



# CEMETERY OPERATIONS

Tonja Walls-Davis, Division Manager  
Parks and Recreation Board Presentation  
December 2018



# The Founding of Historic Cemeteries

**MISSION STATEMENT** | Cemetery Operations strives to honor the past, present, and future of Austin's sacred municipal burial grounds with integrity, empathy, and respect.

**VISION STATEMENT** | Cemetery Operations utilizes available resources to provide the best quality of service and care to our diverse community and historic cemeteries.



1839

- Oakwood Cemetery



1872

- Stanley-Nolen



1878

- Cemetery at Longview Park



1898

- Plummers Cemetery



1915

- Oakwood Cemetery Annex



1926

- Evergreen Cemetery



1927

- Austin Memorial Cemetery

# Background and History



Department of Public Works managed cemeteries (ends 1986).

- **26 Full-Time Employees:** All Grounds (15 Seasonal)

Intercare Managed.

- 1990-2013 Managed by contractor

Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) manages cemeteries.

- April 1, 2013 PARD assumed management of the five (5) City of Austin municipal cemeteries.
- The cemetery team was established to handle the administration, interment and maintenance functions.
- **21 Full-time Employees:** 6 Administrative & 15 Grounds (5 Seasonal)
- Cemetery Operations maintain 200+ acres of cemetery land, which consists of over 80,000 burials
- An average of 365 interments per year and 500 space sales

# Interment Contract

In **June 2013**, the Austin City Council approved a five-year contract with Interment Services, Inc. (ISI) for interment services only.

The ISI contract expired on **November 28, 2018**. On November 15, 2018, Austin City Council approved an extension option for the contract with Interment Services, Inc. extending the contract term for three years: November 29, 2018 to November 28, 2021.





# At the moment...

- PARD is currently managing interments at all five (5) city cemeteries.
- As of April 1, 2013, Cemetery services include:
  - Sales administration and management (PARD)
  - Cemetery operations and maintenance (PARD)
  - Interment services (Contractual)
- Burial spaces are only sold at Austin Memorial Cemetery and Evergreen Cemetery.
- Austin Memorial Park has over **30 acres** of undeveloped land available for future burials.



# Environmental Program Coordinator

**June 2018:** PARD hired an architectural conservator to serve as the Environmental Program Coordinator (ECP) for Cemetery Operations in order to implement aspects of the Cemetery Master Plan relating to **maintaining** and **extending the life** of historic resources.

## Main Responsibilities for FY 2019:

- Develop Historic Cemetery Conservation Program and Standard Operation Procedures
- Assess historic resources and prioritize projects
- Lead restoration and stabilization efforts
- Identify preventative measures for preservation
- Work on special projects relating to historic resources

## Conservation Treatments and Activities May Include:

- Documentation and scopes of work
- Repairing broken monuments
- Releveling and resetting monuments
- Mitigating efflorescence
- Infill of cracks and voids
- Surface consolidation
- Identify and mitigate environmental sources of deterioration



# Accomplishments

2016

- Created a more efficient deed process in conjunction with Office of Real Estate Services in order to reduce the turnaround time for customers to receive their cemetery deeds
- Implemented controls for burials and markings, eliminating the risk of double space sales and errors

2017

- Installed limestone border around Plummers Cemetery to limit vehicular damage
- Updated and implemented new cemetery maintenance practices
- Cleaned up the cemetery at Longview Park
- Cemetery Operations successfully passed the 2014 Cash Audit
- Launched Phase I of the Cemetery Information Management System (CIMS)

2018

- Hired and trained new staff, including an Environmental Program Coordinator
- Completed and submitted a draft of the proposed Cemetery Rules and Regulations
- Launched Phase II of CIMS
- Restored the Oakwood Chapel; it is now being programmed by Museums & Cultural Programs
- Invertible vases are now available for sale



# Business Challenges

- Utilizing CIMS and the administrative team to update cemetery records
- Prioritizing monument conservation appropriately given the backlog of deferred maintenance
- Managing a complex natural landscape to be both sustainable and aesthetically pleasing with limited resources
- Aging infrastructure, including outdated, manual irrigation systems
- Limited personnel resources; current maintenance staff is at 50% of need
- Funding for roads at Austin Memorial Park needs to be identified

## **PERPETUAL CARE FUND:**

- Currently under legal review to establish clear administrative processes that will allow for clarity of the Perpetual Care Fund's purpose, administration and allowable uses.



Antiquated Manual Irrigation System  
(Photo at Austin Memorial Park)



Deteriorating Roads at Austin  
Memorial Park



# Update on Cemetery Rules Ordinance

2013

- Resolution No. 20131017-042: Established updated cemetery rules through public engagement with implementation and enforcement

2017

- Multiple Community Engagements
- Draft Rules Presented to Stakeholders – October 2017

2018

- Notice of Proposed Cemetery Rules R161-18.08 – May 2018
- Appeals Process Overturned – August 2018
- Cemetery Comparison and Additional Citizen Engagement (Current)

2019

- Estimated Implementation and Enforcement of new rules update

# Next Steps

- Continue to plat Section 14A at Austin Memorial Park.
- Work with PARD Planning staff to develop cemetery maps.
- Update the COA website with cemetery project updates, maps and other information.
- Develop an in-house monument team.
- Rehabilitate the Oakwood Annex building to serve as a Cemetery Operations conservation and maintenance workshop.
- Develop a five-year strategic plan (*FY 2019 through FY 2024*).
- Replace the fences and restore the entrance gates at both Oakwood and Oakwood Annex Cemeteries.





# QUESTIONS?