



World Forum on  
Urban Forests  
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*PS 2.2 Between Past and Present -  
Changing Spaces and Places*

# Cemeteries as eternal green-spaces? Shifting uses in the United States and Sweden

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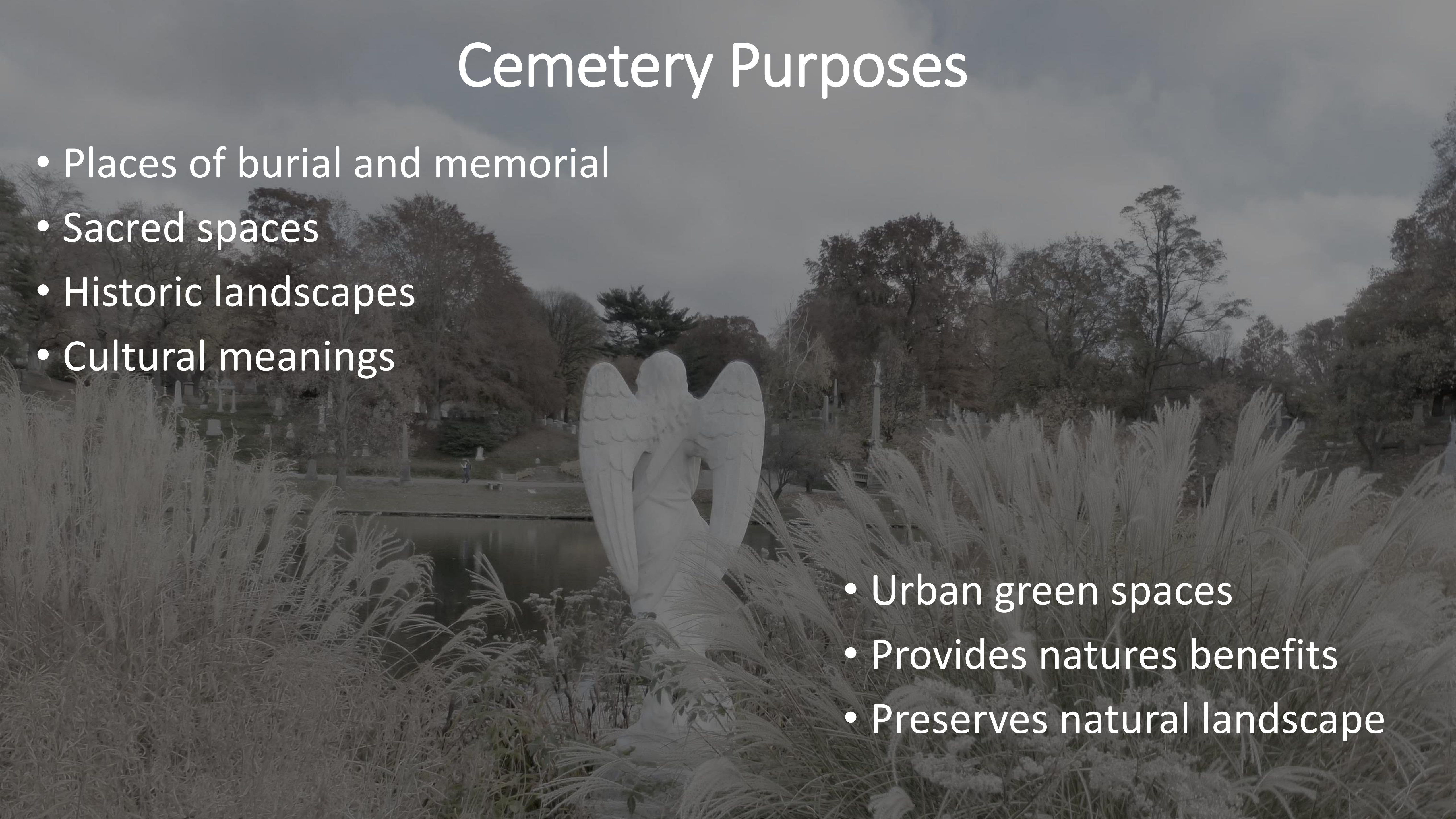




# Cemetery Purposes

- Places of burial and memorial
- Sacred spaces
- Historic landscapes
- Cultural meanings

- Urban green spaces
- Provides nature's benefits
- Preserves natural landscape





# Policy Differences

## Sweden

- Publicly owned/managed
- All Swedes pay a burial tax
- Burial tax funds pay for maintenance of green spaces
- Re-use of graves (without disturbing bodies already buried)
- All cemeteries protected for cultural value in the law
- Management plan for long term preservation of the landscape

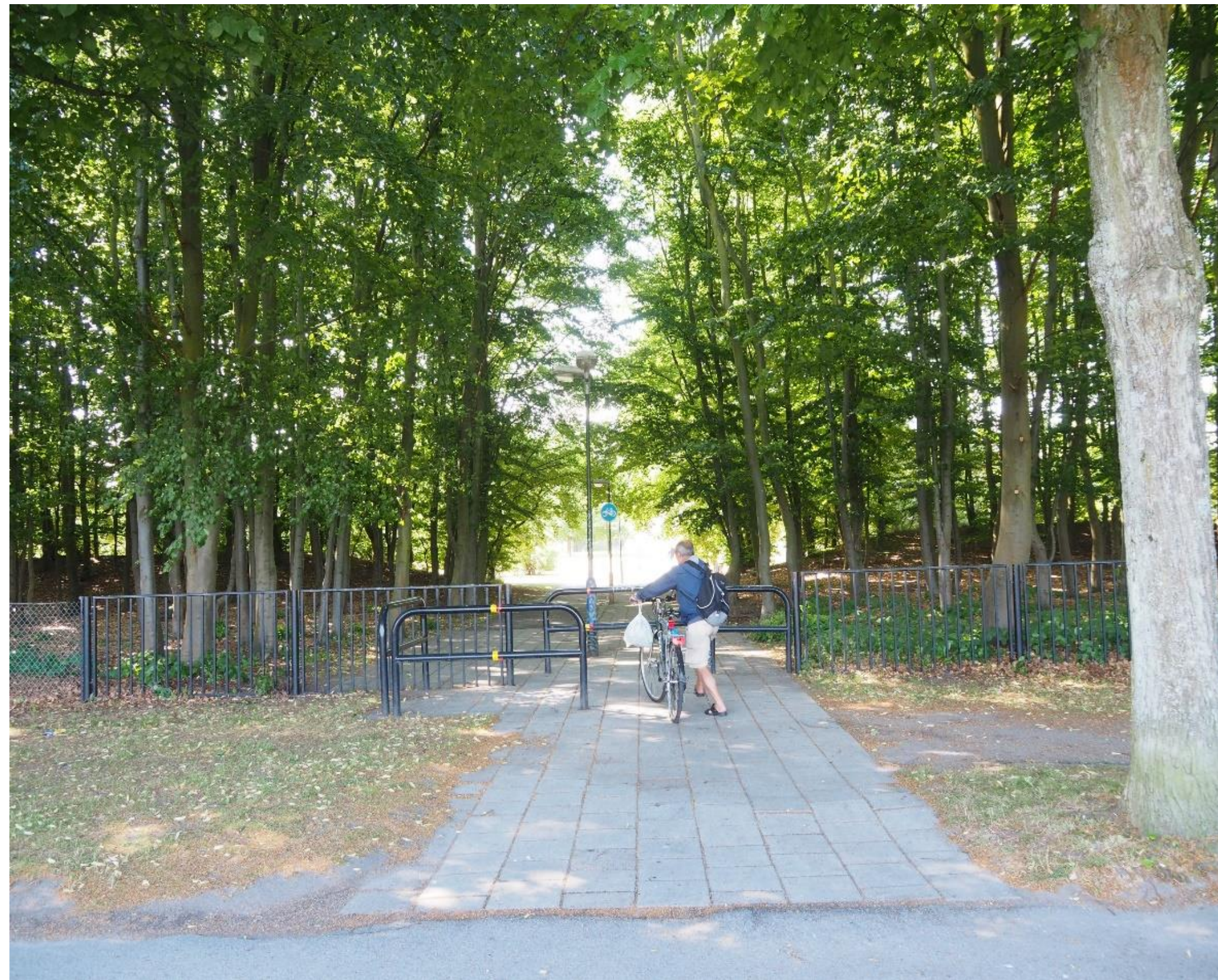
## United States

- Privately owned/managed
- Grave sites privately owned
- Sale of gravesite lots and burials pay for green space management
- Only some cemeteries are protected as cultural and historical landscapes
- Some state government oversight
- Management plan dependent on cemetery staff/Board of Directors



# Case Studies

**Eastern Cemetery**  
**Malmö, Sweden**



**Green-Wood Cemetery**  
**Brooklyn, New York**





# Eastern Cemetery - Malmö, Sweden



- **Size:** 60 hectares (148 acres)
- **Landscape topography:**
  - One large hill separating the two flat areas on the north and south side.
- **Founded:** 1917
- **Architect:** Sigurd Lewerentz
- **Neighbors**
  - Large housing complexes, student housing



# Eastern Cemetery - Malmö, Sweden





# Landscape Management and Public Use

## Eastern Cemetery

- Landscaping effect the use - many of the graves are hidden by hedges
- A change in acceptance by the officials, the visitors and the grave owners
- Does not actively try to invite people
- No events driven by the cemetery, but private vendors are operating





# Evolution

## Eastern Cemetery

- As more graves will be returned, the cemeteries will be more open
- The more open the cemetery is, the more it will be used as a park
- Changes views on how the funds will be used

*“We, the taxpayers, who fund the cemetery, what do we want it to provide?”*





# Green-Wood Cemetery - Brooklyn, New York



- **Size:** 478 acres (193 hectares)
  - 560,000 permanent residents
- **Landscape Topography:**
  - Paths, hills, valleys, glacial ponds
- **Founded:** 1838
  - Early rural cemeteries movement
- **National Historic Landmark**
  - Architecture, historic grave statuary
- **Neighbors**
  - Ethnically diverse neighborhoods



# Green-Wood Cemetery – Brooklyn, New York





# Landscape Management and Public Use

## Green-Wood Cemetery

- Changing turf practices, working with instead of against nature
- Alive at Green-Wood program about nature/biodiversity signage and map
- Certified Arboretum in 2015
- Extensive public event programming - history, art, horticulture, and nature
- Enhanced openness to visitors at gates, neighborhood inclusion



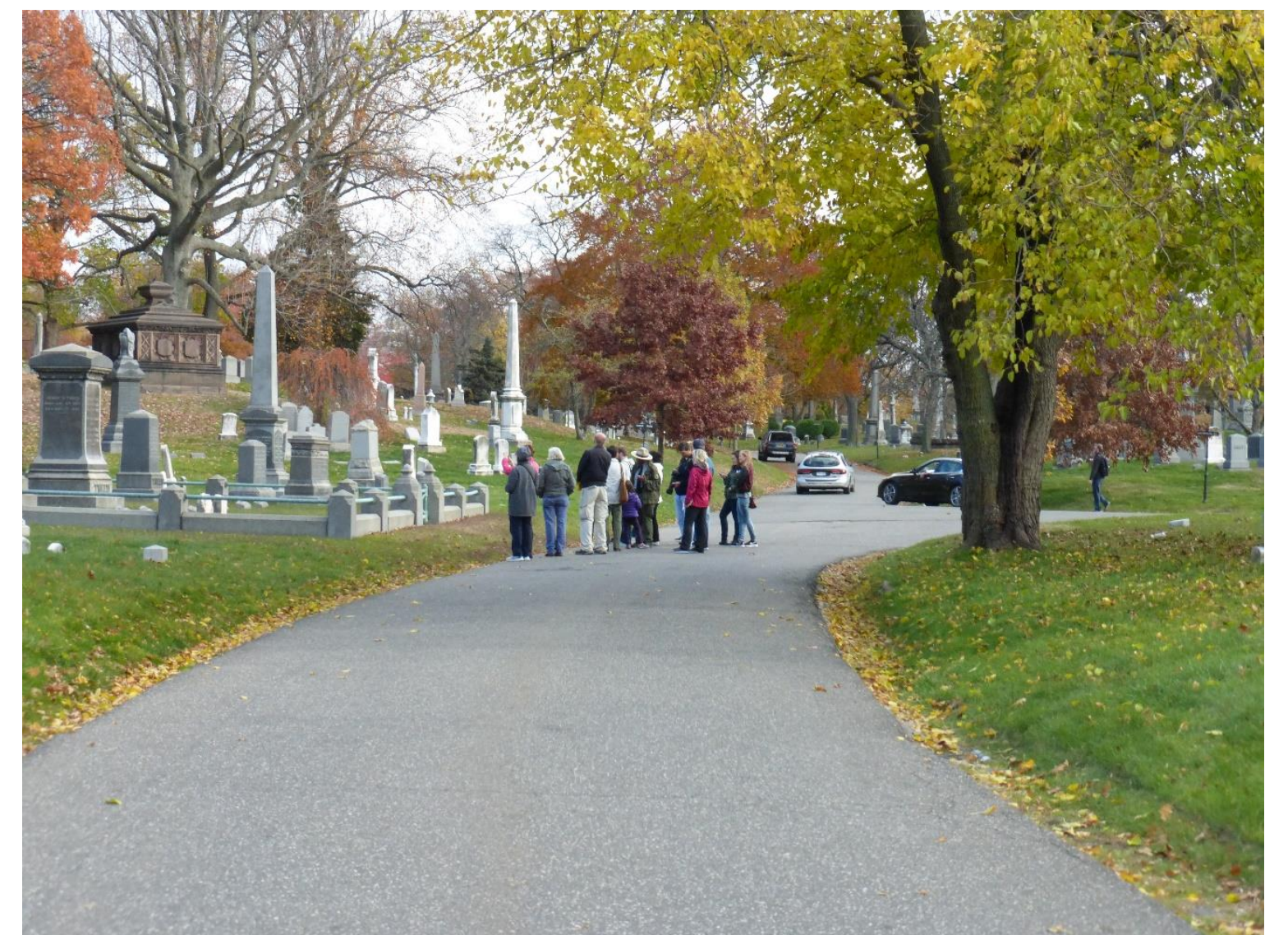


# Evolution

## Green-Wood Cemetery

- New program and horticultural staff pivotal to increased public event focus
- Welcome and Educational Center to enhance education and access to archives
- Burial lot space has become limited, so need new sources of income

*"We have two missions. To bury the dead in Brooklyn, but also to maintain what we have here. So that's the balancing act...."*





# Future Directions

- As cities densify, the importance of cemeteries use as urban green spaces will increase
- Cemeteries will remain sacred places of burials, internments and memorial
- Peoples use and perspectives on cemeteries are changing
- Public versus private funding effects management and maintenance decisions





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