

Visalia Public Cemetery District
Land Use Plan
2005

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Visalia Public Cemetery Land Use Plan

Part 1.

PLANNING FOR VISALIA PUBLIC CEMETERY EXPANSION

Because of rapidly changing trends in cemetery management and burial techniques, the Land Use Plan for Visalia Public Cemetery is designed to be "general and flexible," in nature rather than "specific and rigid." It is intended to be a guide for future expansion and development of the cemetery facility. In order to keep current with new trends towards cemetery operations, it is important that the Land Use Plan be reviewed periodically by the Cemetery Board of Directors and amended as necessary. This document addresses medium to long-range cemetery planning issues and policies, which cover 25 years and longer. However, a comprehensive review of the Plan should occur every five to ten years.

Webster's College Dictionary defines cemetery as "a burial ground for the dead." While that simple explanation may be true in general sense, most people evaluate the cemetery on the basis of its physical attributes, facilities, maintenance and administration. From the perspective of those that are left behind, the cemetery is actually for the living. When selecting a cemetery, one should consider the cemetery's beauty, appearance, and upkeep. Does it have an air of permanence, suggesting good administration? Other factors to consider include internment options, lot selections, aftercare services, and space to accommodate future generations.

In expanding the Visalia Public Cemetery, decisions must be made as to whether new development will be along "traditional" lines, allowing monuments, or of park or garden plan, permitting only flush monument sections, or a combination of the two. Since flush memorials require less space than monuments, lots can be smaller and the grave space per acre yield in non-monument gardens is greater than monument cemeteries. There are three primary considerations when determining the type of development to be undertaken:

- **Demand.** Public preference, or demand for: monument lots or flush memorial lots; cremation; internment; or above-ground mausoleum burial.
- **Supply.** The available supply of monument and non-monument land available in the cemetery.
- **Management.** The relationship between the type of development and the cemetery management's attitudes in reacting to current burial trends.

Local Trends in Cemetery Burials

Cemetery burial techniques and public preferences are changing rapidly in Visalia as it is in many other areas. In recent years, Visalia Public Cemetery land has been absorbed for burial space at a much slower pace than in the past. Cremation burials (60%) are now the prevalent choice over conventional casket burials because of reduced expense and, as a result, of recent Catholic acceptance of cremations. Cremations may now represent only 15% to 20% of the cost of a casket funeral. Also, about 65% of casket gravesites currently have companion burials, with two persons interred in the same gravesite. It is also becoming more common to inter four cremations in a regular gravesite, which further reduces burial costs and the absorption of cemetery land. Typically, a regular gravesite in the Visalia Public Cemetery measures 4' wide by 10' long, while an ash gravesite measures 4' wide by 4' long.

Based on a recent audit, the Visalia Public Cemetery is currently experiencing approximately 500 burials per year. However, due to an increase in multiple burials, regular gravesites are being sold at an average rate of less than 210 per year.

Gravesite Burials Visalia Public Cemetery

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Gravesite Burials</u>	<u>Single Gravesite Burials</u>	<u>Double Gravesite Burials</u>
1999	194	75	119
2000	215	99	116
2001	200	72	128
<u>2002</u>	<u>226</u>	<u>99</u>	<u>127</u>
4 Yr Totals	835	345	490

Visalia Cemetery Historical Background

The City of Visalia is the oldest incorporated City between Los Angeles and Stockton. The area was first settled in the late 1840's. In 1852, a group of settlers built a fort and named it "Fort Visalia," after early settler Nathaniel Vise. Visalia was also incorporated in 1852, the same year Tulare County was created. In 1862, during the Civil War, Camp Babbitt, comprised of three companies of Union soldiers, was established at the southwest corner of Bridge and Race Streets in Visalia. At that time, Visalia's population was estimated at 1500 persons. The first formal cemetery in Visalia was set up in 1854 on Locust Street between Race and Murray Streets and was called the "All Hallows Eve" Cemetery. The Cemetery was then moved in 1863 to its present location at Giddings Street between Goshen and Houston Avenues.

The earliest cemetery records are lost, but records that are more complete have been kept since 1875. The Visalia Cemetery was first incorporated in 1916. It is estimated that nearly 40,000 persons have been buried at the current Visalia Public Cemetery site, which now comprises approximately 68 acres of plotted land.

Cemetery Expansion and Recent Land Acquisition

Based on current burial trends, the Visalia Public Cemetery estimates that there is enough space existing in the 68 acres of plotted cemetery grounds to accommodate burials to the year 2030. In addition, the District owns a total of twenty-one adjacent residential and vacant parcels, which are planned for future cemetery use. Eleven of these parcels have frontage on Rinaldi Street, five have frontage on Turner Street and two have frontage on Goshen Avenue, and two are currently used by the cemetery for burials and dirt storage. These sites are described as follows:

<u>A.P.N.</u>	<u>Address</u>
093-062-009	912 N. Rinaldi
093-073-006	816 N. Rinaldi
093-073-008	812 N. Rinaldi
093-073-009	810 N. Rinaldi
093-073-011	806 N. Rinaldi
093-073-012	804 N. Rinaldi
093-083-001	720 N. Rinaldi
093-083-002	716 N. Rinaldi
093-083-003	712 N. Rinaldi
093-083-027	708 N. Rinaldi
093-102-020	812 N. Turner
093-091-007	712 N. Turner
093-091-006	708 N. Turner
093-091-004	704 N. Turner
093-091-003	700 N. Turner
093-091-002	640 N. Turner
093-091-024	1036 W. Goshen
093-091-023	1018 W. Goshen
093-083-031	1408 W. Goshen

093-083-032 } 093-083-033 }	These two APN's have already been acquired by the Cemetery District and are being used as burial sites and for storage. The APN's need to be included as part of the Cemetery maintenance property.
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***The City is to notify property owners within 300 feet of above listed parcels.**

Long Range Expansion and Acquisition Plans

It is the policy of the Visalia Public Cemetery Board to pursue the acquisition and purchase of adjacent properties for future expansion. In order to implement a "Long Range Land Use Plan for the Cemetery," the following neighboring properties are considered as having the highest priority for acquisition:

<u>Owner</u>	<u>A.P.N.</u>	<u>Address</u>
Gomez, Guillermo	093-073-005	818 N. Rinaldi
Dye, Raymond	093-073-007	814 N. Rinaldi
Enos, Wanda	093-073-010	808 N. Rinaldi ✓
Kelly, Timbrell	093-083-025	706 N. Rinaldi ✓
Rivera, Celeris	093-091-025	1046 W. Goshen
The Berean Christian Church	093-091-009	1021 W. Grove Street
Jordon, Bill	093-091-010	1013 W. Grove Street
Church of God	093-102-015	806 N. Turner Street
	093-102-018	1020 W. Grove Ave
Sirordia, Leonard & Christine	093-102-019	808 N. Turner Street
Thomas, Joe & Betty	093-102-003	915 W. Allen Street
Warren, Dana & Terri	093-102-001	816 N. Turner Street ✓
	093-102-002	919 W. Allen Street ✓

Zoning and General Plan Designations

The Visalia Public Cemetery is currently zoned (Q.P.) Quasi Public and the General Plan Designation is Public Institutional. As the Cemetery expands, it is appropriate that the acquired parcels be consistent with the City Plans and that they be rezoned to Q.P. and the General Plan Designations be amended to Public Institutional as necessary.

Part 2.

ELEMENTS OF THE CEMETERY LAND USE PLAN

Cemetery District Management

The Visalia Public Cemetery District has a five member Board of Directors that is appointed by the Tulare County Board of Supervisors for overlapping two-year terms. Directors are eligible for reappointment. The Cemetery Staff includes the District Manager, an administrative assistant, a receptionist, and five maintenance personnel. The Cemetery is open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. daily.

The Visalia Public Cemetery District covers an approximately 215 square-mile area of Tulare County. Cities and Communities served include Visalia, the largest city in Tulare County and the smaller, unincorporated areas of Goshen, Packwood, Chatham, Ivanhoe, Elbow Creek, Taurusa, Stone Corral, and Union. This area contains about 40% of the population of Tulare County. However, annual tax revenues generated by the District amount to slightly more than \$38,000. Many rural cemeteries serve districts, which have smaller populations, but generate much greater revenue because the state laws relating to Cemetery taxes are based on land area served and not population.

Land Use Plan Elements

The Cemetery Land Use Plan consists of several planning principals, objectives and goals, which will assure continuity in future cemetery land use design and development. These elements will be reviewed periodically by the District Board of Directors and amended periodically as required.

Office / Administration Building

The main office and administrative building will remain at its current location located just north of the main gate near Goshen Avenue. The existing Main Office / Administration Building was expanded in 2004. The addition consists of a two-story building housing a combined conference room / family privacy meeting room and storage.

Maintenance Facility

The existing Maintenance Facility, including shop, vehicle and equipment storage, landscape materials storage and other maintenance activities will be relocated from the existing area northwest of the administrative office, to a new location on the properties known as the "Weddle" parcel east of the Miller Memorial Chapel. The new maintenance site is currently vacant. Preliminary plans call for restricted access from Goshen Avenue with limited access to the cemetery from Turner Street, north of Miller Memorial site.

Chapels and Memorial Services

Within the City of Visalia, funerals are arranged and accommodated by several privately owned memorial chapels and facilities. The District owns and maintains a small chapel within the Cemetery at the corner of Main Street and 2nd Street. Some consideration may be given regarding the future acquisition of the Church of God properties at the northeast corner of Turner Avenue and Grove Street. This facility is adjacent to the cemetery and could meet future needs to provide memorial services for larger funeral groups.

Cemetery Plot Design

Acquisition of the 13 previously described residential properties (see page 5), along with the 21 properties currently owned by the Cemetery, should result in approximately seven (7.00) acres of additional burial site land. Both monument gardens and non-monument garden areas will be maintained and traditional sections will be expanded as needed.

Mausoleums

A mausoleum is a stately structure intended for above ground burials. The Visalia Public Cemetery is unique in that it is the only Cemetery in California that is allowed by state law to own its mausoleum. The Cemetery has two mausoleums – the old mausoleum, constructed in the late 1920's, and the newer mausoleum, which was constructed by the City of Visalia and deeded to the Cemetery District in the mid 1960's along with the Visalia Memorial Gardens. These structures may be maintained and even expanded in the future. However, with the exception of the Visalia Public Cemetery, state law prohibits public cemeteries from constructing or owning a mausoleum.

Mortuaries and Crematory Services

Cremation services are provided by several of the local mortuaries and funeral homes. Public cemeteries, by law, are not permitted to own their own mortuaries or provide cremation services.

Special Land Marks and Memorial Areas

Several special areas have been provided on the cemetery grounds. Located just east of the main gate to the cemetery, the "Eagles Niche" is a special place where cremation remains are placed and offers an aesthetic and serene place for contemplation. The "Eagles Niche" and the "Blue Star Memorial," which was donated by the Visalia Garden Club are surrounded by a Memorial Rose Garden. Also nearby is a scattering garden and a baby land area. The "Fireman's Memorial" is located across from the chapel at the northeast corner of Main Street and 2nd Street in the cemetery. The "Memorial Gardens" are situated south of the old City mausoleum on Main Street. Funds are now being solicited from donations and gifts for the construction of a "Veteran's Memorial Wall" to be located to the south and across the street from the Memorial gardens. The \$750,000 memorial walls will honor the lives of the local military heroes and display the pride Visalia has toward its veterans.

Circulation and Access

The design standards for streets and circulation within the cemetery are expected to remain essentially unchanged in the future. The intent is to accommodate funeral services with a minimum of disruption. The following principals of design will be maintained within the cemetery grounds:

Entrances:

- Retain limited public access to the main gate at Giddings and Goshen.
- Retain limited access gate for maintenance / emergencies at Turner Street.
- After the new maintenance facilities are developed at the Weddle site on Goshen, construct a new maintenance gate at Turner Street adjacent and north of Miller Funeral Chapel.
- Retain the pedestrian entrance at the north end of the cemetery.

Road Widths:

Maintain existing roadway width standards at 20' and 25' for minor roads and 30' for major roads.

On-Road Parking:

Retain policy of parallel road parking on interior streets for burial services.

Storm Drainage:

Retain rolled curbs at edges of paved streets with drainage to Goshen Avenue storm drain.