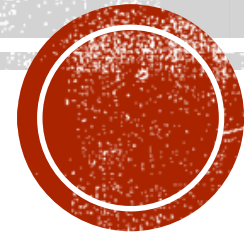
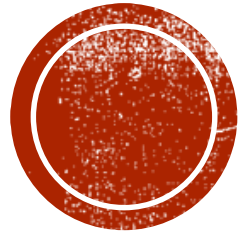


CITY OF AUSTIN CEMETERIES

Cemetery Rules Update 2016





PROJECT GOALS



PURPOSE

- The Parks and Recreation Department must respond to Council Resolution No. 20131017-042 to establish updated cemetery rules, through a public engagement process, with a plan for implementation and enforcement.



GOALS OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

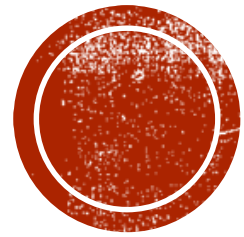
- The goal of the community engagement strategy is to partner with the public in each aspect of the decision making, including the development of alternatives and identification of preferred solutions.
- We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.



WE SEEK TO...

- Gain mutual understanding of public input provided in the past to address key issues and concerns.
- Educate cemetery stakeholders on industry standards and “best practices” in cemetery management.
- Develop updated rules with consideration of stakeholder input, allowing ornamentation that is appropriate and respects cultural expressions of grief.
- Create an appropriate process for enforcement of updated cemetery rules.
- Find common ground between public desire and feasibility.
- Educate public on the governmental process for rules development.





PROJECT BACKGROUND

What we've heard...

OPPOSING VIEWS

- Citizens often have opposite views about what a cemetery should look like or who may not understand another culture or religion's traditions. Typical responses during the public engagement process included:
- The existing rules prohibiting grave decorations should be enforced, and limited or no decorations should be allowed.
- The existing rules are overreaching; stakeholders should be able to place anything they want on the space that they have purchased



IMPLEMENTATION CONCERNS

- Citizens also expressed concerns about how the rules would be implemented, and how decisions could be appealed. Specifically, stakeholders expressed that:
 - The City needs to have a process for notifying stakeholders in advance before removing items from graves.
 - The City should provide a process by which stakeholders can request exemptions from a rule, based on religious or traditional cultural practices, and appeal the decision of the Cemetery Administrator.



GRAVE ORNAMENTATION TRADITIONS

- Burial traditions, grave decorating practices, cultural relationships with ancestors, and varying expectations for the appearance of cemeteries have gradually changed since Austin was founded and its first city cemetery established in 1839. Throughout the past 175 years, the City and Austin's citizens periodically have had to resolve situations in which the practical realities of cemetery upkeep were in tension with the (no less important) cultural and emotional relationships that the living maintain with the deceased. This is even more complex today, as Austin's population becomes more diverse.
- **Traditions to consider:**
 - Curbing and other enclosures
 - Ethnic and Cultural Traditions
 - Burial Customs in Austin





EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

*family plots with modern fencing and
gravel cover*





EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

Pipe and wire fence around grave





EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

chair and pedestal table





EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

*Graves with yucca and perennial
flowers at Plummers Cemetery*

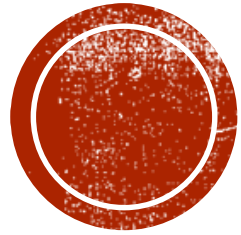




EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

*Graves at San Antonio Cemetery,
Penitas, Texas*





EXISTING RULES

PARD published a set of rules and regulations for cemeteries and burial activities, which were originally adopted in 1978. Many of the existing conditions in the cemeteries are out of compliance with these rules.

EXISTING CONDITIONS



EXISTING CONDITIONS



EXISTING CONDITIONS

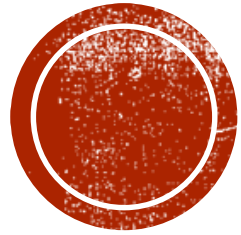


EXISTING CONDITIONS



EXISTING CONDITIONS





CONCERNS AND CONSTRAINTS

Considerations for maintenance and administration

CONCERNS AND CONSTRAINTS

- There is an increase in equipment damage to mowers due to running over objects left on gravesites. This can also cause injury to employees or patrons. Some ornamentation creates tripping hazards for mowing staff and patrons as well.
- Ornaments left on trees can potentially be an overhead hazard and is unhealthy for the trees as well.
- There are a large number of complaints, and the necessary removal of ornamentation or plantings results in excessive loss of man hours for administration and maintenance.
- Potential purchasers have expressed a distaste for the look of the cemeteries and decided to buy lots elsewhere. The City has lost potential revenue.



CONCERNS AND CONSTRAINTS

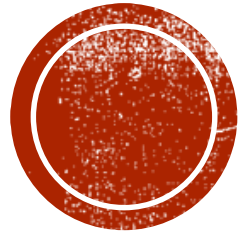
- 45 man hours per week are lost by space ornamentation. This lengthens the targeted 15 day mowing cycle to 21 days.
- Excessive ornamentation results in many areas of the cemeteries not being accessible to mowers. These areas have to be covered with a weed-eater instead of a mower, which is much more time consuming. It additionally shortens the life of the weed-eaters due to wear and tear.
- Planting within grave spaces and easements pose problems. When these plantings establish a mature root ball they cause monuments to shift thus becoming unlevelled and even fall over completely causing obstruction and safety hazards. They also can obstruct irrigation causing incomplete coverage of cemetery grounds.
- Standing water in ornamentation becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other pests.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO MOVE FORWARD

- Establish criteria for evaluating proposed new rules related to grave ornamentation.
- Make a good-faith effort to notify stakeholders of changes to the rules prior to implementation, and explain the rationale behind the rule changes.
- Establish a criteria by which existing non-compliance memorials and fixtures can be grandfathered-in or provided exemptions or variances.





PUBLIC PROCESS

Next steps to update the cemetery rules

SPEAKUP AUSTIN DISCUSSION

- A discussion regarding cemetery rules will be available online through January
- <https://austintexas.granicusideas.com/discussions/city-of-austin-cemeteries-rules-updates>
- Questionnaire



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS: GRAVE ORNAMENTATION

- Conversation Corps will lead a series of guided discussions in five different locations that are in close proximity to each of the city owned cemeteries.
- The conversations will focus on grave ornamentation, associated religious and cultural practices, the maintenance requirements that inform restrictions on ornamentation placement and materials.
- The goal of the meetings is to gather input from stakeholders of many different professional, ethnic, and religious communities.



DRAFT UPDATED RULES

- Staff will incorporate input from past community engagement and the community conversations to develop updated rules and a process for implementation
- Staff will present the revised rules during the final public meeting which will take place before the rules are submitted to the Rules Office



CONTACT INFORMATION

- Cemetery Page: <http://austintexas.gov/departments/cemeteries>
- Cemetery Master Plan: <http://austintexas.gov/cmp>
- Contact: cemeteries@austintexas.gov

