

## **Barstow Cemetery District Landscape Conversion Project Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

### **Who owns / operates the Mountain View Cemetery?**

The Barstow Cemetery District (dba Mountain View Memorial Park) is a self-governed special district with trustees appointed by the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors. It is not owned by any one person, corporation or entity, and is a government organization. The cemetery was established in 1947 by local funeral directors Paul and Peggy O'Donnell. Two cemeteries from within the City of Barstow were relocated and the decedents were among the first to be interred here. The O'Donnell's donated the cemetery to the community at which time it became a self-governed special district that operates under the direction of a five-member Board that is appointed by the County of San Bernardino's Board of Supervisors. In addition to the sale of grave sites, funding is received from a rather small portion of property taxes paid to the County of San Bernadino within the Cemetery District's boundaries. The District area encompasses North to Ft Irwin, west to the Kern County line, east to the Marine Base and South to Hodge.

### **Why remove the grass and convert the Cemetery to drought tolerant landscaping?**

Here in Southern California, water continues to become more scarce and more expensive. As water rates have continued to climb and water allocations have been reduced, the Cemetery Board has been forced to reduce the amount of water used at the Cemetery. (Last summer the water bill approached \$20,000 per month.) Before making this decision, a considerable amount of time was spent exploring other possible options to obtain sufficient water for existing grass and trees such as drilling new wells, purchasing water rights, obtaining and using non-potable water for irrigation purposes and diverting water from the city sewer plant. None of these options were feasible.

### **How much will it cost and who will pay for it?**

Although there is no grant money available to pay on-going water bills, the State of California has set aside money to help communities remove turf which consumes large amounts of water and convert to drought tolerant landscaping. Depending on the final design, this project is estimated to cost between \$750,000 to 1 million dollars and will be paid for using grant funding. The Cemetery District is also pursuing donations of materials (plants, gravel, irrigation equipment, etc.) from businesses to help reduce the cost. The District has already received a \$375,000 Cash-For-Grass grant through the Mojave Water Agency. This money can only be used for removing the grass and switching to drought tolerant landscaping. Barstow Cemetery District will also be applying for additional funding through a Proposition 1 grant to further the project.

### **Who is creating the design?**

Jaime Yamashita is a licensed landscape architect who has experience designing drought tolerant landscapes. She created the landscape designs at Barstow City Hall as well as in the Rimrock Road median. She also has knowledge of cemetery landscaping and brings extensive knowledge to this project. Link to design renderings:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/fsz8odwd9ew98pm/Mountain%20View%20Board.pdf?dl=0>

**What is the timeline for the conversion?**

The Cemetery District has received grant funding to remove the first eight acres of turf which includes the back (eastern) portion of the cemetery from the office on back. The water has already been turned off to this portion and is expected to be removed in October. Several trees in this area are already dead and will also be taken out at this time. Many of the Mulberry trees in this area are 40 to 60 years old. They have roots close to the surface and will die over time once the grass is no longer watered. In the future, these trees will be replaced with desert trees and watered with a deep root system. During the winter months, the new irrigation system will be installed along with gravel (crusher fines) and extruded concrete curbing. Once the weather begins to warm up in early spring, the new vegetation will be planted. The second phase of the project will include improving the entry way and four acres at the front (westside) of the cemetery. This portion will be done when funding becomes available, hopefully in early 2022. It is expected that all turf will be removed and replaced by 2023. The Mulberry trees will be removed and replaced over a longer period time, perhaps up to five years.

**What can be done to ensure that this project will be maintained?**

As part of the design process, a water budget will be created that will determine the amount of water that will be needed to maintain the new landscaping. With this information, costs for water and ongoing maintenance can be accurately estimated. The Board is committed to using this information as part of its annual budgeting process to ensure adequate funding for water, maintenance, and staffing. The Trustees of the Barstow Cemetery District have recently passed a resolution directing all funds and grants received for this project to be placed in a specific landscaping account with the County for this landscaping renovation and no other use.

**How can the public give input?**

The Board encourages the public to participate in the design of the new landscaping. So far, the public has asked to consider adding shade structures, reclaimed water feature(s), a walking trail and better access for handicapped. These and other ecologically sound concepts along with restful and serene concepts are among ideas the Board is considering and looking at. Link to comments that have been received:

<https://mountainviewmemorial.specialdistrict.org/files/62ab8508c/Special+Meeting+Minutes+8-7-2021.pdf>