

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 2, June 2014



Next Meeting

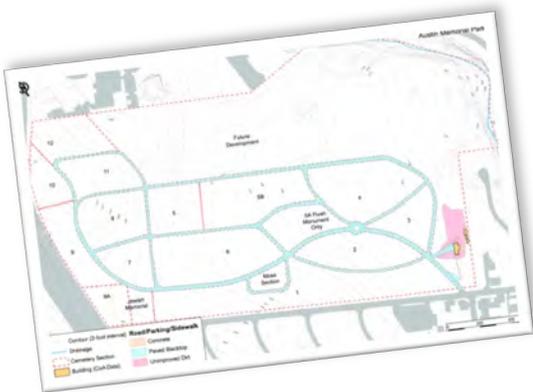
Saturday, August 23, 2014

10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Austin Public Library, Ruiz Branch
1600 Grove Blvd., Austin, TX 78741

Making Progress

The Cemetery Master Plan team continued to be hard at work and ended the month of June with the project’s second community meeting. At the meeting, project manager Mason Miller, from AmaTerra Environmental, reported that both the cemetery tree survey and GIS digitization and mapping are nearly completed. The conditions assessment of all five city-owned cemeteries, generally — and the assessment of grave markers specifically — is also nearly done. **Historical landscape architect Laura Knott, from John Milner Associates, will report on her findings at the third community meeting in August.** Historic preservation consultant Steph McDougal has completed interviews with 25 stakeholders and is currently preparing questions for a community-wide survey, planned to launch via Speak Up Austin, also in August.





Cemetery Trees Update

Initial Findings from the Tree Survey

A total of 4,578 trees were inventoried in Austin’s city cemeteries this summer, consisting of 53 different species. Despite that diversity, more than half (57.5%) were live oaks, crape myrtles, or cedar elms. Just four other species — ligustrum, pecan, ashe juniper, and post oak – made up another 23.6% of the total number of cemetery trees.

Some highlights of the tree survey include:

- ✿ Austin Memorial Park Cemetery (AMP) has both the most trees and the greatest variety. It is the only cemetery with more evergreens than deciduous trees.
- ✿ Plummers Cemetery has the largest number of a single species per acre, with more than 50 cedar elms in a single acre.

✿ Oakwood Cemetery Annex has both the least tree coverage and the smallest variety of trees.

✿ Evergreen Cemetery has more dead trees still standing than other cemeteries, but also the largest live oaks, on average.

Additional findings about the conditions of cemetery trees (and other resources) will be presented at the August 23 meeting.

Ball Moss: A Symptom, Not A Cause

Ball moss is a plant (not actually a moss) that attaches itself to trees, fences, and monuments in Austin’s cemeteries. It is a relative of Spanish moss and pineapple. Contrary to popular belief, ball moss is not parasitic; it does not take any nutrients or water from the trees to which it is attached.

Sometimes, a tree’s interior branches die from a lack of sunlight. The dead interior branches creates a perfect environment for ball moss, which prefers a shady, humid environment. A large colony of ball moss can become heavy and cause dead branches to break.



Anyone concerned about a specific tree should call 311 to report their concern. For more information about ball moss, please visit <http://texasforestservicetamu.edu/main/popup.aspx?id=1264>.

Government Grave Markers

The U.S. Government began providing grave markers for its veterans in the 1800s. These became standardized after the Civil War. In all, 15 different types of markers have been issued since then.



The first grave markers for veterans were simple wooden boards, erected for those soldiers who died at frontier posts. Only after the Civil War did the U.S. government establish national cemeteries. Soon, it became clear that wooden markers (which had to be replaced every few years) were not a long-term solution to marking veterans' graves. The first design for a marble or stone headstone was unveiled in 1873. It included a grave number, name and rank of the soldier, and his home state. Originally, graves of the unknown dead were marked with a simple stone block, but after the original headstone design was updated in 1903, all graves – of both known deceased and unknown – were marked with the same design: a stone slab, 39 inches high, 12 inches wide, and four inches thick, with a rounded top. Later, Confederate graves were marked with a similar stone, with a pointed top.

After World War I, the "General" design was adopted for all graves except those from the Civil and Spanish-American wars. The General marker was made of American white marble and measured 42 inches long, 13 inches wide, and four inches thick. The inscription was expanded to include the soldier's regiment, division, and date of death. A religious symbol (a Latin cross or a Star of David) was also allowed, for the first time. In 1941, granite was approved as an option for military headstones.

Many veterans were buried in private cemeteries, some of which only allowed surface markers, so in the 1930s, a flat marble or granite marker was authorized. A bronze version was approved in 1940. These markers were intended to be placed flush with the ground.

A Buddhist symbol (the Wheel of Righteousness) was approved as an option in 1951.

The types of veterans' markers remained unchanged for several decades, but in 1994, upright granite headstones were re-introduced. Most recently, a 2001 law allowed the Veterans Administration to furnish a government marker for the grave



of a veteran who is buried in a private cemetery, even if the grave is already marked with a private marker. As a result, some graves now include VA markers as footstones.

Genealogy in the Graveyard

Genealogy – tracing the history of a family – often brings researchers to a cemetery, where grave markers and family plots can provide helpful information. However, some methods of capturing that information can cause damage to grave markers. Here are some useful tips to get that information safely.

1. Don't put anything on a grave marker to improve readability.

Using chalk, shaving cream, or other substances to highlight inscriptions can abrade the surface of the stone and (especially in the case of shaving cream) leave behind substances that attract dirt and bacteria.

The National Center for Preservation Technology and Training has studied this extensively and recommends using a car sun shade or a mirror to bounce light at an angle onto a grave marker, which can make the inscription easier to read. Wetting the stone with plain water also can improve the readability of the inscription.

2. Take photographs, not rubbings.

Digital photographs are easy to take and (other than the cost of the camera) inexpensive. A close-up photo of a special feature or inscription can make those details even easier to read or decipher. And photography does not harm the marker's surface.



Light reflected onto an inscription

3. Clean only when absolutely necessary and then only if you know what you are doing.

Grave markers can be damaged by well-meaning people who use household cleaners and other inappropriate products to remove soil, stains, and biological growth.

It is generally safe to use a soft brush to remove loose dirt, leaves, etc., or a small amount of plain water in a spray bottle. Beyond that, please only clean grave markers for your immediate family, or – for others – only if you have permission to clean and you have received instruction about safe methods and cleaning agents from a credible source, such as the Texas Historical Commission or Save Austin's Cemeteries.

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, August 23, 2014** from **10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.** at the **Austin Public Library, Ruiz Branch at 1600 Grove Blvd.**
- ✿ 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.
- ✿ Participate in Speak Up Austin! Surveys: **COMING SOON!**
- ✿ 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:

August 23, 2014

10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Austin Public Library, Ruiz Branch

1600 Grove Blvd.

Learn more at www.cityofaustin.org/parks

City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department

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