

Chapter 6

Plummers Cemetery

Plummers Cemetery was established in 1898 as a private cemetery serving Austin’s African American community. This chapter contains a historical narrative of Plummers Cemetery’s development, an examination of its historic integrity and significance, a discussion of existing conditions observed in the cemetery during the master plan team’s site evaluations, specific treatment recommendations, and a list of potential projects with cost estimates.

This chapter should be used in conjunction with the General Management Guidelines presented in Chapter Three. The General Management Guidelines include treatment recommendations that apply to all five historic city cemeteries; this chapter provides additional detail specific to Plummers Cemetery.

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HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Plummers Cemetery is a historically African American, Upper South folk cemetery, containing family plots, handmade markers, and examples of art and craft. It is located at 1150 Springdale Road, on the east side of Austin near the intersection of Springdale Road and Airport Boulevard. Nearby neighborhood associations include the East MLK (Martin Luther King) Combined Neighborhood Association, the East Austin Conservancy, and the M.E.T.S.A. (MLK, Ed Bluestein, Tannehill, Springdale, Airport) Neighborhood Association.

The development of Plummers Cemetery is largely a matter of speculation today, as the records available are limited; while the intensive research needed to write a complete history of the cemetery was not within the scope of this plan, the following information should provide a useful starting point for future researchers.

Plummers Cemetery was likely established prior to 1898, the death year of Jack Jones, possibly the first person interred in the cemetery with a marker.¹²⁸ The cemetery may have been known as Mount Calvary Cemetery,¹²⁹ not to be confused with another Mount Calvary Cemetery (located elsewhere in the city). The cemetery was named for Thomas P. Plummer (1860–1926), an African American Texas native who owned a farm in Travis County in 1900¹³⁰ and later worked as the cemetery sexton. Thomas' wife Mattie, who died in 1909, is buried at Plummers Cemetery near the top of the hill. Thomas Plummer briefly established the Capital City Burial Association, a fraternal beneficiary association, in June 1908;¹³¹ whether that organization was ever a going concern is unknown. He failed to file its annual report in 1909, and the association subsequently may have been dissolved.¹³²

A variety of public records from the early 1900s include references to Thomas Plummer as the sexton of Mount Calvary Cemetery. It is possible that two "Mount Calvary" cemeteries were established, one for white people and one for black people. Even during the 1920s, the cemetery was known variously as both "Mount Calvary" and "Plummer's." (Over time, the apostrophe was dropped.)

Plummer, who resided at 1606 Gregory Street, died on May 7, 1926 at the age of 71. His death certificate gave his occupation as "grave sexton" and stated that he was buried at "Mt. Calvary Cemetery." His daughter, Annie Plummer, provided the information for the death certificate.

128. City of Austin Cemetery Records for Plummers Cemetery, Austin History Center.

129. Deed of sale, Travis County Property Records, Vol. 354, 228–229.

130. 1900 U.S. Census records, Precinct No. 3 (Austin), Enumeration District No. 109, Sheet 14.

131. *Annual Report*, Texas Board of Insurance Commissioners, Vol. 33, pages 39 and 148. (Austin: Von Boeckman-Jones Co., 1908)

132. "File No Annual Statement," *The Daily Express* (San Antonio, Texas), Vol. 44, No. 205, Ed. 1 Saturday, July 24, 1909.

A few years earlier, in November 1923, Thomas Plummer had sold the cemetery (with the exception of Blocks 4 and 5, as well as “those lots in said cemetery heretofore sold to private individuals”) to one Sylvester Plummer, of Travis County, for \$300. The deed conveying the property stated that Sylvester Plummer “is now and shall remain sexton of said cemetery and have the exclusive overseeing of all interments in said lots herein conveyed.”¹³³

Based on research conducted for this report, it appears that “Sylvester” may have been a nickname for “Thomas (Tom) Sylvester,” possibly because multiple people named “Tom Plummer” lived in Austin during the early 1900s. The deed of sale conveying Plummers Cemetery to the City of Austin references Thomas Sylvester Plummer, and Ida Plummer is listed in both City Directories and Census data as living with “Sylvester,” “Tom P. Plummer,” or “Thomas S. Plummer.”

Another, possibly related, Thomas W. Plummer and his wife Arbella White Plummer are buried at Plummers Cemetery, but whether or how any of the Thomas Plummers are related is unknown.

No map of grave lots has been located for Plummers, and early twentieth century burial dates appear to be located throughout the site. Some family plots were clearly purchased as a unit and occupied over time, as in the other city cemeteries, but the condition or lack of grave markers makes the development of the cemetery difficult to determine today. However, although burials appear to have slowed here after the 1960s, they have continued through 2014. A contemporary map of existing gravesites has been created by Save Austin’s Cemeteries founder Dale Flatt and informs the treatment plans for this cemetery.

133. Deed of sale, Travis County
Property Records, Vol 354, Page
228.

An aerial photograph taken in 1952 (Figure 291) shows that the cemetery had three access points: one being today's entrance, the second being located approximately 210 feet northward along Springdale Road, and the third being located approximately 160 feet farther north along the road. The second driveway entrance connected to the internal cemetery drive and may have created a second loop. The third cemetery entrance appears to have also served as a driveway for a house that was located close to the road and may have served as the sexton's residence.

The severe drought of the 1950s may have contributed to the loss of trees in the cemetery, as shown in an aerial photo from 1969 (Figure 292). However, rows of trees parallel to grave sections are still visible, although a comparison of later maps indicates that many of these trees were removed in the 1970s.

The roadways in the cemetery appear to have been paved with gravel during the mid-twentieth century; today, they are still visible but have become grassy paths. The wooded area around the cemetery's perimeter has grown into what had been grassy lawn, and may now obscure older graves and markers.



Figure 291. Aerial photo of Plummers Cemetery as it appeared in 1952, with the addition of stars to indicate the locations of the three cemetery entrances (City of Austin)



Figure 292. Aerial photo of Plummers Cemetery as it appeared in 1969 (City of Austin)

The cemetery is relatively small—only about eight acres in size—and burials have taken place fairly continuously throughout the 20th century and into the present day.

Plummers Cemetery contains a variety of handmade, craftsman carved, machine carved, and military grave markers. Many of the handmade markers are poured concrete with inset letters and are notable for the content of the aggregate, which in many cases features large pieces of mica, a stone with high reflectivity, mixed into or pressed into the surface of the concrete.

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT PERSONS

Plummers Cemetery contains the graves of several hundred people, although the exact number is unknown and many graves may be, at this late date, unmarked. In addition, the previous use of the name “Mount Calvary” for both this cemetery and another extant cemetery makes this research difficult, as death certificates listing “Mount Calvary” might refer to either cemetery. Extensive additional research, beyond the scope of this project, is needed to better identify the people who are buried at Plummers Cemetery and their place in the history of Austin and Austin’s African American Community.

One significant person known to be buried in this cemetery is:

Tom Sylvester Plummer (1902–1986), businessman; first black deputy sheriff in Travis County, 1949–1953, 1968–1972, 1973–1976; organizer, El Dorado social club

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Ecological Setting

The acid soils at Plummers Cemetery support vegetation and flora that are distinct from those on the other associations found in the area. The typical vegetation on these soils is a mix of post oak/blackjack oak/Eastern red cedar woodlands and patches of mid- to shortgrass grasslands. At the flora level, this association is home to many species commonly found on the sandy acid soils of eastern Texas but seldom, if ever, found on the clayey alkaline soils in the other 97 percent of Travis County. Plummers contains an abundance of cedar elm, with a few oaks and Eastern red cedar trees. There is at least one protected tree at Plummers—a huge American elm near the eastern boundary of the site.

Plummers Cemetery is partially developed and situated in an urban area. In the developed areas of the cemetery, where vegetation is maintained to create a park-like setting studded by shade trees, the woody vegetation attracts common urban wildlife species, including many birds and a few mammals such as squirrels, raccoons, and opossums. The undeveloped wooded area in the western part of the park bordering the floodplain of Tannehill Branch provides cover, foraging area, and habitat for more wildlife. However, because invasive exotic species such as Chinese privet have largely taken over the understory, and due to the density of vegetation in these areas, and their relatively limited extent, the cemetery provides marginal wildlife habitat and is unlikely to contain suitable habitat for the listed species tracked by TPWD in Travis County (TXNDD, 2014). Frequent mowing and other disturbances also make the maintained areas unsuitable as habitat for protected plants.

Plummers Cemetery is located in Karst Zone 4, which includes areas which do not contain endangered cave fauna. No City-defined Critical Environmental Features (CEFs) were observed in the cemetery during recent surveys.

Topography

Plummers Cemetery is organized along the edge of a broad ridge that extends from the east (Figure 293). The highest point in the cemetery occurs at about the midpoint of the eastern boundary, with an elevation of 538 feet above mean sea level (AMSL). The ridge slopes gently westward, and is punctuated by two drainage channels that flow toward Tannehill Branch to the west, dividing the site roughly into three distinct knolls (Figure 294 on page 234). A slight rise in the southernmost knoll contains the looped vehicular drive. At the western edge of the ridge, the land slopes sharply down to join the Tannehill Branch floodplain. This steeply sloped area is entirely wooded and has no known burial sites.

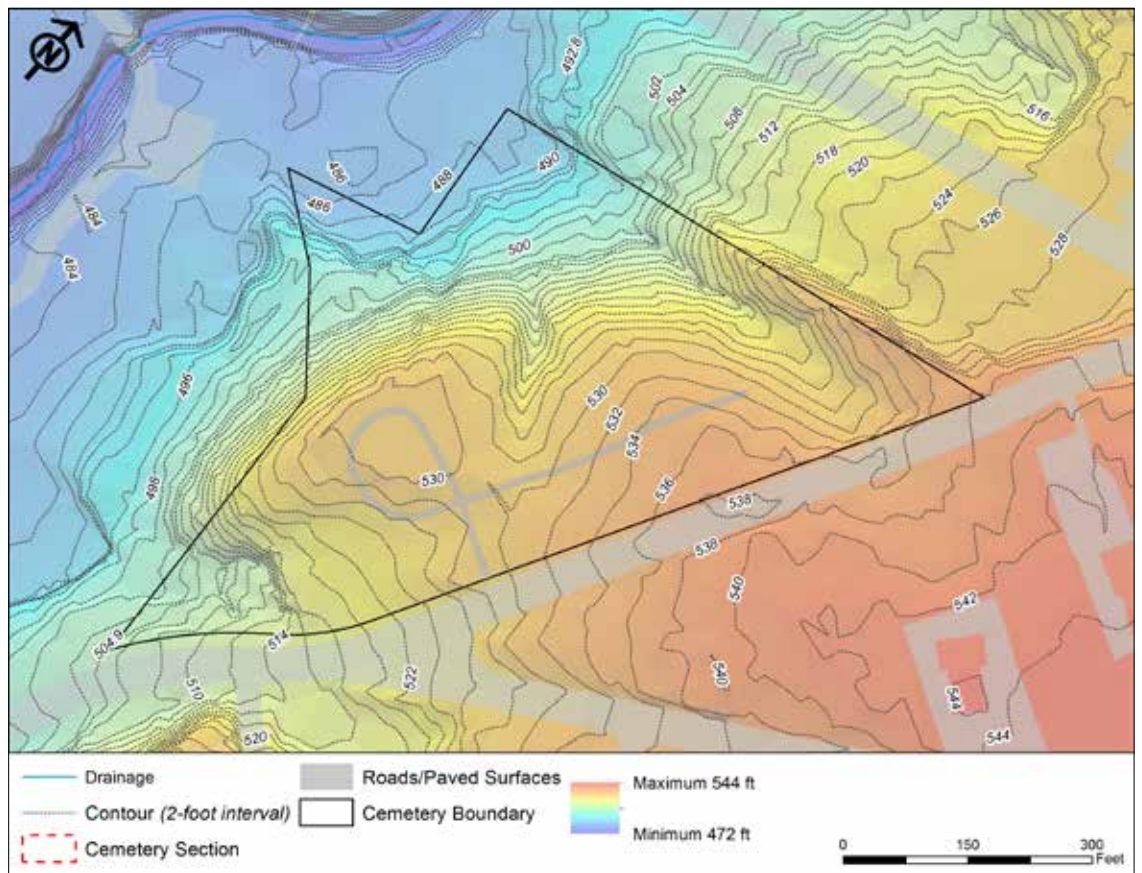


Figure 293. Topography of Plummers Cemetery (Plummers Topo; Project Team)



Figure 294. A drainage channel divides the cemetery (John Milner Associates)

Geology and Soils

The underlying geology of Plummers Cemetery consists of Pleistocene-age fluvial terrace deposits (Qt), with the western portion being Upper Cretaceous-age Ozan Formation of the Navarro Group (Ko). Two soil types arise from these deposits, as well as imported soils: one is a combination of urban land and Travis soils (TuD), which makes up the entirety of the burial area, and the other is a combination of urban land and Houston Black soils (HsD), which occurs in the woodland at the edge of the cemetery boundary (Figure 295 on page 235).

Of the first type, Travis soils make up about 45 percent, urban land makes up about 35 percent, and other soils about 20 percent. Travis soils have a surface layer of gravelly fine sandy loam about 18 inches thick, with a second layer of red gravelly sandy clay to a depth of 50 inches. Urban soils are made up of a mixture of native and imported soils and other material, and cannot be described unless specifically tested. The Travis soils and urban land in Plummers Cemetery are characterized by 1–8 percent slopes.

The second type of soil present in a small area of Plummers Cemetery consists of about 56 percent Houston Black clay, 30 percent urban land, and 14 percent other soils, including Heiden clay and Burleson clay. Houston Black soils have a surface layer of very dark gray clay or gravelly clay about 30 inches thick, with a secondary layer of dark gray clay to a depth of 75 inches, underlain by mottled clay. The urban land is of an unknown composition. The portion of the cemetery where these soils occur is entirely wooded and has no known burial sites.



Figure 295. Plummers Cemetery soils (Plummers Soils; Project Team)

Cultural Setting: Previously Conducted Archeological and Historical Investigations

The Texas Historical Commission's Archeological Sites Atlas indicates that Plummers Cemetery was recorded as site number 41TV1675 in 1994. (Number conventions for Texas archaeological sites are as follows: "41" is Texas' place in an alphabetical list of the states; "TV" is an abbreviation for Travis County; and "1675" indicates that the site was the 1,675th recorded within Travis County at the time of its recording.) The cemetery was described in a 2004 cemetery data form as being maintained (although some of the gravestones were noted to have fallen over) in an urban setting. The stones are manufactured from granite, limestone, and marble, and there are also metal funeral markers, with some graves being unmarked.

In addition to the recorded site and the cemetery, a small linear survey was conducted through the eastern portion of the grounds. This survey was completed in 1999 for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Fort Worth District. No sites were documented in the vicinity as a result of this survey.

No additional archeological sites, surveys, National Register of Historic Places individually listed buildings or historic districts, State Antiquities Landmarks, or historical markers are recorded within 30 meters of the cemetery boundaries.

Spatial Organization

Plummers Cemetery is located three miles east of the Austin city center. The approximately triangular cemetery is bounded by Givens Park to the west, East 12th Street and a small residential development to the north, and Springdale Road to the east (Figure 296).

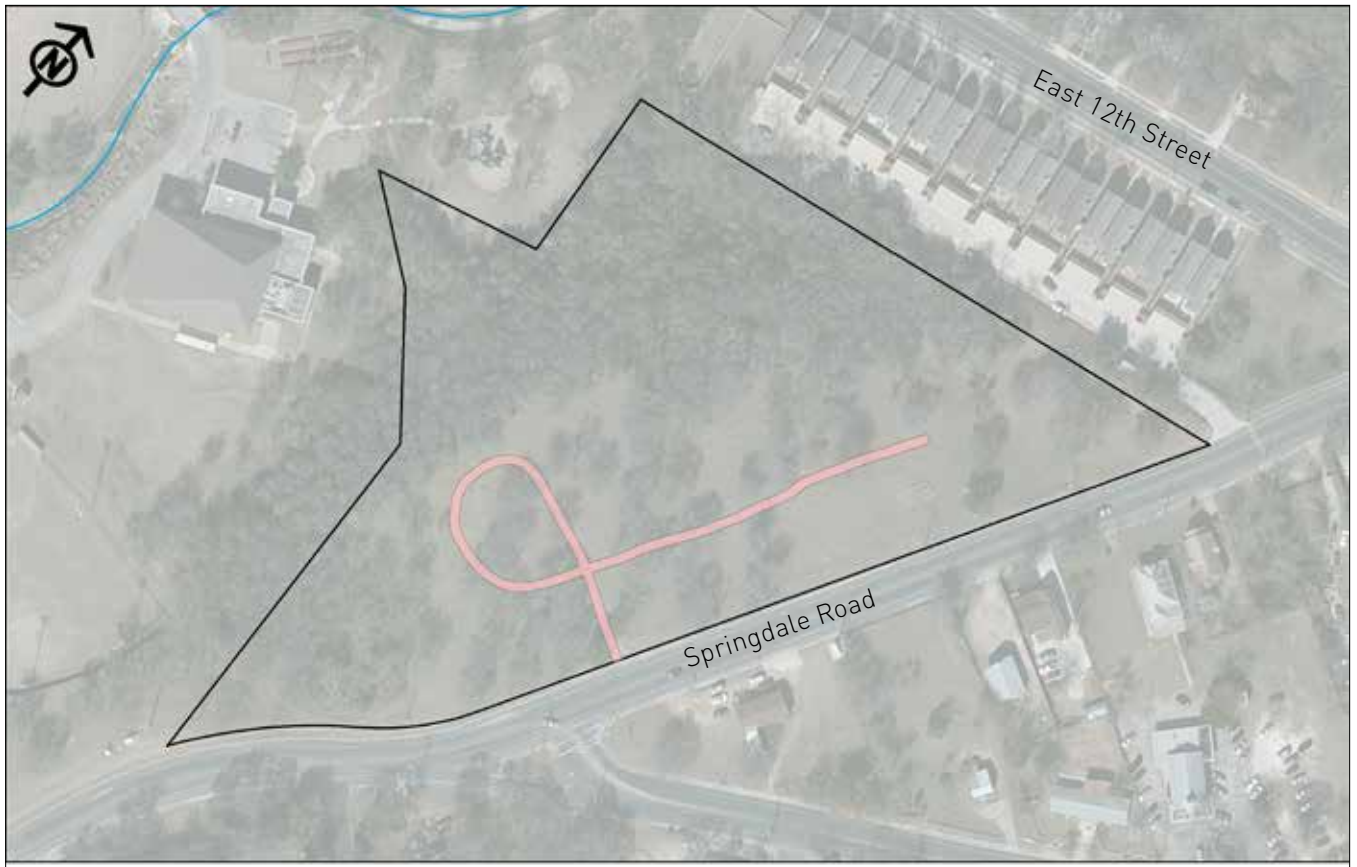


Figure 296. Plummers Cemetery (field map by Project Team)

Plummers Cemetery was organized in a loose grid applied over a landscape comprising three knolls. The knolls are separated from each other by draws that fall in a westward direction towards Tannehill Branch, which runs through the adjacent Givens Park. The current entrance drive into the cemetery runs perpendicular to Springdale Road and rises to the summit of the southernmost knoll. It connects to another drive, which parallels Springdale Road and is the organizing spine of the cemetery: most of the burial plots are arranged generally perpendicular to and along this drive, oriented approximately to the southeast. Graves within the cemetery appear scattered and its internal organization is not easily legible at ground level because many of the graves are not marked, or their markers have been damaged or lost. Most of the burials occur on the central knoll, which was historically also accessed by a second drive perpendicular to Springdale Road. A few mid-twentieth century burials are located on the smallest knoll in the north corner of the site (Figure 297 and Figure 298 on page 239).

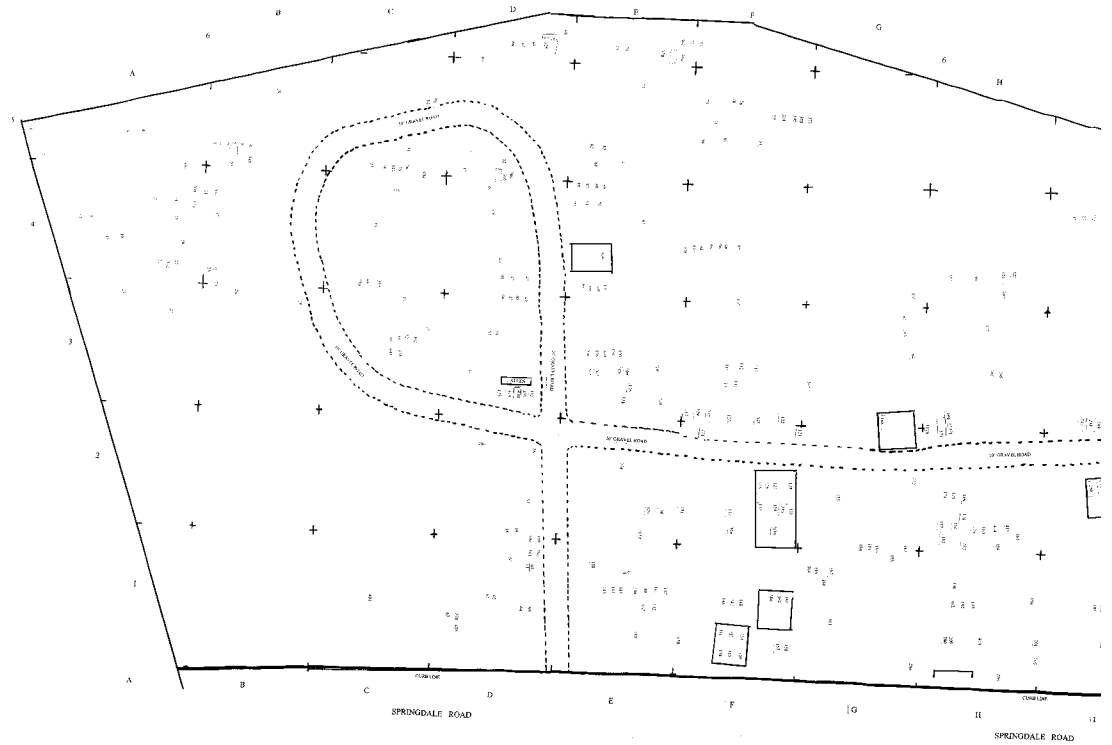


Figure 297. Burials in south half of Plummers Cemetery (Plummers Cem Map – Flatt 2009.pdf)

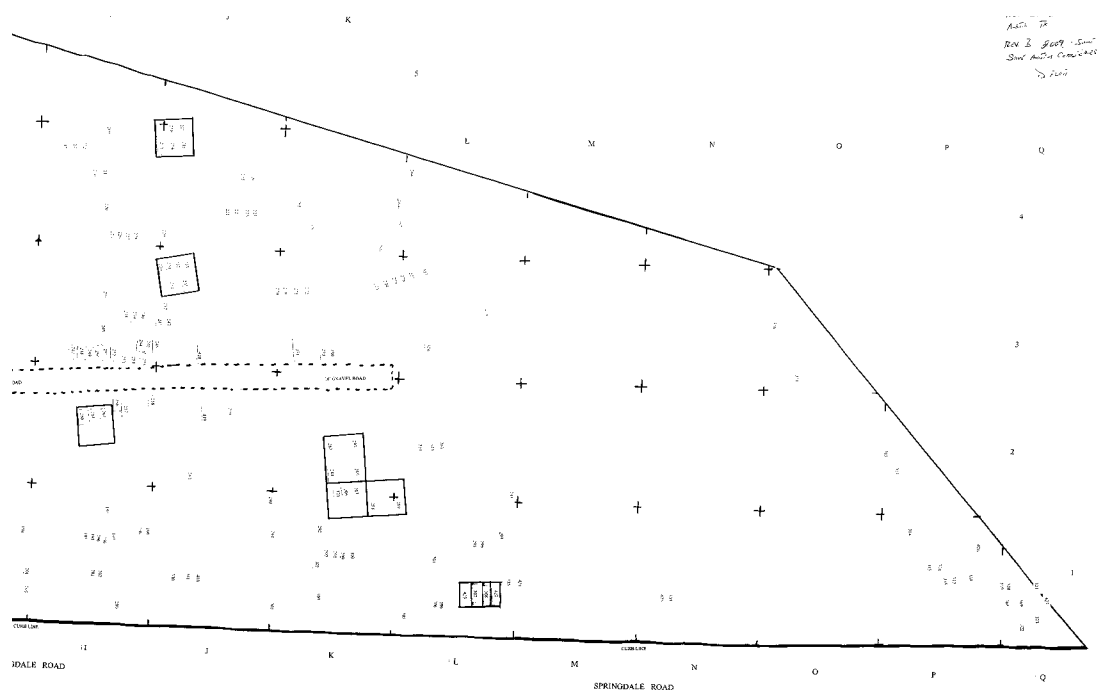


Figure 298. Burials in north half of Plummers Cemetery (Plummers Cem Map – Flatt 2009.pdf)

Circulation and Access

An entrance drive from Springdale Road provides the only vehicular access into Plummers Cemetery, entering at the approximate midpoint of the cemetery's eastern boundary. Vehicular access to the cemetery outside of posted times is restricted by a metal single-arm gate. Because the cemetery has no boundary fence, pedestrians can gain access at any time.

Within the cemetery, vehicular circulation is provided via a narrow gravel and dirt drive that extends west into the site up onto the southern knoll before making a counterclockwise loop and crossing itself to extend north through the cemetery, parallel to Springdale Road (Figure 299 on page 240).

Pedestrian circulation is not defined within the site, but can occur along the loop road and in spaces between burial plots. Formal access, into the few family plots defined by curbs or walls, is usually defined by low thresholds set into the curb or wall (Figure 300). A city bus stop on Springdale Road required the installation of a short section of concrete sidewalk along a portion of the eastern edge of the cemetery (Figure 301). Social trails extend from both ends of this sidewalk to parallel Springdale Road along the cemetery boundary (Figure 302).



Figure 299. A narrow gravel and dirt drive provides the only vehicular circulation through the cemetery. (John Milner Associates)



Figure 300. Access to family plot via a low stone threshold (John Milner Associates)

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Figure 301. Concrete sidewalk along the east side of the cemetery on Springdale Road (John Milner Associates)



Figure 302. Social trail on cemetery grounds along Springdale Road (John Milner Associates)

Vegetation Management

Plummers Cemetery contains a mix of native and naturalized trees and other plants, including self-seeded species and cultural plantings.

Trees

The burial area of Plummers Cemetery is generally characterized by an open, rolling grass lawn dominated by a mature grove of cedar elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*) (Figure 303). A few other species are present in this grove, including post oak (*Quercus stellata*), chinaberry (*Melia azedarach*), American elm (*Ulmus americana*), ashe juniper (*Juniperus ashei*), live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), blackjack oak (*Quercus marilandica*), pecan (*Carya illinoensis*), and honey mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*). Most of these trees are in fair condition and exhibit some portion of dead wood (Figure 304).

Historic aerials of Plummers Cemetery indicate that, earlier in the twentieth century, trees had been planted in rows parallel to the arrangement of burial plots (Figure 305). This pattern is no longer evident in the cemetery, due to the removal of numerous trees sometime between 1967 and 1973, as seen in a comparison of historic aerial photographs on the website HistoricAerials.com.



Figure 303. A grove of cedar elm dominates the cemetery.
(John Milner Associates)

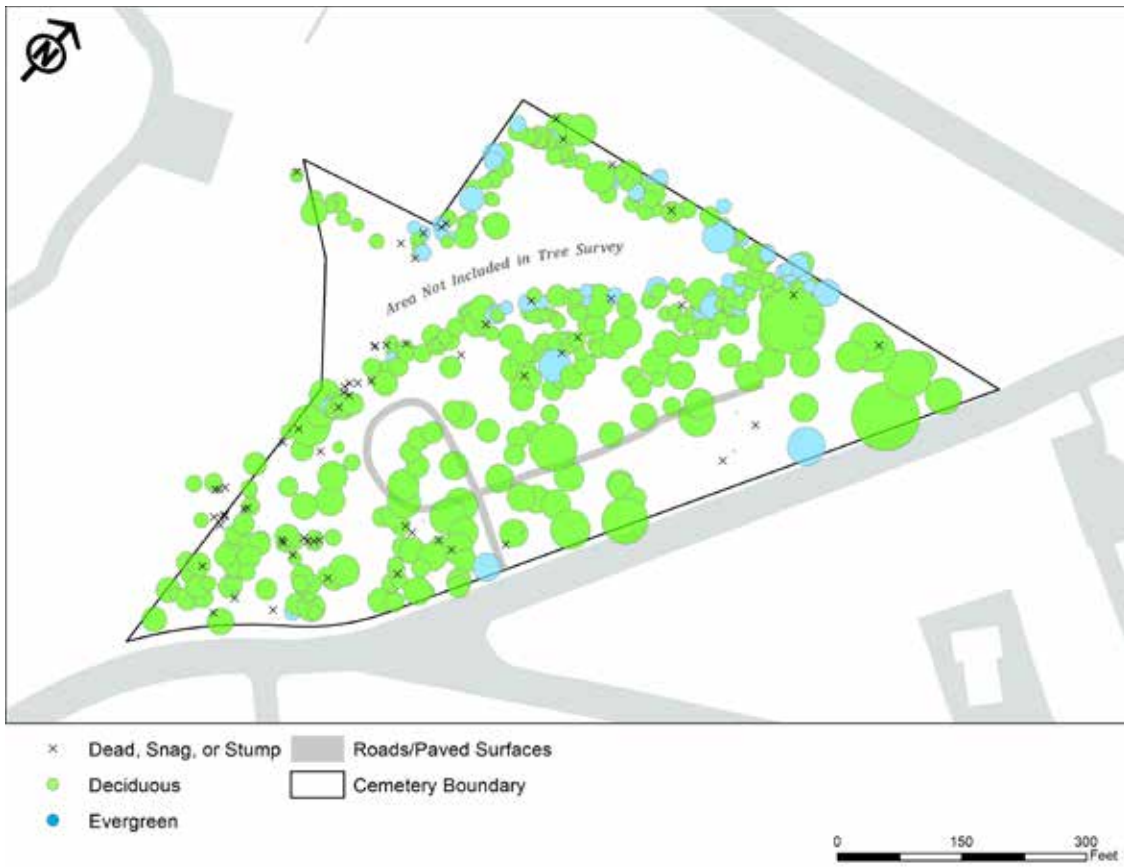


Figure 304. Trees in Plummers Cemetery (Plummers Trees; Project Team)



Figure 305. Aerial photograph of Plummers Cemetery, 1966 (Plummers 1966, City of Austin)

In a number of instances, a mature tree is growing directly adjacent to or behind a grave marker, in line with the Upland South folk cemetery tradition of planting trees (typically Eastern red cedar) in family plots or next to individual graves. In a few cases, the tree has caused damage or lifting to adjacent grave markers or plot enclosures (Figure 306).

The western portion and southern tip of the site have thick stands of woodland, also dominated by cedar elm. The woodland areas have significant underbrush, including shrubs such as privet (*Ligustrum* sp.) and elbowbush (*Forestiera pubescens*).



Figure 306. Tree roots causing damage to adjacent markers (John Milner Associates)



Figure 307. Paired trees (McDoux Preservation)

Shrubs, Vines, and Bulbs

Plummers is very sparsely planted with ornamental species. Throughout the cemetery, a grass lawn is kept mowed. Other plants, including shrubs, perennials, and bulbs have been planted as ornamentals within family plots or adjacent to grave markers. Ornamental species observed in the cemetery include Dutch iris (*Iris germanica*), crinum lily (*Crinum asiaticum*), daffodil (*Narcissus sp.*), and agave (*Agave sp.*) (Figure 308, Figure 309). Other species also may be present, but were not evident during the site visit.



Figure 308. *Crinum lily* (John Milner Associates)



Figure 309. *Agave* (left) and *iris* (right) (John Milner Associates)

Grave Markers

Plummers Cemetery has more than 500 documented burials, but not all of these are marked with headstones. Those markers that are present vary in both size and material, with most being fairly simple and relatively small.

Plummers Cemetery was established in the early twentieth century, and burials have continued there through the present. It was an African American cemetery and contains approximately 278 interments spread over eight acres. Many graves are unmarked. Of those that were marked at one time, the associated markers may have since been lost or destroyed; marker fragments are visible throughout the cemetery.

Marker Types

Most grave markers in Plummers Cemetery are made of either concrete, granite, or marble (Figure 310, Figure 311). A few limestone markers are present, as are individual examples of brick, bronze, and steel markers (Figure 312). No above-ground tombs are present. Several infant graves are located in the cemetery, some identified by lamb motifs, but there is no separate infant section.

Most markers feature carved, pressed, or molded inscriptions, some of which are worn and hard to read. Many are clearly handmade of concrete or other materials; some are embellished with inlaid tile.

Many of the concrete markers appear to be made by the same person or company; these distinctive pieces feature larger pieces of mica and other decorative applied aggregate (Figure 317). A series of stone markers enframed in concrete are also present (Figure 318–Figure 320).

Adverse Conditions

Grave markers at Plummers Cemetery are adversely affected by soiling and biological growth, differential settling due to soil or foundation conditions, mower/trimmer damage, and cracking (Figure 321–Figure 326). Several markers exhibit visible repairs (Figure 327–Figure 329 on page 251). Approximately 25–30 percent of markers are slightly or severely tilted from settling or foundation conditions.

Nearly all of the remaining grave markers in Plummers Cemetery are in need of conservation and repair. The extent of damage in this cemetery is far greater, for its size, than in the other four municipally owned cemeteries. The number and variety of handmade markers is significant and should be addressed by an art conservator.



Figure 310. A fallen marble marker (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 311. Granite markers with ceramic photographs (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 312. Welded metal cross (John Milner Associates)



Figure 313. Handmade concrete marker (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 314. Handmade stone marker (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 315. Handmade marker with tile embellishment (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 316. Handmade marker with tile embellishment (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 317. Concrete grave marker with distinctive mica aggregate (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 318. Stone marker enframed in concrete (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 319. Stone marker in concrete (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 320. Stone marker in concrete; the marker is sunken and shows mower damage (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 321. Mower damage (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 322. Broken concrete cross (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 323. Biological growth (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 324. Biological growth (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 325. Marker displaced by contact with a mower and severely damaged by trimmers (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 326. Mower damage to a flush marker (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 327. Repaired cracks (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 328. Cracked marker with visible repairs (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 329. Cracked marker (John Milner Associates)

Plot Coverings

Most burial sites in Plummers Cemetery feature a covering of mowed grass; however, in a few instances, plots have been covered with poured concrete slabs (Figure 330). These range in appearance from simple concrete pads set flush with the ground, to more ornamental coverings. A row of burial sites in the north part of the cemetery is paved with rounded concrete units outlined in brick (Figure 331). This feature is in fair condition, with some cracking of the concrete, and the loss and displacement of some bricks.

Plot Enclosures

Only a handful of family plots in Plummers are bounded by curbs marking their extents. Curb materials vary, ranging from simple poured concrete to low mortared brick or limestone walls (Figure 332). The curbs are often punctuated by upright stones on either side of a low stone or concrete threshold, marking the formal plot entrances (see Figure 300 on page 240). In addition to the family plot enclosures, there are also a few instances of enclosures around individual graves (Figure 334).

Most of the plot and grave enclosures are in poor condition, with broken, displaced, or missing material, and damage from tree roots (Figure 333). Other problems include subsidence damage and maintenance problems such as damage from mowers and string trimmers.

Plot Fencing

None of the burial plot enclosures in this cemetery feature fencing.



Figure 330. Family plot covered with a poured concrete slab (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 331. Family plot covered with concrete and outlined in brick (McDoux Preservation)



Figure 332. Family plot enclosures (John Milner Associates)



Figure 334. The curb surrounding this individual burial is slightly sunken at one corner (John Milner Associates)



Figure 333. A severely damaged plot enclosure (John Milner Associates)

Water Features

Plummers does not feature any irrigation systems. The only water feature on site is a concrete storm water culvert that drains water from Springdale Road, funneling water into the drainage channel in the northern part of the cemetery.

Structures

Fence System

Unlike the other four historic Austin cemeteries, Plummers Cemetery does not have an enclosing boundary fence. Access to the cemetery loop drive from Springdale Road is restricted by means of a simple metal swing gate (Figure 335).

Small-Scale Features

Signs & Site Furnishings

No site furnishings are provided for visitor use within Plummers. Signs at the entrance to the cemetery include a large cemetery identification sign and informational signs citing cemetery rules and regulations (Figure 336). A few city signs, including a sign denoting the bus stop, have been installed along the edge of the cemetery on Springdale Road. Other city features along Springdale Road include manholes and poles for overhead electrical and telephone lines.

Grave Furnishings

Very few burial sites feature the types of grave decorations prevalent in the other historic cemeteries; the extent of decorative features at Plummers is limited to a few graves set with silk flowers.



Figure 335. A metal gate controls access to the cemetery. (John Milner Associates)



Figure 336. Signs clustered at the cemetery entrance (John Milner Associates)

SIGNIFICANCE

In order to develop treatment recommendations that are well-grounded in national standards, this master plan proposes areas and periods of significance, evaluates the cemetery under National Register Criteria, and determines its integrity.

In order to determine potential strategies for listing Plummers Cemetery in the National Register, the author reviewed a sample of National Register listings for African American cemeteries in other states. Most of these examples seem to be more similar to Plummers Cemetery than to Evergreen Cemetery (see Chapter 7), in terms of age, history, resources, and plan.

Golden Hill Cemetery in Clarksville, Tennessee, is one example that may provide a model for nominating Plummers Cemetery. Like Plummers Cemetery, Golden Hill is relatively small (just under eight acres) and was established by an individual. It was listed as an Historic Landmark (site) on the basis of Criteria A and C, with Criteria Consideration D, in the areas of ethnic heritage, art, and settlement patterns. The bibliography in the Golden Hill nomination also may provide assistance to future researchers.

Criterion A: *Properties can be eligible for the National Register if they are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.*

Plummers Cemetery may be significant as a representative example within the context of Texas rural folk cemeteries. Additional research would be required to develop the context and place this cemetery within it.

Criterion C: *Properties may be eligible for the National Register if they embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.*

Plummers Cemetery may be significant for the presence of handmade markers which are found throughout the site. Although Plummers Cemetery lacks the distinctive work of a master stonemason, which is present in Golden Hill Cemetery, it does contain a number of headstones—likely made by the same individual or business—that are distinctive for their use of concrete with an aggregate or cast surface of relatively large pieces of mica.

Criterion D: *Properties may be eligible for the National Register if they have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.*

Plummers Cemetery contains at least some now-unmarked graves, and the future discovery of their placement within the cemetery, might

reveal evidence of currently not-visible organization or design that would provide additional information about the development of rural African American cemeteries in Central Texas.

Criteria Consideration D: *A cemetery is eligible if it derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events.*

See above.

Period of Significance

The period of time during which a property acquired the characteristics that make it eligible for listing in the National Register or for designation as a local landmark is called the *period of significance*. This period often begins when the property was established or constructed, or when events or activities that contribute to the property's historic significance began to take place. The period of significance usually ends at least 50 years before the present date.

Based on Criterion A, the period of significance for Plummers Cemetery would begin when the cemetery was established in 1898. The master plan team would define the period of significance as 1898–1965, as the cemetery was still quite active with burials through the 1960s. Although people were still being buried at Plummers as late as 2014, the incidence of burials diminished significantly after the 1960s.

Integrity and Threats

To be eligible for National Register listing, a property must retain integrity to the period of significance. The evaluation of existing conditions at Plummers Cemetery reveals that this burial place and its overall setting possesses integrity to its most important period of use, which is from 1898 to 1970.

Assessment of integrity is based on an evaluation of the existence and condition of physical features dating from a property's period of significance, taking into consideration the degree to which the individual qualities of integrity are present. The seven aspects of integrity included in National Register criteria are location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, as described below:

Location refers to the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where a historic event occurred.

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.

Setting refers to the physical environment of a historic property.

Materials are the physical elements that were combined during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.

Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall treatment objectives for Plummers Cemetery are focused on:

- creating a visible boundary;
- protecting historic features from vehicular damage;
- preserving and enhancing its cultural vegetation;
- preventing soil erosion; and
- adding interpretive features that tell the story of the cemetery and its community.

Treatment plans illustrating these objectives are presented at the end of this chapter.

Spatial Organization

The primary goals for the treatment of the spatial organization of Plummers Cemetery are to create a visible boundary and to establish a visitor access and interpretation node. The following actions are recommended:

- Due to the heavily wooded area that separates Plummers Cemetery from Givens Park and the lack of definitive documentation of burials, the boundary between the cemetery and the park should be considered somewhat fluid at this time. Take precautions when making any disruption to the ground in the wooded area or beyond the woods into the park, as unmarked burials may be present.
- Attempt to identify and map locations of unmarked graves utilizing a series of geophysical remote sensing analyses such as magnetometer and soil electrical resistivity survey.¹³⁴ Keep all areas containing unmarked graves mowed, following the schedule described below.
- Clear additional undergrowth along the west edge of the cemetery to expose any other unmarked graves and to increase visibility for safety in that area.

134. Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) would not be effective in this cemetery due to the density of trees and the resulting data-obscuring network of subsurface roots.

Circulation and Access

Goals for circulation and access at Plummers Cemetery are to limit vehicular damage to markers and plot edgings, while providing for visitor access. Cemetery markers are vulnerable to damage from vehicles that could veer off Springdale Road or cross burial areas from the cemetery drive. The following actions are recommended:

- Erect a visible boundary along Springdale Road that will also function to prevent vehicles from entering except at the designated access point. Instead of erecting a fence, consider using large, native stone boulders or other barrier, such as bollards, spaced closely enough to prevent or discourage vehicles from entering. If boulders are used, they should be partially buried so that at least $\frac{1}{3}$ of their height is below the ground surface for a naturalistic appearance, rather than placed on the ground surface (Figure 338 and Figure 339). Site boulders or bollards approximately five feet inside the Springdale Road curb, spaced at 10-20 feet on center, taking care to avoid existing known burials. Conduct appropriate archeological investigation prior to any excavation in this area to avoid disturbing any unmarked graves.
- Create an access point for visitors, to include a low cemetery identification sign, a single parking space, and a low kiosk or interpretive sign exhibiting historical information (Figure 340). The parking space should be universally-accessible.
- Close the cemetery drive to public use, limiting vehicles to the above-described single parking space provided at the entrance. Use bollards rather than a gate to restrict access. The central bollard should be a removable type that will allow for access by maintenance vehicles.
- Develop the entrance area to provide for one universally-accessible parking space and a stable, level area for access to the informational kiosk.
- Pave the parking and kiosk/interpretive sign area with exposed aggregate concrete or a chip-seal asphalt, both of which should match the color and texture of adjacent soils to minimize the appearance of the paving.
- Provide for pedestrian circulation via the cemetery drive trace, which should be maintained as a regularly-mowed path, 10 feet wide (Figure 337).
- Include visitor wayfinding tools in the informational kiosk, including a graphic plan of the cemetery, including a grave location map, if possible; a brief account of its history and significance; visitor registration; and operational or maintenance rules.



Figure 337. Example of a mowed path through a meadow of native grasses and wildflowers (JMA Collection)

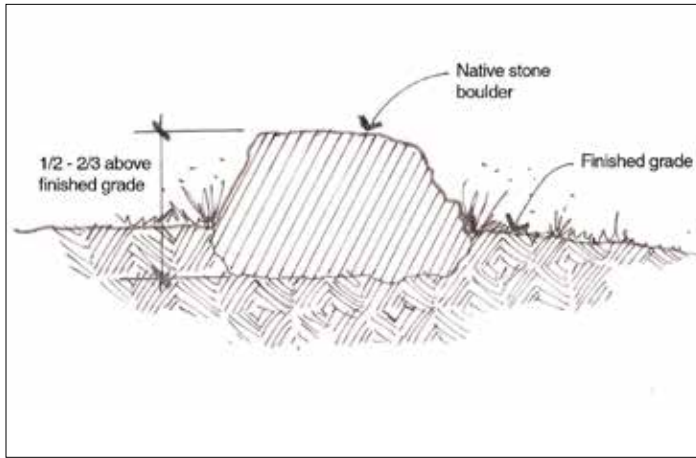


Figure 338. Set native stone boulders with at least $\frac{1}{3}$ their height set into the ground for a naturalistic appearance. (JMA Collection)



Figure 339. Example of native stone boulders set in turf with at least one-third of their height below ground (boulders-in-lawn-tailrace--ntlandscapes.com.au.jpg)



Figure 340. Example of a simple, non-intrusive cemetery interpretive sign (ANDE 20120919 661.jpg)

Erosion Control

The primary issue affecting the topography of Plummers Cemetery is the potential for soil erosion on the steeper slopes of the two drainage valleys that extend into the cemetery, as well as around grave markers and family plot curbs. Soil erosion occurs most frequently in the cemetery when reduced tree cover is combined with the current intensive mowing regime. In addition, erosion occurs locally where trimming activity removes vegetative ground cover. To reduce the occurrence and extent of erosion in the cemetery, the following actions are recommended:

- Close the cemetery drive to public use, thus limiting soil compaction and wear.
- Limit overall cemetery mowing to one or two times a year. Instead, utilize a regular mowing regimen to maintain the cemetery drive as a mown grass/groundcover path. Follow established PARD practices for meadow maintenance, if any, or work with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to develop a meadow maintenance program.
- Encourage the growth of native groundcovers, including horseherb (*Calyptracarpus vialis*) and other low plants that are easily established in dry shade and can substitute for lawn grasses.
- Replace trees that historically stood in the cemetery, thus increasing tree cover and reducing runoff.

Vegetation

Plummers Cemetery was more heavily vegetated in the past, but many trees were removed at some point between 1967 and 1973. Prior to that period, it appears that many trees were planted in rows that paralleled the rows of burials. The primary goal of vegetation treatment at Plummers Cemetery is to preserve and enhance the historic character of the cemetery through the protection of existing historic trees and the replacement of lost trees. Another important goal is limiting the need for mowing and trimming in order to reduce erosion and protect grave markers and plot enclosures. The following actions are recommended:

- Develop a construction phase planting plan to replace trees that have been lost from the cemetery, based on the 1966 aerial and any ground-level evidence, such as stumps. Determine species and location by further close study of historic aerials and identification of stumps and other vegetative remnants. It is possible that shrubs or perennials may mark the location of a tree.

- Identify, through consultation with a horticulturalist, the varieties of historic shrubs and bulbs located within the cemetery. These plants have proven to be hardy and self-sustaining, but should be protected through documentation and ongoing care, if feasible.
- Water trees (as necessary and as appropriate for each species) during periods of insufficient rainfall.
- Remove volunteer trees (usually mulberry, hackberry, tree ligustrum, or gum bumelia) that threaten markers and plot enclosures. Retain other volunteer trees as needed for tree cover or to represent a lost historic tree.
- Ensure that over time, specimen trees remain as historic features within the landscape with a program of in-kind replacement.
- Overseed the cemetery with native grasses and forbs in order to create a shade meadow and reduce mowing.
- Establish a maintenance boundary located at least ten feet outside the boundary of unmarked graves, as identified above. This should be the mowing and clearing boundary for the cemetery and should be subtly marked with native boulders or other low markers that are not visible from the interpretive kiosk.
- Limit cemetery mowing, except on the cemetery drive, to once or twice a year, preferably between December and mid-February, in order to assure that native grasses and forbs have distributed their seed.
- Avoid the development of entrance plantings that may detract from the overall historic character of this rural cemetery. Restrict additional plantings to tree species used to replace lost specimens.
- Develop an interpretive marker that illustrates with a historic aerial the rows of trees that once lined the rows of graves prior to clearing in the 1970s.

Grave Markers

Nearly all of the grave markers in Plummers Cemetery are in need of conservation and repair, suffering from differential settling, mower/trimmer damage, cracking, and disintegration. The extent of damage in this cemetery is far greater, for its size, than in the other four municipally owned cemeteries. The number and variety of handmade markers is significant and should be addressed by an art conservator. The following actions are recommended:

- Conduct GPS and GIS survey to locate and identify all grave markers, plot borders, and locations of historic vegetation, including yucca, iris, and other ornamental plants.
- Conduct research on unusual or unique markers to identify craftspersons (handmade markers and tile work) or manufacturers (artificial stone).

- Protect, preserve, repair, and conserve cemetery markers, including unique works of art and craft.
- Monitor mowing and trimming practices to identify methods causing damage.
- Limit cemetery mowing, except on the cemetery drive, to once or twice a year, to reduce mower and trimmer damage to markers and plot enclosures. Mow the cemetery drive as needed for daily access.
- Avoid using riding mowers and metal core trimmers within 12 inches of markers and plot enclosures. Finish using trimmers with nylon whips only.
- Encourage the establishment of groundcovers within curbed or walled family plots, to reduce the amount of mowing and trimming required.
- Clean, reset, and conserve markers as recommended in Chapter 3, General Management Guidelines.

Plot Enclosures

Most of the plot and grave enclosures located within Plummers Cemetery are in poor condition, with broken, displaced, or missing material, and damage from tree roots, subsidence, and mowers and string trimmers. Most critical to the protection of the historic character of the cemetery is to protect, stabilize, and repair damage to those enclosures made of masonry units, which range from limestone to concrete to brick. The following actions are recommended:

- Protect plot and grave enclosures by limiting mowers to areas away from these features.
- Document all curbs and wall enclosures, noting materials, dimensions, and locations, and recording conditions with photographs. Curbs made from limestone or marble are more vulnerable to deterioration and should take priority over those of granite or concrete unless individual features are particularly threatened.
- Stabilize enclosures by resetting loosened units using a mortar that matches the original.
- Repair enclosures by replacing missing units with materials in-kind, and repointing failing joints. Refer to Chapter 3, General Management Guidelines, for more details regarding masonry repair.

Small-Scale Features

Small-scale features within a cemetery, with the exception of grave markers, are provided for visitor access, wayfinding or other information, and general accommodation. The following actions are recommended:

- Reset the cemetery identification sign closer to the ground so that it does not block the viewshed into the cemetery.
- Consolidate signage as much as possible to reduce the appearance of clutter in the cemetery viewshed. For example, the cemetery rules information can be placed in the new informational kiosk. The bicycle route sign can be re-located onto the bus stop sign post, and "No Parking" signs can be attached to utility poles.
- Consider providing simple, unpainted, backless benches, possibly of cedar and stone, at key locations within the cemetery for visitor use.
- Conduct additional research regarding artists and craftspeople who created handmade unique pieces within the cemetery and provide this information to visitors, possibly on small interpretive signs.
- If the recommended mowing schedule of 1–2 times per year is adopted, install signs to explain this so that members of the public will be aware that the cemetery is not being neglected. These signs might be similar to the "wildflower restoration area" signs placed in unmowed highway medians.

PRIORITIZED PROJECT LIST AND ESTIMATE OF PROBABLE COSTS

Priority One

(to be completed within 1-2 years)

These probable costs are estimates based on comparable projects and previous estimates. All costs are subject to fluctuation and/or increase.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Locate and map unmarked graves within the cemetery and attempt to resolve its extents.	allow \$10,000
Add native stone boulders along Springdale Road (assume 60).	\$6,000
Limit vehicular access to the cemetery by installing removable bollards across the drive (2).	\$2,000
Evaluate marker conditions (continuing volunteer project?).	\$0 (to be completed by volunteers)
Document, stabilize, and preserve unique works of art and craft.	allow \$10,000

Priority Two

(to be completed within 3-5 years)

These probable costs are estimates based on comparable projects and previous estimates. All costs are subject to fluctuation and/or increase.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Install a single-car, accessible parking space at entrance.	\$5,000
Overseed cemetery with native grass and wildflower mix that is shade-tolerant.	\$9,500

Priority Three

(to be completed within 5-7 years)

These probable costs are estimates based on comparable projects and previous estimates. All costs are subject to fluctuation and/or increase.

<i>Item</i>	<i>Estimated Cost</i>
Install an interpretive kiosk or low informative sign at the entrance.	\$7,500
Install informational signs at graves of community leaders (assume 15 small metal, short post).	\$3,750

PLANTING PLAN

Please refer to the Site Plan and Detail Plan on the following pages for locations of the plantings described below.

Additional Trees (within cemetery or along boundaries)

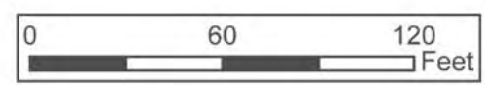
Preferred Plant Characteristics and Considerations:	Evergreen and deciduous trees in a variety of sizes and mature heights
Soils:	Fine sandy loam to 18" then red gravelly sandy clay to 50"
Sunlight:	Full sun to part shade
Planting Cycle:	Install all plants in fall and winter
Installation and Maintenance:	Refer to the City of Austin's <i>Native and Adapted Landscape Plants</i> guide (Appendix A) for information on installing and maintaining specific individual species
Recommended Species by Common Name:	Cedar elm, post oak, live oak, blackjack oak, pecan, honey mesquite

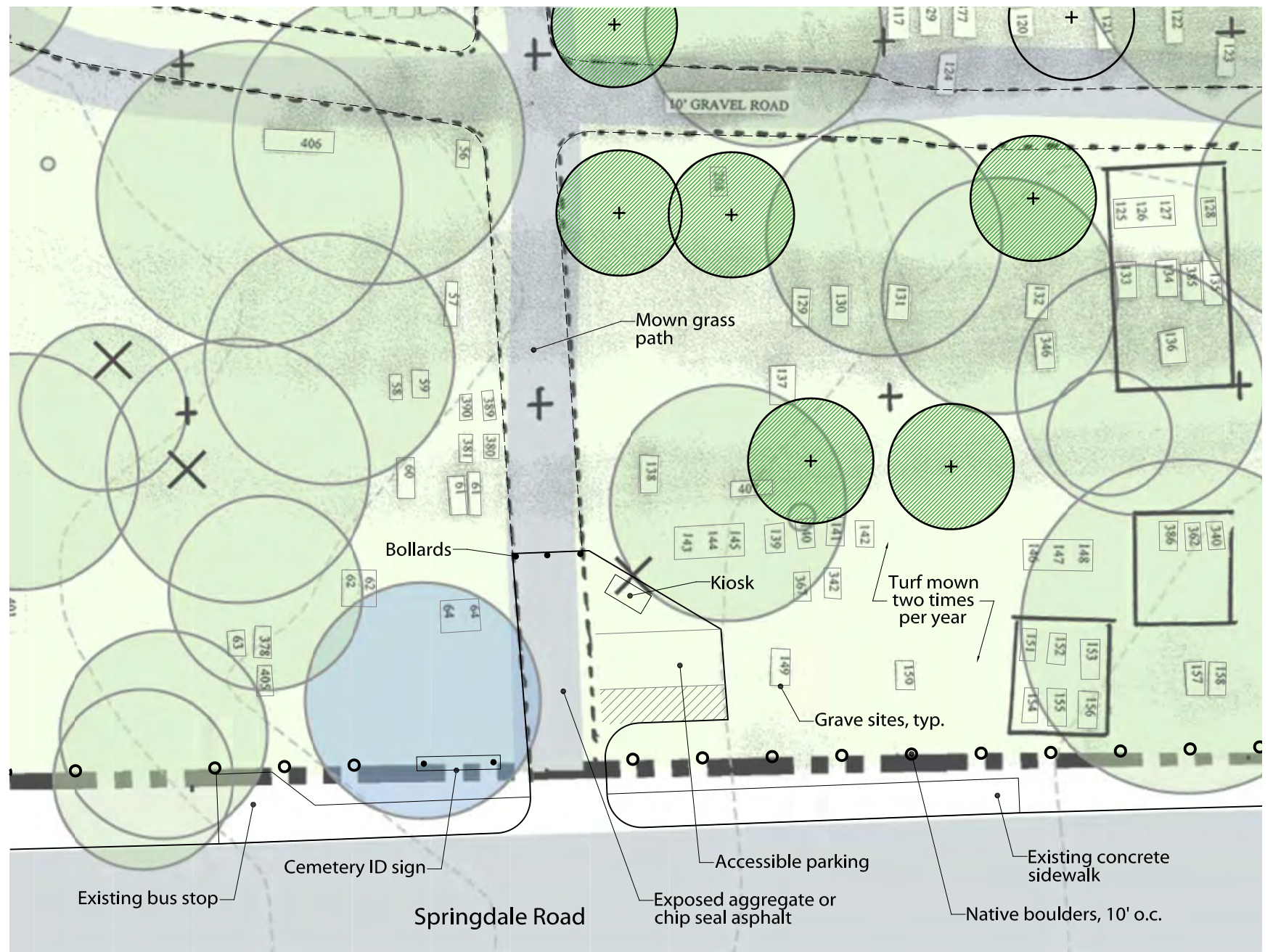


- Cemetery Boundary
- Contour (2-foot interval)
- Cemetery Section
- Streams
- Roads
- Dead, Snag, or Stump
- Deciduous Trees
- Evergreen Trees



Plummers Cemetery Site Plan





Plummers Cemetery, Entrance Detail

Scale: 1" = 20'-0"