

**CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS  
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
AGENDA**

Tuesday, August 5, 2014

Meeting held at the City of Saratoga Springs City Offices  
1307 North Commerce Drive, Suite 200, Saratoga Springs, Utah 84045

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**One or more Councilmember may participate in this meeting electronically via video or telephonic conferencing**

**City Council Work Session**

**6:30 p.m.**

1. Discussion of cemetery research.
2. Agenda Review:
  - a. Discussion of current City Council agenda staff questions.
  - b. Discussion of future City Council policy and work session agenda items.
3. Reports:
  - a. Mayor.
  - b. City Council.
  - c. Administration communication with Council.
4. Adjourn to Policy Session.

# City Council Staff Report

**Author:** Daniel Widenhouse, City Management Intern

**Subject:** Cemetery Recommendations

**Date:** July 17, 2014

**Type of Item:**



**Summary Recommendations:** The City Council should study potential locations for a cemetery. The City should also amend the city code to allow improved landscape areas for the purpose of cemetery.

## **Description:**

**A. Topic:** Considerations for a Cemetery

**B. Background:** Saratoga Springs is the only city in Utah County with more than ten thousand residents that doesn't have a city-owned cemetery. According to the Utah State Office of Vitality Statistics, the number of deaths occurring among the residents of Saratoga Springs is increasing. Some residents have personally expressed their interest in being buried within the city boundaries. Due to the increased interest from the local residents in a city-owned cemetery, the staff has begun the preliminary analysis.

**C. Analysis:** The location of the cemetery is among the most important decisions in planning a cemetery. There are many considerations in choosing a site:

- Permanence and future developments
- Effect on residential and commercial real estate values
- Water table levels
- Environmental effects of decay
- Public access and parking
- Expense

### *Permanence and Future Developments*

Due to the rapid development of Saratoga Springs, available land will continue to become scarcer. Additionally, it is expensive and time consuming to move vaults, coffins, and gravestones if a cemetery site is compromised or repurposed. I recommend that the City Council, Planning Commission, and the Planning department review potential locations in light of the Saratoga Springs Master Plan. Planned developments, new roads, and proposed recreational and residential areas will limit the number of areas a cemetery could go.

### *Effect on Residential and Commercial Real Estate Values*

Based on extensive research, the effect of a cemetery on the real estate values of adjoining properties depends on the people who are buying and selling the properties. In areas with large Asian populations, cemeteries are considered bad luck and are therefore undesirable. However,

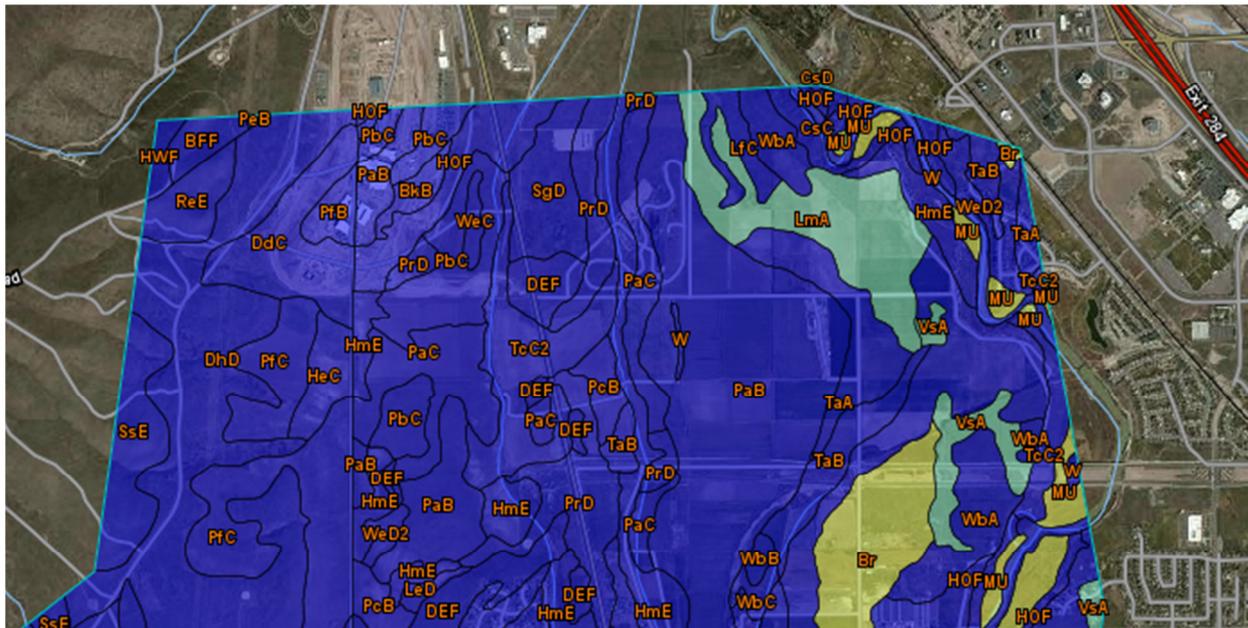
Redfin Real Estate conducted a study in 2013<sup>1</sup> that found that homes near cemeteries had a higher sales price but took longer to sell.

Due to the nature of the culture of the area and the culture of those that move to this area, it is unlikely that the cemetery will have any negative effect on real estate values.

### *Water Table Levels*

During the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, cemeteries across the effected states became afloat with the flood waters. The water table rose so much that vaults, coffins, and even headstones were moved from their resting places<sup>2</sup>. It is important to take this in to consideration when planning the location of a cemetery. Though Utah doesn't experience hurricanes like Mississippi or Louisiana, it can experience flash floods and high water tables. Accordingly, it is important to locate the cemetery out of potential flood plains or areas of frequent flash floods. Therefore, I recommend that the City locate the cemetery in an area with a lower water table level.

The following are maps of Saratoga Springs that show the water table levels. The darker areas are longer depths until the water table and the lighter areas are shorter depths until the water table.



Source: United States Department of Agriculture. "Web Soil Survey."  
<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx> (accessed May 28, 2014)

<sup>1</sup> Christin Camacho (2013). *I See Dead People: Do Homes Near Cemeteries Sell Well?* - Redfin Real Estate Blog. Retrieved from <http://blog.redfin.com/blog/2013/10/i-see-dead-people-do-homes-near-cemeteries-sell-well.html#.U3PtA4FdWSo>

<sup>2</sup> Koppel, Lily. "Coffins and Buried Remains Set Adrift by Hurricanes Create a Grisly Puzzle." *NY Times* [New York City] 25 Oct. 2005. Web. 19 May 2014.  
<[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/25/national/nationalspecial/25coffins.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/25/national/nationalspecial/25coffins.html?_r=0)>.





### *Environmental Effects of Decay*

The major concern regarding decay is its effect on water sources. The following can leave a decaying body and can enter the groundwater, rivers, or other bodies of water:

- Dangerous bacteria and viruses
- Formaldehyde and other dangerous chemicals
- Mercury

There are two proposed options for a remedy. The first option would be to create a “green” cemetery. The rules and regulations of this cemetery include bans on preservation chemicals—such as formaldehyde—and bans on decorations other than organic materials (e.g., live flowers, real trees, etc.). Graves would be dug without a vault and only coffins made of unpreserved wood would be allowed. An additional option for the “green” cemetery would be cremation.

The second option would be to require a vault in each gravesite. These seal the coffin and can keep any dangerous chemicals in the vault. The owners of the gravesite, not the City, would purchase the vault. In order to expand the pool of possible areas for the cemetery, I would recommend requiring a vault.

### *Public Access and Parking*

The traffic and usage of a cemetery will be intermittent. There will be times of increased usage during holidays such as Memorial Day or Veteran’s Day and on days when a funeral is held. Outside these times, usage will be limited. Due to this intermittent use, most cemeteries do not have large parking lots. Some cemetery sextons have recommended 5 – 10 parking stalls. I would recommend limiting the parking stalls to this amount. However, that number of parking stalls will not be sufficient for high traffic days.

In order to accommodate these high traffic days, it is important to plan for temporary parking. There are several options in order to accomplish this:

- Design the intra-cemetery roads to have a buffer zone between the road and the graves large enough to accommodate cars on both sides. In this way, patrons can park inside the cemetery.
- Choose a location with an access road that has parking on both sides of the street outside the cemetery.
- Choose a location near a large publicly-owned facility, such as a school, which has an existing parking lot.

I would recommend designing the intra-cemetery roads to have a buffer zone large enough for cars and other vehicles to park.

### *Expense*

Given the increase in land prices, the price tag for purchasing land for a cemetery could be expensive. If land sells for \$50,000 per acre, a 10 acre cemetery would cost \$500,000 plus initial building and landscaping costs (see attached spreadsheet).

There is an additional option for obtaining the land. Current city code requires that each development have a certain percentage of “open space” set apart (insert code number here). This green space is then donated to the city and is maintained by the Parks department. I recommend that the city code be changed to allow green space to be donated with the purpose of developing

a cemetery. In this way, developers can meet their requirement for green space, the City receives land at a low cost, and the residents can have a cemetery.

### **Additional Information**

Attached to this document is a spreadsheet that contains estimates for the upfront costs, recurring costs, and fees associated with a building and maintaining a cemetery.

### **Summary**

I have made the following recommendations in this report:

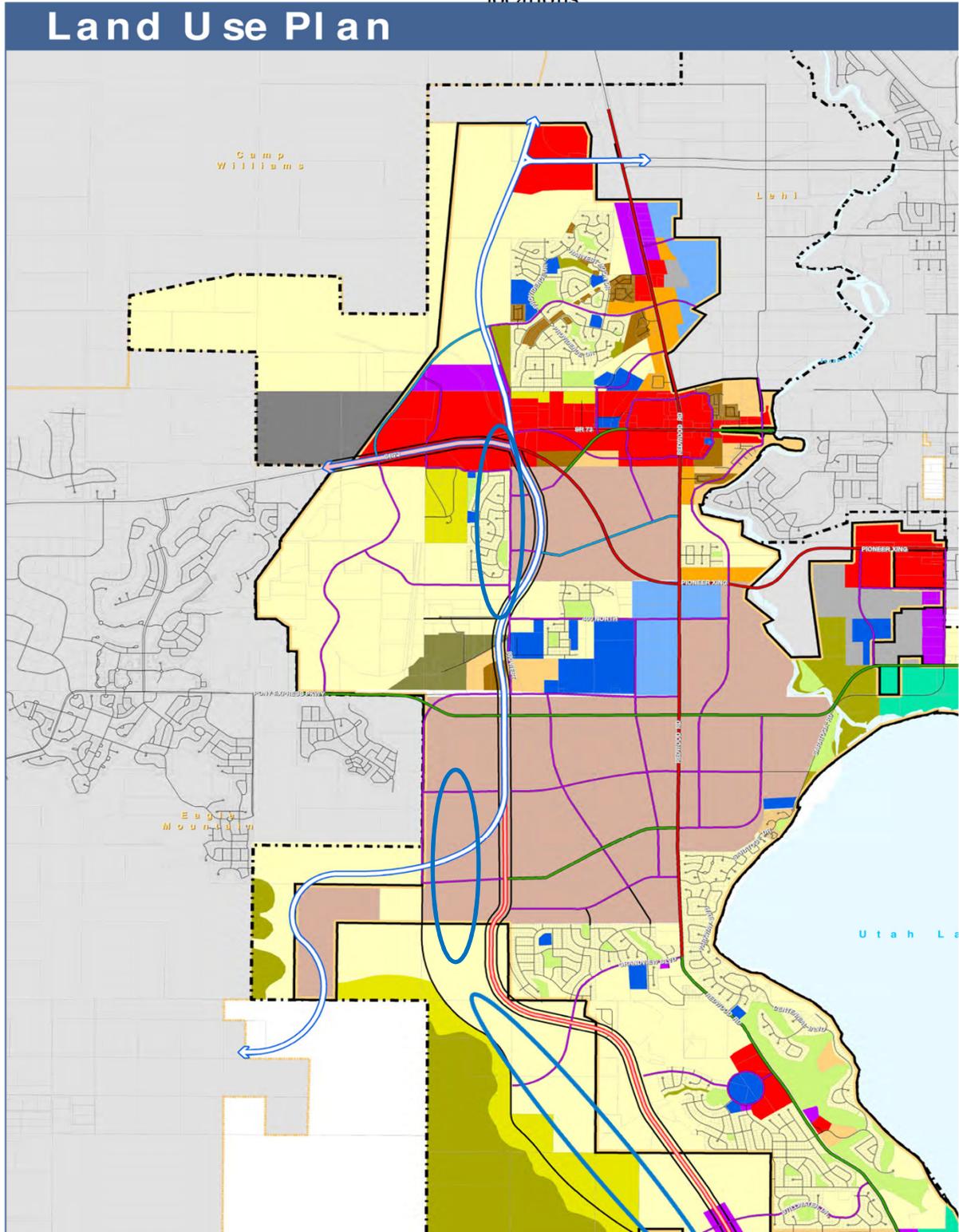
- The City Council, Planning Commission, and the Planning department should review potential sites in light and referring to the Saratoga Springs Master Plan and plan for permanence.
- The City should locate the cemetery in an area with low water table levels and outside flood plains or potential flood areas.
- The cemetery should require all gravesites to have a vault in order to reduce pollution of the water table.
- The cemetery should plan 5 – 10 parking stalls and design a buffer around all intra-cemetery roads to accommodate parking during high usage times.
- The city code should be amended to allow developers to donate green space for the purpose of a cemetery in order to satisfy their open space requirements.

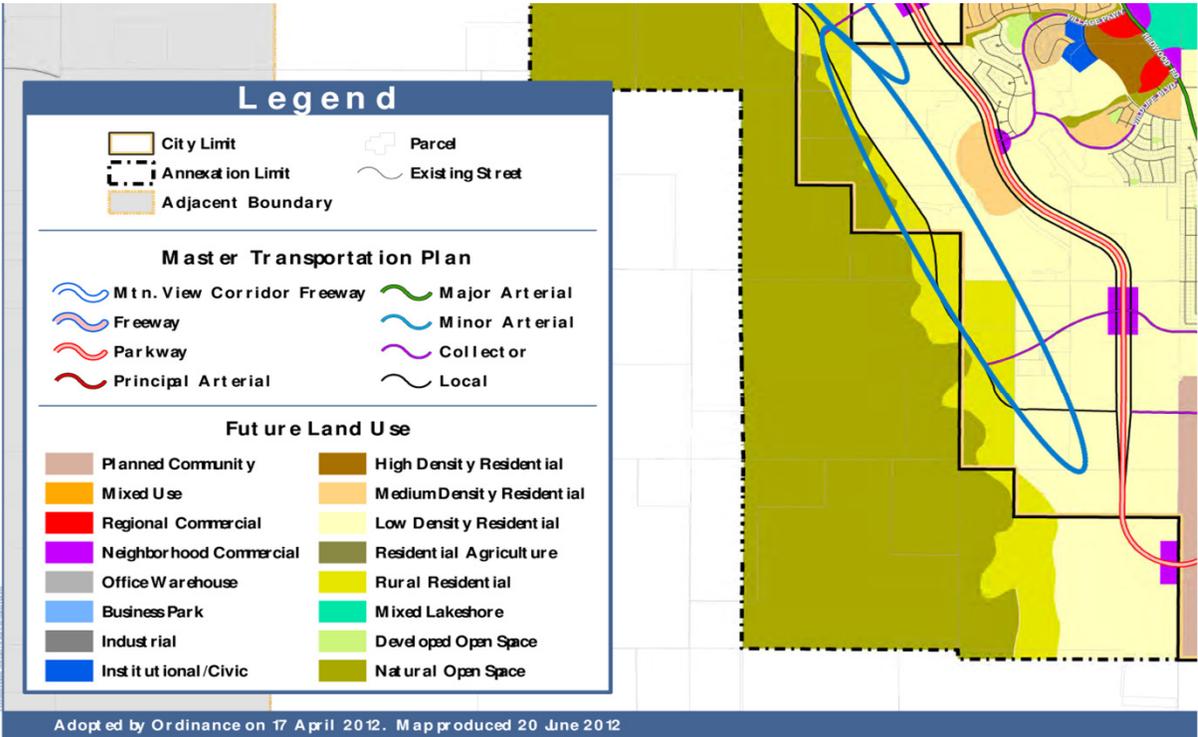
Thank you.

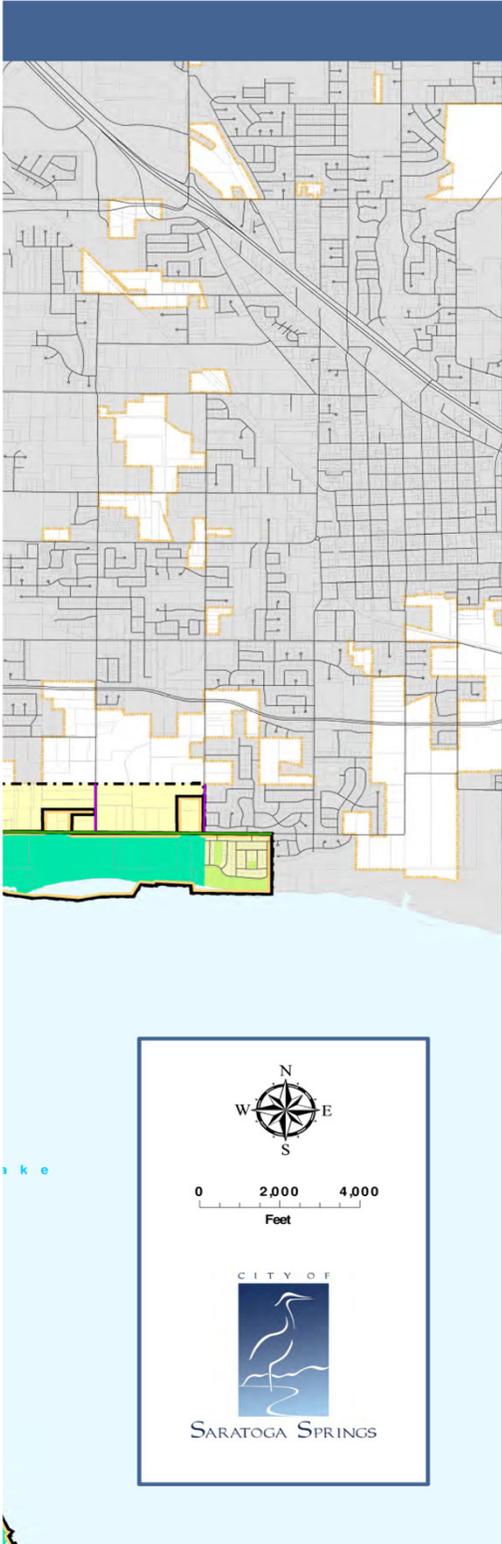
# SARATOGA SPRINGS CEMETERY

Total Cemetery Acreage 10

Possible Locations **\*\*Blue circles contain possible locations\*\***







<b>The following are suggested rules:</b>
Each grave is required to have a concrete vault
Plot markers must be used to mark the plots
Plots must be 16' by 16.5'. The extra .5 is for sprinkler lines
The headstone must not exceed a base area of 2'4'
Have a set day each week to mow and remove flowers
Do not remove flowers or decorations for two weeks after Memorial Day

<b>Total</b>
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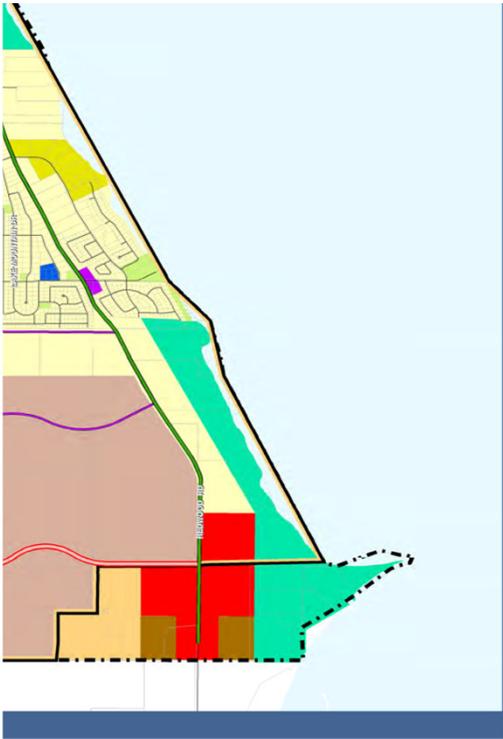
10 acres

70% area

80% area

90% area

- 2014**
- 2015**
- 2016**
- 2017**
- 2018**
- 2019**
- 2020**
- 2021**
- 2022**
- 2023**
- 2024**
- 2025**
- 2026**
- 2027**
- 2028**
- 2029**
- 2030**
- 2031**
- 2032**
- 2033**
- 2034**
- 2035**
- 2036**
- 2037**
- 2038**



70% area	2039
	2040
	2041
	2042
80% area	2043
	2044
	2045
90% area	2046

## al Space and Occupancy

435600 sq. ft 16' x 16.5' for 8 vaults

1155 graves

1320 graves

1485 graves

<b>Constant rate (45 deaths per year)</b>	<b>Increasing rate (+5 deaths per year)</b>
45	45
90	95
135	150
180	210
225	275
270	345
315	420
360	500
405	585
450	675
495	770
540	870
585	975
630	1085 70% area
675	1200
720	1320 80% area
765	1445 90% area
810	
855	
900	
945	
990	
1035	
1080	
1125	

1170

1215

1260

1305

1350

1395

1440

1485