



**Introducing the Cemetery Master Planning Process**

**Summary of Feedback received from Stakeholder Meetings in June, 2013**

**SUMMARY OF CEMETERY STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS  
JUNE, 2013**

In June, 2013, the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) held a series of meetings about the upcoming cemetery master plan process. The primary purpose of the meetings was outreach to stakeholders interested in the five municipal cemeteries and feedback about the general issues that should be addressed in the master plan as well as issues related to the public engagement process.

PAR is developing a Scope of Work for a solicitation for a consultant to conduct a master plan. PAR received feedback from meeting questionnaires, emails and phone calls that will aid the department in the development of the Scope of Work, including the public engagement process. The Scope of Work will be informed by both community input and departmental goals for the cemeteries. Further, the master plan will be closely coordinated with the team implementing capital improvements funded in the 2012 Capital Improvements Program.

Once the draft Scope of Work is developed, it will be posted to PAR's website for feedback. Further, PAR will host a public meeting in August, 2013, to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to provide feedback about the draft Scope of Work. PAR appreciates the community's participation in the Introductory Meetings in June and looks forward to a great master planning process, which is expected to begin in early 2014.

Following are the responses received through questionnaires, the public meetings, and emails:

<b>How did you hear about the June meetings?</b>	
Newspaper	9
Radio	2
TV News	1
PAR/City of Austin email	15
Neighborhood Email	8
Signage in the cemetery	6
Website	3
Facebook	0
Save Austin's Cemeteries	5
Rescue Austin Memorial Park	1
Friend/neighbor	3



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When is the best meeting time for you?	
Weekday evenings	26
Saturday mornings	18
Saturday afternoons	13

What cemetery are you most interested in?	
Oakwood Cemetery	10
Oakwood Cemetery Annex	7
Evergreen Cemetery	8
Plummers Cemetery	3
Austin Memorial Park Cemetery	14
All the cemeteries	21

Are there other organizations that should be included in the notifications about the master planning process? Are there community outreach tools that we can use to get information to your community?	
Austin Genealogical Society	Service organizations: Boy Scouts, AmeriCorps, Schools (Public/Private)
Rescue Austin Memorial Park	Post in neighborhood businesses: Colvin, Shoal Creek Nursery, Crenshaw's, Russell's. Fonda San Miguel, Randall's
Save Austin's Cemeteries	Heritage Tree Foundation (Austin)
Texas Historical Commission (THC) RIP List serve	Neighborhood contact teams
Community congregations	Plot owners and relatives
Funeral Homes east of IH-35	Preservation Society
KAZI website	Archeologists and historians (universities/community colleges)
Soulciti.com	Local Audubon Society
KOOP, KAZI, KUT Radio	Allandale Neighborhood Association newsletters and listserv
Austin Memorial and Burial Information Society (AMBIS)	Arborists (ISA), Non-profits
The Daughters of the Republic of Texas	East Austin newspapers, i.e. La Voc, Nokia
The African American Cultural Heritage District	Churches and Synagogues
The French Legation	Carver Museum and Library



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**(CONTINUED)**

Homeowner's Association newsletters and email blasts	Fraternal organizations, VFW, American Legion
Retirement homes like Westminster Manor	Juneteenth events
Big Landscaping Contractor (maintenance input)	Electric bill inserts
Funeral Homes/Directors	Tree Folks
Veterans	Mt. Zion Church District
Austin History Center	Austin Parks Foundation
Service Organizations	Travis County Historical Commission
ACC Eastview (Professor Roland Hayes)	Huston-Tillotson University
NAACP	UT Warfield Center
African American Chamber of Commerce	Urban League
New Hope Primitive Baptist Church	New Lincoln Missionary Baptist Church
The David Chapel	Metropolitan A.M.E. Church
Sweet Home Missionary Baptist Church	Friendship Community Center
Congregation Agudas Achim	Temple Beth Shalom
Temple Beth Israel	St. Edward's Baptist Church
St. Stephen's Baptist Church	W.H. Passon Society
Wesley United Methodist Church	Multicultural Sororities and Fraternities
Mt. Sinai Missionary Baptist Church	Ebenezer Baptist Church
New Covenant Presbyterian Church	Mt. Olive Baptist Church
New Jerusalem Pentecostal Church	Austin Baptist Association
Church of God in Christ	Bethany Christian Church
Eastside Church of Christ	Greater Galilee Baptist Church
Greater Mount Moriah Primitive Baptist Church	Greater Mt. Zion Baptist Church
St. James Missionary Baptist Church	<a href="http://www.eastaustinonline.com/east-austin-churches.htm">http://www.eastaustinonline.com/east-austin-churches.htm</a>



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What planning issues are of most interest to you?	
Historic context of cemetery development and identification of significant historic and cultural features	30
Cultural landscape evaluation, including analysis of topography, land use, circulation, spatial relationships, vegetation, etc.	25
Recommendations for infrastructure improvements including irrigation and drainage	25
Recommendations for circulation improvements (roads and sidewalks)	16
Recommendations related to appropriate site furnishings (benches, chairs, trashcans)	17
Recommendations for horticulture documentation and management, including a master planting plan for trees and shrubs	28
Recommendations for architectural conservation of existing buildings, mausoleums, monuments, gravestones	29
Recommendations for new facilities, features, fencing, monuments	19
Analysis and recommendations for cemetery management issues including security, vandalism prevention, volunteer management, legal issues related to plot ownership	25
Recommendations related to use and recreation issues, such as interpretation, programming, and heritage tourism	23
Recommendations for management of cemetery data such as burial information and mapping technology	27
Recommendations related to funding mechanisms for cemetery operations and maintenance	25



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What are other issues that should be addressed as part of the master planning process?
Adopt-A-Cemetery by congregations close to the property
All issues are critical, but the issues related to conservation and preservation should be the starting point
Recommendations to improve perpetual care
Recommendations to improve landscaping care
King-Tears Partnership
The overall AMP Cemetery Boundary needs to be legally established. There is confusion regarding Travis CAD information and historical records.
Discuss maintenance/protection of graves during and after adjacent burials.
Recent renovation at Evergreen
At Austin Memorial Park, limit public access to only one entrance/exit for safety of visitors. No public trails on cemetery property.
Available funding
Regular, specific number and location for additional engagement meetings during the master plan development
Require summary/decision/presentation before plan is approved
Maintenance of headstones--broken and/or sinking
Changing the city leadership that has made parks and cemeteries red-headed step children while handing out million dollar subsidies to billionaires for upscale shopping malls (Domain) and circuses (F1). Cemeteries should be open to all, not just the dead and grieving.
Records archiving at all cemeteries
Water access at graves
More detailed info regarding the process and priorities for assessing and development of each cemetery
Historical significance and documentation of community and cultural leaders buried in Evergreen
For master plan process, extend timeline for at least 6 months
Periodic review of plan and public input included
Public to review an scope of work or instructions to consultants
Public to know which consultants will be considered and provide feedback
Identifying significant (historically or community) trees
Recommendations for maintaining (volunteers and Forestry) and preserving large trees, especially heritage trees--with collaboration from Austin Heritage Tree Foundation and others
ADA Accessibility
BMPs and standards of care, even if general, regarding trees and vegetation
It was suggested that the desires of plot owners be given special consideration as they are property owners within the cemetery.
Tree Survey
Recommendations to meet state laws
In addition to Recommendations for horticultural documentation and management, including a master planting plan for trees and shrubs, be sure to include not just planting but also preserving existing trees.
The master plan for the State Cemetery may be a good resource.



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Several participants expressed a desire to see local firms on the master plan team.

It was recommended that a "Frequently Asked Questions" document be developed to answer common questions about the solicitation process.

Archeology is an important component of the master plan process.

In re-visioning the role of the lands currently designated as cemeteries, there is an opportunity to consider converting some of the cemetery land to park use and/or trail corridors. Will discussion of this possibility be part of the scope of work for the Cemetery Master Plan process?

I would GLADLY APPRECIATE, BEAUTIFICATION of the EVERGREEN CEMETARY...paved streets and at entry something more attractive lives beautiful flowers? I have so many loved one's there including my only son. There is now GRASS? It looks like grass but is not, I suggest seeds of grass sprinkled/ then weeds be-gone type of measure. It is very expensive for funerals, and I happy the City of Austin are now in-house not out-sourcing.

I believe the City used to provide some care and maintenance for Bethany Cemetery. I was wondering if, during the planning that's being done now, the City might commit to occasional maintenance (as it did in 2010 and before).

My main concern is safety. I live directly across from the cemetery on Hancock. Several times I have called the police because I see kids jump the fence after dark. At times, I see police in there at night with bright search lights. Twice I have seen a helicopter search. I think that because the fence is easy to jump -it's in really bad shape - that it makes it a good place to hide out. Are there any plans on the table for a new fence? The present one is really old and unsightly. I would like to suggest a tall wrought iron looking version to make the place safer and nicer looking.

Whenever you have public meetings, you should send the re-cap to all cemetery stakeholders and owners that PARD has email addresses for since many are elderly and cannot attend. This is a matter of courtesy for those out of town too.

Austin Cemeteries may require at least four Master (long-range) Plans. A Plan for the Development of properties which should include burial crypts for those interested in cremation. A Plan for the financing of operations, maintenance, assumption of title (ownership) of all within city limits. A plan for the administration/management structure to anticipate the significant increase of burials due to the explosion of persons over 75 in 2030 and beyond. A Plan for customer service that includes the funeral home owners, mortuary directors and the private/commercial sector as a partner. You will recall the functioning of our cemeteries commanded scant attention of our council members over the years. The moment may allow for us to "get it done right." I am sure you could think of several Master Plans for incorporation into a long range vision that we can take pride and project as Austin's Own The Best for Our times. The "QUICK FIX MIND-SET" of the past does not work today. To suggest the hiring of a contractor is the solution and a major part of the master plan is a false premise (to hire an operations manager is a great first step but only a first step (a retired funeral director as a part of your cadre of volunteers to develop a program for Hancock operations while getting a team in place might be the ticket).



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Please, keep in mind to have a balanced plan, in spite of having a higher attendance from SAC who focuses on historical preservation rather than maintenance. As you know, Oakwood, the Annex and Plummers are pretty much at a historical state while AMP cemetery and Evergreen still function as active cemeteries. This means that more people frequent AMP and Evergreen cemeteries and are thus concerned with maintenance and operations, as well as the historical aspect. It is critical that you, the leader, maintains a balance. Please, lead this effort without getting influenced too much by a special group of stakeholders. SAC and RAMP are the main non-profit stakeholders and their input should be treated equally regardless of attendance to the meetings. With that said, there are some stakeholders that should have more direct input: The stakeholders that are directly affected by the plan such as first, the plot owners, second the organizations that already work with the cemeteries such as RAMP, SAC, the veterans that put flags, and Heritage Tree Foundation (trees). I was disappointed to hear the plot owners cannot be contacted. I understand that this would be difficult at Plummers, Oakwood, the annex and the older parts of Evergreen, but there are records for AMP cemetery. Please, make efforts to contact AMP plot owners because this is the cemetery where the public will feel the effects of the plan the most (because it has more plot owners and is more active). This is the group that you need to involve the most to gain their support. Neighborhood associations and individuals that do not own plots have not been involved much with supporting the cemeteries and are not as directly affected by the plan. They should be involved and encouraged to participate, but keep in mind that input from the experienced knowledgeable stakeholders is more appropriate. I agree with you that a plan needs to be developed for Austin. It is not OK to take a standard plan or template. The plan needs to be specific to Austin. The timing of 6-12 months for the contractor to develop a plan is OK. There should be periodic public review of the consultant's plan and this input should be included as appropriate. Don't allow only a single review once the plan is almost completed. That approach is never successful and leaves the community feeling not included, which therefore causes them to not support much the cemeteries and PARD's efforts. The stakeholders need to review the scope of work and the RFP instructions that PARD will send out to Purchasing to hire a consultant. We, the immediate stakeholders, are more familiar with cemetery issues and it will help you to rely on our expertise so that the right consultant is hired.

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