



# MASTER PLAN

**DAVIS  
CEMETERY  
DISTRICT**

## **INDIGO**

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# MASTER PLAN JULY 2005

## DAVIS CEMETERY DISTRICT

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### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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### ARCHITECT

INDIGO/ Hammond & Playle Architects LLP  
Principal Jonathan Hammond, AIA  
Mugdha Thakurdesai  
Edited by Alexandra Hammond  
Layout and Illustrations by Alexandra Hammond

# FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Davis District Cemetery is directed by a five-member Board of Trustees. The Board is appointed by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors to four-year terms. In 2002, the cemetery trustees began discussions regarding the need for a long-range capital improvement plan so that as the cemetery expanded, the feeling of the old section would be carried on into the new sections.

Trustees serving in the 1960's had developed a limited plan for future development in 1968. Trustees in the new millennium felt it was time for a new vision. The new vision is reflected in this master plan. The vision includes space for green burials, incorporates native plants, provides an atmosphere of serenity for contemplation of the mysteries of life and death, and incorporates the ability for those living in Davis now to chronicle the area's past.

The Trustees envisioned a long-range plan that would include various projects such as gates, road extensions, significant tree plantings, a columbarium, and a gathering shelter as well as a program to acquire and/or commission works of art. In addition, the Trustees expressed a desire to connect the cemetery with the community of Davis, develop a deeper horticultural interest, and highlight the historical aspects of the community. The goal is a gradual transformation of the cemetery as a natural habitat and center of local history, celebrating the diverse cultural heritage of the people of Davis.

A Request for Proposal was developed and after competitive bidding the Davis-based firm of INDIGO, Hammond & Playle Architects, LLP was selected to develop a master plan. This plan is the product of a half a year's work by the architectural firm, numerous meetings with the Cemetery Board, four public meetings and visits to several area cemeteries, including two in Yolo County, one in Solano County and one in Marin County (Forever Fernwood, dedicated to natural burials.)

The Davis District Cemetery Board of Trustees looks forward to implementing the proposals contained in this master plan. On behalf of the Board, I wish to acknowledge the support of the following individuals who played an important role in the development of this plan: Michelle Reardon, Trustee, Ann M. Evans, Trustee, Dennis Dingemans, Trustee, Laura Westrup, Former Trustee, John Reuter, Former Trustee, Mariko Yamada, Supervisor, 2nd Supervisorial District, Dave Rosenberg, Former Supervisor, 2nd Supervisorial District, John Reynolds, Former Davis Cemetery District Superintendent, and Joe Cattarin, Grounds Supervisor, Davis District Cemetery.

VALENTE F. DOLCINI, Chair  
Davis Cemetery District Board of Trustees

# FROM THE ARCHITECT

The Davis Cemetery District represents a spiritual center for the history and memory of our community. It is also a priceless tract of open space in a quickly growing city and region. As an ecologist and Architect, these qualities have made the Cemetery Master Plan an exciting and rewarding project. In addition, memorial landscapes and burial practices are becoming part of a larger public dialogue led by the worldwide green burial movement and urban ecologists who have rediscovered neglected graveyards as wildlife refuges within city limits.

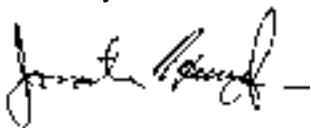
Given these trends INDIGO/ Hammond & Playle Architects, LLP was excited to embark on the process of giving visual form to the goals and concepts laid out by a forward-thinking Board of Directors. The mission of the Master Plan has been to develop the as-yet-unused portion of the cemetery so that it both harmonizes with the well-loved existing historic cemetery and heightens the atmosphere of memory and spiritual growth for the space as a whole. This plan is meant to reflect our sense of place: the unique combination of people, culture, and natural environment that intersect to form our identification with Davis as a community.

Central to our design concept has been the importance of creating a flexible landscape that encourages individuals and their loved ones to express their memories and spiritual aspirations. This expression gives meaning to the space, increasing the richness and resonance of the grounds as a whole. A landscape matrix that weaves native California oak woodlands with softening turf-grass, flowering plants, and wetlands, pays homage to our natural environment as well as the diverse cultural origins of our community. Architectural elements such as the proposed columbarium and gathering shelter will increase the functionality and capacity of the cemetery while enhancing its timeless beauty and healing qualities.

Part and parcel to enhancing these healing qualities has been the formulation of a design that balances human comfort with ecological sustainability. Acting as thoroughfares for walking and repose, serpentine ribbons of turf interlock with peninsulas of unirrigated, unmown native plantings. This means that approximately 70% of the “new” cemetery doubles as wildlife refuge. In addition to climate-appropriate landscaping will be increased options for sustainable interment. Not only will the proposed columbarium increase the capacity of the cemetery, but the option of “green burial” will be available for plot holders who wish to be buried without vaults, caskets, or embalming chemicals.

After much research, an ongoing dialogue with a very motivated cemetery staff and Board of Directors, and several meetings with the public, INDIGO is pleased to submit this Master Plan and accompanying report. It has been a pleasure to work with a committed, savvy, and forward-thinking Board that represents the progressive and environmentally conscious values of our unique community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Hammond", followed by a horizontal line.

Jonathan Hammond, AIA

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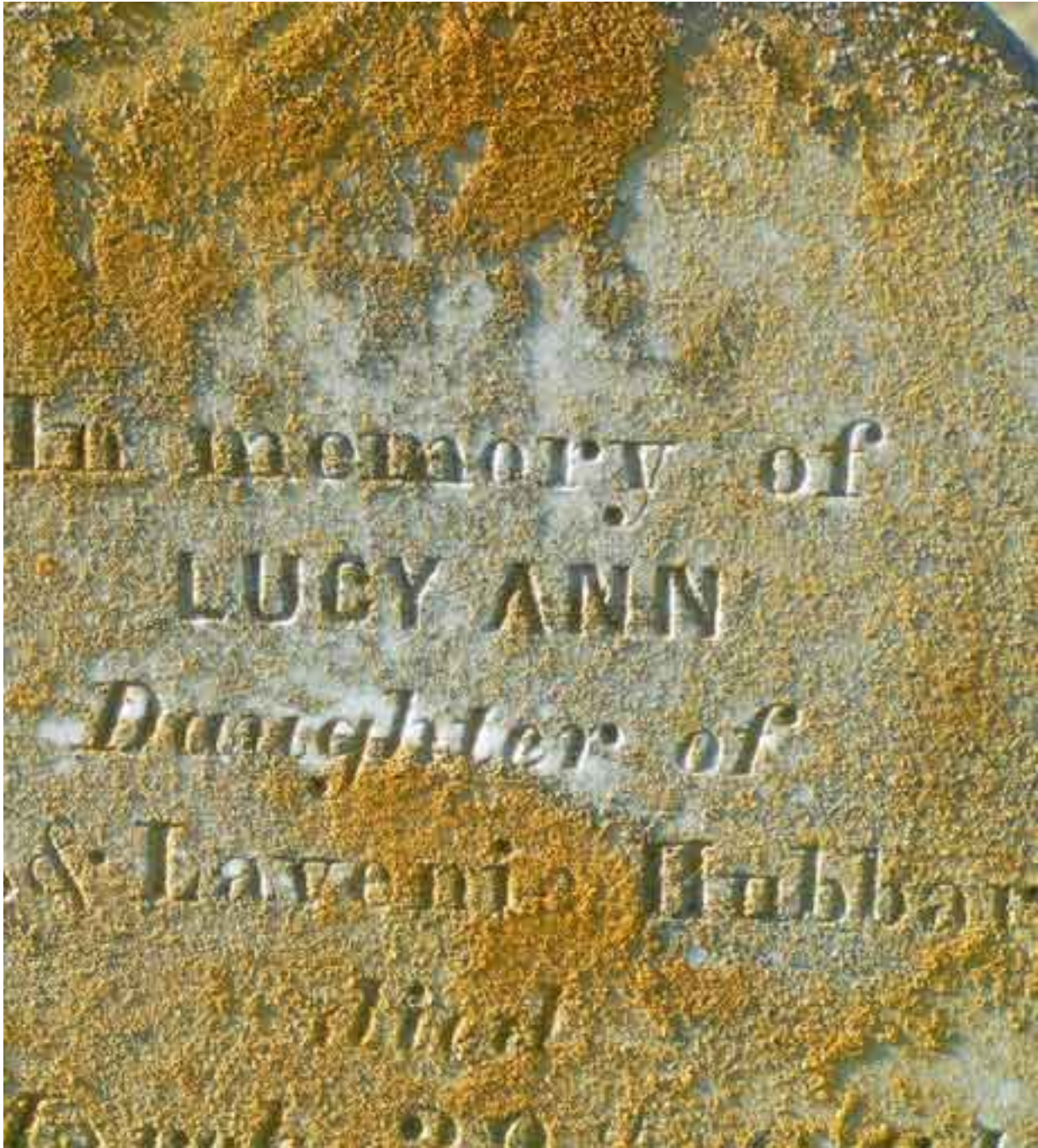
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# **BUILDING MEMORY**

## **HISTORIC PRECEDENTS FOR CEMETERY DESIGN EVOLUTION OF THE AMERICAN CEMETERY GREEN BURIAL**

The following essays provide a conceptual context for the design approach implemented in the Master Plan.

# HISTORIC PRECEDENTS FOR CEMETERY DESIGN

With its origins in the Greek term for sleeping chamber, the word 'cemetery' comes from the need to describe a final resting place. Traditionally, the cemetery has marked an ultimate home-place, the place where our ancestors lived and were buried. It describes the final shelter for the body when the intangible spirit, the energy that makes us 'alive', has disappeared. The space of the cemetery exists as an intermediate location where the physical world must be built and shaped to remind us of what no longer is. This effort of remembrance has been practiced in different ways throughout history and across religious, cultural and geographical lines. The most beloved commemorative spaces, however, always address the tension between the worlds of the dead and the living, the need to grieve and be comforted, and to continue without forgetting. These examples form an imaginary bridge between the past, present and future.



Tikal, Guatemala

In past centuries, a preoccupation with death and commemoration has provided inspiration and economic incentive for the finest efforts in sculpture, landscape design and architecture. Some of the earliest examples of human structures in the landscape include burial mounds, standing stones, catacombs and pyramids. Despite this historic connection between the houses of the living and those of their dead, contemporary design circles have largely ignored issues of cemetery design.

Today the urban graveyard in churchyard or park has largely been replaced by sprawling suburban cemeteries far removed from the daily life of the city. As modern people become more geographically mobile, culturally integrated and simultaneously homogenized by a global mass culture of consumerism, the task of creating meaningful memorial and funerary spaces becomes increasingly unclear. As history speeds up to record drastic events by live feed digital video, the act of memorializing becomes constant, instantaneous and ultimately forgettable. Responses to these aspects

of contemporary life are varied and unquantifiable, however, new social movements, from vegetarianism to radical Islam, all reveal an effort to find sense of place, spiritual wholeness and community in times and locations where these values are no longer innate or self-evident.

Though highly controversial and provocative at the time of its conception, **Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC** has proven to be one of the most effective and frequently visited memorial landscapes in modern history. In the simplest and most graceful physical terms, **it simultaneously honors the dead and serves as an anti-monument to the convoluted and misjudged circumstances of their death.** While no physical bodies are entombed at the site, **the act of descending into a depression in the earth provides visitors with a sense of both the shelter and discomfort of prospective burial.** It is at once a gentle swale and wartime trench. Lin's brilliant design articulates the ambivalent relationship that always exists between the dead and their survivors.



Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington DC

**In contrast to Lin's minimalism, the oft-painted and photographed Jewish Cemetery in Prague exemplifies the burial ground's role as witness to the sheer accumulation of human life and history.** Founded in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century in what was then a Jewish hamlet, religious prohibitions against rotation of interments allowed for the collection of up to twelve layers of graves in a small area. The resulting view from the world of the living, a dense pack of crooked, tattered headstones, is at once romantically picturesque and uneasily crowded with spirits of the past. Like many urban cemeteries, it is both eerie in its separation from the laws of the comprehensible peasant and refreshing in its defiance of fleeting bureaucratic control. As the city changes around it, falling victim in turn to unthinkable tragedy and ecstatic liberation, the cemetery is recast with varying historical meanings but remains a toothy reminder of every human being's simple and inevitable destiny.

The Mexican tradition of grave yard processions on the **Day of the Dead pays tribute to the important function of the cemetery as a monument to mortality, the grand leveler.** On this single day of the year, the cemetery serves as an intermediate realm where criticisms of power structures in the world of the living may be expressed in the name of inevitable equality. The celebration within the bounds of the cemetery involves elaborate decoration. Food and drink are offered to those interred as well as live participants. Solace comes in the guarantee of remembrance and necessary forgetfulness of life's vanities.

Another reaction to human pretension is expressed in the growing number of 'woodland burial' grounds in Europe and North America. In opposition to the age old practice of monument building, the concept of minimally marked burial in a natural landscape stems from a desire for reabsorption or erasure. As opposed to memorializing our own, highly apparent civilizations, industrial societies of the North feel the need to pay tribute to the environment they have destroyed or lost touch with.

Despite the perceived newness of ecologically friendly burial practices, the image of the forest as a final home or resting place is not without historic precedent. The word 'paradise' comes from the Persian term for a forest of trees and the sentiment for the sheltering nature of woods is also reflected in Scandinavian languages. While the overgrown historic cemeteries of Europe and the Eastern United States convey a melancholy neglect for ancestral memory, the unmanaged mingling of trees, grasses and headstones also holds a kind of entropic honesty.

This newly recognized function echoes the cemetery's historic role as a patch of neutral ground, a sanctuary beyond the laws of shifting political powers. The church graveyard at the Mission Dolores in San Francisco exemplifies the purpose of the cultivated cemetery with its charming mixture of fruit trees, flowers and commemorative engravings and sculpture. Upon entering this walled garden in the middle of a bustling modern city, we learn not only the individual stories of those who lie beneath the engraved headstones, but also about the rich cultural and botanical history of the region. Native plants are mixed with Mediterranean imports, Spain's religious and architectural tastes are filtered through the local conditions of the New World to form an appropriate resting place for San Francisco's history.

**The success of a memorial landscape is not measured by its conformity with any set of aesthetic standards but by its ability to bear witness to the qualities of the place where it is located. It allows the living to contemplate the unknowable journey that lies ahead. This contemplation need not be morbid or specific but must remind us of those who came before, their relationship to us, and in turn, those who will come afterward. The cemetery is best described as an in-between place where human beings reconcile the impermanence of the living body with the eternal nature of spirit and memory.**



Historic Jewish Cemetery, Prague, Czech Republic



Churchyard cemetery at the Mission Dolores, San Francisco



# EVOLUTION OF THE AMERICAN CEMETERY

As members of a primarily agrarian pioneer society, most early Americans were buried in family cemeteries located on privately owned land. With the rise of the industrial revolution and the continuing urbanization of American life, burial practices began to change. Epidemics of cholera and influenza swept through overcrowded metropolitan centers, leaving cemeteries impacted. Medical theories of the day held that epidemics were caused by the odors emitted by overcrowded graveyards. This unprecedented growth in Eastern cities led to various civic movements aimed at addressing the squalid conditions of the urban life. Among these, the Cemetery Movement sought to change the old fashioned grave yard into an organized institution, reserving tracts of land outside the city as peaceful resting places for contemporary urbanites.



Simple wooden crosses mark the graves of early settlers in San Juan Bautista, recording both the self sufficiency and the displacement of early American life. Settlers buried their loved ones but would not be there to tend their graves in coming generations.

19th Century rural cemeteries like Mount Auburn, began to resemble the chaotic urban landscapes that necessitated and inspired their creation. At the same time, the desired balance between romantic charm and uncontrolled overgrowth proved difficult and expensive to maintain. In a move to combine efficiency and professionalism with landscape esthetics, Prussian designer Adolphe Struach conceived of the Lawn Park cemetery in 1855. As a Civil War torn American society struggled to deal with astonishing numbers of casualties in an increasingly displaced and urbanized population, the impulse to create uniform, easily maintained and controlled cemeteries gained immediate popularity. The Lawn Park cemetery would provide maintenance for the grounds as a whole, creating a unified landscape without fences or individual gardens. The professionalism and uniformity of Lawn Park cemeteries rationalized the care of memorials and contributed to the loosening of bonds between families and their ancestral resting places.

By the end of the World Wars, American attitudes toward their dead had become further removed. A new brand of memorial parks became the appropriate location for tasteful burial. With a prohibition against raised monuments, these simplified landscapes dictated almost complete uniformity of grave markers. Grand tracts of uninterrupted turf facilitated a controlled appearance. Technological innovations led to the creation of improved irrigation systems, grass seed, motorized mowers, powerful herbicides and pesticides, leading to the rise of monocultural turf grass as a dominant landscape feature.

In 1831, the Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts was the first American cemetery to be established and managed as a non-profit, non-denominational business institution. Set in a picturesque location outside the city, it was modeled after the rambling gardens of an English estate. Echoing the aesthetic tastes of the Romantic era, the grounds were left with many of their natural landscape features in tact. Family grave plots were considered to be the full property of their owners and design, planting and fencing was left to their discretion. All manner of monuments, follies and grottoes were fenced and gardened according to personal taste.



Family crypts add the architectural qualities of a living city in a rural cemetery. Wealth and establishment are carried on to the afterlife.

Unfortunately, the bland and impersonal graveyards of the past half-century have become removed from the dynamism of modern experience, less visited than their historic counterparts. Recent trends toward woodland burial and the reclamation of urban cemeteries as parks and wildlife refuges point to a contemporary desire to take back ownership of burial and memory.



Overgrown, Romantic styling is translated into Central Valley vernacular almost by accident at the Capay Cemetery. Relaxed maintenance combined with established, self-reliant, naturalized and native plants achieves informal beauty the easy way.



The lawn plaque section of picturesque San Juan Bautista Cemetery appears sterile in comparison with other sections of the cemetery where weeds and wildflowers are used in place of turf.



Older sections of the San Juan Bautista Cemetery display relaxed charm.

The proposed Master Plan for the Davis Cemetery District is an attempt to come to terms with these issues. In order to incorporate the cemetery into the living fabric of the city, the space must acknowledge the plurality of our community, both past and present. Perhaps the most useful tool in the creation of a vital, honest and meaningful space will be a tolerance for disorder. Native plants will be encouraged with the knowledge that some exotic weeds will sprout amongst them. A balance of conventionally maintained turf and unmown, unirrigated native oak woodlands will create a softer, more natural looking environment in the undeveloped portion of the cemetery. Self-reliant naturalized and native plants develop beautifully without excessive irrigation, pruning and pesticide application. The goal of the Master Plan is to create a landscape matrix that looks best when left to its own devices. Plot-holders are encouraged to commemorate loved ones with a greater variety of grave monuments and burial styles as the Central Valley biome is expressed through the re-establishment of native plant and animal communities.

As a secular, public district, the Davis Cemetery will have as many meanings as there are individuals and belief systems in our community. However, it seems safe to say that one of Davis' collective spiritual aspirations is to live in balance with the natural environment, allowing space for human expression while respecting the things that lived here before our settlement. Through this wholistic approach, we hope to create a truly wonderful place for commemoration of our unique community, the individuals who have shaped it, and the location we occupy on the face of the planet.

# GREEN BURIAL RECONNECTING THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

The concept of “green burial” has developed in reaction to the practices of embalming and casket burial now common in the United States and Europe. First gaining popularity in England, the “woodland burial” movement is an example of the growing affinity toward more sustainable, “low-tech” solutions for life and death that are grounded in ancient tradition. As an alternative to the practice of chemically preserving the flesh and preventing its reabsorption into the earth with elaborate embalming, casket technology and heavy grave-liners, green burial proposes to inter remains in biodegradable containers such as untreated wood and cardboard coffins, even linen shrouds. Thus, natural decomposition, the flow of energy and elements through the ecosystem, proceeds uninhibited. The planting of trees as grave markers or the incorporation of new grave sites into existing forests allows for the creation and maintenance of nature preserve and habitat. Green burial proposes to place death back into the cycle of life.



Visitors pay their respects by an oak sapling planted in place of a headstone at Forever Fernwood Cemetery in Mill Valley.

With 200 green burial cemeteries now opened or planned in the United Kingdom and a handful in operation around the United States, the “woodland” cemetery is gaining popularity as an alternative to the perceived sterility of rigidly groomed lawn cemeteries, which require heavy irrigation and pesticide application. Green burial also offers a more economical option for those who wish to avoid the expense of embalment and casket burial.

The Ramsey Creek preserve, located in the woods outside Westminster, South Carolina, was created by MD Billy Campbell and entrepreneur Tyler Cassity and was the first contemporary green cemetery in the United States. Now Cassity and Campbell have instituted green burial, along with traditional cremation and columbarium facilities, at the historic Fernwood Cemetery in Mill Valley. Other sites include Glendale Memorial Nature Preserve in De Funiak Springs, Florida, and The Ethician Family Cemetery in San Jacinto County, Texas. Many green cemeteries plan to use GIS/GPS technologies to keep track of grave sites that may become obscured by forest growth.

Still more cemeteries are in the process of reconsidering their function and planning. The Historic Congressional Cemetery in Washington DC, for example, is trading its carefully mowed lawns for more environmentally appropriate native plantings. In growing urban areas cemeteries are being reimagined as city parks and inviting open spaces, becoming part of cities’ lives as well as receptacles for their material history.

While the ecological and spiritual bent of green burial has attracted many, questions of legality and public health invariably arise. Environmentalists and green cemetery proponents point out that burial, even at relatively shallow depths, has historically been an effective and “clean” way of dealing with human remains. The natural process of underground decomposition renders harmful viruses and bacteria inert, preventing the spread of disease and contamination of ground water. Underground burial also protects against scavenging animals. It should be noted that caskets and grave liners serve not only to preserve embalmed flesh, but also to guard soils and groundwater from pollution by formaldehyde and other chemicals. Advocates of green burial hope that the establishment of such ecologically friendly cemeteries will protect groundwater by creating ecologically sustainable spaces and reducing the need for agricultural chemicals and excessive irrigation.

Fortunately for those who hope to be buried “green”, embalming is not required in California or most other states of The Union. According to section 8115 of the California Health and Safety Code, the governing body of any city or county may prescribe the

*“...standards governing burial, inurement and entombment... to be reasonably necessary to protect the public health... [and] assure decent and respectful treatment of human remains...”*

Health and Safety Code of the State of California. Section 8115. 2004. (<http://www.legalinfo.ca.gov>)

The Davis Cemetery District requires only that remains be enclosed in a “rigid container” to allow for dignified handling.

**As an environmentally conscious population ages and the need for preservation of green, open spaces increases, the popularity and prominence of green burial is sure to spread. The appeal of an interment process that acknowledges the flows of energy and materials through the ecosystem and places the human body back at the center of this system is an attractive alternative to anxious and ultimately futile efforts to protect the flesh against its natural reincorporation. The relative simplicity and affordability of green burial also recommends it. On the sensitive issue of the treatment of human remains, the final rite of passage, individuals and families in a plural society should have the broadest possible range of choices. Certainly, the option of resting, finally, in a plain pine box, should be one of them.**



The forest grows freely over historic graves at Fernwood Cemetery and Nature Preserve.



# THE DAVIS CEMETERY PAST & PRESENT

## HISTORY OF THE DAVIS CEMETERY SITE ANALYSIS & EXISTING CONDITIONS

- Map with Observations
- Map of Existing Trees
- Contour Map

# HISTORY OF THE DAVIS CEMETERY

The first lands purchased specifically for cemetery use in Davis were bought by Col. Joseph B. Chiles in 1850. The earliest remaining grave markers in today's Cemetery District date back to 1855. Many of Davisville's earliest settlers, particularly large numbers of Chinese settlers, now lie unmarked due to the ravages of vandals and grass fires which destroyed all but one remaining wooden grave monument.

A local Cemetery Association was formed in 1901 after various land donations by Mrs. I.S. Chiles and the Catholic Church. A year later the Cemetery Association embarked on the first organized landscaping and maintenance efforts including the planting of 80 palm and cypress trees.

The incorporation of the Davis Cemetery District was approved by the Yolo County Board of Trustees in 1922 after a successful petition by local residents. The twenty additional acres that now complete the district lands were purchased from George Chiles in the early 1960's. In 1966, the office building and corporation yard were constructed and maintenance of the cemetery grounds was charged to the first full time superintendent. Between 1968 and 1970, the old cemetery was restored and the new section laid out with modern irrigation systems, new turf, and trees. The cemetery now covers 25 acres with 10 acres developed for burial and is projected to meet the communities burial needs for the next 100 years.

(Based on various publications by the Davis Cemetery District.)



Historic gate on Pole Line Road.

# SITE ANALYSIS & EXISTING CONDITIONS



Existing sign for the Cemetery District is located at the corner of Pole Line Road and East Eighth St.

The monument sign on the corner of Pole Line Road and E. Eighth Street serves the minimum function of marking the cemetery. However, it does little to express the cemetery's function as a center of local history and memorial. The main entrance on E. Eighth Street offers the possibility of a graceful introduction to cemetery lands but might be improved by planting trees on its eastern edge to match the row of trees already growing on the west side. While the historic gate on Pole Line Rd. provides pleasant sight lines, other favorable views are blocked by the thick oleander hedges that trace most of the cemetery's western edge. In contrast to its counterpart on E. Eighth Street, the entrance on Pole Line Rd. presents less attractive views and might be better employed as an exit. The existing historic cemetery represents a significant exhibition of local history and should be made more visible from Pole Line Rd. District lands are fenced on all sides from East Eighth Street and Pole Line Rd. to the west and south, and from abutting yards and fields to the north, south and east. While denser plantings of trees may be desirable along fences that face private yards, creation of a more porous barrier along Pole Line Rd. would improve views for bikers, pedestrians and drivers, creating a visual interface with the living city. This being said, some degree of separation must be maintained in order to preserve the peaceful and contemplative atmosphere of the grounds. The existing hill provides subtle topographic interest at the center of the district. The historic slough in the southern portion has been narrowed considerably but might be restored to recreate a permanent water feature or riparian environment.



An attractive array of monuments already exist in the historic portion of the cemetery.



A picturesque vista of the historic cemetery is provided upon entrance from East Eighth St. Mature trees and a variety of monuments contribute to visual interest.



The undeveloped area in the eastern part of the cemetery is intermittently planted with trees.



Existing offices (built in 1966-67) are set atop a hillside of native clump grass. The office and maintenance buildings lie at the juncture between the historic cemetery and the undeveloped lands to the east.



Historic family plots bounded by copings are planted with turf and mowed to match surrounding lawns.



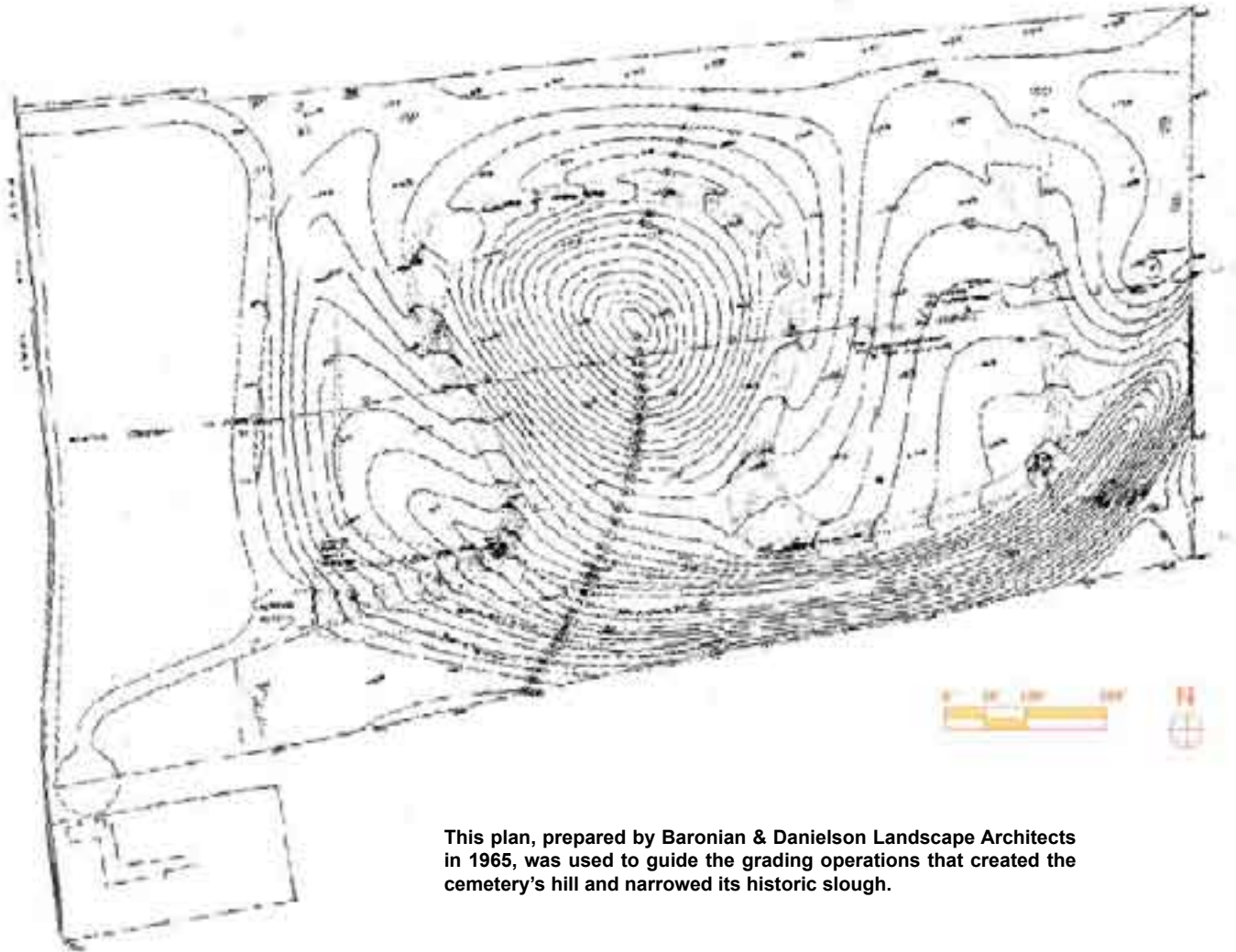
Much of the cemetery is hidden from street views by thick oleander bushes.



Existing historic gate on the western boundary of the District provides good views of developed sections of the cemetery and the hill from Pole Line Road.



## Contour Map



This plan, prepared by Baronian & Danielson Landscape Architects in 1965, was used to guide the grading operations that created the cemetery's hill and narrowed its historic slough.



# A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

**GOALS & OBJECTIVES**  
**DESIGN APPROACH & PHILOSOPHY**  
**PROPOSED MASTER PLAN**  
**PROGRAM & POLICY**

- Landscape & Planting
- Buildings
- Markers & Monuments
- Green Burial
- Acquisition of Art
- Phasing Plan

# GOALS & OBJECTIVES



Benign neglect at the Capay Cemetery allows bird planted acorns and volunteer native and naturalized plants to contribute to the beauty of the site.

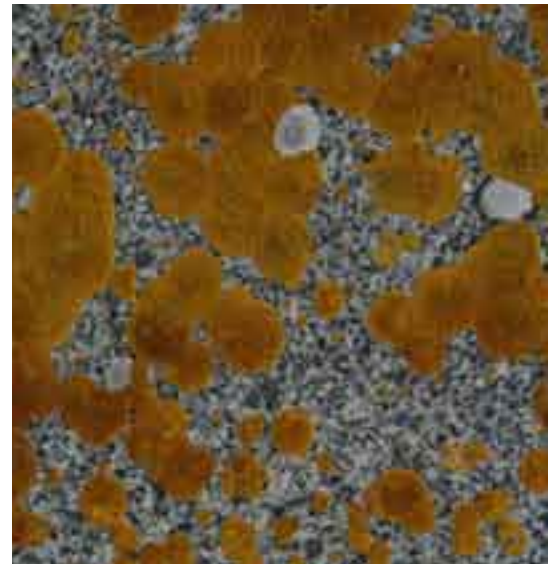
- Strengthen the cemetery's qualities as an inviting space for remembrance, contemplation, and healing.
- Enhance the cemetery's spiritual function as a grounding element within the community by using art, architecture, and design values to memorialize the history of Davis, its people, and the original Central Valley landscape.
- Maintain the Davis Cemetery District as a center of local history, celebrating the diverse cultural heritage of the people of Davis.
- Create an attractive environment that will encourage people to come and enjoy art, nature, and civic history.
- Enhance the existing ecological function of the cemetery as an open green space and a sanctuary for native plant and animal life.
- Reduce the use of pesticides.

# DESIGN APPROACH & PHILOSOPHY

The goal of the Master Plan is to articulate a design that enhances the cemetery's current function as an open green space dedicated to the remembrance of community heritage and Central Valley natural history. In this capacity, it is an exhibition space for our local identity. The most honest way to express this identity is by creating a low maintenance landscape canvas on which individual plot holders can convey their values and spiritual aspirations through diverse monuments, submissions of public art proposals, and/or the placement of temporary adornments at approved times of year.

Central to this design approach is a commitment to unpredictable beauty and a belief that the most well loved public spaces are those that are shaped by and bear witness to both the natural environment and the hopes and dreams of the public. These spaces communicate history, telling the story of both the changeability and the eternal character of place.

A balance of conventionally maintained turf and unmown, unirrigated native oak woodlands will create a softer, more natural looking environment in the undeveloped portion of the cemetery. Self reliant naturalized and native plants develop beautifully without excessive irrigation, pruning and pesticide application. The goal of the Master Plan is to create a landscape matrix that looks best when left to its own devices. Just as plot-holders are encouraged to commemorate loved ones with a greater variety of grave monuments and burial styles, so too will the Central Valley biome be expressed through the re-establishment of native plant and animal refuge within the cemetery.

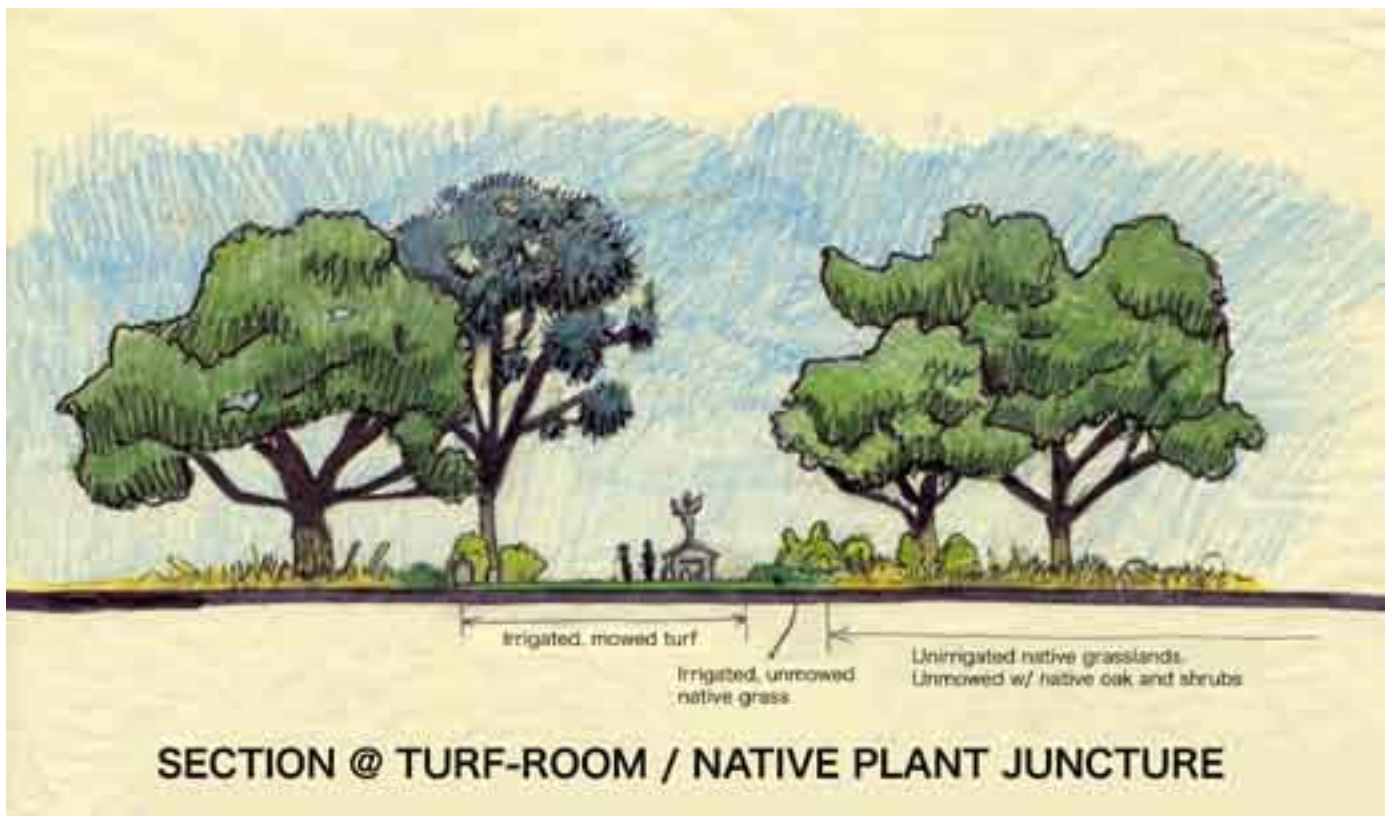


Lichen on a granite gravestone lets us appreciate its age.

# PROGRAM & POLICY LANDSCAPE & PLANTING

In order to cultivate the organic charm displayed by many historic cemeteries, the landscape matrix of the Davis Cemetery District Master Plan is tailored toward a policy of selective maintenance and non-interference. This policy of “benign neglect” strikes a balance between outright overgrowth and manicured sterility. Irrigated sections of turf are mowed so that visitors can enjoy the grounds comfortably and safely, but signs of age, such as lichens on headstones, as well as the natural growth of trees, shrubs, and some weeds, is welcomed. As a location of community memory, the site is allowed to wear its age gracefully.

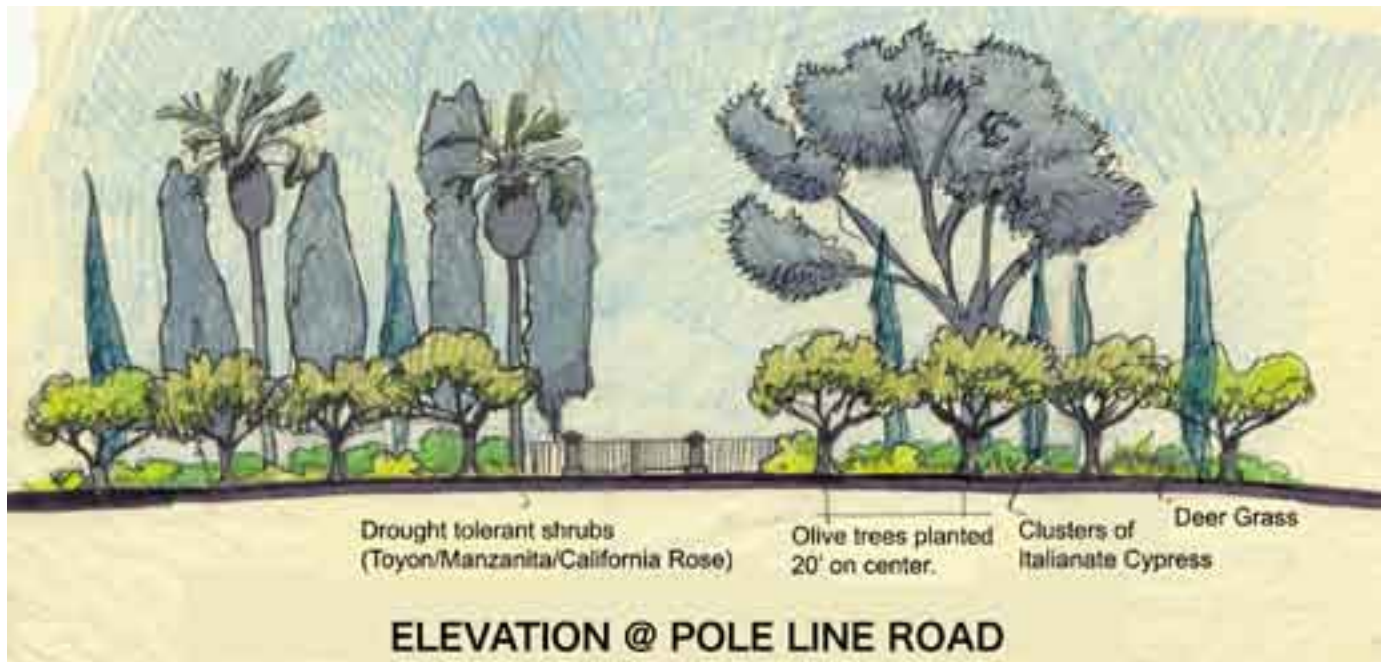
The overall landscape matrix proposed for the undeveloped section of the district is an interwoven mixture of turf and Central Valley native plantings. **The proposed ratio of oak woodland to turf is approximately 70%-30% (see Proposed Master Plan drawing).** Fingers of turf interlock with peninsulas of valley oaks, gray pine and clump grass. Because meticulous tending of this unorthodox combination would be labor and chemical intensive, tolerance of some exotic weeds will be necessary once native grasses are established. Herbicides should only be used as a last resort. Weed eating and mowing are preferred methods for defining borders between irrigated turf and native grass zones.



Proposed landscape section.

Undulating patches of turf are mowed and irrigated to provide access and comfort to visitors. Borders of irrigated, unmowed native red fescue grasses form a transition between mowed turf and swaths of unirrigated, unmowed native planting. These “rough” turf borders are populated with perennial bulbs such as narcissus and native California iris, creating a beautiful display in early spring. Unirrigated areas are seeded with wildflowers and drought-tolerant bulbs such as purplish-blue brodia and white-blooming soap plant. Special care is taken to provide fire protection to neighboring properties. Pine and redwood groves along residential borders of the cemetery enhance privacy and add a sense of timelessness to this spiritually significant location. In contrast, hedges along East Eighth Street and Pole Line Road are opened in selected areas to provide attractive sight lines for drivers, pedestrians and bikers. Eventually, the oleanders will be replaced with a mixture of native shrub hedgerow and olive trees. Special care will be taken to set olive trees back from sidewalks in order to minimize the slippery mess of windfall fruit. The occasional Italianate cypress, a traditional marker of the Mediterranean cemetery, will be planted amongst the olives, manzanita and California rose.

While one goal of the Master Plan is to create a bioregionally appropriate landscape of drought-tolerant, wildlife-friendly native plants, it is appropriate to incorporate historic landscape references to Davis residents' ancestral homelands in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Selected areas are designated for intensive planting of flowering ornamentals, while native planting areas will be periodically seeded with wildflowers.



Planting elevation of new Olives, Oaks and native shrubs along Pole Line road. Ornamental Iron fence on stone pillars replaces existing cyclone fencing.

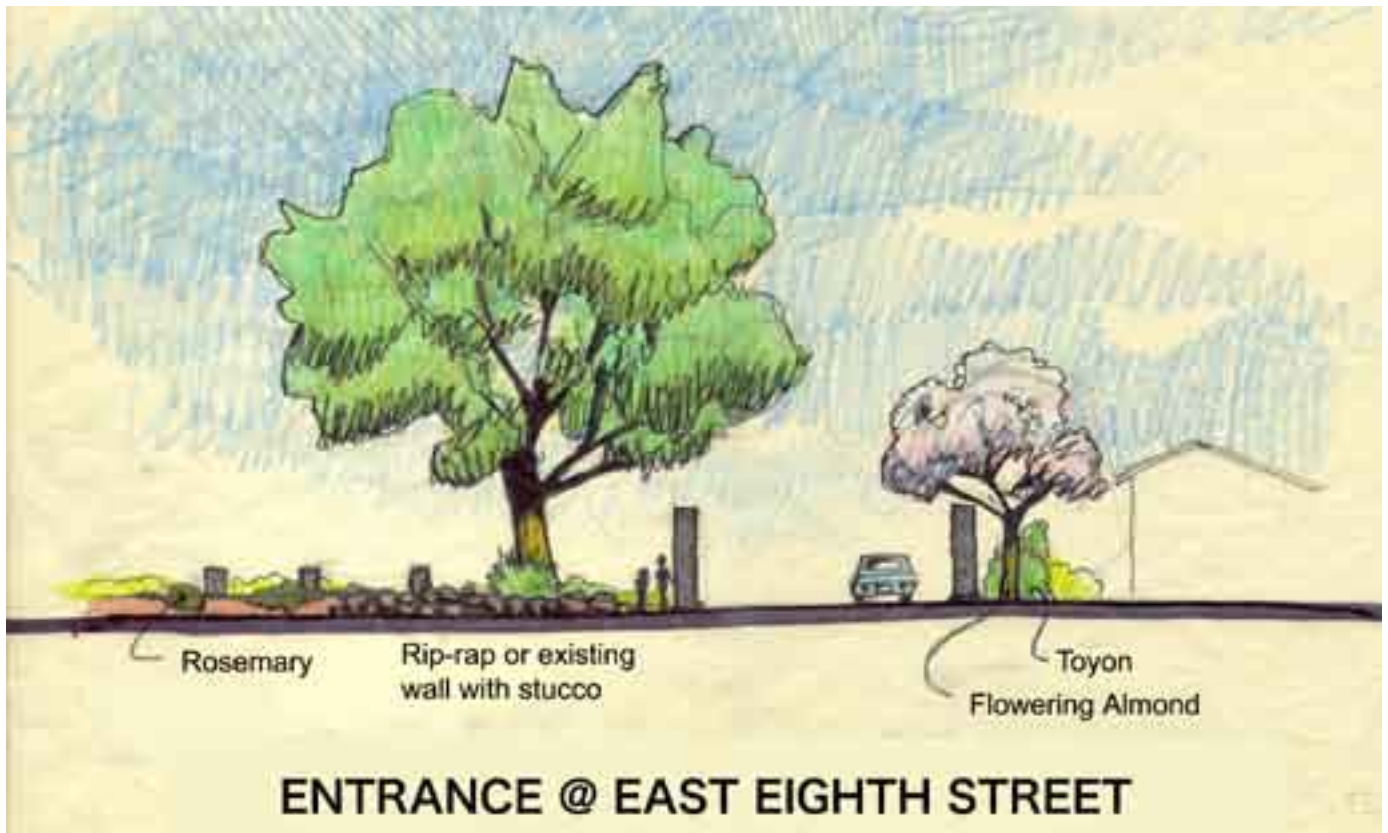
New water features and ponds are designed into the Master Plan at the historic slough. In this way, the slough is partially restored, tying old and new portions of the cemetery together and providing wetland habitat for birds and other wildlife. The Cemetery District will also initiate a program to replace short lived trees, such as locusts, with long lived, drought tolerant trees such as valley oaks. When short lived trees die, new trees will replace them. Together, these policies create a safe, green, and inviting oasis for visitors and wildlife. Funerals take place and visitors are able to stroll and sit on the grass. Familiar elements such as groves of trees, views across the water, quiet shaded paths, and patches of colorful flowers provide comfort.



A hedgerow of native shrubs borders fields of native grasses.



Benign neglect showing good results at Capay Cemetery.



# BUILDINGS

Architectural elements, such as a memorial gathering shelter and columbarium, are priorities in the District's program. These elements must exhibit a high level of artistic expression and spiritual resonance.

## Columbarium

A columbarium is most simply described as a vault with niches for cinerary urns. The proposed columbarium for the Davis Cemetery District is a round depression (**diameter 60' to 70', depth 10'**) dug into the existing hill at the heart of the cemetery district. The walls of this crater-like room are lined with niches, the floor carpeted with turf. This is a secret garden of contemplation, removed from the bustling noise and distraction of the outside world. A labyrinth at the center awakens visitors to the circular connections between earth and sky, life and death, temporality and eternity.



Eleven circuit labyrinth. Walking meditation is guided by a path that leads in one way and out the other.

Circular engineered concrete retaining walls are built using the "shot-crete" method typically used to build swimming pools. These walls are shaped to receive prefabricated niche-walls used to store cremains. We estimate that this structure will accommodate over 3,000 niches. Niche walls are installed on an as-needed basis and will be finished with flamed granite or bronze. This space provides sufficient views from the outside to accommodate public safety requirements.

While the form of the space, its location within the hill, and its use of quarried stone give it the aspect of a geological formation, the softening elements of turf, pond, benches and scattered wildflowers make it a comfortable site for tranquil contemplation and remembrance.

Its entrance is marked by a meandering path and a formal gate. Echoing both prehistoric and classical architectural forms, it is a timeless monument to the collective memory of our community.



Niche-wall finishes are customized according to buyer's tastes. (Image provided by Infinity Memorial Systems.)

Recessed niche configuration.



Wall mounted niche configuration.

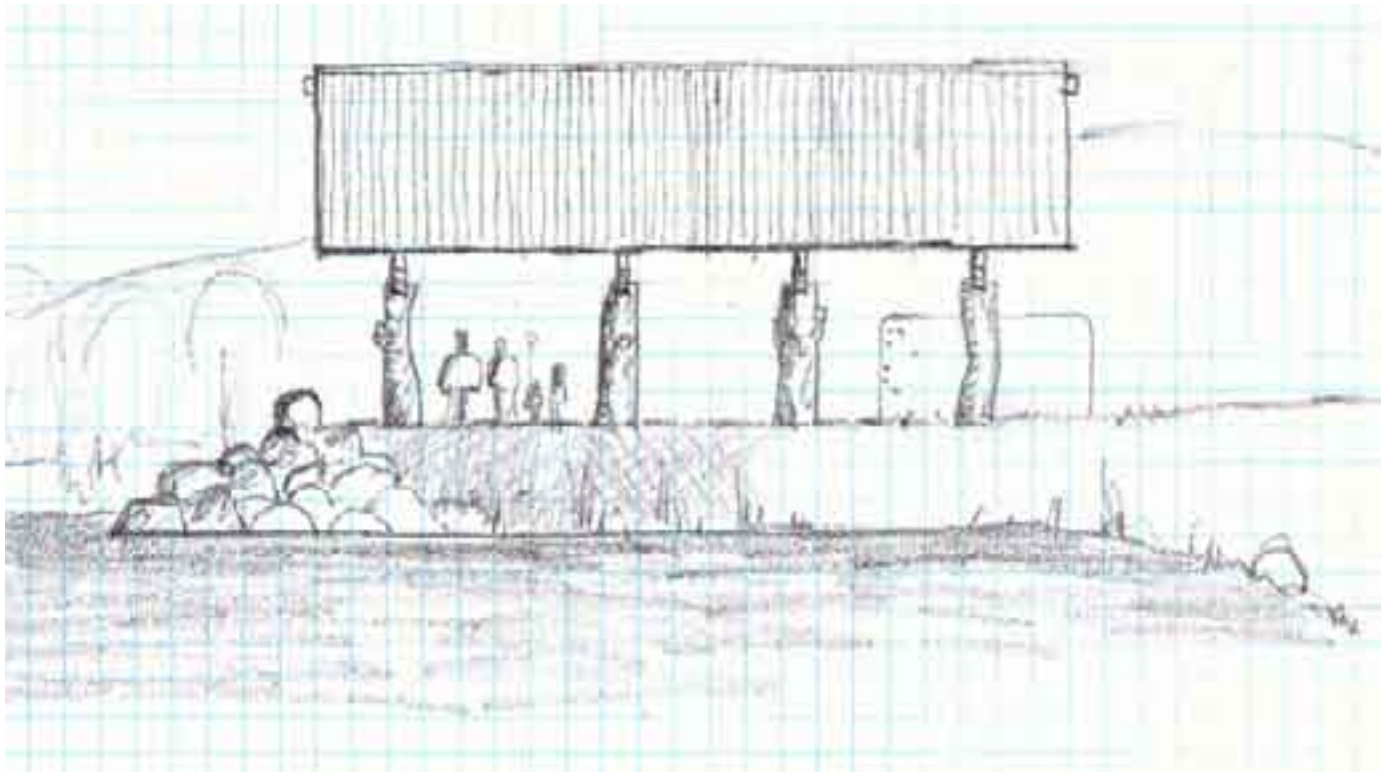


Cinerary urn under metal wall plaques. (Image provided by Everest Columbarium Systems.)

Examples of prefabricated niche-walls to be received by circular columbarium walls. (Image provided by Everest Columbarium Systems.)

## Nondenominational Gathering Shelter

As a functioning cemetery and a location for funerary congregations, District lands need a shelter where visitors can gather and find protection from sun and rain. Practitioners of all faiths and spiritual beliefs must be able to perform the ceremonies they find necessary when faced with the loss of a community member. With these universal needs in mind, the design for the gathering shelter at the Davis Cemetery is simple and flexible.



Proposed gathering shelter

While the roof is its most important practical element, the gathering shelter also exhibits the beauty and timelessness necessary for a space of spiritual communion. In this capacity, it has a generalized altar structure (to be adorned by visitors according to the style of ceremonies taking place), and is oriented with an eye toward favorable views and light exposure.

The drawing above is inspired by the sweat lodges of native California Indians. It is constructed using tree trunks, perhaps from local valley oak or black walnut, and topped with a rough timber roof frame. An alternate option would be a round building similar to the one pictured below. The form of this structure places it in conversation with the proposed columbarium.



Traditional sweat lodge of the Native Americans of Northern California.



# MARKERS & MONUMENTS

The world's most meaningful and well visited cemeteries are often those that have been allowed to develop organically, without regulation, herbicides, or excessive pruning. For this reason, the greatest possible variety of grave markers and monuments are allowed and encouraged at the Davis Cemetery. In the spirit of benign neglect and picturesque disorder, there are the fewest possible regulations on the style, placement, and mixing of monuments, plaques, mausoleums, and plantings within given sections of the cemetery. **Markers of almost any size or shape are allowed assuming they are constant with good engineering practice for footings, attachment, and structure.** Some oversize monuments may require approval by an architect or engineer.

Grave markers could range from weathered wooden crosses to sculpted mausoleums. Local artists are invited to submit portfolios for review at the District office. Local builders of traditional monuments are also encouraged to display a wider variety of monument possibilities. Green burials might incorporate valley oak trees planted at the time of burial or benches with the names of individuals whose cremated ashes have been scattered elsewhere.



## Expanded options for plot or niche-holders at the Davis Cemetery will include:

- Green burials with or without markers throughout the cemetery.
- Green burials with tree planting in place of traditional markers in designated "green burial only" grove.
- Conventional burials with or without markers.
- Burials of cremains with or without markers throughout the cemetery.
- Scatterings of cremains in designated areas.
- Storage of cremains within niche-walls of proposed columbarium.
- Creativity and variety of grave markers and monuments will be encouraged.

# GREEN BURIAL

Green burial, without vaults or conventional inorganic caskets, should be an approved practice at the Davis Cemetery. The landscape matrix will integrate areas of native planting with areas of irrigated turf and exotic formal garden elements so that there is space for both conventional vaulted burials and green burials. Ideally, these two modes of burial would be mixed in a given zone. Fees normally levied for the purchase of burial vaults will be used to pay for the maintenance of level turf for green burials in non-native turf areas. A stock of native grass plugs is maintained at the cemetery to replace disturbed vegetation in unirrigated zones over burials in the cool season. Burials that take place in unirrigated sections during the hot season may have exposed soil until climatic conditions are appropriate for replanting.

There is no reason that monuments, from the simplest to the most ornate, should not be able to coexist in the same section of the cemetery. In the same way, green burials are integrated in areas populated primarily by casket burials.

A section of the cemetery is reserved for those who wish to be buried green and unmarked. While some additional leveling may be required to maintain a consistent surface in irrigated turf areas, the humps and depressions resulting from displacement of earth by green burial is accepted as raised mounds and vernal pools in unirrigated, native landscape areas.



A mound of displaced earth is allowed to recede naturally after a green burial at Forever Fernwood Cemetery.

## ACQUISITION OF ART

In order to make the cemetery a more inviting and meaningful park for contemplation and civic remembrance, the space has been reimagined as a new kind of sculpture garden that combines grave monuments memorializing individuals with works of art that commemorate the sensibilities of the community as a whole. Included in these works will be collective memorials such as children's and veterans' memorials. These works are purchased, commissioned or donated to the District with the approval of board members. With the goal of creating a space that honestly speaks about the history of the community, innovation and variety of works should be encouraged. Ephemeral pieces may be equally important as those made of concrete, granite, or bronze.



This natural boulder acts as an elegant but understated marker at the entrance of Golden Gate Park.

The District supports the concept of developing a program to acquire and/or commission works of art such as sculptures and earthworks for the cemetery. Possibly a yearly budget could be established so that works could be commissioned. A logical first step would be the commission of a new gate and sign for the cemetery.

## PHASING

1. Prepare understanding between Agencies; District, County, and City.
2. Plant flowering trees along existing roads within the cemetery.
3. Design and install columbarium and approaching pathway. (While columbarium work is underway, grade round pond at cemetery road.)
4. Plant the entire undeveloped eastern portion of the cemetery with native grasses. This may be done in phases. Turf planting and irrigations systems will be established as cemetery expands, trees are planted, and graves are installed.
5. Institute tree planting program for new east portion of the cemetery. This can be done all at once with a combination of seedlings, acorns, and 5-gallon trees. Where groves of trees are shown, plant trees on 10-20 ft. centers and plan to thin later. New trees will require the establishment of a drip irrigation system.
6. Build round pond, regrade slough, and establish wetland area. Create pad for nondenominational gathering shelter.
7. Begin tree and native hedgerow planting program along Pole Line Road.
8. Build ornamental iron fence along Pole Line Rd. and East Eighth St.
9. Create new network of gravel and/or permeable concrete paths. This can be done all at once or as the cemetery expands.
10. Design and build nondenominational gathering shelter.