

www.news8austin.com

Group works to preserve Austin's oldest residents

Updated: 11/1/2007 12:02:32 PM

By: Reagan Hackleman



For most people a cemetery is not a place they visit on a regular basis, but that's not true for everyone.

"People don't realize there's a lot of people interested in cemeteries. A lot of people," David Coleman with the [Austin Parks and Recreation Department](#) said.

Here in Austin, a lot of those people choose to visit the five cemeteries owned and operated by the city. It's up to Austin's Parks and Recreation Department to maintain those cemeteries.

"I think they are in fairly decent condition. If we had more money, obviously we could probably do more," Coleman said.

While the city is able to do most of the maintenance such as the landscaping, one thing they cannot maintain are the tombstones and the memorials because they're private property. Old tombstones from as far back as the 1800s lay in disrepair because the city can't track down the family members to take care of them.

"The City does care about the cemeteries but they can't use public money to fix private things like this," Dale Flatt of the group [Save Austin's Cemeteries](#) said.

Flatt's group is trying to raise money to help restore some of the badly damaged memorials and tombstones at the city-owned cemeteries. They are applying for grants and trying to find a way to restore memorials and tombs in the worst condition.

"This is the only part of Austin that hasn't changed since the early 1800's. It's the Zilkers and the Scarbaroughs and the Kreisles. Austin's founding families are here and they tell a story of sorts," Flatt said.