

January 4, 2024

Salem Cemetery Commission
City of Salem Department of Public Services,
Cemetery Division
Martha Lyons, Landscape Architect, LLC

Re: Thoughts on "West Chapel Slope Project"

Thank you for welcoming public comments on the above referenced proposal. Greenlawn Cemetery is one of Salem's true treasures, serving as Salem's sole active public interment site, while simultaneously fulfilling an important role as a municipal park in the Rural Cemetery Movement, and finally, as the recognized arboretum envisioned by Harlen Kelsey and Sargent. While Salem hasn't always been as truly dedicated to maximizing this asset, the commissioning of the original Master Plan and this current proposal provides an opportunity for Salem to ensure Greenlawn's future preservation for all its purposes.

The proposal's Sections on Purpose, One Wish, and, Landscape Recommendations (including 'Future Expansion'), provide clear guidance for Salem's decision-makers in considering future development at Greenlawn, and, while I further believe that beginning that future development on the West Chapel Slope is the correct next step for all of the reasons set forth in the proposal, I recognize that each of the proposed 14 sites identified in the project will enhance Greenlawn's ability to fulfill its multiple purposes.

I would only emphasize that the ability to adequately staff the Cemetery Division will be critical to achieving the goals of the City regarding Greenlawn. One further point that I believe should be emphasized is that combating the invasive plants that have made, and will continue to make, Greenlawn home, will also be essential to its proper preservation as an arboretum.

Regarding each of the specific concepts: 1A, 1B, 2A and 2B: I support:

1. Replacing the road that crosses in front of the Chapel with a walkway as shown in Concept 2B with the proviso that access to the front entrance of the chapel can be secured for caskets.
2. Removing the streets as shown on the future expansion plan (including around the fountain pond) and replace with grassed paths/walkways. This will reduce the ongoing maintenance cost.
3. Maximizing the views to and from the Chapel.
4. Emphasizing the privacy and contemplative features within the columbaria, which I believe the separate pathways shown in 2A and 2B do this best (IMHO)
5. Maximizing the opportunity to remove trees that are either failing or in very poor condition and replacing them with trees that enhance the arboretum status of Greenlawn. I believe that in regard to this particular aspect of Greenlawn's future, the work currently being conducted by the collaboration of the City, Salem State University and the Friends of Greenlawn Cemetery will be essential to developing a policy that guarantees a thoughtful process for selecting appropriate specimens to be planted in the future.

Many questions will remain regarding the phasing, appropriate pricing of interments, etc., and I hope that the involvement of the larger Salem community is encouraged and promoted as a priority of Greenlawn's future development. While I believe Concept 2B best incorporates the several goals for Greenlawn's future development, I am eager to hear what others' think.

Thank you to Martha Lyons and her team for their visionary study and Master Plan for Greenlawn Cemetery.

Sincerely,

Richard Stafford
30 Boardman Street