

[Home](#)[News](#)

San Jose City Council takes up Heritage Oaks Cemetery on Dec. 9

By Carol Rosen, Correspondent

POSTED: 11/26/14, 6:14 PM PST

0 COMMENTS

Some 102 acres near the Cinnabar Hills Golf Club will become a final resting place if the San Jose City Council approves development of the Heritage Oaks Cemetery at its Dec. 9 meeting. The cemetery would be located off of McKean Road just south of Almaden Valley and near Coyote Valley.

The proposal was approved by the San Jose Planning Commission on Nov. 19.

The new non-sectarian cemetery would contain a 102 acres for burials, leaving the surrounding 173 acres as permanent open space. Concerns raised at the planning meeting focused on the effect of grading the site and also on the loss of mature trees.

Approximately 120 trees within the cemetery proper would be lost, but Brandenburg Properties, the developer, plans to replace those with 600 mature trees. At the same time the company plans to gather and plant acorns to create at least 2,000 saplings that will be planted throughout the 275-acre property.

Those acorns with their genetic connection to the land will produce stronger trees, said Bill Baron, a partner in Brandenburg Properties. The company used the same acorn-growing plan when it built Cinnabar Hills Golf Club.

The planning staff and commission approved the environmental impact report, which incorporated community input.

Matt Kamkar, commission chair, said the concerns presented didn't sway him enough to vote against the project. "The applicant and the model presented were good examples for the environment."

He said there were other concerns about the new cemetery besides the tree removals. "The use of acorns to develop saplings that in 200 years will be huge oak trees solved that problem," he said.

Another concern was the potential use of fences, which the proposal doesn't require. However, if in the future, the city does require fencing, the project managers will only use wildlife-friendly fences with no spikes or metal thorns to impair or snare wild animals, Kamkar said.

Kamkar's questions regarding public comments about the size of grading were sufficiently answered, he said, when the developer noted that maximum hillside grading would be minimized to a maximum slope of 15 percent. "They plan to cut and fill responsibly, Kamkar said.

One speaker asked why San Jose doesn't removed the dead from graves after 100 years as they do in Germany. Kamkar told her the developer has no power to change laws regarding burials.

The project initially was proposed in 2004. At that time it was 164 acres with more tree, grading and visual impacts, said Baron. "We entirely retooled the project into a more compact and less impactful project--minimizing grading, minimizing tree removed and minimizing visual and other environmental impacts in October 2013."

Baron, who's been with Brandenburg for 31 years, praised the developer as committed to bettering San Jose's quality of life on a variety of levels. The cemetery, which is not committed to a single religion, will respect the diverse burial practices and traditions of all of the city's population, he said.

"This site is peaceful, remote, and cemetery land use has been contemplated in the past three San Jose general plans including Envision 2040. It's not in the middle of urban or neighborhood settings and is above areas containing high groundwater, generally out of sight and mind but remaining close and easily accessible to family and friends," Baron said.

Heritage Oaks would be the fourth cemetery in San Jose and the first to be built in the city in 125 years. The other three are 96 percent full. Oak Hill opened in 1800, Calvary in the mid-1800s and Los Gatos Memorial Park in 1887, according to Baron.