
APPENDIX 0

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Austin Cemetery Master Plan

Stakeholder Interviews

Steph McDougal
McDoux Preservation LLC
May–June 2014

As part of the Austin Cemetery Master Plan public engagement effort, project team member Steph McDougal conducted 25 telephone interviews with community stakeholders to solicit input, gather feedback, and identify top-level issues that can be further explored through the online survey tool, *Speak Up Austin*.

Methodology

Sixty people were identified as potential interviewees. Kim McKnight, cultural resources specialist with the Parks and Recreation Department and the project coordinator, provided an initial list of 35 stakeholders. Ms. McKnight identified 25 of the 35 as especially high-priority interviewees. An additional 25 people were added to that list, primarily because they emailed Ms. McKnight asking to be included in the interviews or were recommended by other interviewees.

Stakeholders were identified or recruited from the following general categories:

- People whose loved ones are buried at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery or Evergreen Cemetery
- Descendants of people buried at Oakwood Cemetery
- Members of Save Austin's Cemeteries
- Community leaders and activists
- Funeral home directors
- Religious leaders
- Members or officers of neighborhood associations located near the cemeteries
- People who attended Cemetery Master Plan meetings and volunteered to be interviewed
- Preservation specialists, archaeologists, cemetery conservators
- Members of local and county historical or landmark commissions
- Genealogists
- Representatives of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Central Texas

A list of respondents is provided at the end of this report. All interviewees will remain anonymous. Comments have been lightly edited to correct spelling and punctuation, for easier reading, and to delete identifying information.

Ms. McDougal initially contacted each person via email if an email address was provided. Any email addresses that returned an undeliverable response were researched, corrected, and re-sent; those addresses were also reported to Ms. McKnight. A follow-up email was sent about a week later to anyone who had not originally responded. Telephone calls were also made, both to those people for whom email addresses were not provided and to follow up with people who did not respond to email invitations. In all, Ms. McDougal invited 55 people to participate; one person declined, and 29 did not respond.

Ms. McDougal scheduled an interview appointment with those who did agree to participate. Most interviews lasted around 30 minutes. Some took only about 15 minutes, while one gentleman spoke for two hours. Ms. McDougal transcribed the interviewees’ comments in real time and asked follow-up questions to ensure that she understood their responses. In some cases, when interviewees had questions about goals of the master plan or made comments indicating a misunderstanding (for example, about which cemeteries were City-owned and subject to PARD oversight), Ms. McDougal provided information to participants.

At the end of the interview, Ms. McDougal asked if the participant could recommend anyone else to whom she should speak. Most respondents either identified specific individuals or recommended funeral home directors, members of neighborhood associations located near the cemeteries, or nearby churches or synagogues.

The City’s Public Information Office requested that Ms. McDougal ask each participant if they would be willing to share their ZIP Code and race or ethnicity, in an effort to ensure that the project outreach efforts represent the diversity of the Austin community. Of the 25 people interviewed, 19 provided their ZIP Code and 20 identified their race or ethnicity.

Racial/Ethnic Identification (per interviewee)	% of Austin Population (2010 Census)	Identified as Potential Stakeholders	Invited to Participate (% of invitees)	Accepted Invitation (% of those accepting)	Did Not Respond	Declined Invitation
African American	8%	10	10 (17%)	2 (8%)	8	0
Asian American	6%	5	5 (8.5%)	0 (0%)	5	0
Mexican American/Latino/Latina/Hispanic	35%	9	9 (15.5%)	3 (12%)	6	0
White/Anglo/Caucasian (“not Hispanic”)	48%	43	35 (59%)	20 (80%)	15	1
TOTAL	97% (3% two or more races)	67	59	25	34	1

ZIP Codes represented include 78702 (2); 78704 (2); 78705;78730; 78731 (2); 78736; 78741; 78745 (2); 78747; 78751; 78753; 78758 (3).

Ms. McDougal read the following introductory script at the beginning of each interview.

Hi, my name is Steph McDougal. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Is this still a good time for us to talk?

I have 8 questions for you today, and I expect that this interview will take about 30 minutes, depending on how much you have to say. Does that sound all right?

I have just a few things to cover before we begin.

First, as I've already mentioned, I'm part of the project team helping the City of Austin to develop its Cemeteries Master Plan. My role includes community engagement and gathering public input and feedback, so I'll be the person running the public meetings, creating the project website, and managing other outreach and information gathering activities. It's my job to make sure that the people of Austin have multiple opportunities to make their voices and opinions heard.

Now, I know that, as the City was preparing for the master planning process over the past few years, there were working groups, interviews, surveys, public meetings, et cetera. You may have participated in some or all of those activities, and I want to assure you that the feedback from those past activities has been documented and shared with the project team.

In this interview, I'd like to hear your opinions about the master plan process itself and the community's interaction with the cemeteries going forward. Does that make sense?

Second, I want to let you know that your responses today will be anonymous. The City provided me with a list of about 50 potential interviewees, but I'm only talking to 25 of you, and I'm the only person who will know who I've talked to. Your responses will be compiled and aggregated in my report, and no one will be personally identified. So please feel free to be completely candid.

Finally, we'll take the top issues mentioned by you and the other stakeholders being interviewed, and we'll use that information as the basis for surveying the greater Austin community and gathering what I hope will be broad input to the master plan.

All right. Do you have any questions before we begin?

The interview questions and answers are provided on the following pages.

The comments provided for each answer, below, have been edited for brevity.

Question 1: In your opinion, when we get to the end of the development of this project and deliver the finished master plan to the City of Austin, how will you know whether the master planning process has been a success?

Most of the answers to this question fell into three categories: the master plan must be implemented; it must incorporate the input received from citizens; and it must result in an improvement to the appearance of the cemeteries.

Implementation

- It will be a success if the City will take action on the master plan and fund the recommendations in it.
- The master plan is only as useful as it is implemented. City Council has to let the cemetery overseer do his job and not make it political.
- The city planning projects that I've been involved in have been very thorough, but not all of them have been implemented.
- The master plan is not an end because I'm familiar with other city master plan projects; they are ongoing. PARD makes their presentation to Council and Council accepts the plan, but sometimes they only go forward with only portions of the plan, like the development of Town Lake. Sometimes Council has to make bonds and get citizens to approve them and then implement things.
- PARD has to pick up the master plan and present it to Council. This is a continual process with many steps to implementation. A master plan is just guidelines or suggestions; you're not making policies or ordinances or passing laws. I don't think a master plan should contain minutiae. I know some people feel left out if all of their issues aren't addressed in the master plan and its intent (e.g., the Holly Shores project), but we don't need to please everybody.
- The short answer is, how easily will the city incorporate it? How easy is it to adopt? A lot of master plans have high ideals and lengthy goals, but you can't achieve any of them. The master plan must be laid out in short steps that are attainable.
- Many master plan items require long term planning. Some things can be done fairly quickly or with temporary fixes, although that's (quick fixes) how we got where we are today.
- I'll know it's successful if it actually has implementation attached to it – either city ordinances, city policy changes, or funding. It's not about the planning itself. Austin plans itself to death. We have had some really bad consultant-led processes.
- It will be a success when I see remedies either in place or plans for remedies at all five city cemeteries. I also would like to see specific recommendations and additional plans for revisiting the master plan process on a five- or 10-year basis, because as we know, things change. Once the plan is done, I look forward to being continuously participating in the evolution of the plan.
- A lot of the time, the city wants to create master plans, but they don't implement the repairs and maintenance.
- If the city actually applies what the master plan recommends, as opposed it just sits on the shelf, which is what always happens.

Citizen Feedback

- Transparency and a continual flow of information is important. My experience has shown that the stakeholder input meetings, and the online surveys from stakeholders and the feedback that we get, keeps everyone on top of the progress, no matter what the topic is. We're getting a whole lot of information back from the folks in charge. We hear what the consensus is.
- The main measure of success is that it reflects the stakeholders and the feedback that was given; that it is accepted by the public; and that it reflects the values of Austin as a whole and doesn't contradict *Imagine Austin* and other accepted plans.
- It will be a success if clear takeaways and action items come out of the process, which directly address concerns that were brought up by residents, and if there is a timeline for each of action items – a target schedule, plus an estimate of the amount of time that it will take to reach those solutions.
- The City should continue to engage the community and get some Memoranda of Agreement with groups like Save Austin's Cemeteries.
- I will know if it's been a success if people go to a public hearing and they're satisfied that they've had an opportunity to have input.
- After you get feedback on the draft master plan, make the revised draft available to the public before it goes to the other bodies so that people can see what has happened to their feedback and if you got their feedback right.
- I go to so many meetings and processes where stakeholders were led down the path to the answer the City wanted. If the process was equitable ... but you're only getting feedback from the city staff and the people who sent up the process. Get the neighborhood and the stakeholders talking about the results that were provided in the plan to City Council or to the Commission. People need to give feedback on the validity of what's being shown. If we know that's going to happen at the end, that might affect how you get that feedback.
- I would measure it by looking at all the input that you have received from the public and seeing if most of those concerns had been addressed or at least acknowledged. And it has to be implemented.
- There would be a mechanism in the system where stakeholders when the information is presented to staff or council or whatever and they give feedback on the effectiveness of the process. If it's not effective and the stakeholders are not being heard and you're just checking a box, you'd be getting that information there because people would tell you.
- I've been in these meetings and have come out really frustrated because the answer was predetermined. We know when that's going on. We need to have a voice at the end of the process to say if that happened.
- I'll know it was a success by the acceptance that you'll have from people – not the majority of people who all come to the meetings and have the same point of view, but by everybody. No one is going to get everything that they want, but everyone should get something. There has to be diversity.
- The plan has to deal with all of the concerns that people had before.
- If the community voiced their opinion about things that need to be Improved and if those are mostly done, then you know you did your job. You need to make sure you

get a lot of opinions and that the groups are not all aligned. You need to go out to where people utilize areas. You can't just say you'll have one meeting at that one place; you need to go to where the people are, instead of having people come to you, like at a festival or something else. People do want to talk to you and have input. The people who have limited resources are using these.

Visible Improvements

- Oakwood will be more attractive.
- I do hope there will be some arrangement made for the resetting of headstones. Right now, the family is responsible for that and they are just not around. I think it would be very easy to do a fundraiser and put money for that into the cemetery fund.
- I want to see how the process works and what the city will do to maintain those sites – like cutting the grass, fixing the markers, etc. There is physical evidence of the lack of maintenance and if that's dealt with, that will be the most obvious sign of success.
- My main concern is maintenance. The City has done a wonderful job of getting some things cleaned up, but I don't know what their overall plan is or funding for staffing. If they contract out the maintenance again, it must have more oversight than before.
- It all comes back to who takes care of the cemeteries. Because we have to follow the rules that the cemeteries have of what is proper there and what is not. Of course that's under discussion now. And when that's decided on that needs to be followed.

Question 2: In an ideal world, five years from now, when you spend time in one of Austin's historic cemeteries, what would you like to see?

Most respondents were very specific about their concerns and their vision for the cemeteries. The comments have been organized below into eight categories: general maintenance comments; the need for all five cemeteries to be treated equally; a desire for public-friendly spaces within the cemeteries that provide areas for quiet reflection; requests for the restoration or preservation of buildings, grave markers, and monuments; comments about cemetery trees and turf; comments about perimeter fencing around the cemeteries; requests for wayfinding and signage/information; comments for and against cultural activities and programming in the cemeteries; and statements for and against gravesite ornamentation regulations.

Maintenance (General)

- Primarily I would like to see less disrepair.
- We need ongoing maintenance of the landscaping and the cemetery markers.
- The City cannot, unless they're willing to spend a ton of money, maintain Oakwood to be like the State Cemetery. We're never going to have green lawns and stuff like that.
- I've still heard complaints about [maintenance at] Austin Memorial Park Cemetery as recently as a couple of weeks ago.
- In cases where old families might have moved on and people might have lost connections to their family plots, it would be nice if descendants could be located to help with the conservation and funding and maybe use the plots themselves.

- Some graves are not maintained; perhaps there aren't any family members nearby to maintain them, and that makes me sad in a place that's already sad. You need to be able to walk away from a cemetery with some sense of peace.
- I want to see better landscaping, mowing, basic maintenance and cleanup, and making sure that the guys who have the contracts to do the work actually do their job.
- I want to see healthy landscaping, headstones that are in good shape, perimeter fencing (if there is any) is in good shape, signage regarding either the folks interred there or the history of the cemetery, and the buildings in good shape. I'd also like to see some sort of obvious vandalism prevention, such as lighting, locked gates, etc.

Equitable Treatment

- Bethany, Plummers, and Evergreen Cemeteries should all be treated equally to Oakwood Cemetery and Austin Memorial Park Cemetery.
- The main thing is that they all be treated the same. They should all be watered the same, have the same upkeep, and be treated with the same respect. One shouldn't stand out from the others. I have people in different cemeteries and those people get treated differently. That's not how it should be.
- I'd like to see them all equally look the same in terms of treatment, maintenance, landscaping, etc.
- I would like to see them maintained on an equal basis.
- I would really like to see all of the cemeteries in as good a shape as Austin Memorial Park Cemetery. There are some problems at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery and all the cemeteries. I would like to have more emphasis as money allows in the other cemeteries.

Creation of Reflective Spaces

- I would like to see the City put money into creating treescapes and places for people to have seats, where they can visit with their loved ones.
- I would like to be able to access them more easily. I spend no time there now and that's mainly because I find them alienating and unwelcoming. I would like to feel welcome, whether I have ancestors there or not. I would like to see it be more of a welcoming public space where I'm welcome to move through the cemetery, even if I'm just spending time there as a visitor. I don't want to be barricaded by fences or feel like it's inappropriate that I'm sitting on the lawn.
- I would base it on cemeteries that I grew up near and visited as a child [in another state]. They were a good balance between pleasant relaxing places and places with historic information. Places to sit down or to walk, green spaces with tours and plaques and good information about the people there.
- Cemeteries can serve as an important community resource. They should be meditative places. Austin Memorial Park Cemetery is used as a park in addition to being a cemetery. People jog and walk there, and bicycle, and the cemeteries can serve multiple purposes. They are valuable resources. I'm so glad that the City acquired these spaces because they provide a unique area where the community can interact in different ways. I've met so many people in Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, like the couple whose son is buried near our people, and we see them almost every evening and I've started going out just to see him occasionally, to connect with him

and learn about him and come together. I think a cemetery does that. It helps us feel like we have a connection because we share that loss.

Buildings and Markers/Monuments

- I would like to see the chapel at Oakwood Cemetery being restored.
- I want to see headstones set up properly.
- I would like to see [attention paid to] old tombstones, which have various conservation issues and are not all at right angles, whether by City funding or a combination of City and nonprofit funding, I would like to see a mechanism for the repair of tombstones.
- I'd like to see the headstones properly leveled.
- I think that where they take out dead trees, if there is a known area that is vacant, we could install columbariums. That would increase the income at some of these cemeteries, which would increase the perpetual care fund.
- We need to save those fragile monuments that are at risk. We're losing a lot of that stuff over time. Footstones also tend to get displaced and moved around. A cemetery in Sacramento that's about the same age as Oakwood has an Adopt-A-Plot program for "abandoned" plots, which includes training in cleaning headstones, planting approved vegetation, etc. However, some people are concerned that a program like that might start changing the historic fabric of the site and morph it into something it never was.
- Basic maintenance includes putting up markers that have fallen down.
- Headstones should be up straight.
- The buildings should be rehabbed and in use by the public – just in general, not only for specific uses. Austin Memorial Park Cemetery and Oakwood Cemetery have such great buildings, and they just sit empty and deteriorate.
- We need to fix overturned and knocked-off headstones.
- I really look forward to seeing the buildings at the cemeteries in good shape.

Trees and Turf

- I would like to see it as pristine as possible, with grass and trees growing well.
- Mainly I want to see greener grass.
- I don't care much about landscaping if nobody is going to be there to see it.
- We need trees that are being taken care of through watering; I want to see good health for the existing landscaping.
- I would like to see cemeteries where trees of any age are maintained and taken care of, where they are mulched and watered when there is insufficient rainfall. At least 400–500 trees have died in the last five years.
- I am constantly fielding complaints from Temple Beth Israel congregants because that cemetery does not meet the standards of a Jewish section of a cemetery. Not only does it have to be separated by a physical boundary, but ideally, out of respect for people who cannot thank us or give anything back, which for us is a high calling, we'd like to improve the condition of the grounds. It's not park-like in appearance. However, since we're good citizens about water usage, we don't feel like watering would be a challenge. We could do that responsibly.

- I want to see much cleaner landscaping. Most of the stakeholders have issues tied to a specific cemetery, and I'm concerned with Evergreen Cemetery. I want to see consistent landscaping, no fire ants, and no burrs.
- I'd like to see that care is being taken of the landscaping.
- I don't expect us to have street lamps.
- I would like to see better landscaping; i.e., trees that are tended to and that are not dying or falling over.
- I don't agree with replanting trees, although you have to have something in there because it's so hot in the summer. Some people think if you have a tree that died, we have to replant it.
- The dead trees need to be removed, because they're such a hazard. I think there needs to be a thorough landscape investigation. The city did a whole clean-out-the-cemeteries thing in the 1970s and they might have done a lot of planting then. I'd like to see what was historically there but I don't think we know what that was.
- I know the last two years have been really hard on the trees and some have died and more may die. I hope that there will be a program for maintenance and selective new planting.
- The bushes should be taken care of.
- Grass or sod should be put on the graves and taken care of. I know of several burials this year where, even after five or six months, sometimes there's no sod put down yet. I don't know what the rules are, but where sod has been put down, it never gets watered and it dies or goes dormant. So instead of having a 40" by 8' area of dirt, it's an area of grass that has turned brown and looks dead – maybe *is* dead. It's more upsetting to see that, the dead grass, than for it to not be there at all. It just goes back to the management and operation of the cemetery; they just don't seem to care. The quiet peaceful reflective environment I want also includes trimming trees and keeping things well-groomed. In some cases, I've put down fertilizer for the trees and weed-and-seed to get the grass to grow and get rid of the cruddy weeds and stuff.
- I would like to see new trees planted in a manner that's the way people want – near their graves, not just at the perimeter. We want long-lived shade trees, not just little crape myrtles just because that's easier for maintenance. I go to the cemeteries a lot and I observe what people go through, and I have my share of losses, so I would like to see a place that's taken care of, that looks like someone cares for the place and that shows they respect the people who are buried there and who come to see the people who they love who have died.
- Graves should be covered with grass that is watered.

Fencing

- Appropriate boundary fencing is needed, both to keep the cemetery secure and also to give it the respect that it deserves. Right now, it's wire and barbed wire fencing, and that's not appropriate. That should be something like nice and aesthetically pleasing, with gates that can be secured as well.
- We need something nicer than chain link fencing. It's too easy to destroy and gain access, and it has a tendency to look like prison or vacant lot.
- I really want additional access points in the fencing. I understand that there are crime concerns, but just having more access points (like at the corners) would be better.

Most of the entrances are mid-block, and those make you have to walk another 200 feet along a car-lined street. So something as simple as access points where they make sense about how people get to the cemeteries, not just in vehicles but on the bus or on foot. Look at how you can get in without feeling like you're being herded to an entrance.

- I don't care if the fence is green or whatever color, but I'd like to see the barbed wire taken off the top. That makes it not very inviting. With that said, fences are a waste of money at this point. We need the money for more pressing problems.

Wayfinding and Signage/Information

- I would like to see better navigation for the public. Having spent a lot of time in these places, I can navigate them pretty easily, but it's hard for people who are only there a couple of times a year. We need section signs and kiosks and maps on site.
- I would like to see an actual entry gate that includes the cemetery's name, as well as usable convenient restroom facilities and perhaps an information kiosk of some sort. That should be consistent for all of the cemeteries. We also need accessible information about who is buried in the cemeteries, like an historical archive. QR code technology cannot be the only option. Coupled with other kinds of information, including a phone number or some sort of registry, it would be okay. This is especially important for unmarked graves. Some families may not be able to afford a really nice gravestone, so the only markers that go up are the very temporary markers that come from the funeral homes. I think it would be nice if in the fee for the burial there is a minor fee for something a little more long-term. Maybe not a memorial stone, but even if there was just a small flat marker, that would be helpful. Families that can put up memorial markers do so, but some families just can't or don't know how. And once the funeral home markers get knocked down or run over or whatever, we've got unmarked graves.
- Technology with smartphones and things like that would be great. People should be able to go to a website like the Texas State Cemetery's search engine where you can look up someone and find their grave. Or they should be able to call someone, even on a Sunday. A lot of people that I see in the cemeteries are older and they aren't up on technology. We have to have ways for people to access this information no matter what their access to that information is. It's especially hard if they have had to come so far and not find what they want. We need a docent program too, where someone can be on site and can provide this information and help people.

Activities and Programming

- My favorite cemetery is Oakwood Cemetery because it's so historical, with so many famous people and great stories. I'd like to see them doing more with it. I'd like it if people knew more about it. They take it for granted.
- My specific area of interest is Oakwood Cemetery. I would like to see it utilized more as a destination point for any number of cultural and educational activities. I would like to see Oakwood as a tool for the city to hold events and celebrations. I would like to see it utilized as what it is and can be. I understand that Austin Memorial Park Cemetery is active, but Oakwood is more of a cultural place. PARD has any number of museums under their direction, and they could utilize Oakwood as a museum.

- I would love to see interpretive brochures on the older cemeteries about who is buried there and what their significance was and if there are especially interesting gravestones from an artistic point of view. I'd like to see a series of tours of the graveyard, the sort of historic tourism like they do well in other cities that is respectful but can make the cemetery a destination for more than just funerals.
- [The cemeteries could be] tourist attractions. Fulfill the mandates of the memorial park architectures on which some of them are based. Have a public education component with school tours.
- Ideally, it would be great to have our cemeteries be where tourists go and learn about Austin's history.
- Cemeteries can be cool public spaces with multi-function uses. That's good for the people who have families buried there because other people have a way to enjoy the space that's not disrespectful. Plays can be performed there, for example.
- I've run into other cemeteries in Austin that I biked past, where there really aren't a lot of signs. There were a lot of 19th century graves, so I thought it was odd that it wasn't announced more specifically. I would like to know that sites as old as that cemetery are there. I know it's complicated, because Austin is growing and there's so much building. I don't know what the policy is for graveyards, if you ever move a plot or whatever. It was exciting – my experience with cemeteries in the past never included stumbling upon a cemetery like I do now.
- PARD should make a distinction between the cemeteries and use them for different purposes. I think there is too much emphasis is on what's going on at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery with rules and regulations. They're the ones who handle the administrative and burials. They're concerned with the staffing and financial side, and that's geared to their needs, but Oakwood is left out of that. There needs to be a separation of administration needs for the different cemeteries based on how active they are and how they're being used. We should look at Oakwood differently from AMP.
- There should be a cultural director like they have for museums or cultural centers. I was very disappointed when, a couple of years ago, a young man made a presentation to the Mexican American Cultural Center board and wanted to do a Day of the Dead celebration at Oakwood. He was very ambitious and the presentation was exciting, involving dance, music, food trailers, and I thought that was great. I was disappointed that he didn't get approval. You could have a great celebration of the different cultures and how different cultures celebrate. Instead, it's all about "Let's not offend the white people; let's not offend the white Protestant majority!"
- I would like to see cultural events in Oakwood every month. Not just tours but also celebrations, and all different cultural communities. Why can't there be a Chinese New Year celebration?
- There's that main street that cuts right through Oakwood which could be used for all sorts of things. The Heritage Society [now Preservation Austin] did something at Oakwood last year which did really well. I would like to bring the cemeteries alive. Lots of cities embrace their cemeteries in a lot of ways. It's a burden for the cemeteries division because that's not what they are staffed to do.
- The cemetery culture right now is that you drive there, park, visit, and drive away. I like the idea that, especially if you have ancestors there, that you could make a visit

there part of another trip. Like it would be more of a part of your normal life, more integrated with your life.

- We (community groups) need to be able to raise money and pick projects and work on those projects.
- Some cemeteries have tours, activities, even theater. SAC put on Macbeth at the Masonic cemetery for several weekends in a row, and that was very popular. Even at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, if people can come out and realize that the cemetery is more than a collection of bones and stones – that there are people at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery who are interesting, like the Texas Ranger who captured Bonnie and Clyde, or [author] James Michener – getting people to engage is going to be important in order to get funding through Capital Improvement Projects and bond issue items. The master plan has to include using the cemeteries and making people aware of them.
- Evergreen is going to be sold out within a couple of years. Once it's no longer being used actively for burials, it should be a cultural place.
- I got involved because I really like the monuments and the artistry and the epitaphs, the life stories that really makes cemeteries interesting to me. Being able to preserve those old monuments and make it so people can come out and do activities and programming, that's important.
- People like to go there for reflection, for grieving and to visit loved ones. It needs to be quiet and respect their losses. It cannot be a park. A community garden or trail would be disrespectful. There should be no distractions with noise and other activities. There's also the aspect of the historical and people could go from one grave to another but in a respectful manner, but not like a circus atmosphere. I think we can make a lot of improvements in five years because it's mostly attitude.
- I continue to see the cemeteries as restful places but also places of activity. It's wonderful to see people in a cemetery, either doing things or walking or driving around and having activities in the cemeteries.

Gravesite Ornamentation

- I think decoration should be minimal. That's my idea of a cemetery.
- The whole business of the families of the deceased, especially those people who add an awful lot of clutter, you need to be respectful of them but there needs to be a better way of recognizing the accomplishments of their forebears.
- The whole atmosphere that's been created at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery between the tilted headstones and whirligigs and balloons and plastic flowers, where it's overdone to some degree, is not conducive to what the environment of a cemetery ought to have.
- I enjoy all the decorations that people put up for holidays, feast days, etc. That adds more color to the cemetery.
- I like the cemetery the way it is right now. We already have more rules and regulations than we need. I see a lot of things there that I would never do; it's too much clutter for me, but I'm perfectly all right if someone else wants to do it. I would hate to see that change.
- I've read some of the comments online that various people have made about the ornamentation and what would be allowed and not allowed. The word I kept seeing

crop up was “sterile”. People were concerned that the cemetery would be different than what it is, if they enforce the regulations and don’t allow people to do things – trying to define what a bench could be made of, and so on. I think it’s just majestic when you go into a military cemetery, when all the gravestones are identical and perfectly aligned and all the grass is trimmed and everything; and for a military cemetery, that’s the way it should look. And other people like the private cemeteries where things are flush with the ground and it’s easy to mow. But that doesn’t appeal to everyone. That’s exactly why we chose Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, because of the variety of memorials. But I know if you set up a group to study something, they have to come up with something or people say you didn’t do your job. So I expect a lot of things are going to change.

- I know that the cemeteries need to be all things to be all people and there are controversial issues including what people can leave by the gravestones, so I’m hoping that that will be dealt with in a fair and systematic sort of way.
- I like the cemetery the way it is. It might be cluttered and some of the people who have Spanish surnames, their gravesites quite often have rocks or stones around them, and they plant flowers and plants there and sometimes they don’t maintain it and it looks trashy after a while, but I don’t think that happens enough that it’s really a problem. That’s part of Austin Memorial Park Cemetery’s charm. I look at the date on the headstone and I can see that it’s been 10 years and they’re just not coming around as often. I find it interesting.
- I had several conversations with the man who managed the cemeteries before the City took it back over. He said that the rules in the rule book weren’t being followed because someone had buried a loved one and put up some kind of memorial, and it wasn’t according to the rules. That person was told that the memorial had to be taken down, so then he went before City Council and they said he didn’t have to take it down. So there you go.
- We chose Austin Memorial Park Cemetery for the diversity that it allows. We own a pretty large number of plots there where my relatives are buried. And it’s so important that there can be a meditative atmosphere and people can express unique things about the people buried there, and it’s a place where people want to go and they can feel comfortable to be there. I enjoy the central area in AMP, walking around and seeing how other people have done unique things to express their individuality. It has a feel of welcoming spirit, where it’s not just a place where bodies or ashes are buried. It’s a place where people can remember and feel connected to their loved ones. It is a place where I can reconnect with my past. We specifically chose Austin Memorial Park Cemetery because of all those things and it feels good when we are out there. We are very committed to the fact that there needs to be a balance. I know there was a plan to prohibit all of those decorations, and that’s wrong, but the City has to be able to keep it clean and remove things that haven’t been taken care of. They can’t allow things to just deteriorate right there. I want an area where expression can be made on an individual basis, but the City doesn’t have to just let things go to pot there. I don’t see any conflict. You don’t have to be able to run a mower over everything. We’ve seen people out videoing Austin Memorial Park Cemetery from other private cemeteries who want to know why people are buying lots there instead of their cemeteries. About six or seven years ago, when it was still managed by a contractor, the Parks Director decided they would remove the benches,

and I went out and photographed that central part and met with the director, and I showed him where the family had placed memorabilia and benches and things on the grave of a young Hispanic Marine. I told him if he forced that family to take that stuff off, he would be on the front page of the *New York Times*. There are some really special things there, and if they adopt across the board rules to get rid of everything, that would be a problem.

- I would like to see the ornamentation cleaned up and more respectful.
- I would like to see an area that looks neat and clean and well groomed and taken care of. The whole cemetery should be an area that allows quiet reflectiveness and is well cared for, a nice peaceful quiet area, both audibly and visually quiet. In other words, I personally don't like driving through the cemetery and seeing the silver balloons and hanging stuff and whirligigs. That's a circus atmosphere and destructive and takes away from the solemnity that a cemetery should be.
- For the places where people attend, like Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, people need to have a positive experience in the cemetery where they feel comfortable, where they are respected, not harassed.
- We need a consistent grave decoration implementation plan.

Question 3: As you may know, our team will be providing the City with very specific recommendations for the care of the five historic cemeteries. One of the project goals is to help the City preserve the historic character of the cemeteries while developing their value as community resources. That includes encouraging people to recognize and connect with the City's heritage, while maintaining the reverence and respect that these sacred spaces require. What do you think about that concept?

Many people interviewed were open to the idea of cemeteries as community resources, as long as that was done in a respectful way and represented the diversity of the city, instead of focusing on white men. As one person put it, "There needs to be a balance between opening cemeteries to the public, inviting them in, and making them feel welcome, while still being respectful. But it's an achievable balance."

Public-Private Partnerships

- I think the community can play a big part in the maintenance of the cemeteries in terms of volunteering. That would be a good concept for the prolonged maintenance of them. For example, if the maintenance was about landscaping and will cost X amount of dollars and X amount of time, the community could be involved in litter clean up or something like that after the City has invested money in that.
- Atlanta, Georgia, has the Old City Cemetery, which is the same time period as Oakwood. Margaret Mitchell is buried there. They're about 15 years ahead of where we are with SAC. They have a foundation with an office and a big budget, and they raise a ton of money every year. The pub across the street is called Six Feet Under. After a tornado a couple of years ago, the non-profit did a lot of the remediation work that the City just couldn't do. The non-profit can take donations that the City can't. The non-profit actually goes a section of the cemetery through based on the master plan and they pay an outside contractor to do the maintenance. That way the City has

no maintenance cost in the future. The non-profit still has issues with the city, and they all do, but it's a good working model.

Heritage Tourism

- I do like that concept. Oakwood is full of history and it is probably our most important cemetery in terms of how history is concerned.
- I think tours and education are okay. People are either interested in history or they aren't. Exposing people to that can't be a bad thing. But would the city have to employ some guides that would be paid by the city? Volunteers would be okay.
- Some of the military cemeteries, such as Vicksburg, have paid guides who will spend a couple of hours with you. We were interested enough to have made the trip there, and it was great to have someone who knew the details about what had happened and the stories behind some of the memorials and things. That works for people who have a similar interest, and volunteers could do that.
- I'm all for it. I'm a history nut, particularly about sites of historical interest. Respect for those things and people who came before us, and had an impact on us today, is always a source of reverence and respect.
- I think the greater community can become involved by approving a 5% ad valorem tax to fund the city cemeteries. Citizens need to understand that if the cemeteries go down in a disrespectful manner, like Oakwood and Oakwood Annex, which are a disgrace, it affects property values. It's a citywide issue.
- That needs to be explored. The state cemetery has been extremely successful in doing educational outreach and public tours, and that's not detrimental to the cemetery aspect. These are such historic places that the opportunities for educating school children is phenomenal. They'll be filled up in a short time and they won't make any more money. That is a way to bring the public in and making them publicly usable and making money.
- SAC has been trying to get people to get involved for 8–10 years. It seems to be a lack of communication in the community. People seem to come over from the hotel there near Oakwood, or from the convention center. How can we get the word out that we do tours, etc.? We (SAC) want to have a decent program, but it's hard to get the word out. This sort of thing is so much easier in a small town because everybody knows each other. It's hard to plan events in Austin because there's so much else going on.
- This resonates with me a lot because I've done a lot of genealogy work. My family came from Europe so I have to travel a lot to cemeteries to get information. For me it's more like a history tour of the cemetery. It's me looking into history. There's such a huge impact on whether I can get information from cemetery management. It's easy in some places but really hard in others. We need to have a public liaison with the public. I've also visited graveyards for heritage tourism. Heritage is a really powerful word. I've heard some kind of extremes in terms of respect, like the idea of "sanctity" like having people visit a cemetery for reasons other than grieving is a problem. I think those aren't mutually exclusive. You don't need to restrict cemeteries to burying people and that's the end of it. There are other things involved. Certainly now in a highly populated urban area like Austin, these are being served to the public as a place to walk and contemplate and get into nature, not just look at graves. I think the possibilities are pretty good as community resources. Some of the events that

I know are going on in Oakwood, are really neat. I went to one of their heritage days and was really impressed with the array of stuff they had available.

- I think that maintaining respect for cemeteries includes recognizing its historic significance within the City's culture. I don't think people can be educated about the historic significance of a cemetery if they never have a chance to visit it. Cemeteries can be emotional places for some people, and you want to give those people privacy, so that's important. But at the same time, a lot of the cemeteries have so much history and people want to be able to tell that history so people know what that is. We need to be able to talk about what happened in Austin's past on a local, personal basis, especially with people who live in the neighborhoods where the people buried in the cemeteries used to live.
- It's easy to do that at the older cemeteries because, unlike at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, you're not going to have burials all the time. You couldn't have programming at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery – it would always seem irreverent, because there are so many burials out there every day. At the rest of them, it's a lot easier to do programming because of the long history of who's out there and also because it's not active. One of our [SAC's] most popular tours is Murder Mayhem and Misadventure, with costumed characters. There's a cemetery out in California like Hollywood Forever that has movies. But these cemeteries that have programming are really the old closed cemeteries.
- It's okay because I do see that, in other parts of the country, cemeteries can have historical or genealogical ways of helping people find out about things and people. Sacred ground is a sacred ground and it has to be respected, but there has to be some value attached to it as well. I don't mind there being historical information attached to the cemetery.
- I like the idea, but I don't want to spend a lot of money on it, to be honest. There's so much value in respecting history, and I love walking through cemeteries. I love history and artifacts. I see grave stones as above-ground artifacts. When I'm in a cemetery I'll have a contest with my husband to find the oldest gravestones, and families buried together and when the children died, and to get a feel for what was going on during that time. But I don't want to spend a lot of money on it. We have issues that involve people who need these services today. We just need to keep our cemeteries landscaped and respected. We can market or advertise the benefit of cemeteries but I don't want to spend money on it.
- That's great. I know that at Oakwood, which I'm most familiar with, they're putting out some sort of signage to find out a little bit more about those interred. A lot of people have a weird feeling about cemeteries, and I'd like to see some measures to bring people in and interested in former members of their community.
- I don't think that people are disrespectful because of ignorance. People do what they do because they don't care. People in Austin, not all, but a lot of people feel like if it's a green space then it's a public park and "I'm entitled to be there and do what I want." It doesn't take a lot of those people to make it bad for everybody. A lot of Austinites, especially younger ones, don't have respect for a cemetery and they feel like "green space is green space" to be enjoyed by the public.
- As far as education is concerned, that's a great question. As our synagogue's membership changes radically and the average age of our families has dropped from mid-50s to mid-30s (people with young kids), many don't know about Jewish burial

practices and mourning and funerals and how to behave in general. We're talking about creating an adult education class and a publishing little booklet. The attempts that we've made at education so far, they haven't showed much of an interest. The younger folks aren't disrespectful, but they don't really care. It's not a priority. "Cemeteries are for old dying people." Most younger people, in my opinion, don't think about death and dying. I don't know how to instill an awareness and a respect for not only the death and dying and mourning process, but also the cemetery practices.

- There should be respect for the people buried there. There is someone who cares for that person who is related who cares for that person. It is good to have the historical but there has to be respectful. There cannot be so much noise. There might not be many people who come visit Oakwood but people do come, and we should be more sensitive. How do we promote historical significance? How do we do homes tours in the cemetery? They don't allow people to come in with boom boxes in those homes and let kids play wherever. We need to treat cemeteries even better than that.
- In many different cemeteries they have cemetery day or a memorial day when people come to clean up the cemetery. I haven't seen that in any of the city cemeteries – that might be more of a rural thing.
- SAC helps explain why cemeteries are important and why you can find so much of our local heritage in our cemeteries. They do four tours annually, sometimes with actors, sometimes just guides. Sometimes people request a tour with a specific theme. I've also heard some talk about what is or isn't appropriate in a cemetery. I think everything that SAC undertakes is appropriate. We (SAC) give people instructions on cemetery conduct. If little kids are playing on monuments, we ask them to stop, for example.
- One of the things that has happened in the past is "It's my park day" It happens all over the City of Austin and volunteers choose what they want to do – plant trees, clean up parks, etc. One has been at Plummers and two at Oakwood. Those are helpful.
- It would be helpful to have restrooms at each of the cemeteries and places where people can actually sit, with benches under a tree. Long ago, people would have picnics at the cemeteries. They were green places with lots of trees and the whole family would come out and have a picnic. I think that's not so traditional any longer, but I enjoy seeing people in the cemeteries.

Diversity

- If you're recognizing things like the establishment of the state or the city of Austin, we have to make sure that the non-Anglo people get as much recognition as the Anglo people. You have to be sure it's an equal playing ground or it will just be the same thing as always where the Anglo people get all the credit.
- I think that's fabulous. I don't know how hard that will be to accomplish, but I do think that the cultural flavor of that will be dynamic, especially in Evergreen. People in my generation are going to have to try to pick up the history and tell you who are the leaders who were buried there. Our elders are dying, so now people like me are the elders now. People like my mother had fabulous knowledge of these people. The King family with the mortuary, we would have to put together a group of our peers, of native Austinites, and solicit their input. My friends and myself are all going into our

70s. There are still a lot of people in their 80s who will be our best cultural assets right now, before they start dying off.

- That's a tricky question. I mean, being from a Latino background, when our family members pass on, we are big on decorating the gravesites for holidays, birthdays, etc., creating shrines, and at the end of the month city staff comes along and throws everything in the trash. And we get that, because that's the way it is. Having some kind of marker that's really nice that says the name of the cemetery and when it came to be, etc., something of that nature would be okay. But I wouldn't promote tourism! Maybe you could make a brochure or something that's like a point of interest. But in terms of people's place of rest, you don't want to put one person over the other.
- I've worked with a lot of these groups who are doing this master plan, and I even have a problem with the word "master" because it's like people are going to be our "masters". These master plans are all being done by people who aren't here and our opinions just end up on a sticky note that gets lost forever.

No "One Size Fits All" Solution

- When you talk about Oakwood and Memorial, those are apples and oranges, two very different venues. For a lot of the gravesites at Oakwood, there is no one to contact about the grave. The whole family line has died out with no heirs, so the ornamentation on the graves becomes an altogether different matter, whereas at Austin Memorial, they're still burying people there.
- It would be helpful if there was a distinction between the cemeteries. People would have more of an issue with this sort of idea at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery rather than Oakwood, where you can focus on the historic aspect. It might seem disrespectful at AMP, but not at Oakwood. You need to clarify how each cemetery should be treated individually. If there are active burials at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery and Evergreen, treat them differently than Oakwood and Annex and Plummers Cemetery. Don't try to find a policy that fits all of the cemeteries, if they're really not all the same.

Questions 4 and 5: One of the areas that we're exploring is the potential for partnerships between the City and other organizations that may be interested in supporting the preservation of the cemeteries, encouraging people to experience the cemeteries in various ways, et cetera. Are there any partnerships that you would especially like to see the City pursue? Conversely, are there any partnerships that you would not be in favor of?

Ms. McDougal began by asking this question as stated above. At first, most people did not have any idea what such partnerships might look like. When they expressed uncertainty or asked for an example, Ms. McDougal suggested that one such partnership might include working with volunteers from a Master Gardeners Club to plant annual flowers as part of a beautification project. Many people were generally in favor of the concept of the City partnering with community organizations, although some expressed a negative opinion about the idea in general. People also expressed skepticism about how a collaboration might be implemented and whether the City's perceived favoritism for certain organizations would tarnish the community's opinion of any such partnerships or projects.

Positive Response with Specific Suggestions

- It would be great to partner with a gardeners organization or something like that.
- We (SAC) work with other preservation groups. The little museums are already connected to the City. We work hand-in-hand trying to get them to partner with us on some of our projects.
- The City Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) needs to promote Oakwood more. I was disappointed that they didn't take advantage of the National Convention of Funeral Directors when they were right there nearby. Funeral directors are very involved in historic cemeteries and historic preservation, but the CVB didn't do anything. There was also a Goth convention here and it would have been a natural fit to have at least awareness of Oakwood and its close proximity to the convention center.
- I would like to see something along the lines of the Texas Historical Commission's Heritage Trails program, which highlights cemeteries across the state. That ties into people's interests in hiking, so that would be the number one to look at. I'm interested in the history of people, even if they're not famous.
- There has to be a role for the African American Cultural Heritage District because that organization has a mandate from City Council to be the stewards for the African American community.
- The Texas Historical Commission and their cemetery program would be the most logical allies. Official Texas historical markers could be placed for some of the most significant people, in terms of permanent information.
- Preservation Austin would have an interest but no funding.
- Travis County Historical Commission might be able to help with documentation on some of the people who are buried there.
- The Northwest Recreation Center could be a good partnership if people in the recreation department would be interested in beautification or volunteer efforts. Just some low-level stuff that wouldn't get in the way of the maintenance department.
- If a church is nearby, that might be a good resource to tap.
- The concept sounds good to me, especially partnering with smaller arts or music or neighborhood organizations.
- I represent a neighborhood association and I think that's a good partnership to pursue. Those people might not have financial resources but they have a lot of interest and could provide manual labor resources.
- The big Halloween thing they do in Oakwood is interesting, and if someone wants to go into a cemetery because they're interested, that meets my criteria right there.
- The master gardener idea is fabulous. We are going to need some thoughtful ideas. I know we need shade and a few well-placed trees, but in a place like Oakwood where it's already really dense, the tree roots will have a negative impact. Large shade trees are impractical. The whole issue of what is planted in the cemeteries has to be really sensitive. Arborists and horticulturists are excellent collaborators.
- Some places have high schools with junior historian programs that can be useful.
- Sons of the American Revolution.
- I know someone who works extensively with Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts on different history-related projects, and they might be retiring flags or that type of thing, but they

could have a role in cleanups and other projects, in a small way to recognize the notable features of the cemeteries.

- The Austin History Center.
- There needs to be a mechanism for communication with the Latino community. After Latinos began migrating to Austin, they were buried mostly in in the Travis County International Cemetery (indigent) and it's filled up and now they are burying them in a second indigent cemetery in Manor. In the 1920s, Mexican groups began organizing their own cemeteries. Tracing that history is very important. There's a Mexican cemetery in Montopolis that's one of the oldest cemeteries in the city.
- Partnerships could be with the the Veterans Administration or VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) posts who work with getting cemeteries ready for Memorial Day and Veterans Day.
- I can imagine working with different colleges across Austin, high schools, etc., where people are studying archaeology and history and educating people on the timeframes of these older stones and demographics and all that stuff and having them write articles or stories or research papers.
- The Mormon church has a big genealogy department.
- I'm sure SAC will be heavily involved.
- Churches or congregations might be interested in partnering on maintenance or cleaning.
- Neighborhood groups, especially in east Austin.
- I think bicycling would be fine. I know people who bring their kids into their cemeteries to learn how to ride a bike. It would also be a good place for people who maybe aren't so steady on their bike and need a safe place to learn to ride.
- I would recommend the African American Cultural Heritage District.
- If we [SAC] had more volunteers and more interest, SAC could be at every one at the cemeteries, but mostly we work with Oakwood.
- We [SAC] had an arborist that came out to Oakwood and gave a presentation that was fascinating. We had a geologist from UT who gave a talk about the different types of stone, how it weathers, and why lichen forms on things. I would like to reach out to the universities who have specialties that are related to cemeteries or would help people understand the cemeteries.
- The Austin Trees Foundation would like to help participate with watering and maintenance of trees.
- SAC had a delightful event at Oakwood with Preservation Austin where they served dinner and we gave tours. Some of the other organizations that have worked closely with us [SAC] include the Neil Cochran House, Elisabet Ney Museum, and Buffalo Soldiers from Camp Mabry and Fort Hood.
- Museums and repositories in Austin and Travis County, like the General Land Office and Austin History Center, would be good partners.
- Partnerships are going to be crucial. The City parks have partnerships with non-profits and volunteer groups, and those partnerships help the City to carry out the work and the maintenance and the use. The City can't do it by itself.
- The gardening clubs would be good, in terms of landscaping.
- The Audubon Society could do educational outreach in terms of what wildlife you see in the cemeteries.

- Photography groups would be good.
- I'd like to see partnerships between the City museums and the cemeteries.
- SAC hosted Heritage Day for two years at Oakwood, partnering with the Susanna Dickinson House, French Legation, etc. and we had good feedback from those entities, but not a lot of public attendance. If we could partner and cross-pollinate, that would be good for them too, because they have trouble reaching the public.
- SAC has to be on the list. They served as the City's shadow cemetery department, and Dale Flatt is the unofficial city sexton.
- People who are walking in the cemeteries are fine.
- We need an African American advocacy organization brought on board to deal with the cemeteries; the African American Cultural Center is the one to do that. Evergreen is in their district. The City Council just agreed to seed that organization with \$300,000, so they have some resources to do things.
- We've been contacted by theater groups who want to put on performances. We refer them to the City. I think anything that's done with respect is fine.
- I grew up in a small town where the cemetery association was the leading social organization (it was mostly widows) and I know that those sorts of groups are very valuable. I would join a Friends group in a nano-second.
- Swede Hill Neighborhood Association is interested in the chapel project because they want a place to go meet. None of our cemeteries have any meeting places like private cemeteries do.

Positive but Non-Specific Response

- Partner with anybody who can offer something positive.
- I don't really know which partnerships the City has entered into or is considering, but I would be in favor of organizations that would contribute to maintaining the cemeteries. A Friends group and various private organizations can help to support that.
- That's a great idea and such a great way to engage the community. I think any neighborhood group or any group that is interested would be appropriate.
- I guess I would have to know the particulars before I could make a judgment, but it sounds like a good idea.
- It would be great if we had local people who knew what was in the plan and could do the loving follow-up to keep that going.
- Partnerships, like something with Master Gardeners, would be okay if there was no recognition or advertising or sponsorship sign. They shouldn't get any advertising out of it or make any money.
- I have family buried at Oakwood; I can't say about what happens at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery. We had wanted to have music (the Zombie Band) at one of our [SAC] tours, to perform under a tent, and the cemetery division said no just because of the name of the band alone. I thought it would be great! Not offensive! The City doesn't get the idea that even with our Halloween tour how accepting the public is – they would have enjoyed it. In Oakwood, that would not have been offensive. I'm pretty liberal. I'm not easily offended. Austin Memorial Park Cemetery could be used as a venue for SXSW! They could put up a stage at one end! When people bring this up, I think, "you don't even come to the cemetery! And now you don't want anybody else to

do it!” You can enjoy your time at the cemetery! You don’t have to be somber! Come on! I know that’s somewhat a matter of cultural differences, but our [Latino] way of dealing with and celebrating death and memory can be and should be a focus at Oakwood, for different cultures to come and celebrate that. Put it in print that cemeteries have other uses and resources; be creative! Be imaginative! Be open! People don’t want anybody there! Why worry about landscaping then? Make it a destination. Oakwood has gone through different stages, and it might have been one dominant culture but we [Latinos] slipped in anyway!

- If there was a way to do things respectfully, I think everything would be all right.
- Things would have to just not interfere with funerals. Even people just walking and having a conversation. But I don’t think that rules out any kind of activity. There would just have to be some way of segregating the activity from burials.
- Now that all the offices are at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery and not Oakwood, when you have vandalism and theft, it might be 10–14 days before the next mowing cycle and you realize that something happened. When someone was at Oakwood Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., that was a deterrent to theft. Oakwood’s problem is that you can stand in the middle and you can’t see the fences. It’s the terrain and the tree cover. We need to have someone on site and get people from the public in there because that deters crime. Even low-impact walking and biking will keep thieves from coming in, or at least deter them.
- The east side is going through gentrification. We used to see a lot of condoms and underwear in Oakwood Cemetery and the Annex, but now we don’t see as much prostitution in the cemeteries. Hopefully the gentrification will help with the drug use. We need to have people in the cemeteries on a daily basis.
- We need to allow groups like SAC to do some things, but not for-profit groups. The administrator or the parks board or whoever needs to approve the tourism stuff.
- From an historian’s standpoint, you’re worried about overuse or vandalism, but the only way that people who aren’t part of this organization or history or cemeteries in general, the only way they get to know about cemeteries and appreciate them are to really use them. So if you have a dedicated bike area or running area through them, you form some sort of connection to the cemeteries. I could really argue for or against recreation. In New Orleans, they are definitely a recreation and tourism destination. I’m sure that encourages people to steal things, but it also encourages people to understand the city’s heritage.

Negative Responses about Specific Groups

- Bicycle riders have taken over the whole city, and they don’t need to be running over people who are there paying their respects.
- No bicycling! There has been so much bicyclist policy pushed on us – bike lanes and all this other stuff. Bicyclists don’t obey the rules; they feel like they can do anything and whatever they want, and they don’t pay taxes to use the road, but they can slow us down on the road and there’s nothing that I can do. The cemeteries are only for people who are buried there or are going to visit their loved ones.
- I am opposed to the bicyclists! People should bike on the trails. I would be careful about doing any kind of collaboration with the bike people. I wouldn’t want to have to

accommodate them. People could ride their bike to the cemetery to pay their respects, or they want to just be there, but cemeteries are not a bike path.

- I know that the neighborhood associations sometimes are very much on target and sometimes they're way off target, so some decisions may become a popularity contest instead of the best idea.
- I think with some landscaping things and so on, some landscape architects and nursery men are so oriented toward the present and the future that their advice or donation of plant materials might not be best for preserving the historic character of the older cemeteries.
- The City has a rule that you can't run a business in a City park or cemetery. So we have to deal with that in the master plan. I don't want to see a bunch of bus tours and things like that coming through the cemeteries with loudspeakers and people getting on and off a bus. Our roads are narrow.
- If they want to make agreements with private clubs, that's okay, but I don't want to see it become the "Master Gardeners Club Cemetery".
- One organization's view of what is an enhancement would be someone else's negative. For example, I wouldn't want the City to collaborate with a flower club and come in one day and find out that they put a whole bunch of flowers in Section 14 of Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, because flowers are inappropriate in a Jewish cemetery. Same with putting up more benches or seating areas. I wouldn't trust any collaboration to be sensitive to another group.
- The preservation society (Preservation Austin) that preserves homes would be a good partner. More people need to be included and not just one organization per cemetery. There needs to be partnerships with more people, like the five neighborhood associations around Oakwood.
- I would be very careful about antique dealers, because we've had thefts of historic fencing and monuments. I'm not saying that they went out there, but they bought things from the thief.
- I would not like to be associated with the KKK! Or really political groups, left wing or right wing.
- I can't imagine someone would suggest an organization that would be detrimental, like Wiccans or witches. Not to be judgmental!

Other Negative Responses (General)

- I'll say no to that question. [Does not want any partnerships]
- My general feeling on these things is that they turn into turf battles.
- Some people are out there taking photos without permission, and we can't keep them from doing that.
- The fewer people involved in managing, the better. It's important to me to know who is responsible for what, with clear roles and responsibilities. I would think that, by collaborating, that would cloud who's responsible for what.

Negative Responses about the City

- The city’s Historic Preservation office hasn’t done a good job.
- I don’t know what those [partnerships] would look like or how that would be structured. The City has a public trust to take care of the cemeteries; I don’t care if the families still survive or not. I think the City is trying to push it off on someone else.
- Right now, the City is not adequately managing what they have, and it would only be worse if they were collaborating. If the management of the cemetery was competent and on top of things, then I would probably welcome or at least not object to collaborations.
- A lot of times when the City says “partnership,” that means they want to take over what the other group has or they want to delegate a lot of the work to that group.
- Considering the fees that the City charges [for interments], they should be responsible for maintaining the cemeteries. They might have some smaller non-profits that they work with, like when people go out and put up flags for fallen soldiers. But as far as upkeep goes, that needs to be mostly on the City’s shoulders because that’s where the dollars go.
- I’ve been trying to find volunteers to water trees (we don’t have a permit yet) and people want to help, but they think that whatever they offer will not be accepted and so it will be a waste of time. The City will not work with them. They will have to do what the City wants or nothing.
- There needs to be a lot more PR to build goodwill before the City does any partnerships.
- The City has turned down other groups that have volunteered to help. Austin Heritage Tree Foundation offered to water the trees at Oakwood, but the City said no – they could have saved 100 trees but the City said no. They were turned down flat. The City picks and chooses who they want to deal with, and that’s inexcusable.
- When the new PARD director came on board, there was a change to the participation of boards and organizations in terms of working with PARD. Some of us weren’t happy with these changes. The expectation of Oakwood had to be taken into context with PARD and how they generate sponsors and what extent of activity they could bring to different areas.
- I would like to see more outside solicitation by PARD of what you can do in the cemeteries, instead of waiting for people to knock on the door – and not just at cemeteries but other parks as well. We [community organizations] are made to feel unwelcome. A lot of these turn into legal issues.
- I would like to see PARD be more generous and attract and solicit participation. I’m in favor of (partnerships), but it’s all in how you do it – contacting people and groups and creating those relationships. I would like to see PARD actively solicit and develop relationships with the community.
- This is a difficult issue. The City prefers people who agree with them and excludes those who don’t. Many people won’t partner with the City because if they say anything that’s contrary to what the City wants, they won’t be able to work with the City ever again. So the only people who work with the City are the people who say, “Yes, yes, yes!” Partners need to be able to disagree and work to find a solution. Also the City will only work with people who they already work with. They won’t work with anybody else.

- I can see pluses and minuses on both sides, but my reaction is that I don't like it. I don't think the management of the cemeteries is adequate as it is, and it would be even more difficult to collaborate. It would be an excuse for the City to say, "Well, we aren't responsible."
- One of my concerns about the Austin parks, which I don't want to see happen with the cemeteries, is that the City has been moving toward getting private groups to do the maintenance of the parks. Austin already doesn't put much priority on the City parks, even though they have a big budget. In my neighborhood, we have to raise money to help with the pool there. I'm paying \$11,000 in property taxes and now I have to pay more? I don't want the City to start privatizing our public facilities.
- It seems like there's some territorialism with the cemeteries. It's important for the City to take ownership and lead everything and only rely on these groups for support, not the other way around. As a neighborhood association, a year ago, we found it very difficult to find out who to contact and how to contribute and it wasn't clear how we could get involved. It was important for the City to be ultimately responsible and not hand off or delegate any of the maintenance responsibilities to other groups.
- I have no idea who else [other organizations] works with the City. I'm not a fan of the City, so I don't pay much attention to them.

Question 6: To keep everyone up to date on what's happening for the next year, while we work on the master plan, we're taking a three-pronged approach. We'll have a project website that's updated every week and includes a way to share their input and feedback; we'll have a newsletter that's emailed every month and also can be printed out for those people who don't have computers or email; and about every two months, we'll have a public meeting to both share the status of the project and gather feedback on specific topics. Do you think that will be sufficient? [If not, what else should we do?]

People who thought that the community engagement plan was sufficient commented:

- Nothing else comes to mind.
- Sounds sufficient to me.
- I think that will reach anyone in Austin who wants to be aware. There may be family members who aren't in Austin, but I don't know how they would be involved anyway.
- I've been very impressed by how extensive the communication is. I want to make sure I'm on the mailing list.
- Some people will protest that none of that fits their personal criteria and also won't make any suggestions. There will always be someone who feels left out or will say, "If I had known!" I hear that all the time, even when there's outreach. It's very difficult because of the dynamics of Austin. People wait until they hear about stuff on Council or in the news, and then they show up just to protest.
- I think your coverage is practical. There can be issues, like translation, but I don't think that's the case here. Outreach needs to be to the African American and Mexican American community.
- I think you're pretty much covering the bases. First, the current active group of stakeholders, who became involved a few years ago and kind of branched out into

the various issues, are already on your email list. It sounds like you're covering the bases.

- A website would be great.
- I think you're on the right track. It's sufficient in the sense that we have a manager and he's asking for input.
- I think you've got it covered.
- I think you're definitely reaching people who are interested.
- I think that you're doing all that you feasibly can do. Mail-outs just are too expensive.
- I'm an older guy, so I would rather get information pushed to me than pulled. The chances are minimal that I would go to the website. If you send me a newsletter, I would read it and redistribute it to the people I feel responsible for who would be interested. The newsletter would be appealing, provided that it contains the same information as on the website. Newsletters tend to be less detailed.

Many people made additional suggestions for public outreach, including:

Email, Snail Mail, and Mailing Lists

- I would like to give you the email names of people that I know who would want to receive the newsletter.
- SAC has a mailing list of about 300 people who are family members. We could pass along your information to our mailing list too.
- The City needs to mail things out via snail mail.
- The newsletters and website also need to be available in Spanish.
- Stakeholders like to help, but they never get contacted. They think the PARD doesn't want to work with them, but that's not the case. PARD needs to contact plot owners. You should send at least one newsletter to every plot owner you have on file that says, "If you want to continue receiving this newsletter, sign up here." At Oakwood and Annex, they may not have those records, but they have *something*. But for Austin Memorial Park Cemetery and Evergreen, they do have those records. They never reach directly to the stakeholders/plot owners. Organizations and communities of interest are fine, but you really need to work with the people who own the plots. You're going to get PARD's position that "addresses aren't valid," but you have to try. This isn't the first time we've proposed this.

Locations for Signs

- I think a lot of this stuff reaches a lot of the same people. I would consider signs in the cemeteries. People who walk or drive through the cemeteries are the ones who care about this. People might not be interested in going to the meetings, but signs posted in front of the cemeteries would be an effective method. For me, that has been the most effective way to find out about City of Austin recreational activities. They do a pretty poor job of advertising their rec activities.
- Put up enough signs, and not just in the cemeteries. Post something at the art center or museums or other non-library buildings that people visit, especially during summertime because of camps going on.
- Put information and signs up in the parks in the neighborhoods that are within walking distance to the cemeteries.

- Put signs in other cemeteries in Austin, if you're allowed to. The master plan result would be helpful for smaller [non-City-owned] cemeteries, and some of those solutions might trickle down, so people who are interested in those cemeteries might be interested in the master plan.
- There needs to be signage out in front of the cemeteries.

Locations for Flyers and Newsletters

- The bulletin board at Oakwood would be a good place to post information.
- Churches and synagogues and funeral homes are the most logical places to make sure they have this information.
- I don't watch the news, but I suppose if there's a community activity or notice on the news, it would bear mentioning. I think that has been happening.
- The Austin Science and Nature Center gets a lot of traffic flowing through where you could put a sign on a bulletin board there that people would probably see.
- Rec centers, but be sure you're not just putting up your flyer in a stack. It has to be pinned on a board where they list where you can get food, clothing, job resources, etc.
- You need hard copies of flyers or laminated newsletters that can be posted in the cemeteries.
- Post things at the office at the cemeteries.
- Post signs telling people where to get newsletters.
- I think it's sufficient, especially if the newsletter copies are placed at the libraries or other places where it's convenient for people to go. Maybe put them at transit areas, where people congregate – and I mean plaster them on the wall, otherwise they become a litter problem – with instructions about how to get your own copy.
- Put meeting announcements in the city's other historic museums. People who visit those places might be interested in the cemeteries as well.

Social Media

- Have you engaged in social media at all?
- What about Facebook? [mentioned by several people]
- Post on neighborhood groups' Facebook pages.
- A Facebook page could be good or bad. It's so easy to upload a picture and post a comment. However on the bad side, you have a tendency to get a lot of negative feedback. People who are on Facebook are always getting the updates.

Traditional Media

- Post to community calendars.
- Advertise meetings and everything on the news media calendars, community event calendars, etc. They can come out and do a story. YNN will run things several times a week.
- KAVI is the #1 African American radio station.
- Radio Co-Op does community service announcements. College kids and working class people and a wide gamut of people listen to that.
- At the DeWitty Center – Channels 10, 16, 17, and 20 – they do public access TV shows, and you can probably get some of those people to do announcements about

it. The different shows reach different segments of the community, different age levels, different genres.

- You need to get stories on the TV, radio, and in the newspaper before the meeting so people can find out. Try to get it the weekend before. They need more advance notice.
- Put notices in La Voz, COA, The Villager, the Daily Texan, etc.

In-Person Events

- Go out to events and have tables at festivals and in person. People who are interested will engage and people who aren't, won't.
- Get out to neighborhood association meetings.
- My second preference would be public meetings, but you have issues with those because the City schedules them at 6:00 p.m. during the week, which is understandable, but people from all over the city can't get there. That's a problem.
- The public meetings are the most interactive. That's the best way to do things. I would encourage the meetings to be held in different locations.
- I'm happy with the timing. I was concerned that there would only be two meetings. This is controversial so you need to say what you're doing and then get feedback.
- Go to the *Día de los Muertos* festival in October; people will be willing to talk to you there. It's a huge festival at the MACC and big parade downtown.
- Austin Neighborhoods Council is a non-profit umbrella organization that provides a forum to bring people together and educate these organizations; they have a monthly meeting the fourth Wednesday of every month. You could have a table in the atrium with a meet and greet or just provide information, from 6:30–7:00 p.m. at the Austin Energy building on Barton Springs Road. You need to call ahead of time. There has been more interest lately because of all the candidates running for city council.

Work Through Other Organizations

- How would you make that information available to other people who might be interested but aren't in those neighborhoods or checking websites regularly?
- Work with UT to make this information available to students. As a student, I would like to be included or have the opportunity to learn more about this. I want to know how you go through the process of making these things happen. It's really good training for students generally to understand why you would handle things and make decisions about stuff where it's messy and people all have different opinions and needs. Students would benefit from being more engaged with that. I never was very good at getting involved when I was an undergraduate, but now it's like a light bulb went off in my head! Getting involved makes people care, makes them stay, helps them understand the dynamics of what's going on in the city.
- There are so many people who care about the cemeteries and won't get the message in these ways. You need to reach out to the funeral homes and monuments people.
- Funeral homes and monuments companies can help spread the word to their customers. Engage them in the process. They are interested. You can put up flyers and give out newsletters.
- St. James Church near Evergreen Cemetery could be a meeting place. They have a huge congregation who I'm sure would be interested.
- Talk to the Austin Neighborhood Council.

- Use the Neighborhood Associations online list. They will post this ahead of time. You need to post it well in advance.
- Work with the Montopolis neighborhood organization to reach more Hispanics.
- I don't think that plan is sufficient. The problem with these public processes is that they have not put it out on the city's community registry that goes to everybody. They don't put out signs for all of the outreach efforts at the cemeteries. There was one for the master plan but that is it. Use Austin Neighborhoods Council "ANC Talk." Flyers need to be distributed at the senior citizens center, and let the churches know. There needs to be community-wide outreach and so far it's just who they have on their mailing list, not property owners in the cemeteries.

Question 7: Is there anyone else who you think I should talk to?

Several people made specific recommendations, which Ms. McDougal added to the list of potential stakeholders to be interviewed. Other suggestions included funeral homes and residents, churches, and community groups located near the cemeteries.

Question 8: Finally, would you be willing to share your zip code and race or ethnicity? This is entirely optional and will be used to help the City ensure that this project's community outreach and engagement efforts are inclusive and representative of the City's diversity.

The results of this question are presented in the Methodology section of this report (Page 2).

Other Comments

Interviewees provided many other comments in addition to their answers to the questions above. Two interviewees, especially, offered quite extensive comments, as shown immediately below; the rest of the comments follow.

These comments included complaints about:

- Fees charged for interment
- Dumping ground (spoils) from the construction of MOPAC
- Walking trails through Austin Memorial Park
- People walking/running through the cemeteries during funeral services, sometimes with dogs, sometimes inappropriately dressed (running shorts, no shirt)
- Workers at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery who are insensitive to mourners: standing or sitting on grave markers waiting for funerals to conclude so that they can complete the burial, placing a large diesel truck or front end loader nearby while a funeral is ongoing, generally being visible during services, walking/driving over fresh graves
- How complaints to PARD and the Cemeteries department are handled
- City might need to have something they can give to families, when they buy a plot, that tells them things about how the cemetery works and what to expect. Is it in the City of Austin's responsibility to make sure people know how long it takes to get a headstone, and that there needs to be arrangements made to pour the foundation, and there's a significant charge to the City to pour the foundation and erect the

headstone? It's the City of Austin PARD who digs the whole and pours the concrete etc. to prepare for the installation of the headstone. How would people know that? Those materials need to be sent to ... who's your audience? I think right now it's all of those people who have bought grave sites and haven't used them yet. Or those families who have been buried in the last year, to perhaps play catch up. And people who buy sites in the future. I'm sure there's a process when people buy grave sites, as individuals. Right now you just get a receipt for your check. You could put it on a website but most people don't go to websites.

- The overall historic preservation of Austin Memorial Park, and by that I mean, the integrity of the buildings at the entrance, the stones righted and leveled, the roads resurfaced and in better shape, the historic rock fencing reestablished along Hancock, the roof on the main building repaired and restored to the original Spanish tile roof, the buildings (like the carriage house) not used as maintenance sheds, and the equipment not stored in view behind a privacy fence, which I think destroyed the ambiance of the cemeteries as you drive in.
- I would like the boundaries identified correctly.
- Austin Memorial Park Cemetery needs a reclaimed water system and the irrigation system repaired, particularly in Sections 5, 5B, and 5A.
- Regarding public restrooms, the round building should be kept and not destroyed just by making it ADA compliant. That's historically significant to the cemetery.
- Trees need to be in better shape, watered and cared for regularly.
- The City should do an archaeological survey of the entire historical boundaries, because I have a feeling that some of the bodies were not moved when they built MOPAC.
- A visitor kiosk could help people locate burials.
- Historical records should be moved off-site as we were promised a couple of years ago and that hasn't happened yet.
- No organizations should have fundraising activities like parties or events that demean the character and are disrespectful to deceased and their families.
- Austin Memorial Park Cemetery needs to be on the National Register of Historic Places.
- I don't like the stakeholder process and who the stakeholders are. The City has thrown a huge wide net over the whole United States. They need to step back and say that our stakeholders are only the people who own property in the cemeteries – not just historians or people who think that it's fun to do stuff in the cemeteries. They (property owners) should have a greater weight.
- The City of Austin needs to honor and respect the dead and their families.
- We need a Cemeteries Committee or board established by the City like the Parks Board, and better communication between PARD and public, without shutting out public like in the case of the privacy fence around the work area – the work area shouldn't be that large in the first place.
- My main thing is historic preservation and restoration, the original boundaries, the original buildings and roads taken care of, and the cemeteries taken care of into the future.

Other comments are shown below.

Cemetery Administration

- Kim is fantastic! I've really gotten hostile to the City and I don't do anything anymore, but Kim is the only reason that I'm involved in this process.
- I want there to be an overall cemetery person in charge of this at the City.
- Are you getting into the administration of the cemeteries?
- They need to treat the families with respect and not pick and choose who they do work for. My son has called in work orders and I have called in work orders, and the assistant city manager specifically told me they would not do work on my husband's grave. They cannot pick and choose who they want to work with. They can't discriminate on who they service. All the funeral homes have complained about them to city council for threatening to cancel funerals. You have to accommodate them. It's just a moneymaking machine and that's all they care about. They should care about the people.
- We need to get out of the mindset like a typical park employee who just shows up and cuts grass. Train people to use the riding mower without damaging stuff. Teach them how to care for the monuments, notice vandalism, etc., a whole set of orientation classes plus continuing education classes. Trees are a very big aspect. We need to send a couple of guys over to work with Forestry for a couple of weeks in the winter so they can learn to manage cemetery trees. There's an Urban Forestry class that's like 8-10 hours and they could get certified as an Urban Forester. Encourage those people to take more training. Hire licensed arborists. Work with crews and trim out dead trees to minimize the target zone under trees from big branches landing on them, especially marble and limestone/sandstone monuments. Working in the cemetery should be an upward career move for someone coming in to work for the City. Increase longevity and decrease turnover for these positions, make it more exclusive and prestigious to work there.
- I would like to see the hierarchy or the structure of the cemetery city department set up so that there is a committee or board to approve request to come through, so it's not just all for one person to make that decisions yes or no. There needs to be a Cemetery Board so the public has a voice.
- As long as I would like to see all monuments upright and straight, but if it's that or using money for a breakfast program for a hungry kid, then obviously I say give the kid a hot breakfast. Parks and Libraries are the first ones to lose funding. Public Safety gets a ton of the money. That doesn't mean that Parks doesn't spend a lot of money on stuff that I don't think we should spend money on.
- As someone in a minority community, when the City comes and says, "See what we've done for you," we think, "See what you've done to me," and not in a very favorable way. That carries over to the cemeteries too. So don't tell me that you've allocated money for the cemeteries when it's really for administration and staffing!
- I've seen things that get included in master plans that are not practical. I would like to see in some of these master plans some alternatives for recommendations. Specifically like landscaping. There is an intent, and even Council accepts that things need to be done, but then there is no follow-up, particularly for long-term plans. There needs to be more sustainability in these plans – more options for what the City could

do, not just the visionary expensive best-case stuff. Give us some practical options; especially keep in mind the budgeting and staffing that's available. We were disappointed when the contractor left because the City used that as a buffer. "If you have questions, go to the contractor." Then he would say, "That's not in my contract." Then the city would say, "Let's send it to Legal." Whenever you hear "Let's get Legal involved," you know you're never going to hear anything. I would like to see the master plan written so that there can be shortfalls, budget cuts, and water restrictions. When we lost a lot of trees, even if the City Arborist said they were taking care of it, they weren't. The loss of trees was city-wide and they had to take out trees around the city, but they had no places to dispose of them and it took months for them to get the trees cut at the cemeteries, and then they left the big trunks on the road for months! They need to count up the tree stumps. You need to keep in mind what people want and what is doable.

- The city controls dozens of cemeteries. Our watershed department manages these cemeteries but it leaves them alone. The true scope is more than just those five cemeteries.
- [We need cemetery staff to get more] professional development. Gilbert just leased his equipment for the first year so he doesn't know how much his costs are going to be. He needs to have someone who can maintain, can do small engine repair. Depending on the size of your crews, you need a small engine mechanic and the guys who are using this equipment need to know how it works and how to keep it working well. But someone in PARD is always buying equipment. Maybe in the winter some of those guys who have aptitude learn how to do engine repair. You'd need to have space for regular maintenance. Not every equipment has a HOBBS meter (hours), you have to know what the wear and tear is on different pieces of equipment and what ongoing maintenance they all need, and how to track each piece of equipment and its repair/maintenance records. What about MSDS and that sort of training. Texas is not an OSHA state, but that's really important. Keeping things in fireproof cabinets. Keeping a safe shop. Make everything really top notch. It's not that hard to train people. These videos are already available in English and Spanish!
- What about a disaster plan? You've got to be prepared for how to deal with damage and alert families when stuff happens.
- [Regarding replacing damaged markers with new ones] We need to educate people that just because you're related to someone doesn't mean you can throw away any markers. If families want to replace a marker, the monument needs to be fixed.
- We need someone who knows about cemeteries in that office.
- If there are changes or repairs made in the cemeteries, I want to make sure that the headstones were put back in the right place and facing the right way. Are there any processes or procedures or whatever?
- There needs to be an appeals process.
- One of the things that's going to be required is political leadership. You don't abdicate responsibility for something this important for 20 years without something being really wrong. Quite frankly, if there were proper accountability here for both the City and their contractor, people would be paying a lot of money or even rotting in jail.
- *Imagine Austin* is the new master plan. Anything that the City does needs to fit in and be benchmarked within the framework of *Imagine Austin*. Here's the problem: the

City, in my opinion on purpose, did not properly scope historic preservation and cultural preservation. Preservation only gets talked about in context of the natural environment. Almost half of the new comprehensive plan is an extensive discussion of the natural environment, to a high level of detail. The discussion of our cultural environment is three pages. That's a real problem, especially when looked at through the lens of race. East Austin is basically being targeted for these types of things. Whatever we do in this cemetery plan should fit into *Imagine Austin*.

- This cemetery master plan needs to be discussed in terms of Austin's cultural environment. You cannot have a conversation about this without it becoming political. What the City has traditionally done is what's led to this process – farm it out until things get run into the ground. Dealing with this issue is going to require money. The City Manager is going to have to allocate proper rotational funding with the appropriate FTEs. Like we need to have a City Sexton, it's a very important function.
- I'm in favor of a Cemeteries Board because cemeteries are such a specialty item. They're not parks, but they're kind of treated like parks. It's such a special field that it should have input from people who have knowledge in that area. But I don't know if you can get people to participate who don't have a conflict of interest.
- Our local government abdicated their responsibility for this for 20 years. Now they need to make this right. They need to do it themselves. They can't just hire someone to do it for them and turn away. The PARD chief let this happen. Budget requests were submitted to the City Manager for this issue and City Managers shot this down. It was a different story when it was in Public Works. PARD doesn't think this in their core responsibilities. The PARD Director bears leadership and primary responsibility for making this a priority in her department. I like her on many fronts. I want to see how she institutionalizes cemetery management when she doesn't have any experience in this area. [She should be] sending PARD police to get the National Park Service training that is specific to cemeteries. Why hasn't this happened? People are still looking at this and saying, "She doesn't want to get this done."
- There has been talk of bringing in gray water to the cemeteries, but you get a lot of salts and stuff in there that will damage the soil and headstones over time.
- From the standpoint of administration, the political mandate is focused on those five cemeteries. We need very basic implementation instructions for City staff. Cemeteries are cultural landscapes first. You don't have engineers in charge of cemeteries. You need someone with the property credentials in cemetery administration. Someone who has multi-disciplinary training and experience. Cemeteries are also real estate. As we start moving into this new City-controlled approach to cemetery management, those are the nuts and bolts things that I'm watching.
- In northern areas, you only need a few full-time people and then you can fill in with seasonal workers.
- (I know a cemetery manager who) provides great customer service. He says, "I work for the families, not the parks dept." He has a set of rules and regulations, and someone always wants to bend it, but the City Administrator needs to enforce those no matter what, with no exceptions. Everybody wants to do memorializations, and that is going to be impossible to manage. Understand that the grieving process is going to last for a long time, and that people who never got the rules are going to put stuff on the gravestones. You need to put a time limit on it, like 18 months after the

burial, and then you clean everything off. There's reasons for those things like maintenance costs.

- What I would really like to see is a sexton who really enforces the rules.
- [Regarding the bench situation] Unless it's a memorial bench used as a headstone, nothing should be allowed. I'd like to see any future benches to be made out of stone only. People use benches and pots and things to define what they think is their space, but then they get upset if there are tire tracks over that space. They need to understand that they aren't buying that land, they're only getting the interment space. Not the top where we mow! Instead of having all these benches, we need stackable chairs that people could sign out and take to the site, have their visitation, and then take it back to the office and get your drivers license back. If you have an elderly person, arrange to have a chair put out on that day. What a great customer service model that would be! If someone brings their own chair, that's fine, take it with you when you go. We should get rid of the benches, especially in Section 6 of Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, which is one of the newer sections. In the other sections, people stopped coming and they took their stuff home. The cheap benches from Home Depot should be thrown out. The cheap concrete benches need to go. There are some very nice cast iron benches that are just beautiful. We need a camera at the gate to capture the plate of every car and truck coming in so you don't have theft and dumping. So you have all these old benches and you get your volunteers and staff. This is a good winter project. Lots of people have a digital camera on their phone, photograph all the benches, and tell people to come get their benches. If anyone takes a bench off the property, you need to have a copy of their drivers license. A lot of people come in at Christmas or Easter or Mothers Day or Fathers Day. Remove all the benches and lock them up so if people come, you can show them where the inventory is and they can claim it.
- If anything is going to be trashed, separate the metal and the wood and recycle it, but people can't just take stuff even if "they're just going to throw it away". Compost the organic matter, recycle the plastic, scrap the metal.
- In order to do this right, we have to be able to levy a tax. In this environment that's a huge ask. Even a quarter cent — maybe that's 9 cents out of a thousand. But if we have a good document and a good case and proper public education, we can make the case. We can turn these cemeteries into the tourist attractions they can be. The Texas state cemetery has nice landscaping. There are nicer cemeteries. I have a problem with the fact that everybody buried there fought for the Confederacy, though.
- When a hearse comes by, workers should stop their mowers, get off the mowers, and stand there with hats off to show their respect. Ring the bell at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery to alert everyone that a new resident is coming in and they need to be respectful. You want families to say they had a great experience. Our feedback model needs to be that every employee needs to have their name on their shirts. A nice polo shirt or whatever. Also it's a problem if workers don't speak any English.
- I don't know what they're going to do at Oakwood. The City outsourced the maintenance of the cemeteries and nothing got done for over 20 years. No records came to the citizens. The financial records need to be made public about what the contractor is getting paid and what it is getting paid for. That needs to be transparent. It all comes down to money and property values. The City has been very reluctant to let citizens know how much they are paying the contractor. I don't think that ties into

the stakeholder process. Just because someone wants to become interested, they don't get to be a stakeholder.

- We need to deal with legal issues. In Oakwood, we're six or seven generations removed from those people, so the City has to figure out how to deal with what is basically abandoned property. The presumption is that there's a descendant somewhere, but it's unlikely that we're going to find someone to spend thousands of dollars to get a monument upright again. The legal department is going to have to see what's enforceable. Other cities have taken steps through their state legislature to make cemetery property abandonable.
- If people throw something away at the cemetery, you need to have a policy that employees can't take anything home, even if it's in the trash.
- A lot of other cities that have cemeteries have a parks advisory board and we need a cemetery subcommittee who actually knows something about cemeteries. The cemetery administrator can make decisions, but there has to be a logical way that someone can challenge that decision. The preservation office and other people need to come in.
- None of the hose bibs have a flow meter or preventer on them. People should not be able to put on fertilizer and chemicals and have their own hoses out there all the time. They can check out a hose and have some kind of meter on it. People leave water on and that's a huge waste of money. You can't turn on all the sprinklers at one time and have any pressure. Even if all the sprinklers were working, you can't water all on the same day.

Master Plan Process

- I have more faith in this process than in any other City planning stuff I've been involved in. Expectations are really low that our input is going to make any difference. We feel like the City is just going to do whatever they want anyway. We feel like the people who are new to the City are valued more than those of us who have been here for a long time.
- I think there should be equity in including everybody, not just all the loud people but also the people who care or the cemeteries and have people there. You need to include them and create a product at the end that is inclusive. It doesn't have to be regimented but it should be not a circus, it must be respectful.
- The scope sounds very doable. I am really proud that the city is going forward with this. I think that a lot of good will come out of it.
- I know it's been strange through the years with all the people who want to be involved and I tell people that we're having meetings and then nobody shows up. But recently I've had feedback that the cemetery looks better. The City has done a great job of bringing it up.
- I think you're losing that [connection to the community] really quickly. It might make sense because you are the only people who are looking at that in a very comprehensive manner, you could talk to people who have been here for a long time and have them tell you what the cemeteries were like back in the day. I have some neighbors who could talk to you. Just send me an email.
- The concerns that I brought up at the Neighborhood Association meeting are that this process takes a long time and the recommendations won't be implemented for a

year, and [we need to be] getting people involved now to get some stuff done now, and taking advantage of the interest that people have right now. At the end we want people to do things, but we need to give them some small projects to do along the way. There was good turnout and community engagement.

- I think you're doing a very thorough job of outreach, and I wish that all departments and city processes were like this. This is so much in contrast with the public works master plan for trails. Every time it's presented, it changes and changes and changes. It's like it's not ready for prime time. With the appropriate planning and outreach, you can have a better product.
- It sounds incredibly comprehensive for a cemetery master plan. The things that you've thought of are thoughtful, transparent, ways of finding out information easily, especially using technology – that doesn't work for everybody. My only fear is that right now we're being pummeled by so much with the new processes, the rewrite of the land development code, project connect, the 10-1 thing, and it can seem overwhelming. I know that Kim is very committed to project engagement in the right way, but people have to pick and choose what issues I want to be involved in.
- Will there be any visibility relative to your final conclusions/recommendations? Will there be anything after that to determine what actions the city will take to implement your recommendations?
- I think it sounds strange, but get as much information from the public as you can and have the strength to say "no" if some of the ideas are bad, no matter how heartfelt.
- I went through planning sessions where people were very vocal and emotional. The facilitator was at the point where she said she wasn't going to return. The people were bringing up issues that had nothing to do with our project! They were bringing old resentments against the City about property values and things, and grievances from generations back, and the City can listen to that and giving them places where those things could be addressed. People wanted their personal items to be addressed in this process even if those issues aren't relevant.
- I want to feel that the master plan will balance the past and the history with the present – what we look at today – and the future – what we hope the cemeteries will be like 25–50 years from now.

Neighbors and Neighborhood Associations

- I have two young children so safety is important and also the history and aesthetics. I use the cemeteries as a asset and as a neighborhood association president, we need to maintain it and encourage people to use it in a responsible way.
- We need to make the City more welcoming for neighbors to use the cemeteries.
- Homeowners associations tend to be in the suburbs. Neighborhood associations are usually nonprofits that can be recognized by the city on the Community Registry. Some neighborhood associations are overlapping because there were feuds, so you have to talk to someone in the know.
- I think you've covered these topics incredibly thoroughly. I think the community wants the cemeteries to be well kept and be shown respect. We have neighbors who don't respect their homes and crime happens. There's a huge consequence and benefit of making things tidy and respectful. And then crime will be reduced too. Clean and groomed and landscaped.

Safety

- The alleys next to the cemeteries need to have brush cleared. We've had drugs dealt in the alleys and there have been pornography shot in the cemeteries recently! Active maintenance will keep people from loitering in the cemetery and will help people to feel safe in the cemeteries. Maybe if we had one of those blue light emergency call boxes where someone can call for help quickly. The cemeteries are big and so you're vulnerable when you're inside.

Trees and Plantings

- I really love the cemetery, I just wish the trees weren't dying. Especially those big huge oak trees. In the park, we hand water and bring sprinklers over to keep the trees going. The first priority needs to be water. I'm disappointed that the city can't make an exception on the water restrictions, even temporarily, to restore the existing vegetation.
- The City wanted to plant more trees in our small park, and we watered them for a while and now the City is hand watering them. The City could water some of those trees [in the cemeteries] to save them within the short term. I guess that's the main concern because if all those trees die, you'd lose all that shade.
- Will your recommendations include planting more plants?

No Dogs Allowed

- One of the issues that I haven't seen covered is whether dogs will be let loose in cemeteries. That needs to be enforced! Having workers in the cemetery all the time would deter people from doing that.
- Some people want dogs in cemeteries and that's been a mess because people don't clean up after their dogs.
- There is a no-dogs rule and I understand that because lot of pet owners don't clean up after their pets.

Texas State Cemetery

- A lot of people think that Oakwood is the state cemetery. That one is a real showplace.
- The benchmark in the city of Austin for how to manage a cemetery is the Texas State Cemetery. They have the money, staff and resources; it's a living space that's still does internments. The Legislature still holds events there for recognition and commemorative purposes. The goal should be that it's not just a place that you go to bury your dead. A memorial park should be a place of repose where people can reflect. We should look to cemeteries that do it well, such as Federal cemeteries and other cities that do a good job of preservation, such as in the greater Boston area, for example. We should try to do the Texas version of that.
- I think people are looking at the Texas State Cemetery and comparing Austin cemeteries to that.
- Texas State Cemetery is exempt from the watering rules so they always look great, those bastards.

Oakwood Cemetery

- Oakwood was protected from being developed over, but that's not the case for all of the cemeteries in the county.
- Oakwood was never designed to be a lawn cemetery, and Annex has that whole thing with the winding roads and Victorian design.
- I probably go to Oakwood about twice a month now. If I was a runner, I would run through there, and anybody who exercises in our neighborhood runs through it.
- One of the problems we have with Oakwood is the Doubletree Hotel next door, where people would back into the fence and knock it over. Finally they installed parking curbs. There was someone over there driving golf balls at one point.
- If you look at the map for Oakwood and where the lots are numbered, there's no lot 1, 20, 21, in Section 1. And you realize that the road wasn't always that wide. The main west gate, when they widened the road, they just took the numbers off the map and didn't necessarily move the bodies. The sidewalk was put in in 1917 and 1919, so we have a clue when the road was put in or paved. We need to have that information in the master plan. So when we make decisions about running a gas line or electrical line to the Chapel house, we need to know where those graves likely were and where we could put in a sewer line and all that stuff next to it. The old sewer line has collapsed. We need to be able to tie into the sewer system with an ADA bathroom.

Austin Memorial Park Cemetery

- I would like to see some kind of curbing on all the roads or redo the curbing. Section 4 [in AMP], where my parents and in-laws are buried, has no curb. I would like all of the driveways to have curbs for a uniform appearance.
- Do you know anything about the study the city did about how fast Austin Memorial Park Cemetery will be filled up?

Evergreen Cemetery

- Particularly at Evergreen Cemetery, we need to acknowledge the struggle of African Americans to protect their dead, particularly when development is involved.
- I think there are historic qualities in each of the cemeteries that are special. The African American cemeteries have not been preserved like they need to be and it's important that they get the attention they need.

General Statements

- With cremation taking over the funeral industry, now funeral directors are being replaced by “celebrants” which are basically party planners. So the municipal model is uniquely challenging as far as that goes.
- Save Austin's Cemeteries is the only non-profit organization right here in Austin and those folks really know what they're doing and are able to work on issues without stridency – does that make sense? They're really taking the lead in advocating for conditions at the cemetery and public participation. That heritage day was really a hoot!

- This has more to do with wherever these cemeteries are, but the THC advocates for 50 feet between any kind of use and the nearest grave and I would trust them to know what they're talking about.
- We want to see a good honest history published as part of the master plan. At some point the City will be out of the cemetery business.
- Yes, we can square away our five official cemeteries, but there are a lot of other cemeteries that need help. It's not our job to help people do things that they should be doing themselves! We don't need to recreate anything that THC is doing. I want a good work product that focuses on our five municipal cemeteries first.
- I share the anxiety that I hear from other people. I will be pushing very hard for Historic Preservation in our cemeteries. I've told Kim that I will support her.
- Cemeteries do not have to be all things to all people.
- First and foremost, cemeteries are a place of dignity and respect for our loved ones.
- Bird poop and animal poop are a big problem at Oakwood, Evergreen, and maybe Plummers.
- I have a different perspective, coming from the northern U.S. The history of race is different down here. I was reading the city planning document from the 1920s where they redistricted African Americans into the east side, and I was shocked by that, especially the language they used! I didn't realize that had played out in that particular way in Austin. I'm surprised that I had to go squirreling around in a 1920s planning document to find out that that had happened. I want to know where those fault lines are, because it would help new people make good choices about how they develop their properties, understanding who their neighbors are and what the history of the neighborhood is. It would help us create a respect and thoughtfulness about people whose families have lived there for decades. You can be a professional and be very good at the physical material and documentation part, but you have to listen to people who have lived here. They know the backlog of historical issues that persist for various communities. That doesn't get told unless people coming in are told about these things. Knowing where those divisions were can make a community stronger. (A place can) hold the memory for the community and help the community have a conversation about it.
- As an outsider who has recently moved to Austin, the cemetery experience needs to be mediated for me. I need to have some help to feel like I'm more a part of the community. Even if I wasn't born here, the idea that I could become an Austinite would be helped by learning more about the city and its history.
- The preservation of the integrity of the cemeteries is an important consideration, as well as whether the resources have been evaluated to recognize, for example, the funerary sculpture and the landscaping.
- Regarding the SCA monument situation, my opinion on that subject is that that monument is not offensive, but the City doesn't want to put a target on their back. We have CSA monuments at Congress and First Street, and already at Oakwood, but they [the Parks Department] are afraid to make a decision. People should not have to sue the City. I've shared lots of examples where there are a lot of inappropriate monuments that people put out there, like if you have a monument made of SpongeBob. If you continue to allow big upright monuments, how do you continue to interpret that policy?

- I've never spent time in cemeteries. I do like to see trees or green things growing. But I try not to hang out in cemeteries. In fact, I'm kind of categorically opposed to cemeteries. I think that it's irresponsible of a culture when land is so valuable and living people are homeless, it's kind of criminal to have valuable land to be used in such a way. I don't really think cemeteries are a good use of land, although I do know that they make good neighbors! They're quiet.
- Plummers actually extends into Givens Park. Not the active burial area, but it goes down that slope toward the ballfield and we need to define the boundaries – not necessarily with a fence, but at least a series of poles with signs indicating where the boundary is. Also the City allowed a bus stop to be installed where we're pretty sure there were some graves. They're going to want to put in a sidewalk there and there are unmarked graves.
- Build a relationship with funeral homes to teach etiquette and so that the funeral homes will recommend the city cemeteries.
- As far as groups go, there isn't a lot of meeting space. [The buildings at the cemeteries could be used for community meeting space.]
- Restrooms would be great unless they would attract people to camp out there.
- At the end of Westfield Drive there's a cemetery! I have a good bit of family in there not to mention people I've known in Austin for a very long time. I have a close connection with the cemetery. We've raised our kids walking around in the cemetery. I've walked around in the cemetery.