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Several trees cut down at Austin's oldest cemetery

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By: Jenna Hiller

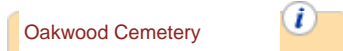
From Zilker to Bergstrom, Barton to Bartholomew, the grave stones at Oakwood Cemetery read like a who's who of historic Austin.

"A lot of the major streets, parks, monuments around Austin are named after people who are buried in this cemetery, so this is a really important, significant part of our culture in Austin," City of Austin forester, Walter Passmore, said.



Several trees were cut down at the cemetery Monday.

Several trees, many of which probably lived through some of those historical moments, got the axe at the cemetery Monday.



Oakwood Cemetery

The City keeps [a database of those buried](#) at Oakwood. The names included were extracted from centuries old ledgers preserved in the archives at the Austin History Center.

Dale Flatt of Save Austin's Cemeteries said that's proof it's not getting treated like the historic place that it is, and he thinks it's because all of the plots were sold almost a century ago.

"It's like a subdivision, when they sell the last house the developer moves out and then the subdivision goes downhill," Flatt said.

Both Flatt and Passmore said cemetery use can compromise trees.

"It's a balancing act, and a lot of times the tree is going to be on the losing end of that balancing act," Passmore said.

They both said the solution lies in a master plan which would specify where graves could be added.

"If there's a huge tree and a descendent from somebody from 100 years ago decides they want to use a grave space, right now they just dig a grave, cut through roots, do whatever it takes to meet that family's needs," Flatt said.

Flatt doesn't believe new graves are the only problem. He said the cemetery's trees are not getting enough water.

"When we know we have a drought and we don't supplement the water, we see things like this happen," Flatt said.



Passmore said for now, it's just important to remove the dead trees before they cause more damage.

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