

# Riverside Memorial Cemetery Master Plan Update

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**Prepared For:** Town of Cape Elizabeth, Maine and  
Riverside Cemetery Board of Trustees



# Master Plan Update Riverside Memorial Cemetery

Cape Elizabeth, Maine  
2011

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### 2011 Master Plan Update Committee:

Ms. Debra Lane, Assistant Town Manager  
Ms. Jessie Timberlake, Riverside Memorial Cemetery Trustee, Chair  
Mr. Gerald Sherry, Riverside Memorial Cemetery Trustee, Chair  
Ms. Beverly Brooking, Riverside Memorial Trustee  
Mr. Frank Governali, Town Council Representative  
Mr. David Jones, Riverside Memorial Cemetery  
Mr. Stephen Mohr, Mohr & Seredin  
Ms. Tanya Seredin, Mohr & Seredin

# **Executive Summary**

## **Introduction**

The Trustees of the Riverside Memorial Cemetery have been working with the 1993 Cemetery Master Plan for the past eighteen years and have used that plan to guide the construction of the cemetery infrastructure and layout of the burial plots. At this time the roads and utilities have been constructed, many of the plots have been located or sold, and only the final phase of plots needs to be laid out. Over the past decade the Trustees have noted that there are improvements that need to be made to make the remaining cemetery sections more attractive, and the Trustees would like to revisit the addition of cremation niche walls as a way to increase the plot count and interment options at the cemetery.

The Riverside Memorial Cemetery Trustees determined that the best approach to addressing these issues would be to update the 1993 Cemetery Master Plan, and they selected Mohr & Seredin to prepare the plan update. The Trustees created a Master Plan Update Committee (the Committee) to guide the process and advise Mohr & Seredin, and this report was prepared to accompany, and explain, the updated plans for the cemetery.

The goal of the current work is to assess the existing conditions and evaluate the issues identified by the Trustees. Based upon this information the Committee can determine the preferred approach to be taken and the specific improvements to be implemented. The Master Plan Update will depict and illustrate the planned improvements, identify typical conceptual construction details and a proposed construction cost budget for the plan implementation, evaluate lot sale issues, and estimate the remaining active life of the cemetery.

## **Master Plan Update Process**

The Plan Update Committee met with Mohr & Seredin to review the Trustees' concerns and the key issues, and walked the cemetery grounds with Mohr & Seredin. Mohr & Seredin returned to Riverside Cemetery to review the existing cemetery conditions, assess conditions in the buffer between the marsh and the cemetery, and review the issues identified by the Committee.

Mohr & Seredin prepared initial assessment plans and options for the treatment of the areas of concern identified by the Committee. These were reviewed with the Committee and direction established for each area of concern, as well as how best to treat the issue of expansion of the cemetery for additional plots and niches.

Based upon the input and guidance from the Committee, Mohr & Seredin prepared this report and supporting graphics.

## **Existing Conditions and Background**

The Riverside Memorial Cemetery began as an early 19<sup>th</sup> century burial ground that was associated with Spurwink Meeting House. Over the centuries it has physically expanded to the north and west to encompass the remaining developable area between the Spurwink Marsh and Route 77. In 1952 the initial build-out plan for the cemetery was prepared by Myron Lamb, RLA, to guide the expansion of the cemetery. In 1982, additional expansion was planned by the Trustees, and implemented over the next decade.

In 1992 the Trustees of the Riverside Cemetery hired Mohr & Seredin to prepare the 1993 Cemetery Master Plan. That plan was adopted, and from 1993 through 1998 the cemetery driveways, waterlines, and maintenance building were installed. The first four phases of the plots have been laid out in the field, and burials have been taking place in these plots. Other parts of the 1993 Master Plan have not yet been implemented: the cremation niche walls associated with the flag circle, the extension of the stone wall along Route 77, and the plantings, of which roughly fifty percent have been installed.

To date, the recent cemetery expansion has been viewed by the Trustees and community as successful. However, the Trustees believe there are some areas where improvements need to be made in order to complete the cemetery build-out and sell the remaining burial plots. One key condition is that there are no plots left which have a view of the marsh, which is the dominant natural feature that helps to create the character of the cemetery.

## **Existing issues which require attention**

The Trustees, working with Mohr & Seredin, have identified the following issues at the cemetery which they want the Master Plan Update to address.

1. Plots adjacent to the Maintenance Shed: Experience with purchasers has shown that it is difficult to sell plots adjacent to the Maintenance Shed due to proximity to the work yard and building. The plan update should explore ways to make the plots in this area of the cemetery more attractive for purchase through plantings, fencing, etc.
2. Exposure to Route 77: The openness to road traffic and lack of enclosure were noted by the Trustees along the north end of the cemetery adjacent to Route 77. This issue has affected the desirability of the plots in this part of the cemetery. This northern area is the only section of the cemetery that does not have a stone wall at the edge of the cemetery between the cemetery and the road.
3. Existing Soils Stockpile: The soils stockpile at the lower edge of the cemetery elicits a large number of complaints from visitors to the cemetery. Presently it is located on the northern edge of the cemetery between the cemetery and the marsh, and has been growing to the point where it has been endangering the adjacent vegetation. A solution needs to be found which will allow for a smaller soils stockpile which can

be used or removed more frequently, and which is located in a less visible area within the cemetery grounds.

4. Flag Circle: The flagpole area is an open lawn circle with a flagpole in the center, and this area appears stark and unfinished. This feature is located on axis with the main entrance to the cemetery from Route 77. In this location it can become an inviting entrance and a focal point, as well as a location for additional interment spaces.
5. Open, flat plot areas: Based upon feedback from cemetery visitors and from the Trustees, there is a lack of plantings in the plot areas between Dogwood Lane and Sycamore Lane. This corresponds directly with the desirability of plots for potential purchasers. The plan update should provide for additional trees in this area, but the planting should be designed in a way so the tree roots do not interfere with the burial plots.
6. Invasive species on the grounds and marsh visibility: A large amount of invasive plant materials have been identified in the wooded area between the burial areas and the marsh, including honeysuckle and bittersweet. This decreases the visibility of the marsh from the cemetery and creates an unhealthy habitat for native species. In the period of time between the 1993 Master Plan and today, the woods have gone from an open forest with a moderate density of canopy trees and groundcover to being filled with a thicket of invasive, non-native plant materials with a dense canopy so as to make the woods nearly impenetrable.
7. Additional interment space: The Cemetery Trustees would like to explore the addition of niche walls to the cemetery. This would help to increase the plot count, offer interment options, and extend the time frame for burials in the cemetery. In addition, the Committee feels that the Master Plan Update should examine options for plot layout for the remaining cemetery section (Phase V) and explore any other areas suitable for use for burial plots.
8. The Trustees also identified other items for review, but with lesser importance for the plan update. These include:
  - a. Mohr & Seredin is to look at the number of plots remaining in the cemetery, annual lots sales, and the number of remaining years for burials anticipated for the cemetery
  - b. Mohr & Seredin is to assess the undeveloped 250' Shoreland Zone buffer between the cemetery and the Spurwink Marsh to determine opportunities and issues for the cemetery's potential use of this area.

## Master Plan Update Recommendations

In response to the issues identified by the Plan Update Committee and from the sitewalk, existing conditions review and the Mohr & Seredin analysis, the following improvements are proposed, and are shown on the plans:

- A. Buffer between burial plots and the Maintenance Building: To develop an effective and interesting visual buffer without creating a hard wall, the Master Plan Update recommends a buffer treatment that includes several layers of screening between the plot areas and the maintenance building. These layers include a 6' high wood fence which is not continuous and is not solid, shrubs, evergreens and deciduous trees.

Recommended plants include: red oak, white and red spruce, viburnum, witchhazel, shadbush, and bayberry.

Refer to the detail plans for a sketch of the fence.

- B. Buffer between Route 77 and cemetery: To create a consistent edge between the cemetery and Route 77, and to help create a better sense of separation from the busy road, a mixed density, multiple-layer buffer is proposed between the burial plots and the road. The layers include extending the stone wall for the full length of the cemetery and planting several groupings of trees on both sides of the wall. The plantings should include overstory trees, understory trees, and large shrubs. The plants should be able to withstand road/salt conditions as well as dry soil conditions.

Recommended plants include: red oak, white ash, tree lilac, bayberry, viburnum (some varieties) and lilac.

- C. Additional tree plantings in the open areas of the cemetery: Mohr & Seredin is proposing new groupings of deciduous shade trees in the sections of the cemetery devoid of plantings, with care taken to place the trees between the already laid-out plot areas wherever possible. Approximately 12 unsold plots are proposed to be removed to accommodate the new trees. An in-ground root barrier is proposed to be installed between the trees and the plots to allow the trees to be planted closer to the burial areas without impacting the plots. In order to fit more trees into the cemetery without risking the tree roots interfering with the burials, a tree root barrier such as DeepRoot is recommended. DeepRoot makes several sizes of a root barrier which would be adequate for use in the cemetery. (Product information is attached)

Refer to the detail plan showing the root barrier detail.

- D. Plot Layout for Phase Five Area: A proposed plot layout is shown in the remaining section of the cemetery on the outermost western edge adjacent to the woods (referred to as Phase Five from the original Master Plan). This is laid out using a pattern similar to the previous burial section layout. This phase will add 243 full size plots, and 24 cremation plots to the cemetery, as proposed. If there is the demand, the northwest corner of this area could be utilized for niche walls, which would

increase the capacity of the cemetery by 300 to 400 interments. Fill from the previous excavation of burials has been stockpiled adjacent to this northwest corner, and can be used to raise the grade in the lower plot areas as shown on the plan update.

- E. Flag Circle: The new layout, which includes cremation walls in the flag circle area, is shown on the proposed plan for the flag circle. Six walls with 40 niches per wall are shown. The walls can be constructed at the same time, or as demand requires. The center of the island is proposed to have shrub and tree planting, and there are benches shown between the walls. The front edge of the flag circle, which is the focus of the cemetery entrance from Route 77, is proposed to include a band of low-maintenance flowering plants, such as daylilies. The driveway edges are shown with a granite curb for improved definition and appearance, and accessibility ramps are shown as needed for disabled access. The driveway width will be wide enough for a car to park with other vehicles able to pass (minimum 16 to 18 feet wide).

Cremation Wall Niche Sizes: The cremation niche sizes are shown on the detail as 12" x 12" x 12" deep. This size can accommodate up to 3 urns. If there is a desire for family niches that can contain more urns, one or more of the walls can contain deeper niches that can hold more urns. (12" x 12" x 16" deep can hold 5 urns, 12" x 12" x 24" can hold 8 urns). These sizes are based upon research of other cemeteries and discussion with national columbarium wall suppliers. (Niche size information is attached)

- F. Control of Invasive Plant Materials and Views to the Marsh: As noted above, invasive plant materials including honeysuckle, bittersweet and barberry are well established in the woods, especially along the woods edge of the cemetery. This is an issue not only for the cemetery, but for the entire town. A removal program should be designed and implemented to keep the invasive plant materials under control so they don't destroy the existing, native plant materials. This will not only be environmentally responsible, it will also bring back some of the scenic qualities of the cemetery, and will enhance sales of the cemetery lots. Mohr & Seredin recommends removal of the invasive plants and their roots, by hand. If acceptable the invasive plants can be cut back and an herbicide applied topically to the exposed stalks. The existing canopy trees should be trimmed and thinned as needed for vigor and to restore views to the marsh.

## **Phasing and Implementation**

The work set forth in the Master Plan Update are separated into a number of projects which can be implemented as the needs arise, and as the funds are available:

### Project A: Removal of Soil Stockpile

Remove excess soil and dead/dying trees. Spread loam in low areas where needed at Projects B, C, and I as described below, and seed with grass mixture.

Construction Budget: \$2,800

### Project B: Northeast Plot Layout

Layout plot areas for sales: 100 full size plots.  
Install tree root barrier, and install approximately 10 trees

Construction Budget: \$4,300

### Project C: Northwest Plot Layout

Layout plot areas for sales: 54 full size plots and 8 cremation plots.  
Install tree root barrier and plant 1 tree

Construction Budget: \$3,700

### Project D: Tree Plantings in Open area

Install tree root barrier and plant approximately 21 trees. This will require the removal of the following lots: NY 24, 25, NY 14,15, NW 30, 31, NX 49, OD 11, 12, 13

Construction Budget: \$9,400

### Project E: Buffer Planting at Maintenance Shed

Install 6' high wooden fence, approximately 120 LF. Install plantings of approximately 6 evergreen trees, 3 deciduous trees, and 24 shrubs.

Construction Budget: \$11,800

### Project F: Flag Circle Development

Install granite curbing on both sides of Lilac Lane, including wheelchair ramps for access onto lawn areas. Construct cremation niche garden, including walls, benches and plantings. Wall construction may be phased by completing all earthwork including installation of all foundations, and constructing walls as needed.

Construction Budget: \$140,000 - \$165,000

### Project G: Buffer Installation along Route 77

Extend stone wall the remaining length of the cemetery, approximately 350 LF.  
Install tree root barrier to protect burial areas from tree roots, and install plantings: approximately 21 large trees, 8 small trees, and 40 shrubs.

Construction Budget: \$42,400



Project H: Control of Invasive Plant Materials

Develop a plan to remove invasive plant materials on a regular basis

Construction Budget: \$5,500 - \$6,800

Project I: Northern Corner Development

There are two options for the development of this area for burials. The first option is to lay it out entirely for in-ground full body burials. This will provide for an additional 62 spaces. If there is a need for additional burial space in the cemetery, this area could be developed as a niche garden with cremation walls. This would provide approximately 200 to 260 niches.

Construction Budget: \$8,500 - \$72,000

## **Cemetery Capacity: Lot Sales and Long Range Planning**

Currently there are approximately 368 full size unsold burial plots, and 123 unsold cremation plots. If the Master Plan Update is implemented as shown, with all in-ground burials laid out on the outside of Sycamore drive (the Phase 5 area), there will be an additional 243 full size plots, 24 cremation burial plots, and 240 cremation niches. The total number of spaces available will be approximately 998.

Lot sales have been fairly steady over the last 3 decades at 611 to 646 lots per decade. Burials have increased from 245 in the 1980s, 337 in the 1990s to 425 in the 2000s. If the lot sales rate remains constant at approximately 63 lots per year, all of the lots in the cemetery will be sold by 2025.

If the Town of Cape Elizabeth wishes to continue to provide burial space for its residents, planning for a new municipal cemetery should begin by 2015. This will allow for approximately three to five years for long-range budgeting, site selection and acquisition. Over the next three years, a master plan can be developed and construction can be undertaken. The goal should be for burials to begin at the new cemetery as the last remaining lots are sold at Riverside, estimated to be in 2022 to 2024.

## **Lot Pricing**

The current lot prices at Riverside Memorial Cemetery, as established in 1998, are \$650 for a full size lot, and \$300 for a cremation lot. Interment prices are \$600 for the full size burial, and \$425 for cremation. Neighboring municipalities charge from \$200 to \$890 for full size lots and \$100 to \$500 for cremation lots. They interment costs range from \$400 to \$1,100 for full size burials, and \$110 to \$700 for cremation burials.

In reviewing the lot price history, there have been price increases in 1998, 1999, 2004, and 2008. The 2004 increase was only \$50, which is half of the previous price increases. Based on this, the price ranges charged by neighboring municipalities, and to help finance the master plan update improvements, a rate increase for 2012 would be appropriate.

## **Rules and Regulations**

The Rules and Regulations that have been published for the Cemetery should be reviewed to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the Town. One rule that needs to be reviewed is the residency requirements for burial in the Cemetery.

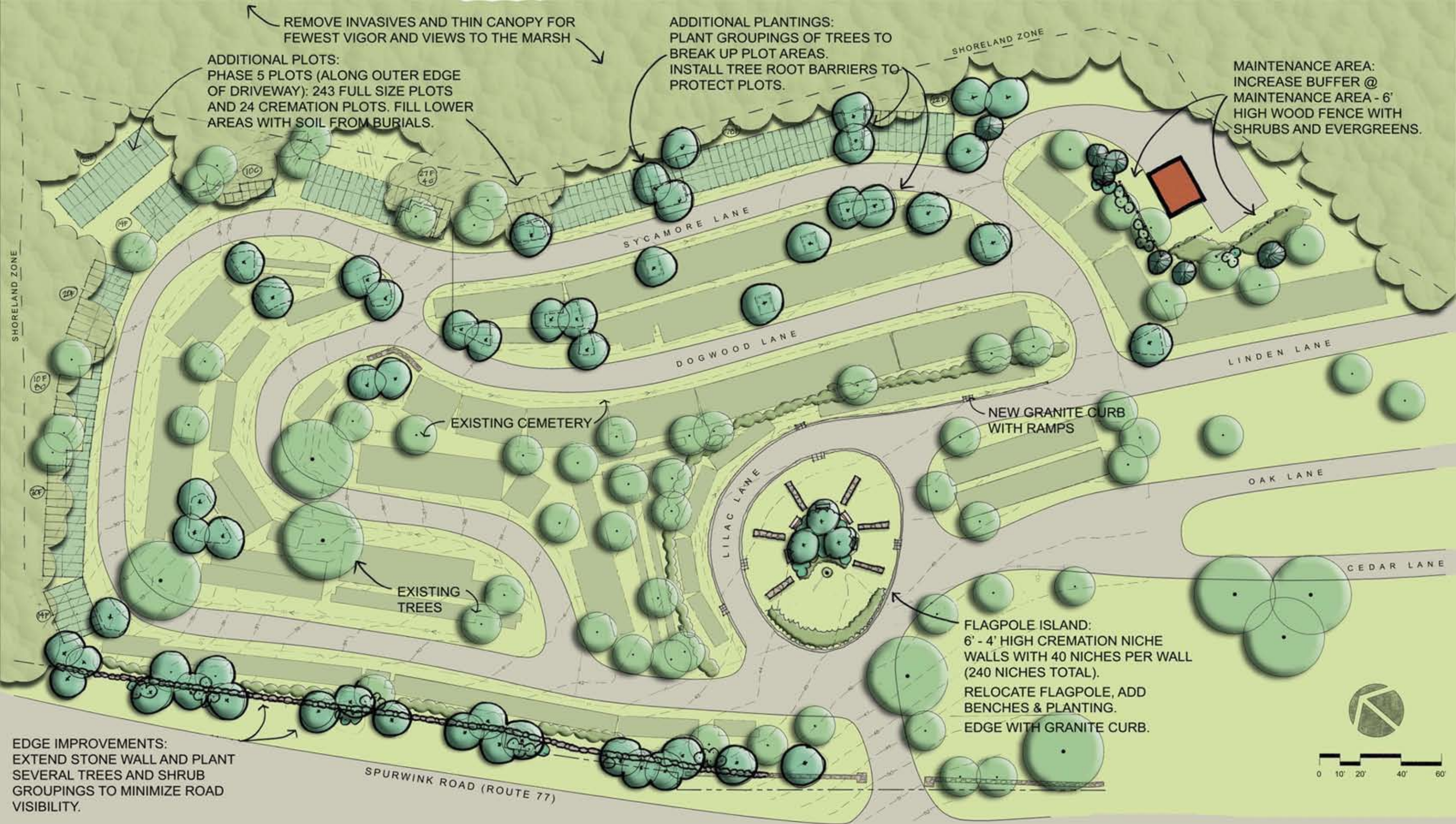
The Cemetery Trustees are considering the pros and cons of allowing non-residents of the Town to be buried in the cemetery. The advantages are financial, as municipalities usually sell cemetery plots to non-residents for a higher cost. This would help to fund improvements to the cemetery. The disadvantage is that there is a finite amount of space

available in the cemetery, and allowing non-residents would mean that the cemetery is built out sooner. One option that was discussed during the Master Plan Update meetings would be to allow non-residents in the cemetery, but restrict them to the niche walls.

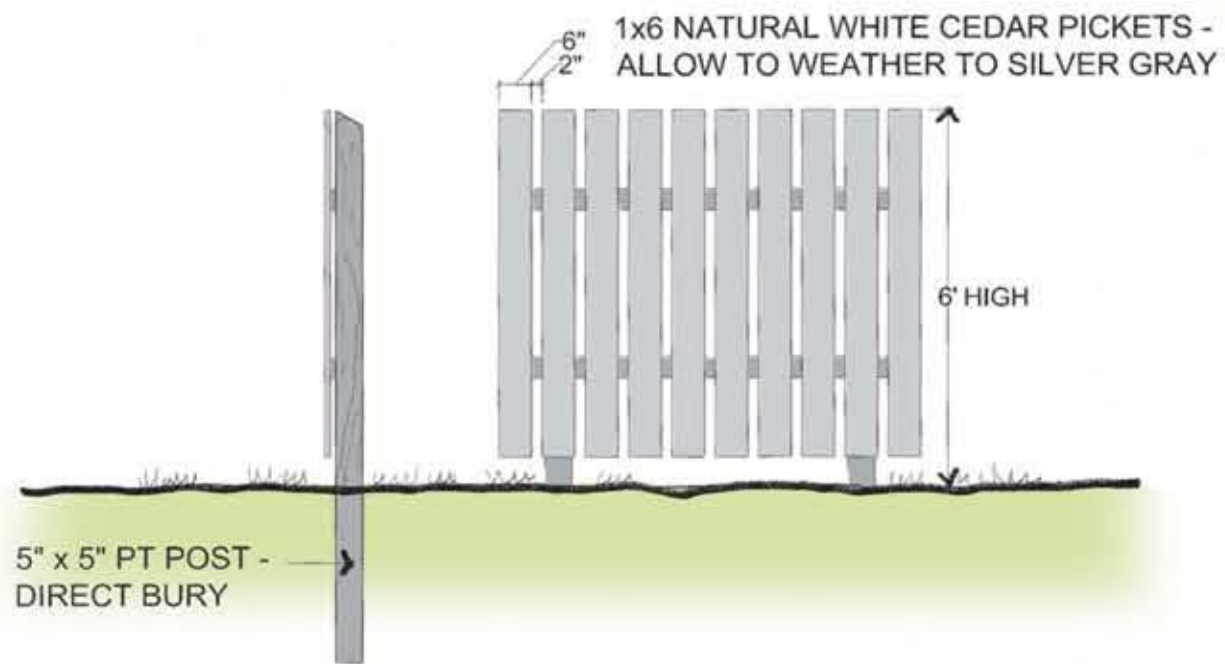
The current language in the RULES and REGULATIONS that pertains to residency is as follows:

Lots are sold to citizens of Cape Elizabeth or non-resident taxpayers. Sale of lots to other non-residents may be made at the discretion of the Board of Trustees. Former long term residents and those with family buried at the cemetery may be considered by the Board.

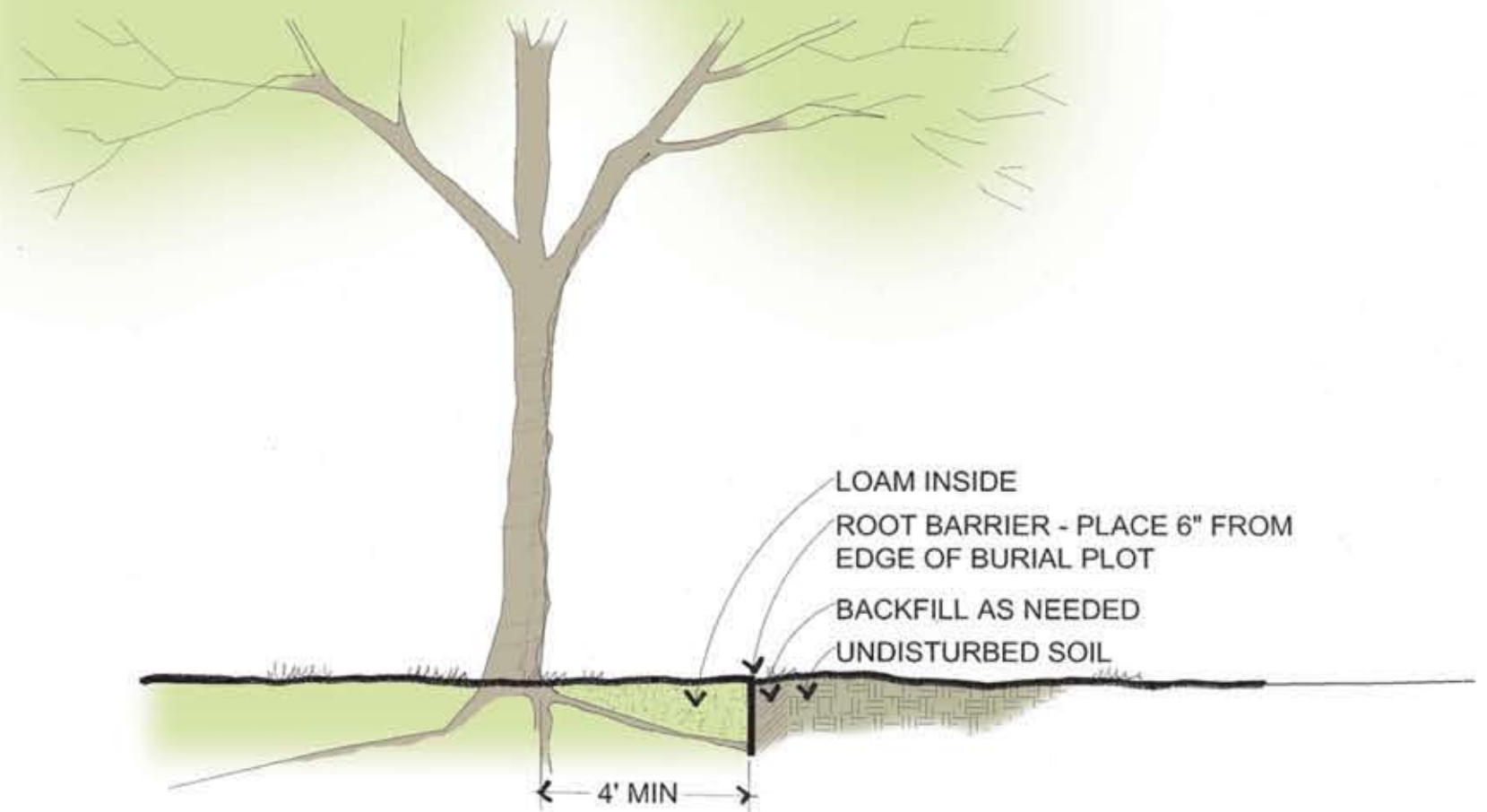
This language gives the Trustees a limited amount of discretion. If the decision is made to allow non-residents to be buried in the cemetery the language should be clarified and/or amended. This would allow for the Town and the Trustees to market the cemetery to a new group of people, if it is determined that it would be to the Town's advantage.



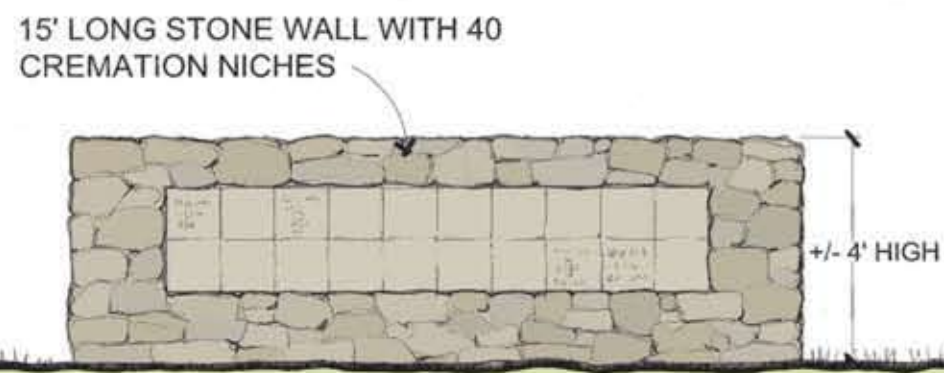




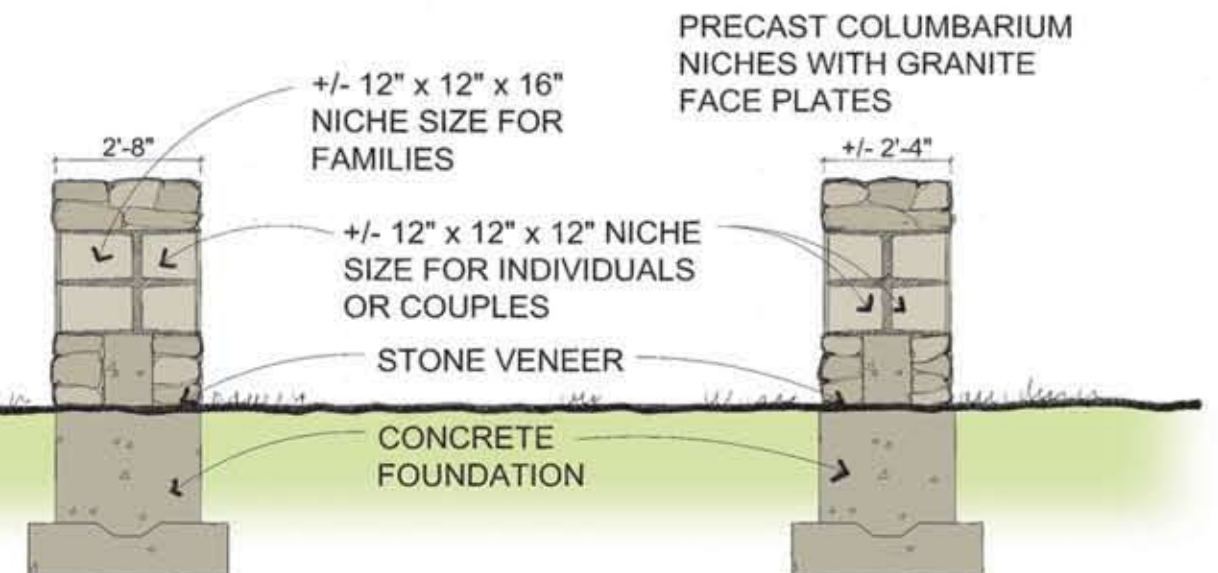
WOOD FENCE SCREEN AT MAINTENANCE BUILDING



ROOT PROTECTION BARRIER



CREMATION NICHE WALL - ELEVATION



CREMATION NICHE WALL - SECTION

TYPICAL CONSTRUCTION DETAILS