



City of Austin running out of places to bury dead

by STEVE ALBERTS / KVUE News

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Oakwood Cemetery at 16th Street and Navasota in East Austin is the city's oldest public burial ground.

"It was established in 1839," said Dale Flatt of Save Austin's Cemeteries. "The same year the city was established."

It's an outdoor museum rich in history -- a place where Civil War generals, city leaders, freed slaves and countless others have been laid to rest.

"The first recorded burial was that of a young black boy who was robbed," said Flatt. "The oldest existing monument we have in the cemetery dates back to 1842. These two gentlemen were killed by Indians in what is now Zilker Park while hunting bear."

Dale Flatt has spent a lot of time at Oakwood researching histories. He wants to help preserve the memory and architecture of Austin's cemeteries. There are five cemeteries in Austin dating back more than 150 years and only two still have plots for sale -- Austin Memorial Park located near Mopac and 2222 and Evergreen at the corner of 12th and Airport.

Thursday, the Austin City Council approved \$24,000 for a study with Texas State University San Marcos to put together a complete analysis and plan for the city.

"We want to make sure we're running the cemetery system in a very efficient manner," said Cora Wright, Assistant Parks and Rec Director. "We want to make sure we are meeting the demands of our community and making sure we keep up with best practices for cemetery management."

Flatt is optimistic and says he supports the study.

“People will be looking at the problem with fresh eyes,” he said. “They will be projecting into the future so when we run out of spots for sale and when cemeteries are sold out what kind of level of care we can continue on with.”

The study will take about six months and the results and recommendations will be presented to the city council.

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