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# APPENDIX P

SPEAKUP AUSTIN!

SURVEYS

# Austin Cemetery Master Plan

## *Speak Up Austin* Survey Results

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Steph McDougal, McDoux Preservation LLC  
December 2014

The Public Engagement process for the Austin Cemetery Master Plan included identifying topics of particular interest to stakeholders and the community at large, then developing surveys to gather more information about, and determine the extent of support for, those topics. In Fall 2014, the Master Plan team worked with the City Public Information Office to launch two separate surveys using the City's *Speak Up Austin* community engagement web portal, provided by Granicus, Inc.

Each survey began with a general statement describing the events leading up to the development of the Cemetery Master Plan, with additional information as needed to prepare the respondent for the survey. A series of multiple-choice questions followed; in some cases, when applicable, respondents could provide comments or were asked for open-ended feedback.

Both surveys opened in early September and were available for responses through November 1. Participation was encouraged and promoted on the City Cemeteries website and on the Master Plan website; in Master Plan newsletters; through email blasts to the PARD cemeteries stakeholder list as well as all 3,400+ registered *Speak Up Austin* users; and during community meeting presentations. (See Appendix A for examples of these promotional efforts.)

After November 1, the results were compiled by the City of Austin Public Information Office staff and provided to the Master Plan team.

### **Survey: Cemetery Programs**

The goal of this survey was to measure the community's interaction with and general interest in cemeteries. Questions were developed to help the City understand how often and why people visit its cemeteries, as well as how best to provide information about future cemetery-related activities and events. See Appendix B for the full text of questions and all results.

A total of 313 people responded to the survey, but only 312 completed the survey, and not all respondents answered all questions.

The respondents seem to be fairly representative of the community at large in that most people (78.2%) had never participated in a cemetery-related meeting, event, or activity in the past year, and 61.8% had not participated in any City project-related community meetings in the past year.

Respondents reported that nearly half of them (42.3%) have never visited one of the cemeteries, and another third (31.7%) only go once or twice a year. Those who visit most typically do so to visit the grave of a loved one (37.4%), because they are interested in history or doing genealogy research (11.8%), or to walk, run, or bicycle for exercise (10.5%).

When asked why they do not visit, the overwhelming majority stated they had no reason to go (69.3%), with several noting in the comments that they had no friends or family members buried there. Only a very small number (two people) said that they did not like the appearance of the cemeteries or were concerned for their safety there.

When asked various questions about how they might access or respond to information about educational, recreational, or other activities and programming in one or more of the City cemeteries, participants indicated that:

- More than half of them (53.8%) would “definitely” or “probably” notice and take the time to read an article, flyer, advertisement or news report about the activity, but only about a third (32.9%) would seek out that information on their own.
- Assuming that they did find out about an activity or event, respondents were fairly evenly split on whether or not they would consider attending, with about one-third reporting “definitely” or “probably”, one-third responding “might or might not”, and one-third responding “probably not” or “definitely not”.
- Even fewer would take an out-of-town visitor to an event or activity at a cemetery, with only 24.8% reporting that they “definitely” or “probably” would do so.

Based on this information, it seems that a well-designed series of appropriate programming and activities could be of interest to those Austin residents who are sufficiently engaged in the community to participate in something like *Speak Up Austin*. However, the City or sponsoring organization would need to promote such programming with a well-coordinated marketing/ publicity campaign in order to catch the attention of as many people as possible.

## Survey: Burial Options

This survey sought to measure the community’s preference for a variety of burial (also known as *interment*) options. The City of Austin, in its five historic city-owned cemeteries, currently offers only traditional below-ground interment, with a permanent “container” (such as a concrete liner or burial vault) required for non-cremated adult interments. In recent years, however, cremation has become increasingly popular, and interest in natural interment options — including burial without embalming or a permanent container, and other alternatives that allow for more rapid decomposition of remains — has grown. Through this survey, the Master

Plan team wanted to learn whether the City should consider offering interment options in addition to those already available.

The survey began by presenting information about natural burial options; defining terms such as *interment*, *embalming*, and *green burial*; and explaining the difference between *natural burial grounds*, *hybrid burial grounds*, and *conservation burial grounds*. This preparatory information failed to define the term *columbarium*, however, which became a problem when respondents were asked their opinion about adding columbariums to the cemeteries. (See Appendix C for the full text provided, as well as all questions and results.)

A total of 412 people completed the survey, although only 390 participants answered every question. An average of 396.5 people responded to each of the substantive questions; 411 people answered the final question, which asked for their zip code.

### Question 1

The first question asked respondents to identify the different types of burial options of which they were aware. A list of 12 common burial options was provided, including:

- Burial (with or without embalming; in a below-ground grave, above-ground grave or mausoleum; in a public, private, church, or family cemetery; in hindsight, this should have read “religious cemetery” rather than “church cemetery,” in order to be inclusive)
- Cremation, with or without the scattering of ashes or placement of cremated remains in a columbarium or container to keep privately
- Donation of body to “medical school” (in hindsight, this should have read “for scientific purposes”)

In addition, respondents were given the opportunity to list other types of interment or funeral practices.

Respondents indicated that, on average, they were aware of 10.6 of the 12 common burial options, and more than 90% of respondents indicated previous awareness of nine of the 12 options. Lower awareness was reported for burial without embalming (73%), burial in a family cemetery (81%), and placement of ashes in a columbarium (74%). It is possible that the lower response to the columbarium question arose from the survey not defining *columbarium*, as several people later indicated, in the comments, that they did not know what that term meant.

Sixty-four participants also provided comments with one or more alternatives to the set answers, indicating a broad knowledge of funerary practices across different cultures and religions. Specific examples of Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist traditions were provided, as well as a wide variety of natural/green options.

## Question 2

The second question repeated the same list of common burial options and asked respondents to indicate which interment method they would select for themselves or a loved one.

Although aware of many options, respondents indicated that they would actual consider an average of only 3.8 of the common alternatives provided, and very few people said that they would consider more than eight options.

The initial results as reported are a bit skewed, because this question attempted to ask too many questions at once. This should have been divided into multiple questions — one to ask whether the respondent would select burial, cremation, donation for scientific purposes, or other; and a second question to ask where the respondent would prefer that the remains should be interred.

In order to correct for this problem, the raw data (as exported to an Excel workbook in comma separated values [.csv] format) was analyzed and adjusted to determine the total number of people indicating a preference for burial (of any kind) or cremation (with ashes placed in any location).

Three hundred and thirteen people (313, 78% of respondents) indicated that they would choose cremation for themselves or a loved one. Of those choosing cremation, the preferred dispositions of cremated remains were as follows:

- Scattered (75%)
- Placed in a container to be kept privately (28%)
- Placed in a columbarium (25%)
- Burial of the ashes, in any type of cemetery or in an unspecified location (12%)
- Other (1%)

A total of 251 people (63% of respondents) indicated that they would consider some kind of burial. Of those choosing the burial of non-cremated remains, preferences included:

- Burial below ground (64%)
- Burial in an above-ground tomb or mausoleum (14%)
- Burial without embalming (62%)
- Burial in a city cemetery (53%)
- Burial in a private cemetery (38%)
- Burial in a religious cemetery (20%)
- Burial in a family cemetery (20%)
- Green burial (10%)
- Burial at sea (2%)

A total of 181 people (72% of respondents who indicated a preference for burial) selected either “burial without embalming” or “green or natural burial”.

Donation of remains to science (medical school; the forensic “body farm” in San Marcos, Texas; etc.) was selected by 150 people (38% of respondents).

Many, but not all, respondents who answered “Other” wrote in the same alternative practice that they had identified in Question 1. In addition to the most common option — “green burial” — these write-in answers tended to include fairly uncommon practices. One respondent indicated that he/she would prefer to be “shot out of a cannon,” presumably after cremation.

#### Questions 3 and 4

When asked in Question 3 whether respondents followed any family or cultural traditions related to burial practices, 78.8% answered “No.” All of the 86 people who responded “Yes” or “Other” shared information about those practices in response to Question 4. Many answers focused on religious practices, while a smaller number described family traditions, and how those traditions are either steadfast or evolving over time. Generally, either religious, family, or cultural practices mentioned the type of interment (burial, cremation) and the location.

#### Questions 5 and 6

The final two questions asked whether respondents would be in favor of the City offering interment in either a columbarium (Question 5) or some sort of natural burial ground (Question 6), which are both options currently being considered by the City potentially to be offered in City cemeteries. Both options were positively received, with 73.6% of respondents in favor of the columbarium option and 79.5% in favor of a natural burial ground.

Although a total of 39 comments were received for Question 5 and 26 for Question 6, a number of these were statements such as “no opinion” or “don’t care”. One person answered, for Question 5/Columbarium, “Depends on the cost.”

In more substantive feedback provided for Question 5, respondents were almost universally in favor of having a columbarium option for *other people*, but would not want to have their own ashes stored there, preferring that their cremated remains be scattered.

The comments for Question 6 were not as useful, with some respondents indicating that they were confused by the terms *hybrid burial ground*, *natural burial ground*, and *conservation burial ground*. Other comments expressed concerns about using any space for burials of any kind; whether decomposing buried bodies were “green”, and that natural burials should not be “segregated” from traditional burials within the same cemetery. Overall, this survey indicated strong support for scatter gardens, columbariums, and natural burial options at the City cemeteries.

## Appendix A: Promoting the Surveys

### City Cemeteries Website

AUSTINTEXAS.GOV | AIRPORT | LIBRARY | AUSTIN ENERGY | AUSTIN WATER | CONVENTION CENTER | VISITORS BUREAU | OPEN GOVERNMENT

Explore your city... **SEARCH** [Advanced Search](#)

Pay Online Services Calendar Media Departments 3-1-1 Translate

Resident Business Development Government Environment

Department » Parks And Recreation » Projects » Cemetery Master Plan

Home  
About  
Services  
Programs  
Media  
Locations  
Projects

### CEMETERY MASTER PLAN

The fifth and final community meeting for the Austin Cemetery Master Plan process will take place on **Saturday, January 24, 2015 from 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.** at the **Carver Branch of the Austin Public Library, 1161 Angelina St., Austin, TX 78702.** Master Plan team members will present the *draft* Master Plan, as well as a brief synopsis of findings and recommendations, and gather feedback from the public. The *draft* Master Plan will be made available online in mid-January prior to the meeting and will remain online for several weeks.

### Preliminary Recommendations Posted for Community Review

Preliminary recommendations for each cemetery are available for community review and input. All feedback will be considered prior to the release of the *draft* Cemetery Master Plan in January, 2015. To see preliminary recommendations for each cemetery, please select [this link](#).

This is the first master planning effort for the City's five historic municipal cemeteries, which include Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, Evergreen Cemetery, Oakwood Cemetery, Oakwood Cemetery Annex, and Plummers Cemetery. The City of Austin selected AmaTerra Environmental, Inc. to develop the master plan. The master plan will include recommendations related to historic preservation, tree care, and cemetery management issues. More background information about the [Cemetery Master Plan process](#).

### Cemeteries Master Plan Newsletter

- [View the Cemetery Master Plan Newsletter #1 \(May, 2014\)](#)
- [View the Cemetery Master Plan Newsletter #2 \(June, 2014\)](#)
- [View the Cemetery Master Plan Newsletter #3 \(July, 2014\)](#)
- [View the Cemetery Master Plan Newsletter #4 \(August, 2014\)](#)
- [View the Cemetery Master Plan Newsletter #5 \(September, 2014\)](#)
- [View the Cemetery Master Plan Newsletter #6 \(October, 2014\)](#)
- [View the Cemetery Master Plan Newsletter #7 \(November, 2014\)](#)

### Website and Email Updates

Visit <http://www.austincemeteryplan.com/>, which is updated weekly, dedicated exclusively to the Cemetery Master Plan process. To receive regular email updates and meeting notices, sign up for the Cemeteries Master Plan email list by emailing [Kim McKnight](#) to be added to the list.

### TOP CONTENT

- ★ [Barton Springs Pool](#)
- ★ [Zilker Metropolitan Park](#)
- ★ [Austin Nature & Science Center](#)
- ★ [Pools & Splash Pads](#)
- ★ [Golf Austin Public Links](#)

### CONTACT INFO

Phone: 512-974-9478  
Email  
Key Contact: Kim McKnight

### Cemetery Rules and Regulations Project

The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) is seeking the public's input in the revision of existing Rules and Regulations of City-managed cemeteries, focusing on burial space ornamentation. Please click for more information.

Take Our Cemetery Survey: Part 1  
Survey: Burial Options

Take Our Cemetery Survey: Part 2  
Survey: Cemetery Programs

## Master Plan Website, September 1, 2014

**AUSTIN PARKS & RECREATION**  
CITY OF AUSTIN

HOME CONTACT US ABOUT THE PROJECT MEET THE TEAM GET INVOLVED WEEKLY UPDATES FAQ

Home > Uncategorized > SpeakUpAustin! Take our surveys

### SPEAKUPAUSTINI! TAKE OUR SURVEYS

September 1, 2014 | By admin | No comments yet

**speakupAustin!** Cemetery Master Plan

The SpeakUp Austin! website provides a way for the City of Austin to gather feedback from citizens. Now through November 1, two cemetery-related surveys are available for your input.

The first survey, "Potential Programming in City Cemeteries", seeks to learn more about whether and how the Austin community currently interacts with the five historic, municipal cemeteries.

The second survey, "Burial Options", seeks to learn about Austin residents' opinions about the many interment options that are available today, including cremation and green burial.

Your answers will provide valuable input to the City of Austin Cemetery Master Plan, which is in the process of being developed. If you have any questions about this survey or would like more information, please contact Kim McKnight, PARD Project Coordinator and Cultural Resources Specialist, at [kim.mcknight@austintexas.gov](mailto:kim.mcknight@austintexas.gov).

**LEAVE A COMMENT**

Logged in as admin. Log out »

Comment \*

Comment

**RECENT POSTS**

- > Preliminary concepts for all cemeteries are now available online
- > Community Meeting #4 Report
- > Community Meeting Tonight!
- > Dia de los Muertos and grave decorations
- > Halloween-Themed Cemetery Tours

**RECENT COMMENTS**

**ARCHIVES**

- December 2014
- November 2014
- October 2014
- September 2014
- August 2014
- July 2014
- June 2014
- April 2014

**CATEGORIES**

- > Uncategorized



□

August 2014 www.cityofaustin.org/parks

# FIVE

FIVE HISTORIC CEMETERIES.  
FIVE TEAM PARTNERS.  
FIVE COMMUNITY MEETINGS.  
HUNDREDS OF STAKEHOLDERS.  
ONE MASTER PLAN.

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER  
OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN  
CEMETERY MASTER PLAN

Issue #4, August 2014



## Next Meeting

Monday, November 3, 2014  
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.  
Zilker Botanical Gardens  
2220 Barton Springs Road



## Speak Up, Austin!

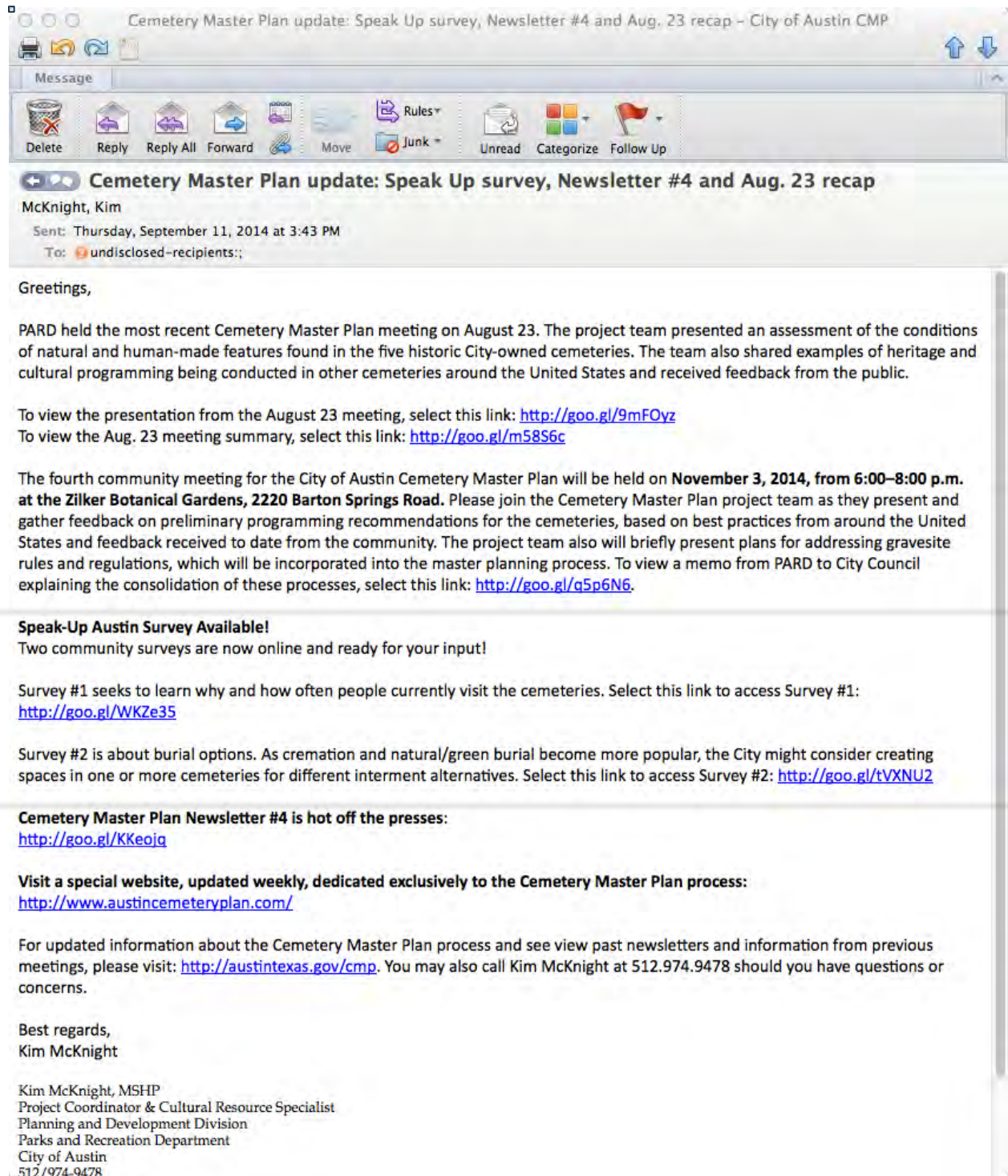
Two community surveys are now online and ready for your input! The Cemetery Master Plan team is seeking your opinions on two topics.

The first survey (online at <http://speakupaustin.org/surveys/potential-programming-in-city-cemeteries>) seeks to learn why and how often people currently visit the cemeteries. Having more people in the older cemeteries, especially, can deter crime and vandalism, as well as build awareness and support for their care.

Survey #2 (online at <http://speakupaustin.org/surveys/burial-options>) is about burial options. As cremation and natural/green burial become more popular, the City might consider creating spaces in one or more cemeteries for different interment alternatives.



City Email Blast, September 11, 2014



Community Meeting Presentation, August 23, 2014

□

## How Can You Get Involved?

- Stay up to date via website, meetings, newsletters, email mailing list
- Attend and participate in community meetings (April, June, August, October, January)
- Community surveys through Speak Up Austin
- 311 Line (now available in English and Spanish)
- Send your feedback via email, website, letters





## Appendix B: Cemetery Programs — Questions and Responses

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Thank you for participating in this Cemetery Visitor Survey, prepared by the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department.

The City of Austin owns and manages five historic cemeteries: Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, Evergreen Cemetery, Oakwood Cemetery, Oakwood Cemetery Annex, and Plummers Cemetery. From 1995 until 2013, management and maintenance for these cemeteries was provided by a contractor. The City's Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) resumed active management of the cemeteries in Spring 2013. Last summer, PARD worked with members of the community to prepare for the development of the Cemetery Master Plan, which is currently underway. The master plan will provide a comprehensive review of all five cemeteries, as well as an implementation guide with direction and action items for PARD moving forward.

If you have any questions about this survey or would like to know more information, please contact Kim McKnight, PARD Project Coordinator and Cultural Resources Specialist, at [kim.mcknight@austintexas.gov](mailto:kim.mcknight@austintexas.gov).

### 1. In the past year, approximately how often have you visited one or more of Austin's municipal cemeteries?

Number of responses: 312

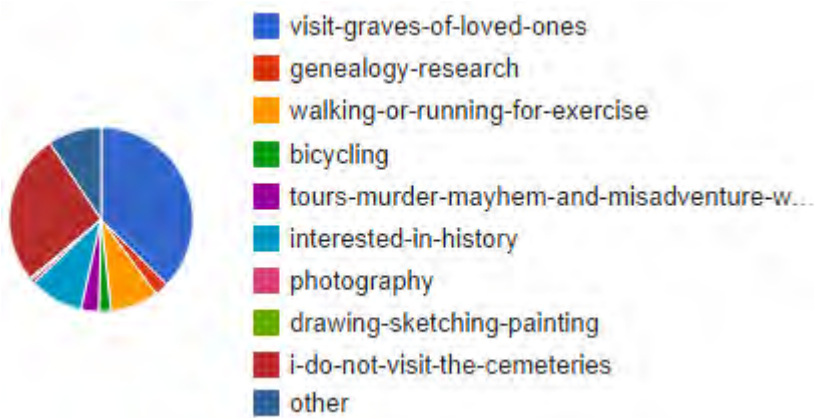
- Never (132 responses; 42.3%)
- 1-2 times during the year (99 responses; 31.7%)
- Once a month (51 responses; 16.3%)
- Once a week (12 responses; 3.8%)
- More than once a week (18 responses; 5.8%)



## 2. If you do visit one of the cemeteries, what are the most common reasons for your visit?

Number of responses: 286

- Visit graves of loved ones (107 responses; 37.4%)
- Genealogy research (7 responses; 2.4%)
- Walking or running for exercise (24 responses; 8.4%)
- Bicycling (6 responses; 2.1%)
- Tours such as “Murder, Mayhem, and Misadventure Walking Tour”, ghost tour, tour of artistic grave markers, etc. (9 responses; 3.1%)
- Interested in history (27 responses; 9.4%)
- Photography (2 responses; 0.7%)
- Drawing/sketching/painting (1 response; 0.3%)
- I do not visit the cemeteries (76 responses; 26.6%)
- Other: (open ended)



Open-ended responses to this question included:

- Review the condition and maintenance (1–2 times per year).
- Assessing condition and upkeep (1–2 times per year).
- Shopping for burial plots (1–2 times per year).
- Select grave sites (1–2 times per year).
- Disinterment (more than once a week).
- Checking on trees we planted around our family plot for the future (1–2 times per year).
- Watering and caring for plants and trees (more than once a week).
- Assessing trees (more than once a week).
- Picking up rocks for landscaping ((1–2 times per year).
- School field trip (1–2 times per year).
- Reflection time (1–2 times per year).
- Prayer/reflection (once a month).
- Pleasure. I just enjoy their peacefulness (once a month).
- Like the artwork and park atmosphere (once a month).

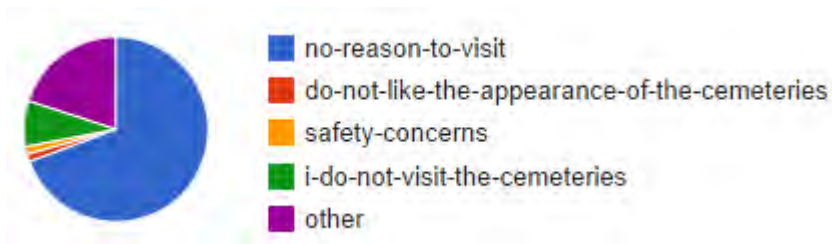
- To be in green space ((1–2 times per year).
- Looking for native plants or native prairie remnants (1–2 times per year).
- Went to a reading in a cemetery - it was fun! (1–2 times per year)
- Put flags on veterans' graves (1–2 times per year).
- Help with cleanup and place flags on veterans' graves (1–2 times per year).
- Work related (once a month).

A few respondents indicated that they never *visit* the cemeteries, but then added an open ended answer indicating that they travel through the cemeteries or go there for picnics or burials. This may reflect a different perception on what it means to *visit* a cemetery.

### 3. If you do not visit the cemeteries, why not?

Number of responses: 150

- No reason to visit (104 responses; 69.3%)
- Do not like the appearance of the cemeteries (2 responses; 1.3%)
- Safety concerns (2 responses; 1.3%)
- Other: (open ended)



Four people indicated in their written responses that they did not understand the question, with answers such as “I do visit” or reasons why they visit.

Other open-ended responses to this question included:

- Was not aware.
- Never think about it.
- Don't know where they are.
- Not close to one.
- Prefer more natural setting.
- I would, but no relatives of mine or friends are here.
- No one is buried here in my family.
- Simply have not made time to do so.
- Too busy.
- Too busy with little kids; had forgotten that they could be good places for outings!
- Busy year. Visited in past to read stones and relax.
- Busy with young child.

- Didn't think you could run in them.
- Mobility problems.
- I believe it's disrespectful to walk around graves if it's not for history or visiting a loved one.
- We used to go for picnics and bike rides but my kids are older so don't anymore.
- I would like to walk my dogs in the cemeteries ON LEASH and under control. Sadly, there are “no pets allowed” signs.

**4. If the City of Austin provided educational, recreational, or other activities and programming in one or more of these cemeteries, how likely would you be to notice and take time to read an article, flyer, advertisement, news report, etc.?**

Number of responses: 310

- Definitely (76 responses; 24.5%)
- Probably (97 responses; 31.3%)
- Might or might not (49 responses; 15.8%)
- Probably not (38 responses; 12.3%)
- Definitely not (50 responses; 16.1%)



**5. If the City of Austin provided educational, recreational, or other activities and programming in one or more of these cemeteries, how likely would you be to seek out information about activities/events at cemeteries on your own?**

Number of responses: 307

- Definitely (39 responses; 12.7%)
- Probably (62 responses; 20.2%)
- Might or might not (93 responses; 30.3%)
- Probably not (113 responses; 36.8%)

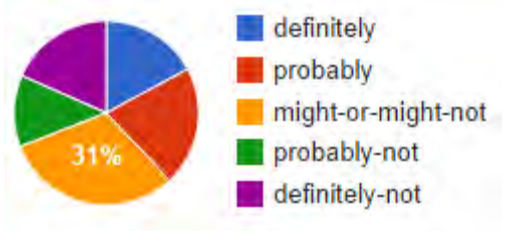
*Note that no option was provided for “definitely not.”*



**6. If the City of Austin provided educational, recreational, or other activities and programming in one or more of these cemeteries, how likely would you be to consider attending an event or activity at a cemetery?**

Number of responses: 310

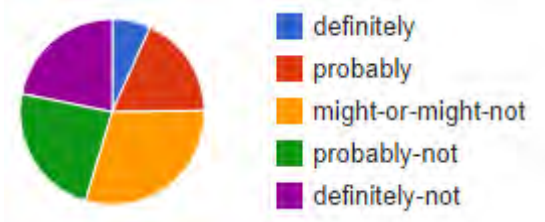
- Definitely (53 responses; 17.1%)
- Probably (65 responses; 21.1%)
- Might or might not (96 responses; 31.0%)
- Probably not (39 responses; 12.6%)
- Definitely not (57 responses; 18.4%)



**7. If the City of Austin provided educational, recreational, or other activities and programming in one or more of these cemeteries, how likely would you be to take out-of-town visitors to an event or activity at a cemetery?**

Number of responses: 311 responses

- Definitely (21 responses; 6.8%)
- Probably (56 responses; 18.0%)
- Might or might not (93 responses; 29.9%)
- Probably not (73 responses; 23.5%)
- Definitely not (68 responses; 21.9%)

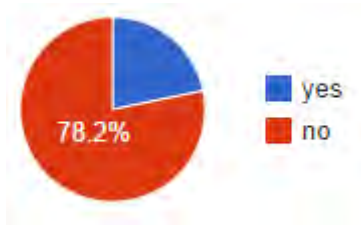




**8. Have you attended community meetings about cemeteries or participated in any cemetery-related projects in the past year?**

Number of responses: 308

- Yes (67 responses; 21.8%)
- No (241 responses; 78.2%)



**9. Have you attended any other City project-related community meetings in the past year?**

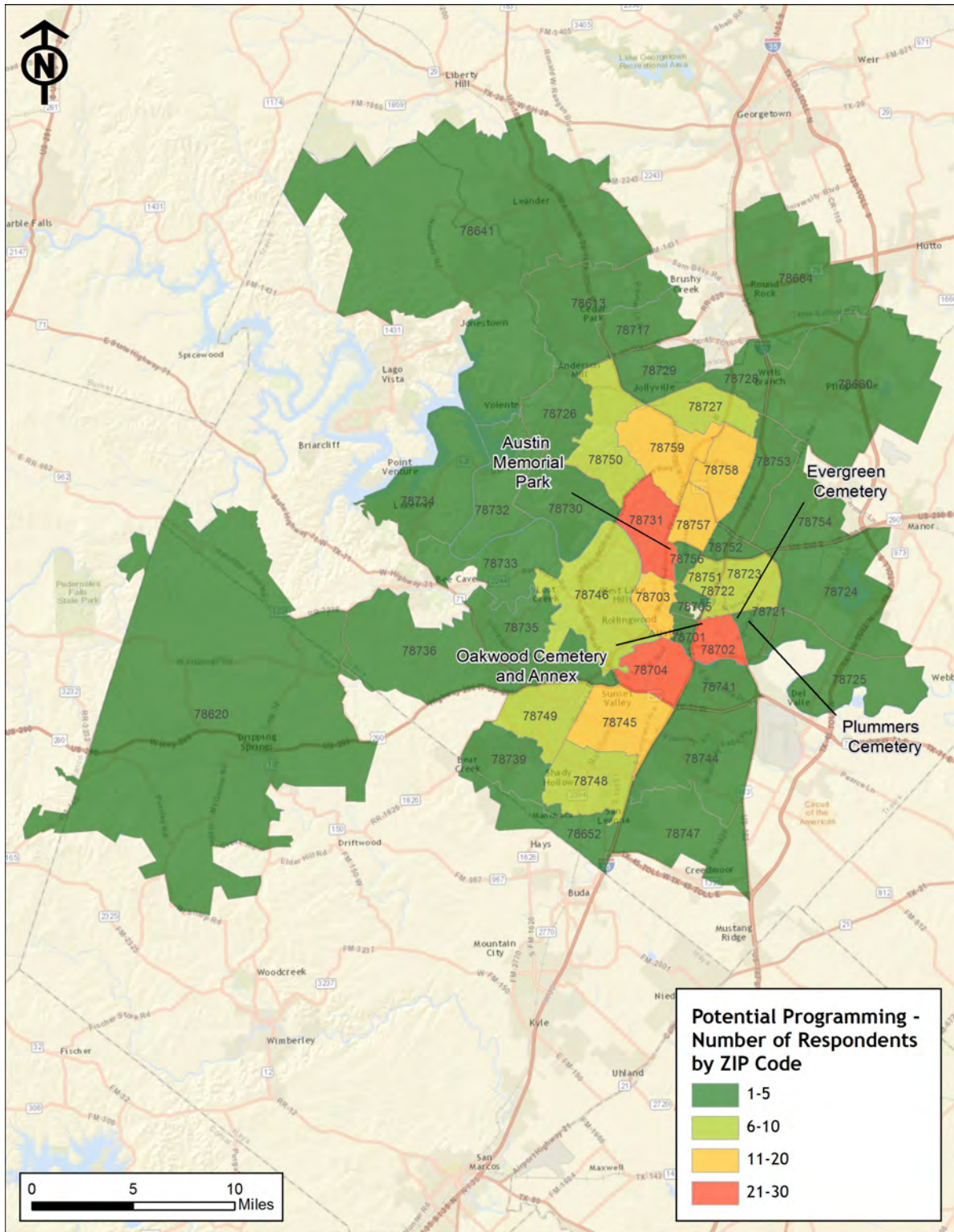
Number of responses: 309

- Yes (118 responses; 38.2%)
- No (191 responses; 61.8%)



10. Please provide your zip code.

Number of responses: 311



## Appendix C: Burial Options — Questions and Responses

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### Information Provided to Survey Participants

Thank you for participating in this survey, prepared by the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department.

The City of Austin owns and manages five historic cemeteries: Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, Evergreen Cemetery, Oakwood Cemetery, Oakwood Cemetery Annex, and Plummers Cemetery. From 1995 until 2013, management and maintenance for these cemeteries was provided by a contractor. The City's Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) resumed active management of the cemeteries in Spring 2013. Last summer, PARD worked with members of the community to prepare for the development of the Cemetery Master Plan, which is currently underway. The master plan will provide a comprehensive review of all five cemeteries, as well as an implementation guide with direction and action items for PARD moving forward.

Today we use the interchangeable terms *burial* or *interment* to describe the placement of a deceased person's remains, even when that does not involve literally burying the remains in the ground. Burial practices and preferences have changed significantly since the first City Cemetery (now known as Oakwood Cemetery) was established in Austin in 1839. The City has created this survey to learn about Austin residents' opinions about the many interment options that are available today, including cremation and green burial.

All terms and interment practices will be defined and explained before you are asked to answer questions. You can access definitions and explanations during the survey by clicking on any words in the questions that are shown in blue, underlined type.

This information will help the City plan for the financial management and maintenance of the City cemeteries in the future. Your answers also may provide valuable input to the City of Austin Cemetery Master Plan, which is in the process of being developed. If you have any questions about this survey or would like to know more information, please contact Kim McKnight, PARD Project Coordinator and Cultural Resources Specialist, at [kim.mcknight@austintexas.gov](mailto:kim.mcknight@austintexas.gov).

Burial practices in what is now the United States have evolved over the years. Cultural influences of different ethnic and religious groups, geographic differences, and social trends all have affected how people in our country attend to the dead. In the past, some of the more popular burial practices have included:

- Burial in a below-ground grave in a cemetery, churchyard, or family graveyard
- Burial in an above-ground crypt or mausoleum
- Burial with or without embalming
- Green burial

- Cremation
- Scattering of ashes (cremains)
- Placement of ashes (cremains) in a columbarium
- Placement of ashes (cremains) in a container to keep privately
- Donation of body for medical research or education

Many early cemeteries were located on the grounds of churches, military forts, plantations, or family homesteads. (Many funerals took place at home.) The Rural Cemetery Movement of the mid-1800s encouraged the establishment of community cemeteries outside city limits; these were generally managed by volunteer groups that sold plots and managed the cemeteries as places of rest and relaxation for both the living and the dead. Individual families were responsible for maintaining the gravesites that they had purchased.

Military cemeteries were originally established at forts to bury soldiers who died on the frontier, far away from their homes. After the Civil War, the United States government created National Cemeteries where veterans could be buried. The most famous of these is Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D. C. Many states also have their own State Cemeteries, like the Texas State Cemetery in Austin.

In the 1900s, perpetual care “lawn”-type cemeteries and memorial parks ushered in a modern type of cemetery that is still popular today. These cemeteries emphasized the natural beauty of the cemeteries, including grassy lawns with trees and, in some cases, professional (and sometimes elaborate) landscape design. In a change from earlier practices, perpetual care cemeteries were owned and managed by private organizations that took responsibility for maintaining the appearance of all of the graves, rather than expecting families to do that work.

In the late 1800s, cremation became popular, and columbariums and mausoleums were built to house cremated remains. This was also the time when advances in *embalming* became widespread in America. Embalming (preserving a body with chemicals to delay decomposition) made it possible to ship bodies home from war, as well as to present the deceased for viewing at the funeral. While embalming is generally accepted by Christian faiths, it is not allowed in the Jewish, Muslim, and other religions.

In an effort to keep the chemicals used in embalming out of the ground and water, some cemeteries practice *green burial*, which encourages environmentally friendly practices such as cremation, biodegradable caskets, and the chemical-free preparation of remains for burial. In addition to these practices for preparing bodies for burial, cemeteries also can be certified by the Green Burial Council in one of three categories.

- Hybrid Burial Grounds are conventional cemeteries that offer the option for burial without a vault or outer burial container of any kind.
- Natural Burial Grounds prohibit the use of vaults, vault lids, concrete boxes, slabs, or partitioned liners in which remains are placed during burial. Natural Burial Grounds also prohibit the burial of persons who have been embalmed with toxic chemicals, and any

burial containers must be made with biodegradable natural/plant-derived materials. The types, sizes, and visibility of grave markers are limited in order to preserve the natural appearance of the cemetery landscape and the health of the ecosystem.

- Conservation Burial Grounds have all of the same requirements as Natural Burial Grounds, but with the addition of a conservation easement or deed restriction held by a government agency or non-profit conservation organization.

## Survey Questions

Today, a wide variety of burial options are available. The following survey questions will ask about your opinions on some of these options.

### 1. Please indicate which of the following burial options you had heard of before reading about them here. Check all that apply.

Number of responses: 398

- Burial in a below-ground grave (392 responses; 98%)
- Burial in an above-ground crypt or mausoleum (387 responses; 97%)
- Burial without embalming (291 responses; 73%)
- Burial in a city cemetery (360 responses; 90%)
- Burial in a private cemetery (379 responses; 93%)
- Burial in a church religious cemetery (365 responses; 92%) – this should have read “religious cemetery”
- Burial in a family cemetery (must meet the requirements of the Texas State Health and Safety Code) (321 responses; 81%)
- Cremation (391 responses; 98%)
- Scattering of ashes (cremains) (378 responses; 95%)
- Placement of ashes (cremains) in a columbarium (295 responses; 74%)
- Placement of ashes (cremains) in a container to keep privately (382 responses; 96%)
- Donation of body to medical school (379 responses; 95%)
- Other (65 responses)

Other answers provided by respondents included:

- Green burial:
  - Most people just used this general term
  - One person specified “in heavy-duty cardboard or biodegradable coffin”
- Burial in a veterans cemetery
- Burial in a natural burial ground
- Burial of unembalmed remains
  - Directly into the ground

- With or without a burial shroud
- Burial of cremains
  - In an unspecified manner
  - In a biodegradable container
  - At a state or federal protected area like a park or forest, with geotag for ease of location in the future
- Burial at sea or scattering of cremains at sea
- Religious, ethnic, or cultural traditions other than burial:
  - Burning of the body as part of Hindu tradition
  - Public cremation on a funeral pyre
  - “Viking style”, in one case specifically described as “on a boat on fire”
  - Float body down the Ganges River
  - “Sky burial” as practiced in the Himalayas, where remains are left outdoors at a high elevation to provide food for vultures
- Donation of uncremated remains for a scientific purpose:
  - Donation to NIH (National Institutes of Health)
  - Body farm (San Marcos)
  - Donation of body to medical research organization, such as Life Legacy
- Incorporation of cremains into memorial objects, such as stepping stones, benches, gemstones, jewelry, sand art
- Incorporation of cremains into Eternal Reef or bricks to create/support ocean reef formation
- Burial of remains or cremains in order to support plant life (Bios Urn, corpse composting, mushroom burial suit, with tree planted directly above grave)
- Liquid cremation
- Mummification
- Launch cremains into space
- “Burying one person over another like at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio; it saves space”

**2. If you were to consider burial options for yourself or a loved one, which might be of interest to you? Please check all that apply.**

Number of responses: 399

- Burial in a below-ground grave (160 responses)
- Burial in an above-ground crypt or mausoleum (34 responses)
- Burial without embalming (157 responses)
- Burial in a city cemetery (145 responses)
- Burial in a private cemetery (99 responses)
- Burial in a church cemetery (50 responses)
- Burial in a family cemetery (must meet the requirements of the Texas State Health and

Safety Code) (59 responses)

- Cremation (274 responses)
- Scattering of ashes (cremains) (236 responses)
- Placement of ashes (cremains) in a columbarium (76 responses)
- Placement of ashes (cremains) in a container to keep privately (89 responses)
- Donation of body to medical school (150 responses)

Other answers provided by respondents included:

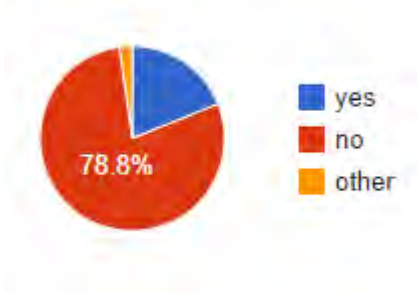
- Ashes in a below-ground grave or columbarium
- Green burial
- Bios Urn
- Forensic training body farm
- Public cremation/funeral pyre
- Corpse composting
- Use of cremains to create a public memorial art piece
- Shot out of a cannon
- Liquid cremation
- Burial at sea
- Cremation in a boat floating out to sea

A separate comment noted that “I am not a fan of anyone being buried; it takes up too much land space that is usable for other purposes.”

**3. Some burial traditions have roots in or are associated with a specific culture or ethnicity. Does your family practice or follow any cultural or ethnic traditions associated with interment?**

Number of responses: 396

- Yes (75 responses; 18.9%)
- No (312 responses; 78.8%)
- Other (9 responses; 2.3 %)



**4. If you answered yes, and you are willing to describe your family's traditions, please do so in the space below. We respect your privacy, and all information provided is considered confidential.**

Number of responses: 86

Many comments provided insight into religious or cultural traditions.

*African American*

- I am African-American and our tradition is to lay our loved ones to rest in a traditional cemetery. We do this in order to feel near them by visiting the cemetery. Some come to pray and share events. It is the ultimate form of respect.

*Cambodian/Chinese*

- My family is Cambodian/Chinese and our tradition in our country of Cambodia is that we buried our loved one with our grandparents who past away or great grandparents. In the U.S., many families would cremate the body and bring the ashes to the their home land to be placed with the grandparents grave. Some may have a traditional underground grave.

*Christian*

- My family believes that there can be no cremation because when "Jesus returns," the body will rise and if it's cremated there is no body to rise. That's why I have a "WILL" and an MPOA!
- Christian burial or columbarium.
- Church service.
- Burial underground, after church services.
- Below-ground burial in keeping with family and Christian traditions.
- Burial in a below ground grave. Traditional Christian burial.
- Typical Christian burial rites with memorial service and viewing of the body and graveside dedication.
- Christian.
- More or less Protestant. Most of paternal forebears are in Oakwood and Oakwood Annex, underground, and we still have a number of plots there, which we plan to use.

*Catholic*

- I am Catholic, which allows for cremation.
- We are Catholic, and cremation wasn't an option for a long time, but now that it's accepted, my parents were cremated. My grandparents, though, were not.
- The body cannot be cremated before taking it to the catholic church for mass. Although it is allowed now, my family prefers to continue with the old tradition.
- Catholic Christian.
- Catholic traditions: High Mass, rosary.



*Hindu*

- Part of our family is Hindu which requires cremation in a specific manner.
- Hindu cremation.
- Anglo-Saxon culture; no matter how the body is prepared, lately often cremated, we bury our dead in below the ground graves with grave stones.

*Muslim*

- Muslim burial; Immediate, no embalming.
- Muslim burial traditions.

*Jewish*

- My dad's side semi-adheres to Jewish standards. No big deal if you have to wait 36 hours to bury, and I like that. Both sides are generally thoughtful and spiritual (if not religious) about death, though, and I have certain natural preferences, I think, as a result.
- Traditional Jewish practices.
- Jewish, no embalming.
- Jewish burial.
- Jewish traditions.
- Jewish burial.
- Jewish burial: plain pine box, no embalming, very short period between death and burial.
- Jewish.
- Jewish burial.
- Being Jewish we follow the Jewish customs related to burial.
- Jewish practice -- no cremation, no embalming.
- Jewish burial traditions which mean no embalming and burial within 24 hours of death.
- Jewish traditions: plain pine box, no embalming.
- Jewish.

*Pagan*

- As a pagan, my spiritual practice is to have a home funeral and green burial; no embalming and use only natural materials to cover/enclose the body.

A number of people shared family traditions:

- Clergy at the internment, with family in attendance.
- Our family graveyard is at Monticello in Virginia, and we will be buried there some day. The family meets annually for a cocktail party at Monticello, work session in the graveyard, a Sunday morning family service at the graveyard and a family business meeting.
- Typically my family views the body after the loved one has died. If the funeral were to take place shortly after death, then viewing of the body could probably still take place. However, it depends on the distance that visitors would have to travel to view the body;

sometimes this can take a few days. I don't know how creepy an untreated body would be. I guess no creepier than any other typical dead body?

- Burial in a community cemetery on a family plot with a memorial bench for loved ones to use. Visitation to the site on a regular basis.
- Visiting and decorating graves.
- Most of the women in the family are scattered on the family rose garden at the private family cemetery.
- Sort of Jewish. We got plots for us, our boys, and my husband's parents in the green cemetery: Eloise Woods. We like that we can bury our cremated pets with us. We expect that our 15-year-old dog will be the first to go in, then my in-law's cat. Some of us want to be buried, others prefer cremation.
- My family already has a family plot for my husband and I at Austin Memorial Park, purchased in 1980.
- Hubby's family tradition is below ground burial. Some are beginning to use cremation due to cost and land use. My side of family. Family is very mixed on decision.
- We have a family plot with four generations buried there.
- I was raised with a deep reverence of the space around a grave and taught not to even stand on the ground above a buried body. While I don't personally follow the same traditions, they are mentally hard to shake. At the same time, I personally believe burial space should take up as little space as possible and, at the very least, "cemeteries" should now be public park-like settings for multiple activities and spaces for gathering and reflection, rather than a massive grid of personally owned plots of sacred ground.
- Most of my family members have been cremated.

Others wrote about their concern for the environment:

- We're environmentalists, so we'd prefer to do what's best for the earth, whether it be cremation or green burial.
- Being green as much as possible to ensure minimal damage is done to the Earth. We are all in favor of cremation.
- Most have been opting for cremation. I think dying should be free and want to feed the fish instead. None of us want to take up space after we leave.
- Many of my family have been cremated and placed in a family plot at a church cemetery, but I'd like to be used for science and/or rot in the ground with a tree stuck in my chest ... maybe some lantana.
- Logical; avoid negative impact on the earth -- and don't take up space permanently.

Several people simply described the type of interment:

- Traditional in-ground interment in traditional cemetery.
- Below-ground burial; not cremated remains in a columbarium.
- No cremations; historical markers & burial in a casket below ground.
- Burial below ground.
- Below-ground in a burial plot.
- Burial below ground.

- Burial in an below-ground grave.
- Burial in ground, embalmed.
- Below ground burials.
- Burial underground in a city cemetery.
- Ashes scattered.
- Public cremation on a funeral pyre with ashes scattered upon the land.
- Donation to science.

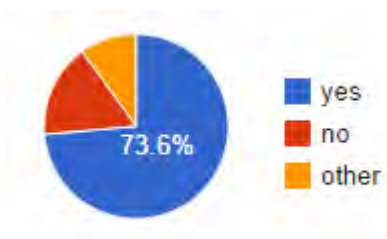
A few additional comments included:

- Cemeteries are for the respect for the dead and should not be used for recreational purpose in any way. This would include walking trails designed to allow traffic (whether walking or vehicle) from one street to another street.
- Respecting the burial site, no gardens, no trails, no bicycling, no noise, no events that don't respect the people who are buried.
- We observe the natural process of burial proceedings.

**5. If it were possible for the City to offer interment of cremains in a columbarium in one or more of the five municipal cemeteries, would you be in favor of that?**

Number of responses: 390

- Yes (287 responses; 73.6%)
- No (64 responses; 16.4%)
- Other (39 responses; 10.0%)



Most respondents were generally in favor of a columbarium, but only as an option for *other* people.

- I think ashes are supposed to be spread; I don't get the point of storing them publicly.
- Better than burial, but not necessarily in favor of it. Everyone should scatter wherever they want.
- As an option for others sounds fine.
- I'd be open to it but I wouldn't use it. I'd prefer cremains be kept in the ground. I prefer burial as natural as possible.

- If other people choose to do that I don't see why not.
- Better scattering ashes of their favorite outdoor environment.
- Not for me. Okay for others.
- Not for myself but do not object to it being offered for others.
- In favor in general, yes, but not personally interested.
- I'm in favor of the option but I wouldn't use it.
- I might be in favor of the option but wouldn't choose it myself; my college and church are also exploring offering a columbarium.
- Personally does not interest me but may interest others.
- I am in favor of options for people but I would not myself use it.
- Yes, but not for me. I'm the last to go into our plot.
- If it means less space taken, okay.

Other comments included:

- Depends on cost.
- Not sure what that (a columbarium) is.
- What's a columbarium?

**6. If it were possible for the City to offer green burial options – including designating sections of a cemetery as a Hybrid Burial Ground, Natural Burial Ground, or Conservation Burial Ground, would you be in favor of that?**

Number of responses: 395

- Yes (314 responses; 79.5%)
- No (55 responses; 13.94%)
- Other (26 responses; 6.6%)



Several people who answered “other” and went on to provide a comment indicated that they did not understand the question, despite the survey providing the definitions of “hybrid burial ground,” “natural burial ground,” and “conservation burial ground” at the beginning. A reminder of those terms and definitions probably would have been helpful by the time the respondent reached the fifth question in this survey.

Other comments included:

- Ashes buried in one of two family plots.
- Pay per year plot is used, if unpaid it can be re-appropriated. No one goes to cemeteries anymore.
- The city should not waste space on burials of any kind; green is better than others.
- VERY, VERY MUCH YES!
- Give portion of ashes to each member of family and let them scattering wherever they want as their blessing!
- Not for me. Okay for others.
- I don't see buried decomposing bodies as green.
- Waste of space; cremate all;
- Strongly in favor.
- These words don't mean anything to me. I am in favor of areas that do not require chemical embalming.
- I would not be opposed to it, but would not be interested in it for me or my loved ones.
- Yes on the option; no on the segregation (away from traditional burial ground).
- Not opposed, if sanitary.
- Be careful with serious viruses! Otherwise all the above.
- Allowed in currently owned plot in graveyard, not separated (from traditional burial ground).

7. Please provide your zip code.

Number of responses: 411

