

## Operations Statement

The Visalia Public Cemetery District's Mission is to provide burial services to families in a respectful and dignified manner. To achieve this goal, as noted on the site plan exhibit **A**. Several of these properties are currently zoned QP and our request is to rezone the other lots to conform with the 2005 Visalia Public Cemetery District Land Use Plan . This will allow usage of the parcels for cemetery operations and burial sites. This use is prohibited in residential zones but is permitted in the QP zone. All 15 sites proposed for reclassification are owned by the Cemetery District. Of these properties 8 are vacant sites. Please see Exhibit **C** for vacant properties. These properties shall serve as new burial sites and will adhere to the 300 lineal feet of lot frontage which is a condition of approval for the 2005 Master Plan.

Currently the Cemetery district has 1298 full body spaces and 468 ash spaces. This current inventory will allow for approximately 7 years of sales at 250 per year. As The Visalia Cemetery District increases their burial sites it will most likely occur at a slower pace since the burials are trending toward cremation which takes up less space. Therefore, the Cemetery District Board of Trustees has decided not to increase the Master Plan area along Turner and has withdrawn that portion of their application.

Also, as the Cemetery adheres to the 2005 Master Plan, they need to enhance the internal circulation. The Cemetery District would install 1 driveway to Rinaldi which would be in the middle of the 3 streets shown on Exhibit **D**. This would offer new direct access to the West. The other 2 street extensions would T into a frontage road paralleling Rinaldi inside the Cemetery. This would allow funeral processions to arrive on site without all of them entering the main gate to the South (Giddings). The Cemetery already has South and East entrances. Additionally, along the Rinaldi frontage the Cemetery District would install a new fence as shown in exhibits **D & E**, similar in style to the fence along Goshen Avenue.

We would like to address several Items that were of concern at the May 1,2023 City Council Meeting.

### **1. Rental/Ownership Terms:**

The Visalia Public Cemetery Districts Board of Trustees, at its May 14 Board Meeting voted unanimously that they will not impose eminent domain when purchasing new properties for Cemetery use. Additionally, Tenants in existing properties which the Cemetery District owns will be given 90 days' notice along with 90 days free rent. Please refer to the attached Rental Policy #2023-2.

### **2. Community Meeting:**

As requested by the City Council the Visalia Public Cemetery District held a Community Meeting on \_June 15,2023 @ 6pm in the Pavilion at the Visalia Public Cemetery. The meeting was posted, and Cemetery District staff hand delivered notices to residents on both Turner and Rinaldi streets. A very small representation of the neighborhood attended the meeting. One resident on Turner St who owns her home was concerned with the Cemetery expanding into her neighborhood. Upon hearing that the Turner St expansion was being removed from the application, it appeared she was relieved.

Only one resident from Rinaldi St attended. There were 3 individuals from outside the Rinaldi St neighborhood one of whom spoke to the importance of having your family together for

generations in one Cemetery. Currently, she has 22 relatives buried in the Visalia Cemetery dating back to the early 1900's.

**3. Affordable Housing and Purchasing of homes along Rinaldi:**

According to the Housing Element Adopted by the City of Visalia none of the sites listed in the project proposal are identified in the Housing Element site inventory list.

The Government Code Section 66300 (Housing Crisis Act of 2019) is a state law tailored to preserve residential land by limiting land use changes that result in a net loss of residential capacity. Per staff and the City Attorney analysis of the State Law, the project is not subject to its provisions. Plans for rezone and growth approved by the city for the Cemetery District in 2005 are not subject to Government Code Section 66300 as they were implemented prior to the 2019 ratification of the law.

The Cemetery District has been purchasing properties along Rinaldi as far back as the 1980's. The sellers have been paid at fair market value and as shown on attached letters have solicited the Cemetery District to purchase their homes. Additionally the Visalia Unified School District sold a southern piece of their property to Visalia Public Cemetery District. Please see attached newspaper clipping that describes the sale of property.

**4. Demo Permits along Rinaldi**

During the City Council meeting, it was noted by a member of the public that demo permits along Rinaldi St may have not been pulled. We just want to confirm that we have worked closely with the City of Visalia Planning Department to confirm all permits have been pulled for all recent demolition projects along Rinaldi St. Attached is the permit documentation for the demo permits at The Visalia Cemetery District.

## **5. Pioneer Cemeteries**

During the City Council meeting members of the public requested the Visalia Cemetery expand the existing Pioneer Cemeteries. We have worked closely with Tulare County Board of Supervisors, the Tulare County assessor's office, and the Tulare County recorder's office to search for old records. We have researched through all channels to find if ownership was given to the Visalia Cemetery. The recorder's office has no information for Elbow Creek Cemetery. The only document found for Lone Oak is an affidavit. The document reads Thelma P Findley declares that she is the legal successor to the appointed trustees J.M. Tout and Frank Brundage. This document was signed in 1970. Chicago Title has the Visalia Cemetery District as the owner. The question remains when and where did ownership change from Thelma P. Findley. It's unfortunate that we don't have clear evidence about these other two cemeteries. It is a difficult situation and unfortunately when these cemeteries were started there was no mechanism for maintenance. Historical information indicates that these cemeteries started as family cemeteries as records indicate most grave sites with the same family name. A list of names has been compiled of those buried at each site, but no documentation or records are known for locations of any burials. The two Cemeteries are minimal in size, Lone Oak is .29 of an acre and Elbow Creek is 3.12 acres. They were cared for by families with loved ones who are buried there. What complicates it further is no water on site to maintain any type of vegetation. The Visalia Cemetery will continue to help and support with the maintenance of both properties.

## **6. Second Site**

A second site with the appropriate acreage, fencing, water, landscaping, equipment, facilities, and workforce was deemed to be fiscally prohibitive and administratively burdensome. The land use plan, approved by the City Council in 2005, for the current cemetery site is considered adequate for the foreseeable future. During public comments, the issue of continuity of families interred was raised as another overarching theme supporting a single site for Visalia Public Cemetery District.

As the Visalia Public Cemetery District, we continue to serve the entire District (see attached map) and request this area to be rezoned so we can continue this tradition.