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City failed to maintain trees at East Austin cemetery

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By: Reagan Hackleman

The only water visible at Oakwood Cemetery in East Austin is a slow drip coming from a faucet near some headstones.

Some trees in the East Austin cemetery are more than 100 years old, and many look as though they haven't seen water in weeks.

According to one organization, more than 60 trees are dead because the City of Austin has failed to quench their thirsty roots.



According to one local organization, more than 60 trees are dead.

Through an open records request, [Save Austin's Cemeteries](#) said the city has spent less than \$1,000 during a 23-month period watering the grounds of the Oakwood Cemetery in East Austin.

Compare that to close nearly \$60,000 the city's spent in two years at another city-owned cemetery in central Austin.

"If they need to hire somebody at night to water then let's come out at night and water," Dale Flatt, with Save Austin's Cemeteries, said. "If you wait too much longer then we're going to lose a bunch more trees and it might be too late for them already."

According to Save Austin's Cemeteries, more than 60 of the cemetery's more than 1,000 trees are dead and need to be removed.

"The lack of care, I think would probably disturb a lot of folks," Flatt said. "For us to lose over 60 trees in a two-year period because of a lack of watering is negligence."

The city said they hired an outside company to maintain the cemetery, and have asked them to look into the problem. The city contracts out the maintenance work at all of its cemeteries.



"It's very important to us and we're trying to look at the different issues out there," David Coleman, with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department, said. "Once we get that information, we're going to review it, and go to our contractor and see if there is some deficiency."

Flatt is convinced there is a huge deficiency and if something isn't done about it soon, "we're going to lose all of the trees and have a bunch of stumps left."

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