be a doable project for a fellow, assuming that they have to time to devote at least 10 hours per week to the project.

After the map is complete, the fellow will present the map at a panel including the Olivewood volunteers.

Why is this project appropriate for the Fondren Fellows program? How does it advance Outline the key tasks that the Fondren Fellow(s) would work on.

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What qualifications would you expect from students working on this project?

The student needs to have ArcGIS and StoryMap experience, as well as a Humanities background which will assist in creating the narrative.

What would students learn through their participation in this project?

They would learn:
- How to produce a body of work for Houston community members
- How to gather coordinates for a small-scale area
- How to finalize data for a large dataset
- How to create a narrative that deals with sensitive subject matter
- How to present their work to an audience