



City of Brandon Municipal Cemetery Plan

July 2008

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Executive Summary

In 2000 a review of the Brandon Municipal Cemetery was conducted by Hilton Landmarks Inc. and at that time it was identified that there would be a need to acquire additional land in order to meet future demands.

Since that time, negotiations with the one landowner have taken place, however an agreement has not been reached and as a community we are reaching a critical decision point on where we go from here related to cemetery land and services.

Since the time of the report there have been a number of different changes in factors such as; the demographic makeup of our community, the anticipated annual death rate, the self sustainability of cemetery operations, and the services that are being provided by cemeteries in communities across the country. It was felt that it would be appropriate for a review to take place in order to ensure that the findings identified in 2000 were still valid and to identify areas where additional recommendations would be of value.

In conducting the review, an analysis of cemetery capacity was completed with models created that demonstrate both the community and the Brandon Municipal Cemetery's capacity for interments over the next twenty years. A review of interment trends across the country was also completed, with a discussion on these being presented.

While the recommendations related to the need to acquire additional land holds true, additional recommendations are included in the report which relate to the various types of cemetery services that could be offered and programs that would expand the ease of use and beautification of the grounds.



Introduction

In late 2000, Hilton Landmarks Inc – Cemetery Consultants, Planning and Design were hired to conduct a needs analysis and to provide a brief for the City of Brandon related to the Brandon Municipal Cemetery. In essence the document outlined the need for the municipality to start to consider acquiring additional land in order to facilitate future requirements.

As a result of the report, negotiations were undertaken with the owners of the property to the east of the existing cemetery. After lengthy negotiations, it was determined through the Property Department that we could not acquire this land due to the restrictions that the property owner had placed on the acquisition. During the same time, the City of Brandon was in discussions with the Province of Manitoba regarding the land located at the former Brandon Mental Health Centre. There was some discussion on whether a portion of that land would be suitable for a cemetery site, incorporating the existing cemetery site currently maintained by the Province.

It was determined at that point a review of the cemetery's requirements should be conducted. The Parks and Cemetery Staff undertook a "needs discovery" and this report outlines their findings and recommendations. For the purpose of this report, much of the information from the 2000 report has been updated and the recommendations have been expanded to incorporate a broader perspective of solutions.

Brandon Municipal Cemetery

History

Brandon Cemetery's effective origin was in 1906 when not less than 80 acres was acquired for \$150.00/acre for the City's cemetery purposes. The first City burial occurred March 30, 1908. Prior to this time, the lands had been operated by the Catholic Church as a Catholic Cemetery.

Services

The Cemetery Office was developed on the property in 2004 in order to provide cemetery services directly on site. Until that point, many of the services were provided out of City Hall, which would often require customers to travel between the two different sites numerous times in order to establish arrangements.

The services provided at the Cemetery include:

- Plot and columbarium niche sales / transfers and registration;
- Interment services;
- Headstone placement coordination;
- Disinterment services;
- Burial records and coordination with the Province;
- Ground maintenance and development,
- Burial record searches; and
- Physically locating and marking of burial plots



Having these services provided directly on site has proven to be of significant benefit to both the public and the City as it has streamlined and made more convenient the services that are available.

The Site

The Cemetery originally located outside the urban fabric has, since 1972, been included within the City boundary when the boundary was moved south from Richmond Avenue to Patricia Avenue. It is surrounded by a variety of land uses, including industrial, commercial, agricultural and in the last two years, tremendous residential development.

44 acres of the original 80 acres purchased in 1906 has been developed as cemetery with the balance of the lands developed for alternative uses, including sale. The development of the retained land includes a number of different burial sections, buildings, and amenities. The following sections outline each of those aspects.

Land Status

The cemetery land is bordered on the west by the Brandon Shopper's Mall parking lot, by Aberdeen Avenue on the North, by the Gulf / Conico property on the east and residential development and the Jewish Cemetery on the south. At present, all the land at the site has been developed in order to facilitate burials. In fact, the land adjacent to the Cemetery Office has been developed in the last four years to provide for additional burial capacity in that location.

Buildings

There are a number of buildings located on the Cemetery property. On the east side of the site, there is a Cemetery Office and Garage Building. This structure is a 44' x 26' metal clad equipment shed. The building houses a small equipment shop, washroom and the Cemetery Office and is serviced with hydro, water, sewer and telephone services. There is no natural gas service to the Cemetery. Directly adjacent to this building is a storage compound which contains a wooden 10' x 10' storage shed that was constructed in the spring of 2008. This shed is used for the storage of lowering devices, weed trimmers, and a small gas tank.

To the south, there is the former Brockie-Donovan Crematorium building that was donated to the City of Brandon in the early 1980s. This building is of reasonable construction and measures approximately 17' x 22'. The building is currently being used for storage, workshop space and contains a washroom. It is serviced with hydro, water and sewer. At the time cremations were taking place in the facility, these were done with the use of propane.

Roads / Lighting

The roads are a combination of asphalt and gravel surface. A majority of the roads have been asphalted and continue to be maintained with the use of chip seal. Except for the main entrance off 18th Street, which is 25', all roads are 15' wide. In 2007 / 2008, lighting was installed along the north side of the main entrance roadway in order to provide for better visibility into the cemetery in the evening.



Landscaping / Soils / Water Levels

The landscaping at the site consists of well established tree cover of coniferous/deciduous trees (ash, maple, aspen, elm, basswood, cedar and spruce) shrubs include caragana, lilac, currant, cotoneaster, mugho pines and junipers pruned in a "formal" manner. Seasonal floral plantings are also used at entrances and in the flower beds located throughout the greenspace.

The Cemetery frontages on both sides of 18th Street have wrought iron fencing. The portion of the Cemetery on the west side of 18th Street has entry pillars and iron gates. The balance of the cemetery is partially enclosed within page wire fencing.

The soil conditions are categorized as sandy loam of glacial origin. These conditions may facilitate digging extra depth graves (stacked 2 deep) if desired. The sand content can make for "cave-in" situations during excavations. Wet weather and/ or winter excavations are, however, typically easier than in clay loam soil type.

Occasionally, the site experiences high ground water levels which have been a problem for casket burials in Section 32 and the grass area in the SW corner of the cemetery at 18th Street. Aside from these areas, land drainage is not a significant issue.

Burial Sections / Columbaria

There are a number of "specialty" burial sections contained on the grounds:

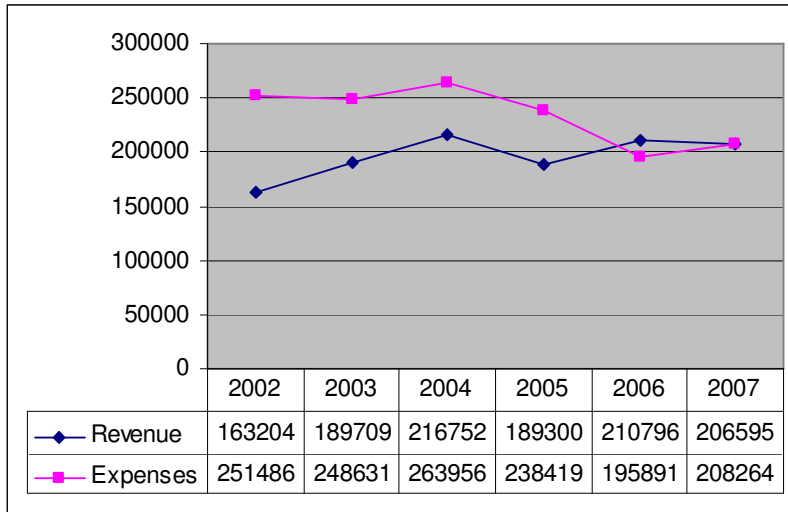
- The Veterans' Section - Is a section designated specifically for veterans and can be easily distinguished by the distinct headstone design. The area contains a 25' lit cenotaph – The Cross of Sacrifice which is flanked with two flag poles. There are 26 Crosses of Sacrifice erected throughout North America, 25 of which are in Canada. Designed by principal architect, Sir Reginald Blomfield, these are finely proportioned stone crosses with a symbolic bronze sword. The one erected in Brandon is significant in that it is the only one erected privately with the permission of the Commission. It is maintained by the Commission in exchange for care of the war graves in the Brandon Municipal Cemetery.
- The Children's Section – This section is designated by a white wrought iron archway and a lit monument along with benches and seating areas.
- Catholic Section – There is a distinct area for those wishing to be buried under the Catholic denomination. This area is not visually distinct from the other areas of the Cemetery.
- Columbaria – The columbaria are located to the west of the Cemetery office. The first 64 niche columbarium was installed in 1999 and all niches have been purchased. In 2001, two additional 64 niche columbaria were installed and of the 128 niches available, only 6 remain for purchase. In 2006, two 84 niche towers were added and at the time this report was completed only 97 remain. The columbaria design and placement incorporate a fountain, bench seating and plantings that enhance the beauty of the area.

Funding and Perpetual Care

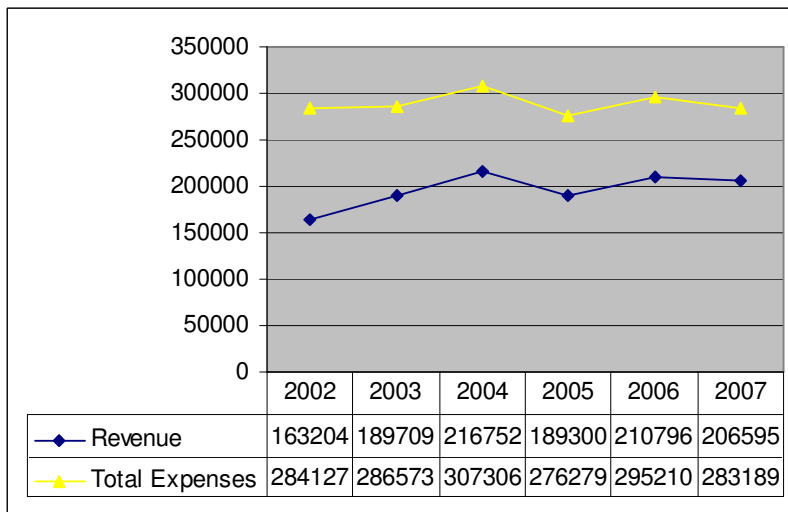
Since 2000, when the Cemetery Reserve was established, fees have been adjusted in an attempt that over time, the cost of running the cemetery will be fully offset by the revenue that is



received annually. In the chart below, we can see that the basic operating costs are now being covered by the revenue that is generated through plot sales and burials.



The one aspect that has yet to be covered is funding of the Cemetery Reserve. When we add in these numbers, the following is the picture.



What this means is that the taxpayers are required to fund the cemetery operation through general taxes at approximately \$75,000 / year although this has narrowed since 2002 when it was \$120,000.

The plan continues to be that over time, the operation will become self-sustaining. As death rates increase, even though there will be an increase in development costs, the revenue that will be generated should cover those costs.



Other Area Cemeteries

Rosewood Memorial Gardens

Rosewood Memorial Gardens is located on Highway 1A, just west of Brandon. They are a privately owned cemetery with approximately 20 acres of land. At this point, 50% of the land has been developed leaving an additional 10 acres for future development.

This cemetery is solely a lawn cemetery where only flat markers are permitted for ground plots. Raised headstones are not permitted. They have a columbarium for niche interments.

On site they have a crematorium facility and according to the 2007 / 2008 WCCA membership records, they indicated that of the interments that are performed at the site, 50% of them are cremations.

Bnai Israel Cemetery

The Jewish Cemetery is a small parcel of land located south between the Brandon Municipal Cemetery (on the west side of 18th Street) and Maryland Avenue. This is a very small cemetery maintained and administered through a local group. It has been in operation since 1906 and continues to operate although minimal burials take place at the site.

Brandon Mental Hospital Cemetery

There are two documented burial sites on the BMHC grounds. The one area just south and east of the main building is marked with a cairn but no individual markers. While reportedly almost 2000 individuals (www.manitobasburiedhistory.com/?page_id=37) are buried there, for the purpose of this report, this area would not be considered a cemetery due to there being no opportunity for additional burials at the site.

The second site is located to the north of the buildings and contains headstones, a memorial cairn and is somewhat enclosed with fencing and trees. It is our understanding that these grounds were closed to interments approximately 8 to 10 years ago. The grounds and specifically the grass cutting, is the responsibility of the Province of Manitoba and it holds all burial records for the site. The site is surrounded by open fields and is not serviced with electricity or water.

Existing and Future Cemetery Capacity

Planning Standards and Future Capacity Requirements

Historical community planning standards provide guidelines that a community should have 10.5 acres to 15.0 acres per 10,000 in current population available under a long range plan depending upon the geo-physical circumstances of a cemetery's location. For example, mountainous/hilly terrain typically requires a greater land base to achieve net burial land needs for a community located in such terrain. Brandon's prairie terrain conditions mean that our requirements would fall within the planning standards guidelines. The reason for this long term planning is in order for a community to have the time to investigate, acquire, re-zone, and suitably develop (tree plantings, roadways, monuments, etc.) the property to a standard that would be suitable to the community.



Brandon Cemetery is currently comprised of 44 acres of land. Of that land, there are approximately 2.2 acres or 1750 plots available. The second cemetery in the area, Rosewood Memorial Gardens has a land base of 20 acres and of that land approximately 10 acres is available for use or 8000 plots. The combination of these two active cemeteries provides for a total of approximately 12.2 acres of unused land.

Based on the community planning standard guidelines outlined previously and on our present population we require:

$$\frac{41,511 \text{ population}}{10,000} = 4.15 \times 11 \text{ acres} = 45.65 \text{ acres}$$

The shortfall in existing cemetery designated land is approximately 33.45 acres based on the current population of Brandon, not taking into account the populations from the small surrounding communities who may choose to be buried in either cemetery.

Capacity Factors

It is important to note in cemetery land use calculations that it is not simply the number of actual burials a cemetery might perform in any one year or over a block of years. Plot sales are the real "use" issue. Every plot sale brings a cemetery one step closer to the end of its inventory and to the end of its overall land based resource. Ultimately, a time will be reached when all developable lands will be used up ("sold out") but burials of a variety of manners will be ongoing for years after a cemetery has "sold" its last plot. It should be noted that "Sold" or "Sale" in fact do not refer to the actual deeded transfer of land ownership as once was the case. Today, ownership by a purchaser is only for the right to be buried in a particular plot. This may well have future implications for Canadian Cemeteries as it does in many European centres for "time lease" of burial rights for a set time frame (25 -50 years) whereupon the plot right reverts back to the cemetery for "re-sell" options.

There are a number of factors that impact the levels and timing of cemetery capacity including the death rate, population demographic, growth rates and the types of interments. The following sections describe the impacts of each of these on how soon the City of Brandon will exhaust the existing capacity of cemetery land and when additional capacity will be required.

Death Rates

According to Statistics Canada, the City of Brandon's Annual Death Rate (ADR) is 1.2% of the total population base or approximately 475 persons per year. In 2007, Brandon Municipal Cemetery interred 198 individuals and therefore based on the community's death rate, the cemetery's share of the interment market is approximately 42%.

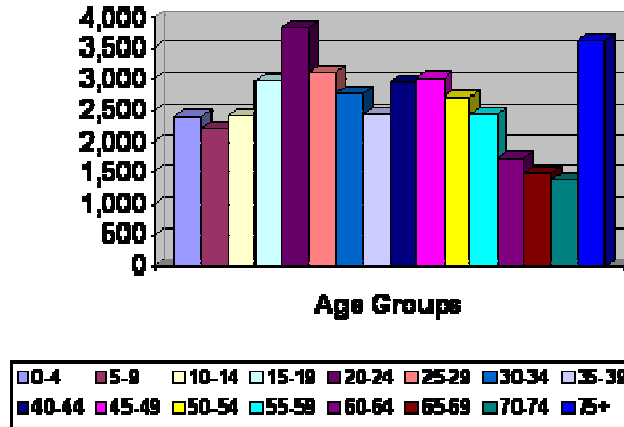
Statistics Canada indicates through various statistical formulae that Canada's ADR will increase from its current rates (typically 0.75% to 1.5% annually) by up to five times. They project that this increase will start to occur in approximately 2012 and will last at that rate for 30 years thereafter. The increase in death numbers is primarily attributed to an aging population and the demographic bubble associated with the "Baby Boomer" Generation.



Population Demographic

In order to understand how the ADR projection may impact the City of Brandon, the following is a breakdown of the community demographics by the various age categories.

Demographic Profile – Brandon 2006



Statistics Canada notes that 21% of Brandon’s population is comprised of the Baby Boomer Generation or approximately 8,700 people aged 40 to 54. In addition 20% or 8,200 persons are over the age of 60 and 9% or 3,610 persons are over the age of 75.

In looking at this data, we can see that even if we only assumed that 50% of the people passed away over the next twenty years, we would have 10,000 -12,000 deaths or approximately 25% of our current population that could require interment over that time period.

Growth Rate

Another factor to consider in planning is the rate in which a community grows. The City of Brandon has doubled its population over the past 50 years as demonstrated below:

Year	Population	% Increase
1950	21,214	
1961	27,944	32%
1971	31,544	13%
1982	36,343	15%
1992	38,567	6%
2000	40,200	4%
2006	41,511	3%

If we were to assume a conservative projected growth rate of .5% per annum over the next twenty years, it is conceivable that the population could be approximately 45,000 people or an increase of 3500 people. In terms of cemetery planning standards discussed earlier, this would require an additional need for 3.85 acres associated with the increase in population.

It is important to note that this type of growth would mean that a significant number of people, much higher than what it may appear, would need to be entering the community in order to offset the decline in population as a result of people passing away.



Interment Statistics

The decision that an individual makes regarding the method of interment impacts the capacity of the cemetery. The mix of one person plot interments, multi-person plot interments and columbarium interments can have an impact on capacity. The more columbarium interments, the lower the capacity impact, and on the opposite side the more one person plot interments, the higher.

In 2007 there were 198 individuals buried in the cemetery and of those 67% (133) were cremation interments and the balance or 33% (65) were casketed remains requiring full size lots for interments.

Capacity Models

In order to understand how all of these factors may impact the cemetery capacity within the City of Brandon it was important to “model” a number of different scenarios. There were a number of basic assumptions that were applied in developing these models:

- That the mix of cremations versus burials would remain constant over the twenty year period;
- That each casket burial would require one plot;
- Every three cremations equaled the use of one plot;
- That the annual death rate (ADR) would remain constant until 2012 and at that point increase; and,
- That all the deaths in the community would result in burials within the community.

The three charts below outline three different scenarios. The first one represents average community growth of 1% per annum with the ADR doubling after 2012. Based on this, the existing land capacity will be consumed by 2025 or within the next 17 years.

Model #1 – Average Growth with Double the ADR

Year	Population Growth Rate	Population	Death Rate	New People to the Community	# of Deaths	Cremations	Burials	Available Plots
2007		41719						9750
2008	1.0%	42136	1.2%	923	506	339	167	9470
2009	1.0%	42558	1.2%	932	511	342	169	9188
2010	1.0%	42983	1.2%	941	516	346	170	8902
2011	1.0%	43413	1.2%	951	521	349	172	8614
2012	1.0%	43847	2.4%	1486	1052	705	347	8032
2013	1.0%	44286	2.4%	1501	1063	712	351	7444
2014	1.0%	44728	2.4%	1516	1073	719	354	6850
2015	1.0%	45176	2.4%	1532	1084	726	358	6250
2016	1.0%	45627	2.4%	1547	1095	734	361	5644
2017	1.0%	46084	2.4%	1562	1106	741	365	5032
2018	1.0%	46545	2.4%	1578	1117	748	369	4414
2019	1.0%	47010	2.4%	1594	1128	756	372	3789
2020	1.0%	47480	2.4%	1610	1140	763	376	3159
2021	1.0%	47955	2.4%	1626	1151	771	380	2522
2022	1.0%	48434	2.4%	1642	1162	779	384	1879
2023	1.0%	48919	2.4%	1658	1174	787	387	1229
2024	1.0%	49408	2.4%	1675	1186	794	391	573
2025	1.0%	49902	2.4%	1692	1198	802	395	-90
2026	1.0%	50401	2.4%	1709	1210	810	399	-759
2027	1.0%	50905	2.4%	1726	1222	819	403	-1435
2028	1.0%	51414	2.4%	1743	1234	827	407	-2118



The second chart represents lower community growth of .5% per annum with the ADR tripling after 2012. Based on this, the existing land capacity will be consumed by 2021 or within the next 13 years.

Model #2 – Lower Growth with Triple the ADR

Year	Population Growth Rate	Population	Death Rate	New People to the Community	# of Deaths	Cremations	Burials	Available Plots
2007		41719						9750
2008	0.50%	41928	1.2%	712	503	337	166	9472
2009	0.50%	42137	1.2%	715	506	339	167	9192
2010	0.50%	42348	1.2%	719	508	340	168	8911
2011	0.50%	42560	1.2%	722	511	342	169	8628
2012	0.50%	42772	3.6%	1753	1540	1032	508	7776
2013	0.50%	42986	3.6%	1761	1548	1037	511	6920
2014	0.50%	43201	3.6%	1770	1555	1042	513	6059
2015	0.50%	43417	3.6%	1779	1563	1047	516	5194
2016	0.50%	43634	3.6%	1788	1571	1052	518	4325
2017	0.50%	43853	3.6%	1797	1579	1058	521	3452
2018	0.50%	44072	3.6%	1806	1587	1063	524	2574
2019	0.50%	44292	3.6%	1815	1595	1068	526	1691
2020	0.50%	44514	3.6%	1824	1602	1074	529	805
2021	0.50%	44736	3.6%	1833	1611	1079	531	-87
2022	0.50%	44960	3.6%	1842	1619	1084	534	-982
2023	0.50%	45185	3.6%	1851	1627	1090	537	-1882
2024	0.50%	45411	3.6%	1861	1635	1095	539	-2787
2025	0.50%	45638	3.6%	1870	1643	1101	542	-3696
2026	0.50%	45866	3.6%	1879	1651	1106	545	-4610
2027	0.50%	46095	3.6%	1889	1659	1112	548	-5528
2028	0.50%	46326	3.6%	1898	1668	1117	550	-6451

The final chart represents zero community growth with the ADR increasing to five times the rate as anticipated by Statistics Canada after 2012. Based on this, the existing land capacity will be consumed by 2019 or within the next 11 years.

Model #3 – No Growth with Statistics Canada Projected ADR

Year	Population Growth Rate	Population	Death Rate	New People to the Community	# of Deaths	Cremations	Burials	Available Plots
2007		41719						9750
2008	0.00%	41719	1.2%	501	501	335	165	9473
2009	0.00%	41719	1.2%	501	501	335	165	9196
2010	0.00%	41719	1.2%	501	501	335	165	8919
2011	0.00%	41719	1.2%	501	501	335	165	8642
2012	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	7488
2013	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	6333
2014	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	5179
2015	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	4025
2016	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	2871
2017	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	1717
2018	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	562
2019	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	-592
2020	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	-1746
2021	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	-2900
2022	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	-4055
2023	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	-5209
2024	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	-6363
2025	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	-7517
2026	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	-8671
2027	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	-9826
2028	0.00%	41719	5.0%	2086	2086	1398	688	-10980



It is difficult to determine exactly which scenario will be the most accurate, but by looking at the three, we are able to determine that somewhere in the next ten to fifteen years we will have consumed all of the cemetery capacity within the community. The other thing to point out is that if we factor in the 800 plots / acre, we can see that as an overall community we will need an additional 10 to 15 acres just to satisfy the requirements for the next 20 years.

Brandon Municipal Cemetery

Now if we assume the middle case, and we change the model to reflect only that of the Brandon Municipal Cemetery at 42% of the market share, the chart on the following page would be the result.

Model #4 – Lower Growth with Triple the ADR – Brandon Municipal Cemetery

Year	Population Growth Rate	Population	Death Rate	New People to the Community	# of Deaths	Cremations (42%)	Burials (42%)	Available Plots
2007		41719						1750
2008	0.50%	41928	1.2%	712	503	142	152	1551
2009	0.50%	42137	1.2%	715	506	142	153	1351
2010	0.50%	42348	1.2%	719	508	143	153	1150
2011	0.50%	42560	1.2%	722	511	144	154	948
2012	0.50%	42772	3.6%	1753	1540	433	465	339
2013	0.50%	42986	3.6%	1761	1548	435	467	-274
2014	0.50%	43201	3.6%	1770	1555	438	469	-889
2015	0.50%	43417	3.6%	1779	1563	440	472	-1507
2016	0.50%	43634	3.6%	1788	1571	442	474	-2129
2017	0.50%	43853	3.6%	1797	1579	444	476	-2753
2018	0.50%	44072	3.6%	1806	1587	446	479	-3381
2019	0.50%	44292	3.6%	1815	1595	449	481	-4012
2020	0.50%	44514	3.6%	1824	1602	451	484	-4646
2021	0.50%	44736	3.6%	1833	1611	453	486	-5283
2022	0.50%	44960	3.6%	1842	1619	455	488	-5923
2023	0.50%	45185	3.6%	1851	1627	458	491	-6567
2024	0.50%	45411	3.6%	1861	1635	460	493	-7213
2025	0.50%	45638	3.6%	1870	1643	462	496	-7863
2026	0.50%	45866	3.6%	1879	1651	465	498	-8517
2027	0.50%	46095	3.6%	1889	1659	467	501	-9173
2028	0.50%	46326	3.6%	1898	1668	469	503	-9833

This indicates, based on continuing under the status quo, that as soon as 2012 the Brandon Municipal Cemetery capacity may be fully utilized, meaning that the only interments that would be conducted on the site would be for those who have pre-purchased their plots / niches. In order to just meet the needs outlined in this model, we would need to acquire 12 acres of additional land. If the Statistics Canada projections come to fruition, this number could be as high as 19 acres just within the next twenty years.

Current Trends

There are a number of trends in cemetery use, development and maintenance that are occurring across the country. Some of these trends will form the basis for the recommendations in this report.



Eco Cemetery

An eco-cemetery also known as a green burial ground, or a natural burial preserve, is a cemetery where the body is returned to the earth to decompose and recycle naturally and is an environmentally sustainable alternative to existing funeral practices.

The body is prepared for burial without chemical preservatives, such as are used in embalming, and is buried in a biodegradable casket. Most "traditional" caskets are made from chipboard covered in a thin veneer. Handles are usually plastic, designed to look like brass. The chipboard requires formaldehyde glues to stick the wood particles together, which causes pollution when cremated or during biodegradation. More expensive caskets and coffins are often manufactured using exotic and in some cases endangered species of wood and designed to prevent decomposition. While there are generally no restrictions on the type of coffin used, most sites encourage the use of environmentally friendly coffins made from cardboard or wicker.

Each year, 22,500 cemeteries across the United States bury approximately:

- 30 million board feet (70,000 m³) of hardwoods (caskets)
- 90,272 tons of steel (caskets)
- 14,000 tons of steel (vaults)
- 2,700 tons of copper and bronze (caskets)
- 1,636,000 tons of reinforced concrete (vaults)
- 827,060 US gallons (3,130 m³) of embalming fluid, which most commonly includes formaldehyde. However it is worth noting that embalming fluid chemically changes in the act of preserving the body and is not largely present as a fluid. This figure refers to embalming fluid before it is introduced to the body.

A natural burial preserve often uses grave markers that don't intrude on the landscape. These natural markers can include shrubs and trees, or a flat indigenous stone which may be engraved. The burial ground may be designed with centralized memorial structures where visitors can sit within an emerging forest. Planting native trees, shrubs and flowers on or near the grave establishes a living memorial and helps form a protected wildlife preserve. Irrigation is not used, nor are pesticides or herbicides applied; instead, a natural burial preserves, protects and restores nature.

As in all cemeteries, there are careful records kept of the exact location of each interment, often using modern survey techniques such as GIS. Cemetery legislation protects natural burial preserves in perpetuity from future development while the establishment of a conservation easement prevents future owners from altering the original intent for these burial grounds. These concepts are protective of personal values for many people who seek to minimize their impact on the planet. For people who are mindful of the cyclical nature of life, a natural burial is a spiritually fulfilling and environmentally benign alternative to conventional burial methods.

Scatter Gardens

Many communities throughout North America have incorporated a garden landscape within their cemetery to accommodate a scatter garden burial site. A deceased individual's cremated remains are scattered at the garden site and a "wall of



remembrance” with commemorative plaques is installed at a centralized location at the site.

In 2006, by approval through the Public Utilities Act, the Cemetery Act and the Prearranged Funeral Act, a scatter garden was established in Winnipeg in the form of a rose garden. Under this application, there is no charge for the scattering of cremated remains although there is a charge for the plaque.

Pet Cemetery

There is an ever-increasing demand for options such as pet cemeteries. We naturally grieve over the death of a pet. Our feelings toward pets are so special that experts have a term for the relationship: The human-companion animal bond.

When this bond is severed, the sense of loss can be overwhelming. Society does not offer a grieving pet owner a great deal of sympathy. Even a close friend may comment: "It's only a dog..." or "She was a pretty cat. What are you going to get now?" Such a reaction would be heartless given the loss of a human friend or family member, and it is generally recognized that a person who has experienced such a loss needs the support of friends and relatives.

People have been burying their pets in a ritual fashion at least since Egyptian times. Today, there are pet cemeteries in virtually every populated area of the United States, Canada and Europe.

Ground Penetrating Radar

In order to extend the life of the current cemetery sites, there are a number of communities that have been using ground penetrating radar technology to scan their cemeteries in order to identify vacant plots. Once these plots are identified and a search conducted for ownership, if it is found that ownership cannot be traced, then notification is given that the plot will be put up for resale. In other cases, families may be contacted to inquire about their intent for the plot, and if they so wish, can sell the plot back to the cemetery for use by others.

This is a very lengthy process however it has reclaimed numerous sites in cemeteries across the country.

On Line Burial Inquiries

There has been an increase in the number of people who are researching their genealogy as a result of the ease in using the internet to gather information. In combination with these efforts, family members will often seek information about burial records and plot locations in the hopes of expanding their information. In order to make it easier for this to happen, a number of different communities across Canada, including Prince George, Winnipeg, Peterborough and Kamloops have all developed online search capabilities pertaining to their cemeteries. These types of services not only make it easier for individuals to research out family members when it is convenient to them, but it cuts down on the level of administration required to support these types of requests.



Land Negotiations

Since 2000, the City of Brandon has been pursuing negotiations with representatives of Gulf Oil, to assume the land located to the east of the current cemetery. These discussions continued through 2006, at which time it was determined that an agreement would not be able to be reached. The sticking issue surrounded the assumption of ownership liability for the contaminated property and those surrounding properties that could at some point be impacted by leaching contaminate. This City is not willing to assume such liability, therefore the negotiations have not proceeded.

Aside from the issue of liability, this land would have provided the community with the optimal solution to our land needs. The site is adjacent to the existing site so the infrastructure cost to develop and maintain the site would have been greatly reduced. The expansion of the existing site would have also allowed families to be buried within a common cemetery in the community.

The second site being considered is the land located north of the BMHC site, encompassing the existing cemetery. The cost of developing and operating this site would be significantly higher than the other choice. The site is not serviced, so water and electricity would need to be brought into the site. The land would need to be surveyed, burial areas marked out, roadway construction and landscaping and tree planting would need to take place. Due to the prairie type terrain in this location, a fence would probably need to be erected in order to keep out predators.

While this site would not be ideal in the fact that it would split service sites, it would however provide these types of services to the north hill, as we continue to expand as a community. There will come a point in the future where the site will be required to be split due to the limitations of land, so the timing at this point may be just as appropriate as at any other time.

Municipal Cemetery Justification

Commonly, there are three different groups that will be in the business of operating a cemetery; a municipality, a church (or small sanctioned group) or a private funeral home. In larger communities, it is not uncommon to have a combination of the three and this is the case in Brandon. At the point that any one of these groups is required to expand, the question can be asked, "is it worth the cost of expansion or should this be left to the other parties". The answer to this is not easy and a number of principles need to be taken into consideration.

- The City of Brandon has historically provided this service to the citizens of Brandon for the last 100 years and the citizens have come to rely on this service being available when they require it.
- The citizens in a community where there is a municipal cemetery have a level of confidence in that the property will always be maintained, or that the principles of perpetual care will be a constant. While there are numerous, well run and respected private cemeteries across the country, there are also instances where these cemeteries have reverted to government ownership.
- These sites should be self sustaining financially, if the operating and development expenses are controlled and the fees for service are kept at market value. A cemetery should not be a cost burden to the citizens of a community.



- The Brandon Municipal Cemetery provides the greatest number of alternatives when it comes to interment options, for example; veteran burials, columbaria, lawn section, monuments, etc. The other main cemetery is restricted to lawn and columbaria.

Recommendations

The following is a list of recommendations related to the operation and planning of the Brandon Municipal Cemetery.

Recommendation #1 – Acquire additional land for the purpose of cemetery expansion by no later than December 31, 2009.

As outlined in the report, the Brandon Municipal Cemetery could reach its full capacity by 2012 assuming that the annual death rate remains constant between now and then. We also know that as an overall community, if we were to develop all the land that has been identified for cemetery purposes at this point, we will reach its capacity somewhere between 2019 and 2022. There needs to be time in which to develop the land, so the timeframe in which to do all of this is narrowing.

At this time there are two recommended sites for expansion; the land directly to the east of the existing cemetery or the property located to the north of the BMHC site. Both of these properties are suitable sites for a cemetery.

The preferred choice would be to expand the current site. There is significant history associated with the current site with many families having multi-generational burials. This site would also be more cost effective to operate as a majority of the maintenance and infrastructure requirements are currently available. It is anticipated the development of this site would be between \$750,000 and \$1 million.

The second choice would be the site located north of the BMHC site, encompassing the existing cemetery. The cost of developing and operating this site would be significantly higher than the other choice. As mentioned, the site is not serviced, so water and electricity would need to be brought in. The land would need to be surveyed, burial areas marked out, roadway construction and landscaping and tree planting would need to take place. Due to the prairie type terrain in this location, a fence would probably need to be erected in order to keep out predators. It is anticipated that the development of this site would be in the range of \$2 to \$2.5 million.

It is assumed that in both of the cases outlined above that the cost of the land would be nominal and that not being the case, the cost of the land would be in addition to the development costs outlined.

The important issue in this recommendation is the need for expedience. As outlined in this document, the Brandon Municipal Cemetery is rapidly reaching its capacity and in order to not cause a service break, land needs to be acquired so that the planning and development can take place ahead of the need.



Timeframe – immediate

Cost – depends on the land deal, but it will be more completely identified at the time of land purchase

Recommendation #2 – Update the City of Brandon Cemetery Bylaw to reflect the inclusion of alternative burial options including the rules and regulations governing their use and to update the maintenance standards.

The current Cemetery Bylaw has not been updated for several years. There have been significant trends towards eco-friendly burials, scatter grounds and how the community views a cemetery as a park-like greenspace. As a result of these trends it is important to conduct a complete review of the existing bylaw and to provide City Council with proposed revisions for their consideration.

Timeframe – short term

Cost – staff time

Recommendation #3 – Identify a portion of the new cemetery site to accommodate and promote the concepts of eco-cemetery and scatter garden alternatives.

Having burial alternatives is important. Over the last century there has been a significant move from the traditional casket burials to more and more cremations. This trend has moved further to where more and more individuals are now choosing columbarium interments. The way in which our society interprets death and seeks to honor those remains, will continue to change and the community will look to the City to provide those alternatives.

The development of this site will require additional research, input from our local funeral homes and neighbouring cemeteries, and additional approvals through the Government of Manitoba.

Timeframe – mid term

Cost – staff time after the land is acquired and developed

Recommendation #4 – Establish columbarium plazas as needed throughout the existing cemetery site.

There has been an ongoing increase of popularity in cremation as the choice for interment, and it is reasonable to project that cremation burials will continue to grow over time. Our municipal cemetery is currently at a cremation interment rate of 67% and this continues to increase each year. With respect to land use, this is a very positive trend, as regular burials can consume large areas of greenspace and the ongoing maintenance is costly.

A columbarium is a place for the respectful storage of cinerary urns which hold the deceased's cremated remains. The columbarium plaza established at the existing cemetery site has been an exceedingly popular burial option within our community as



outlined previously in this report. Cremation interments have seen a continual increase since this site was established.

In addition to the outdoor columbarium plaza, there have been some requests to consider an indoor columbarium option. The old Brockie Donovan crematorium could be considered for such a purpose, although a complete assessment and plan would be required ahead of proceeding with this type of development.

As outlined in the report, columbarium construction is self financing, in the fact that a portion of the proceeds from each niche sale is returned to the Cemetery Reserve for use in purchasing and installing the next columbarium.

Timeframe – ongoing

Cost – to be funded from the Cemetery Reserve with the average cost being approximately \$150,000 / columbarium

Recommendation #5 – Establish a section within the new cemetery site for the interment of pet remains.

At one time there was a pet cemetery established just east of the City of Brandon, however the cemetery has not been maintained and has resulted in many citizens being leery of trusting others with the remains of their pets. There have been requests for these types of burials at the cemetery, however at this time our bylaw does not allow for such to occur. Under this recommendation a small area would be set aside from the other burial sections that would allow for the burial of cremated pet remains.

Timeframe – mid term

Cost – staff time after the land is acquired and developed

Recommendation #6 – That the City of Brandon maintain the perpetual care program established in 2000.

As outlined in this report, the cost of ongoing development for the cemetery is intended to be funded through the Cemetery Reserve. The Cemetery Reserve is funded through a funding formula related to cemetery sales. While there may be times when the cost of development may exceed that of the reserve, in those circumstances a plan needs to be established to return the extra funds back into the reserve in order to maintain a balance. This exact situation has occurred relating to the columbaria however it was resolved by altering the funding formula from niche sales for a period of time.

This type of financial arrangement ensures that the ongoing capital and long term maintenance needs of the cemetery are being met without having to look to the general tax base to fund these.

Timeframe – immediate

Cost – no cost



Recommendation #7 – That the City of Brandon utilize penetrating radar technology to identify vacant plots and then start the process of reclaiming them.

It is believed that there are numerous plots that are vacant especially in the older part of the cemetery. In the past it was not uncommon for a family to purchase a grouping of plots for the entire family's use. As a result of the war, many children were buried abroad or in the Veterans Section, leaving a number of plots vacant. In some cases, family members would choose not to be buried at that site and would be buried in alternate locations. In others, burials were made one on top of the other or within the same plot in the case of cremation.

Timeframe – short term (2010 Budget Year)
Cost – \$25,000

Recommendation #8 – Investigate incorporating a virtual tour tool on the website

The records and information about the cemetery are available, so if an internet search tool can be identified at a nominal cost, then this should be considered. Of course this project would not be a priority for the corporation at this time, but it should be investigated as a future improvement that could be made to enhance services.

Timeframe – long term
Cost – \$8,000

Recommendation #9 – Develop and incorporate a naming and signage guideline policy for the Brandon Municipal Cemetery.

Currently the cemetery is broken down into numbered sections that are intended to assist individuals in locating graves. There is limited signage in terms of these sections and there is no signage related to the various roadways within the cemetery. The combination of these two elements can make it difficult to provide directions to individuals if they do not have a map of the cemetery.

A naming configuration could be established that would designate sections and roadways. From there, a signage configuration similar to that being designed for other parks and pathway under the Recreation Facilities Master Plan could be used to depict these areas.

Timeframe – long term
Cost – \$50,000 for signage

Recommendation #10 – Develop and incorporate a program in conjunction with the City of Brandon Naming Rights Guidelines, to incorporate memorial attributes into the Cemetery.

Amenities such as arbors, benches, fountains, statutes and sun dials all add to the fabric of a cemetery. These types of things are extremely important however they can be quite costly to obtain and maintain. Over the years, we have been approached by friends and



families of deceased individuals, who are interested in donated these types of items in memory of their loved ones. Establishing a program will allow for this information to be readily available and promoted. It will be important that the prices charged, should be on be on a cost recovery basis only or the perception could be that this is a commercialized activity geared at taking advantage of someone's loss.

Timeframe – mid term

Cost – staff time

Recommendation #11 – Develop a new Veteran Section within the new cemetery grounds.

With the current sections in the Brandon Cemetery set aside for burials of veterans (as defined by the Royal Canadian Legion), nearing their capacity, consideration will have to be given to what measures will be taken to accommodate veteran burials once the current land allotment is full. It is recommended that discussion commence immediately upon the acquiring of the new cemetery land with the Royal Canadian Legion to identify an appropriate area. At this point there are only 123 plots remaining in this section of the cemetery.

Timeframe – mid term

Cost – staff time after the land is acquired and developed

Conclusion

The most pressing matter that we face as a community, related to the cemetery, is the need to acquire additional cemetery land in the very near future. We will need adequate time to plan and develop this land in order to have it usable at the appropriate time. The more time we have to develop the land, the easier it will be to spread out these costs over time.

We clearly understand that over the next few years, we will see a rise in the number of deaths as our population continues to age. A great many individuals do not pre-plan for their burial and take it for granted that plots will be available when that time comes. Cemetery services are something that many of our citizens have come to rely on the City to offer, and by having that responsibility we are entrusted with ensuring those needs are met.

