Oakley City, Summit Land Conservancy

Conservation Burial Proposal, April 2024

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Oakley City owns approximately 144.36 acres along Pinyon Lane (OT-270-X).

The land is currently leased for grazing, holds an over-flow pond for Oakley’s City water supply, and has trails that connect to forest service land. There is also a public works building on the property.

Oakley City proposes that the site would be appropriate for a conservation cemetery and public trails.

In partnership with the City of Oakley, the Summit Land Conservancy will work to create a public nature sanctuary that will also host conservation burials.

*Conservation Burial:*

National Conservation Burial Standards require that a cemetery be held by a conservation organization, like the Summit Land Conservancy and protected by a conservation easement. Burials are conducted in a natural way, without chemicals or synthetic materials. There are no gravestones, but there may be a memorial wall or area where names are listed. Gravesites are marked and recorded via GPS. The land is managed for native species, wildlife, and natural trails.

Natural burial is clean. There are no harsh chemicals that damage the watershed or stay forever in the ground.

*The Oakley Sanctuary will have three components:*

1. The Land
2. The Cemetery
3. Conservation Funeral Mortuary
4. The Land:
   1. Oakley City will continue to own the property. The City will grant a conservation easement on at least 20 acres to protect public access, relatively natural wildlife habitat, and open views from Pinion Lane. The conservation easement will allow human burials that conform to national Green Burial Council standards for conservation burial.
   2. Summit Land Conservancy will draft the conservation easement and baseline document and raise the stewardship funding.
5. The Cemetery:
   1. Oakley City will establish a long-term service provider contract with Summit Land Conservancy to manage the cemetery and conservation burials, including open and closing graves, and recording grave locations. Summit Land Conservancy will also coordinate other property management, such as trail building and maintenance, restoration of native vegetation, and support the opening and closing of gravesites. The Conservancy will likely need to hire new staff for this purpose.
   2. Conservation Burial recommends no more than 300 graves per acre. Not all of the property would be immediately used for burials. We’d start with a five-acre area.
6. Conservation Funeral Mortuary:
   1. Summit Land Conservancy will enter into an exclusive contract with Starks Funeral Parlor for all mortuary services. All burials will need to go through Starks to ensure proper conservation burial standards are met. Starks will achieve and maintain certification as a qualified Green Burial Council provider.
   2. Starks will be responsible for collecting and distributing all fees, coordinating with cemetery management staff for preparing the site, arranging for any tents, restrooms or other amenities needed for ceremonies on site.

*Money and Management*

1. The Conservancy will raise funds for:
   * 1. The conservation easement stewardship endowment prior to placing the property under conservation easement. This endowment will ensure the long-term protection of the property as a conservation cemetery with public access. This endowment is for the stewardship and defense of the easement and is separate from the restoration fund.
     2. The Conservancy will also collect a portion of each gravesite fee that will be allocated to a Restoration and Conservation fund. This fund will ensure the property is maintained for public access with native vegetation and restored as necessary. The fund may also be used to pay for additional conservation. NOTE: because this conservation cemetery is owned by the City of Oakley, no special cemetery endowment is required.
2. Starks will
3. collect all fees for cemetery and burial services.
4. Pay the Conservancy 35% of each plot sale for the Restoration and Conservation Fund.
5. Pay the Conservancy an established fee for opening and closing the grave.
6. Pay Oakley City 60% of each plot sale.
7. Handle all mortuary and funeral services in accordance with Conservation Burial Standards
8. Market Conservation burial.
9. Oakley City will
10. Direct anyone interested in use of the cemetery to the Summit Land Conservancy and/or Stark Mortuary.

*Potential Pricing:*

Plots at conventional cemeteries in Utah cost about $2,800. This does not include a fee for opening and closing the grave, casket, name plaque, or other mortuary services. This is a starting point for starting prices. The feasibility of increased pricing for specific site selection will be considered. Presales will also be possible and the administration and timing for distribution of proceeds (between Starks, Conservancy and Oakley City will be considered.

After reviewing site selection at conservation cemeteries in other parts of the nation, this proposal does not anticipate that people will be able to pre-select their gravesite, although they will be able to pre-purchase the “right to a spot.” Because of changes in the natural environment, and because we will likely avoid a grid-type of gravesite allocation, actual site locations will only be granted at time of need. Family members will be allowed to visit the sanctuary and choose from the sites that are available at that time.

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|  | Sites assigned at time of need |
| Presale | $3,000 |
| At time of need | $3,500 |
| Oakley Resident Presale | $2,500 |
| Oakley Resident at need | $2,800 |

State law does not require municipalities to maintain a cemetery endowment. Oakley City will, therefore, be free to allocate plot fees as it wishes. The Conservancy will allocate its portion of the plot fees to a Restoration and Conservation fund for restoration, trail maintenance, and other costs associated with keeping the land in a relatively natural state with public access.

*Future Plans:*

A space for ceremony, mortuary services, and a caretaker’s home are often part of cemeteries and may become desirable. The initial 20-acre conservation easement will not include a potential building envelope for both a caretaker’s home and a facility for mortuary services and ceremonies, because there is other land available for these facilities. Starks Funeral Parlor has expressed an interest in building a space for ceremonies and shouldering that cost, although this should be negotiated when building a facility becomes desirable.