

FIVE

FIVE HISTORIC CEMETERIES.
FIVE TEAM PARTNERS.
FIVE COMMUNITY MEETINGS.
HUNDREDS OF STAKEHOLDERS.
ONE MASTER PLAN.

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN CEMETERY MASTER PLAN

Issue #6, October 2014



Next Meeting

Saturday, January 24, 2015

10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

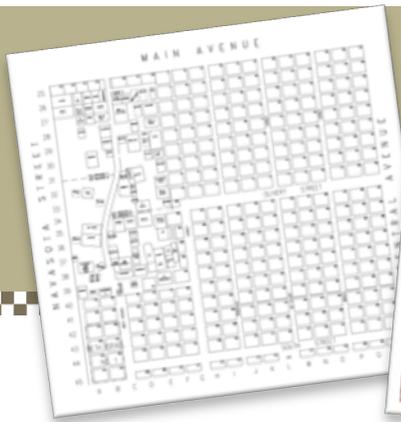
Austin Public Library, Carver Branch

1161 Angelina St, Austin, TX 78702

Cemetery Rules

Cemetery Master Plan team member Steph McDougal will take over the next phase of the development of cemetery rules. The first phase of the rules revision process was completed this summer, when consultants from Smith/Associates met with and gathered input from the public. McDougal will combine Smith/Associates' data with the comments received through the Cemetery Master Plan process, summarize those findings, and present them in a report to the City, along with a review of best practices from around the United States, recommended criteria to be used by the City to evaluate possible solutions, and a few examples of alternatives that balance the many different (and often conflicting) positions held by different members of the community. During the final phase of the rules project, the City will use McDougal's findings and recommendations to determine how best to draft/adopt revised rules.





Entering the Home Stretch

The Cemetery Master Plan team outlines its plan for completing the project.

After spending the spring and summer months completing research and fieldwork, the Cemetery Master Plan team is spending the fall analyzing the data collected, summarizing their findings, and developing recommendations. As this project moves into the winter months, the team will begin to share their recommendations with and gather feedback from the community.

The remaining project schedule is expected to proceed as follows.

- ⌘ December 1–12: Preliminary concepts made available online.
- ⌘ Early January: Master Plan draft made available online.
- ⌘ January 24, 2015: Team presents the draft master plan to the community.
- ⌘ January–February: Collect and incorporate public comments.
- ⌘ March: Bring Master Plan forward to committees, boards, commissions, and Council.

The additional work related to the cemetery rules process will take place concurrently with the development of the Master Plan.

Your input and feedback is very important! The community has been a valuable partner in this process so far. Please continue to share your ideas, suggestions, questions, comments, and concerns with Kim McKnight at kim.mcknight@austintexas.gov or 512-974-9478.

Sacramento's Adopt-a-Plot Program

One of the challenges facing many historic cemeteries today involves the graves of persons whose families may have died out or dispersed to the extent that it becomes difficult to find a living person who has an ownership interest in the gravesite.

One cemetery in Sacramento, California, may have a solution.

The Old City Cemetery Committee, Inc.'s "Adopt A Plot" program encourages volunteers to research the history of the people buried in the "adopted" gravesite, share that information with the Committee, and commit to maintaining and beautifying the gravesite for a minimum of two years. Only approved plants (and no trees) can be planted.



Potential adopters must apply for the program and are not allowed to clean or repair grave markers without prior permission.

It is an interesting concept! Let us know what you think.

American Cemeteries Over Time

The evolution of the American cemetery can be seen in Austin's historic city cemeteries.



In early colonial America, families buried their dead at home, in churchyards, or in town burial grounds. People in the agricultural South, living on farms and plantations spread far apart, were more likely to establish small family cemeteries on their own property or nearby in wooded or sheltered areas.

In 1831, Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was opened, ushering in the “rural cemetery movement.” This concept involved creating a public graveyard outside of the town boundaries, in a park-like setting with winding paths and artistic monuments.

Since these cemeteries were designed to be peaceful and beautiful, they became popular places for families to spend a Sunday afternoon, perhaps with a picnic lunch. Often, committees of volunteers would maintain and beautify these cemeteries.

Oakwood Cemetery, formerly known as the Austin City Cemetery, was established in 1839 and is an example of the rural cemetery movement, which continued through the 1800s.

Starting in the early 1900s, the City Beautiful movement became popular. This was a type of landscape planning that emphasized a formal design with symmetry along two axes. The Oakwood Cemetery Annex, which opened in 1917, was designed in this way.

The City Beautiful movement continued to influence American parks and cemeteries for many years. Evergreen Cemetery was established by the City of Austin in 1926 and also features a symmetrical, axial design.

Modern memorial parks began to become popular around 1920, when Los Angeles' Forest Lawn Cemetery popularized the idea of flat, flush markers for easy

maintenance. By then, the ornate statues and markers placed on graves in the Victorian era had gone out of style, and grave markers (along with the cemetery industry itself) had become more standardized.

Like many of these modern cemeteries, Austin Memorial Park Cemetery was started as a private profit-making venture (in 1927) and only later sold to the City.

And what about Plummers Cemetery? Established in the late 1890s and privately owned until the City acquired it in 1951, less is known about this site. Initial research and the presence of many handmade grave markers and family plots indicates that it may be an example of a Southern folk cemetery, common in rural areas and well-documented throughout Texas.

Cremation: Increasingly Popular

Cremation is a funeral practice that has been used for thousands of years. In olden days, this involved placing the body of the deceased on a funeral *pyre* (made of combustible materials) which would then be burned in order to reduce the body to minerals (“ashes”). A few Americans — members of George Washington’s staff — are known to have been cremated this way in the 1790s.

Although cremation was almost entirely replaced by burial for hundreds of years, it became common again starting in the 1870s, in both Europe and the United States. The first cremation chamber to be replicated widely was invented by a Professor Brunetti in Italy, who exhibited it in Vienna in 1873.

The first American crematory was built by Dr. Julius Lemoyne in Washington, Pennsylvania, in 1876. A few years later, a Dr. Corey was cremated in Italy; his sons, returning to Buffalo, New York, with his ashes, established a public crematorium and brought Italian craftsmen and materials there to build it.

Modern cremation uses both thermal and mechanical means to reduce the body to gases and minerals. The ashes are often scattered or placed in an urn or other container, which may be buried or placed in a special building constructed for this purpose, called a columbarium.



Today, nearly half of all Americans choose to be cremated, and in some states, more than 70% of residents choose this option. Some reasons for the increasing interest in cremation include the lower cost as compared to traditional burial, a greater acceptance among some religious groups, and the growing mobility of Americans, which places many people far from cemeteries where their loved ones would otherwise be buried.

Due to the increasing interest in cremation, the City of Austin’s Cemetery Master Plan team is considering a variety of options for the interment of cremated remains. More information, and the team’s recommendations, will be included in the Master Plan.

Contact Information for City Officials

Mayor and City Council

Austin City Hall
301 W. Second St. Second Floor
Austin, TX 78701

Mayor Lee Leffingwell

City Council Members:

Sheryl Cole, mayor pro tem

Mike Martinez

Laura Morrison

Chris Riley

Bill Spelman

Kathie Tovo

Office of the City Manager

P. O. Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767
512-974-2200

City Manager Marc Ott

Deputy City Manager
Michael McDonald

Assistant City Managers:

Rey Arellano

Robert Goode

Sue Edwards

Bert Lumberras

Anthony Snipes

Parks and Recreation Department

P. O. Box 1088, Austin, TX 78767
512-974-9467

Director Sara Hensley

Assistant Directors:
Kimberly McNeeley
Cora Wright

Project Coordinator
Kim McKnight

Cemetery Manager
Gilbert Hernandez



Our Mission

The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Department is to provide, protect, and preserve a park system that promotes quality recreational, cultural, and outdoor experiences for the Austin community.



The City of Austin is proud to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

If you require assistance for participation in our programs or use of our facilities, please call (512) 974-9478.



We Want You! to Participate in the Master Plan Process

In order for this project to be successful, it needs to be inclusive and representative of the Austin community. You can help and make your voice heard. Here's how:

✿ Attend one or more community meetings. The meetings are being held in various locations around the city and on different days and times, so that as many people as possible can attend. The next one will take place on **Saturday, January 24, 2015** from **10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.** at the **Austin Public Library, Carver Branch at 1161 Angelina Street.**

✿ Sign up to receive this newsletter via email, or look for it at your local library, community center, or senior center. Share it with your friends and neighbors.

✿ Sign up for the Austin Cemetery Master Plan email list to get up-to-the-minute information right in your inbox. To subscribe, send an email to Kim.McKnight@AustinTexas.gov.

✿ Visit the Austin Cemetery Master Plan website at <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/cemetery-master-plan>

✿ Share your input and feedback with Kim McKnight (PARD Project Coordinator):

- Email kim.mcknight@austintexas.gov
- Call 512-974-9478
- Send a letter to PARD, Attn: Kim McKnight, P.O. Box 1088, Austin, Texas 78767-1088

✿ Call the Austin 3-1-1 line and share your opinions.





The City of Austin Cemetery Master Plan

Next community meeting:

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10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Austin Public Library, Carver Branch

1161 Angelina Street

Learn more at www.cityofaustin.org/parks

City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department

P.O. Box 1088, Austin, Texas 78767-1088