

**CITY OF DANA POINT  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
AGENDA REPORT**

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**DATE:** OCTOBER 28, 2019

**TO:** DANA POINT PLANNING COMMISSION

**FROM:** COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
MATT SCHNEIDER, ACTING DIRECTOR OF COMM DEV  
SEAN NICHOLAS, AICP, SENIOR PLANNER

**SUBJECT:** MINOR CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT CUP18-0021(M) TO INSTALL A COLUMBARIUM WITHIN THE EXISTING CONTEMPLATION GARDEN AT THE REAR OF THE PROJECT SITE. A COLUMBARIUM IS A CONDITIONALLY PERMITTED USE IN THE COMMUNITY FACILITIES (CF) ZONING DISTRICT. THE PROJECT SITE IS THE GLORIA DEI CHURCH LOCATED AT 33501 STONEHILL DRIVE

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**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Planning Commission adopt the attached draft resolution approving Minor Conditional Use Permit CUP18-0021(M) (Action Document 1).

**OWNER:** Gloria Dei Lutheran Church of Dana Point

**APPLICANT:** David Mattson, Pastor of Gloria Dei

**REQUEST:** A request to install a columbarium within the existing contemplation garden at the rear of the project site.

**LOCATION:** 33501 Stonehill Drive (APN: 628-211-02)

**NOTICE:** Public Hearing Notices were mailed to property owners within 500 feet. The same notice was published in the Dana Point News on October 18, 2019, and notices were posted on October 18, 2019, at Dana Point City Hall, the Dana Point Post Office, the Capistrano Beach Post Office, and the Dana Point Library.

**ENVIRONMENTAL:** Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the project is Categorically Exempt per Section 15303 (Class 3 – New Construction) California Code of Regulations. Class 3(c) of the CEQA Guidelines stipulates that projects that are consistent with the applicable General Plan and zoning regulations, and a non-residential development less than 10,000 square feet are categorically exempt from CEQA.

**ISSUES:**

1. Is the proposal consistent with the City's adopted Zoning Ordinance/Local Coastal

Program?

2. Is the proposal compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and City?
3. Does the project satisfy all the findings required for approving a Minor Conditional Use Permit?

**BACKGROUND:**

The project site is a 140,000 square foot parcel with an existing church, contemplation garden, and pre-school. The church, Gloria Dei, was established in 1966 under the authority of the County of Orange. The Church received approval of a new Master Plan in 2014, including a remodel, new sanctuary, and contemplation garden. As a component of that Master Plan, the columbarium was proposed to be installed. However, after neighborhood concerns were raised during the public hearing/review process, the Church withdrew the columbarium request, stating if they move forward with a columbarium they would do so under a separate permit. This Minor Conditional Use Permit is the separate columbarium request.

On July 3, 2019, a public hearing was conducted by City Staff for the columbarium application. The public hearing was provided to present the project to interested stakeholders and solicit their feedback. At the hearing, thirteen (13) residents spoke on the project. Based on the public's interest and pursuant to Dana Point Zoning Code (DPZC) Section 9.65.040(d), the item has been placed on the Planning Commission agenda.

**DISCUSSION:**

**Proposed Project**

Gloria Dei is proposing a four foot and four inch (4'-4") pre-fabricated columbarium to be installed on an existing bench within the contemplation garden at the rear of the project site. Image 1 below shows the site where it will be installed. The columbarium is proposed to have 222 niches, which can hold up to 444 urns (two per niche). The niches will be covered by a granite face and will have room for two plaques identifying the interned.

The site is located within the Community Facilities (CF) Zoning District, and a columbarium is a conditionally permitted use. The site is surrounded by residential development to the south and west, a vacant open space parcel to the north, and Stonehill Drive to the east. The proposed plans are included as Supporting Document 6.

**Image 1: Proposed Location of Pre-Fabricated Columbarium**



The comments made by residents at the July 3<sup>rd</sup> public hearing were generally regarding four issues: 1) Whether the use is allowed; 2) Concerns about the church profiting or introducing a business use to the property; 3) Impacts to the existing pre-school; and 4) Impacts to property values. The following addresses each of these issues.

**Columbarium an Allowed Use**

As noted above, the church has been operating at the location since 1966. The Community Facility (CF) zone in which the project is located includes “cemetery” as a conditionally permitted use. Based on staff’s research, cemetery uses have been permitted on-site since the adoption of the City’s original Zoning Ordinance. “Cemetery” is defined in the DPZC as “property which is used for the interring of the dead, including a columbarium and/or mausoleum.” The regulations associated with cemeteries in the CF zoning district have not been modified or amended since their original adoption. Therefore, based on the DPZC, a columbarium is a conditionally permitted use in the CF zoning district.

**Concerns on Profits from the Columbarium**

Costs and profits are not standards by which the City evaluates projects. However, the CF district’s stated intent and purpose is to provide for public, quasi-public, and private community uses to serve the needs of residents, visitors, property owners, employers and employees of businesses in the City. The District includes both public and private (emphasis added) community uses such as civic buildings, schools, churches, hospitals, cultural, recreational facilities, sanitary sewer facilities, and other public facilities. The intent and purpose of the CF district does not strictly limit properties to non-profit or institutional

uses. Private, for profit businesses, such as hospitals, schools, and day care facilities are permitted.

*Pre-School Impacts*

At the public hearing, concerns were raised regarding children attending a pre-school near the columbarium. While attendance at the pre-school is completely voluntary, staff contacted a similarly situated facility in San Clemente with an existing columbarium, pre-school, and church. Based on those discussions, the other facility stated they did not encounter any impacts or issues as a result of the columbarium installation, nor did they note a reduction in enrollment.

*Property Value Impacts*

Concerns regarding potential impacts to surrounding property values have been raised. To provide the Planning Commission information on this issue, staff did an online review of what research and information has been completed on the subject. While no scientific or peer reviewed studies were located, staff was able to locate several articles on the subject. Several articles reviewed referenced material from real estate information platforms such as redfin.com and realtor.com. Based on those articles, conclusions appear to vary significantly, as Redfin.com found that there was a 13% increase in property values adjacent to cemeteries (although properties may take longer to sell), and Realtor.com found there was a 12% decrease in property values adjacent to cemeteries. Staff have provided copies of the articles as a reference (attachment 5).

Finally, there were concerns brought up regarding online identification of the columbarium. Staff verified that two existing church columbariums in San Clemente did not have information identifying the columbariums on Google Maps. Staff has added condition of approval 10 that prevents the church from advertising on Google Maps, or similar mapping programs or applications, the existence of the columbarium. Additionally, if the columbarium is added by an outside party, the church shall strive to get it removed. Staff has also reached out to the City of San Clemente to inquire if there had been any complaints associated with the columbariums that have been installed, and staff indicated there have been no complaints or impacts.

**MINOR CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT:**

Pursuant to DPZC Section 9.65.040(a)(6) a project modification determined to have a moderate potential for adverse impacts may be approved by a Minor Conditional Use Permit. The ancillary use of the columbarium is a conditionally permitted use in the CF zoning district and will not generate an increase in use of the church. Condition of approval 11 has been added that funeral services cannot be held at the columbarium, and the internment of remains within the columbarium shall only be attended by applicable church officials and immediate family, and shall not be done on Sundays or during any other special event, services onsite, and federal holidays. Condition of approval 12 limits hours of visitation from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm.



Section 9.65.040 (c) of the DPZC stipulates a minimum of four (4) findings to approve a Minor Conditional Use Permit, requiring that the project:

1. *The use will not jeopardize, adversely affect, endanger, or otherwise constitute a menace to the public health, safety, or general welfare, or be materially detrimental to the property of other persons located in the vicinity of such use.*
2. *That the proposed conditional use is consistent with the General Plan.*
3. *That the nature, condition, and development of adjacent uses, buildings, and structures have been considered, and the proposed conditional use will not adversely or be materially detrimental to the adjacent uses, buildings, or structures.*
4. *That the proposed site is adequate in size and shape to accommodate the yards, walls, fences, parking and loading facilities, landscaping, and other land use development features prescribed in this code and required by the Commission or Council in order to integrate the use with existing and planned uses in the vicinity.*

The required findings are articulated in the attached draft Resolution identified as Action Document 1.

**PUBLIC CORRESPONDENCE:**

Staff has received a number of public letters/emails regarding the project. The correspondences collected are included as Supporting Document 3. The minutes of the July 3<sup>rd</sup> public hearing on this issue have been provided as Supporting Document 4.

**CONCLUSION:**

Based on the analysis of the proposed use, the project is consistent with Community Facilities zoning district. Staff has reviewed the comments received and incorporated conditions of approval noted above. Staff recommends approval of the Minor Conditional Use Permit for the proposed columbarium.



Sean Nicholas, AICP  
Senior Planner



Matt Schneider  
Director of Community Development

**ACTION DOCUMENT:**

1. Draft Planning Commission Resolution 19-10-28-XX

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:**

2. Vicinity Map
3. Public Correspondence
4. Minutes from the July 3<sup>rd</sup> Administrative Public Hearing
5. Applicable Online Articles
6. Proposed Plans

**Action Document 1:          Draft Planning Commission Resolution 19-10-28-XX**

**RESOLUTION NO. 19-10-28-XX**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF  
DANA POINT, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING MINOR CONDITIONAL USE  
PERMIT CUP18-0021(M) TO INSTALL A COLUMBARIUM WITHIN THE  
EXISTING CONTEMPLATION GARDEN AT THE REAR OF THE PROJECT  
SITE AT 33501 STONEHILL DRIVE**

The Planning Commission for the City of Dana Point does hereby resolve as follows:

WHEREAS, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church of Dana Point (the "Owner"), owns the real property commonly referred to as 33501 Stonehill Drive (APN: 628-211-02) (the "Property"); and

WHEREAS, the Owners authorized David Mattson (the "Applicant") and the Applicant caused to be filed a verified application for a Minor Conditional Use Permit to install a columbarium within the existing contemplation garden at the rear of the project site; and

WHEREAS, said verified application constitutes a request as provided by Title 9 of the Dana Point Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission did, on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2019, hold a duly noticed public hearing as prescribed by law to consider said request; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the project is Categorically Exempt per Section 15303 (Class 3-New Construction); and

WHEREAS, at said public hearing, upon hearing and considering all testimony and arguments, if any, of all persons desiring to be heard, said Commission considered all factors relating to Minor Conditional Use Permit CUP18-0021(M).

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of Dana Point as follows;

- A) The above recitations are true and correct and are incorporated herein by this reference.

Findings:

- B) Based on the evidence presented at the public hearing, the Planning Commission adopts the following findings and approves Minor Conditional Use Permit CUP18-0021(M) to allow the installation of a columbarium within the existing contemplation Garden, subject to conditions:

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- 1) The use will not jeopardize, adversely affect, endanger, or otherwise constitute a menace to the public health, safety, or general welfare, or be materially detrimental to the property of other persons located in the vicinity of such use **in that, the proposed columbarium use is ancillary to the primary functions of the site as a church. The location where the columbarium is to be installed is integrated into an existing wall within the “contemplation garden” at the rear of the project site. Due to its incorporation into an existing landscaped area and location at the rear of the property, the proposed columbarium installation will not be visible from the public right-of-way. Conditions of approval have been added to address potential conflicts between internments and other church related activities.**
- 2) That the proposed conditional use is consistent with the General Plan **in that, this project site is zoned Community Facilities (CF) and has been operating as a church since 1966 under the authority of the County of Orange. Consistent with the Public Facilities/Growth Management Element Policy 5.9 of the General Plan facilities such as the proposed columbarium are encouraged to be provided. The proposed ancillary use of a columbarium is a conditionally permitted use on-site and will provide a service in the community that does not exist.**
- 3) That the nature, condition, and development of adjacent uses, buildings, and structures have been considered, and the proposed conditional use will not adversely or be materially detrimental to the adjacent uses, buildings, or structures **in that, the columbarium is an ancillary use to the site. The location where the columbarium is to be installed is integrated into an existing wall within the “contemplation garden” at the rear of the project site. Due to its incorporation into an existing landscaped area and location at the rear of the property, the proposed columbarium installation will not be visible from the public right-of-way. Conditions of approval have been added to address operational components regarding interning to avoid conflicts with other church functions and limited hours of visitation.**
- 4) That the proposed site is adequate in size and shape to accommodate the yards, walls, fences, parking and loading

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facilities, landscaping, and other land use development features prescribed in this code and required by the Commission or Council in order to integrate the use with existing and planned uses in the vicinity **in that, the pre-fabricated columbarium will be attached to an existing bench and wall located in the contemplative garden at the rear of the property. As to parking for the ancillary use, conditions of approval have been added to avoid conflicts with other church functions. Compliance with the conditions of approval will make sure there is no overlap of major events on-site that may impact parking availability. The columbarium will not be visible from the adjacent public right-of-way.**

**Conditions:**

**A. General:**

1. Approval of this application is to allow the installation of a pre-fabricated columbarium at the Gloria Dei church site. Subsequent submittals for this project shall be in substantial compliance with the plans presented to the Planning Commission, and in compliance with the applicable provisions of the Dana Point General Plan and the Dana Point Zoning Code (DPZC).
2. This discretionary permit(s) will become void two (2) years following the effective date of the approval if the privileges authorized are not implemented or utilized or, if construction work is involved and such work is not commenced within such two (2) year time period or; the Director of Community Development or the Planning Commission, as applicable, grants an extension of time. Such time extensions shall be requested in writing by the applicant or authorized agent prior to the expiration of the initial two-year approval period, or any subsequently approved time extensions and in accordance with the appropriate sections of the Orange County Zoning Code and the Dana Point Subdivision Code.
3. The application is approved for the location and design of the uses, structures, features, and materials, shown on the approved plans. Any relocation, alteration, or addition to any use, structure, feature, or material, not specifically approved by this application, will nullify this approving action. If any changes are proposed regarding the location or alteration to the appearance or use of any structure, an amendment to this permit shall be submitted for approval by the Director of

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Community Development. If the Director of Community Development determines that the proposed change complies with the provisions and the spirit and intent of this approval action, and that the action would have been the same for the amendment as for the approved plans, the Director may approve the amendment without requiring a new public hearing.

4. The applicant or any successor-in-interest shall defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the City of Dana Point ("CITY"), its agents, officers, or employees from any claim, action, or proceeding against the CITY, its agents, officers, or employees to attack, set aside, void, or annul an approval or any other action of the CITY, its advisory agencies, appeal boards, or legislative body concerning the project. Applicant's duty to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the City shall include paying the CITY's attorney's fees, costs and expenses incurred concerning the claim, action, or proceeding.

The applicant or any successor-in-interest shall further protect, defend, indemnify and hold harmless the City, its officers, employees, and agents from any and all claims, actions, or proceedings against the City, its officers, employees, or agents arising out of or resulting from the negligence of the applicant or the applicant's agents, employees, or contractors. Applicant's duty to defend, indemnify, and hold harmless the City shall include paying the CITY's attorney's fees, costs and expenses incurred concerning the claim, action, or proceeding.

The applicant shall also reimburse the City for City Attorney fees and costs associated with the review of the proposed project and any other related documentation.

5. The applicant and applicant's successors in interest shall be fully responsible for knowing and complying with all conditions of approval, including making known the conditions to City staff for future governmental permits or actions on the project site.
6. The applicant and applicant's successors in interest shall be responsible for payment of all applicable fees along with reimbursement for all City expense in ensuring compliance with these conditions.
7. Building(s) shall comply with the 2016 editions of the Building Code with all local amendments, unless submitted after December 21,

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2019 and the new Building Code with all local amendments shall apply.

8. Project "*Condition of Approval*" shall appear on the submitted drawings.
9. No additional outdoor lighting is approved as a component of this project. Any future outdoor lighting proposed is subject to separate review to ensure it complies with City standards and will not negatively impact adjacent properties.
10. The church shall not advertise on Google Maps, or similar mapping programs or applications, the existence of the columbarium. Additionally, if the columbarium is added by an outside party, the church shall strive to get it removed.
11. Funeral services cannot be held at the columbarium. Internment of remains within the columbarium shall only be attended by applicable church officials and immediate family. No internments shall be done on Sundays, during any special events, other services on-site, or federal holidays.
12. Visitation of the columbarium shall be limited to 7:00am to 6:00pm every day, except during the times and days specified in condition of approval eleven (11).
13. After installation, Applicant shall obtain final approval from the Planning Division prior to Building Permit final inspection.



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PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED at a regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Dana Point, California, held on this 28<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2019, by the following vote, to wit:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Roy Dohner, Chairman  
Planning Commission

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Matt Schneider, Director  
Community Development Department

### Vicinity Map

### Vicinity Map



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**Supporting Document 3:                      Public Correspondence**

**Sean Nicholas**

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**From:** Mary Vaughan <marygvaughan@cox.net>  
**Sent:** Saturday, July 20, 2019 4:40 PM  
**To:** Sean Nicholas  
**Subject:** Approval of permit for Columbarium in Dana Point

As members of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church on 33501 Stonehill Drive, Dana Point, we strongly support approval of the Columbarium planned on site. Our family has been connected to Gloria Dei since 1971. The custom of church burial is common throughout the world. It will be well out of sight from the road, no traffic hazard, or impact on the neighborhood. This a positive use of the property requiring no expense to taxpayers or impact on property values.

Mr and Mrs Grady Vaughan 32371 Alipaz Street #111 San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675

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**Sean Nicholas**

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**From:** sampk68@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Sunday, July 21, 2019 9:06 PM  
**To:** Matt Schneider  
**Cc:** Sean Nicholas  
**Subject:** Re: UPDATE - Gloria Dei (MCUP 18-0021)  
**Attachments:** Untitled-5.pdf; Untitled-4.pdf; Untitled-3.pdf; Untitled-2.pdf; Untitled.pdf

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Completed

Mr. Schneider,  
Mr. Nicholas,  
City of Dana Point, CA

We, Sam and Ariana and Nick Pourbabak, the family residing homeowner of 25221 Perch Dr., Dana Point, CA, are writing you this letter to officially oppose the "Minor Conditional Use Permit 18-0021" to modify approval of Conditional Use Permit 13-0006 planned by the City of Dana Point under Project Number CUP18-0021(M) at the Project Location 33501 Stonehill Dr. (APN 639-211-02) to the Applicant Gloria Dei Lutheran Church on the ground of health and mental safety of the neighboring residences and the citizens of the city of Dana Point and the rest of the public, while the Church is planning to benefit financially from selling Columbarium slots.

Our House is located exactly south of the project location, directly facing the subject site. To install the proposed columbarium will impose a significant and direct public safety hazard in case of a breach, such as a possible earthquake which is common in the state of California, as well as direct and significant mental stress, such as causing anxiety and panic disorders, to our family, knowing the remains of unknown people are kept in the backyard of our neighbor next door across the fence from our residence. This will also put liability on the applicant as well as the City of Dana Point in case of future physical and mental stress or illnesses, again, while the Church is planning to benefit financially from selling Columbarium slots.

Also attached, report from realtor.com specify on the adverse effect of home values. Finally, enclosed maps show density of real estate activities to be far less within close proximity to memorial grounds.

Please consider this letter as our family official written correspondence to oppose the above-mentioned permit and project number and we preserve any and all rights to pursue any and all possible venues against the Applicant and the City of Dana Point in case of approval and subsequent physical or mental stress to our family.

Regards,

Sam Pourbabak, Ariana Pourbabak

My name is Kristyn Hill, I am a stay at home mother of two young boys. We live on Sea Bright Drive, directly across from the church, and were one of the parties that received the notice in the mail.

I am a Catholic, and my religion opposes the cremation of remains in almost all circumstances. However, I feel very strongly that an area housing human remains, such as this Cemetery-Alternative, or a Death Wall, should be kept far away from where people live.

Our kitchen and living room back the church and its parking lot where this Death Wall is being proposed. When cannot be forced with thoughts of stored dead human remains in boxes next to our house. Also, my young boy's bedroom windows overlook the church, its parking lot and where this death wall would be. My young boys are very sensitive and impressionable, they have had nightmares in the past and we cannot subject them to this constant fear regardless of how church might claim that this proposed death wall will be hidden and unnoticeable.

Overall, having any cemetery alternative so close to our house, gives me a very uneasy and creepy feeling, that this is invading our home and our living space and our investment. I strongly feel that it is completely unreasonable and unnecessary.

Furthermore, had I known the housing of remains would have been an issue, we would not have purchased this home where we are raising our family. It would be totally invading our family's living space. We have been fine and happy with the church and its construction, but definitely not the Death Wall. There are no other places in Dana Point that have to deal with this stigma. We simply do not want it near our home and risk our primary home investment.

In addition, before I had my boys, I was a successful licensed real estate agent for over 15 years. I had a high end listing many years ago that sat across from a mausoleum. The consistent feedback was that everybody thought the home was lovely, but nobody wanted to be across the street from human remains, it was just too creepy. The listing ended up selling for a much lower price due to the mausoleum, after being on the market forever. I am convinced that this will be detrimental to our property values.

I was also very surprised to get this notice in the mail and the way it has been written. I think the letter was very misleading, like the church was asking for a mediation garden. I also find it suspicious that we are meeting here on July 3<sup>rd</sup> right before a holiday. I question the fairness and neutrality of this process and it makes me feel even more violated about this situation. I completely and strongly oppose this permit in its entire form.

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**Sean Nicholas**

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**From:** k h <kristynbythesea@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 23, 2019 12:07 PM  
**To:** Sean Nicholas  
**Subject:** Re: Gloria Dei  
**Attachments:** KHPoints.docx; Real estate license 11.jpg; Real estate license.jpg

Hi Sean,

Thank you very much! Attached is the document with changes. I have also included my California real estate license (maiden name) which I have had since 2007. Prior to moving to California, I was a licensed real estate agent and developer in Georgia since 1999. I can speak professionally (and personally) in regards to cemetery and property values.

[https://www.trulia.com/voices/In\\_My\\_Neighborhood/How\\_proximity\\_to\\_a\\_cemetery\\_effects\\_resale\\_value\\_o-419678](https://www.trulia.com/voices/In_My_Neighborhood/How_proximity_to_a_cemetery_effects_resale_value_o-419678)

<https://www.realestateagent.com/blog/does-living-near-a-cemetery-affect-home-value/>

Thank you very much.

Kristyn Hill  
33511 Sea Bright Drive, Dana Point, CA 92629 949.282.7492

On Mon, Jul 22, 2019 at 8:08 AM Sean Nicholas <[SNicholas@danapoint.org](mailto:SNicholas@danapoint.org)> wrote:  
Good Morning Kristyn,

Thank you for sending this in. I was hoping you could make one small tweak to the attachment. You do not need to sign it, but could you add something at the bottom like, "Kristyn Hill, Concerned Neighbor"? I just want to make sure when I put these comments together to provide to the Planning Commission once a date is set that it is clear where these letters of concern came from.

Thanks, I appreciate you being part of the process, and as we move forward always feel free to reach out to me directly.

Have a great week,  
Sean

Sean Nicholas, AICP  
Senior Planner, City of Dana Point  
(949) 248-3588  
[snicholas@danapoint.org](mailto:snicholas@danapoint.org)

Please be aware that the effective March 1, 2018, City of Dana Point Community Development and Public Works Public Counter "walk in" Business Hours are Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Counter services after 3:30pm will remain available by appointment only.



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**Sean Nicholas**

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**From:** Kristyn hill <kristynbythesea@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 23, 2019 12:22 PM  
**To:** Sean Nicholas  
**Subject:** Re: Gloria Dei

Thank you very much! I really appreciate it.

This is a very big deal to us because it's our biggest investment. Aside from that, it's where we are raising our young boys. I am sitting outside right now on my patio that is directly across from the church and I just can't tell you how much this would bother me. It's not just the investment, but to me personally it's a spiritual and creepy thing that bothers me till no end. I am typically an easy-going person and not much really gets to me, But this is one thing I really oppose and my immediate neighbors feel the same way. It would encroach on our home where we live. We had no idea when buying our property this would even be an issue (There are no other examples like this in Dana Point). We enjoy living across the street from the church just not a church with any type of death near it.

Thank you very much.

Kristyn

Sent from my iPhone

On Jul 23, 2019, at 12:11 PM, Sean Nicholas <[SNicholas@danapoint.org](mailto:SNicholas@danapoint.org)> wrote:

Thank you Kristyn, I will add this to my file and let you know when we are moving forward to Planning Commission.

Until then, feel free to reach out to me should you have any additional questions or items to add.

Thanks again for participating in the development review process.

Sean

**Sean Nicholas, AICP**  
*Senior Planner, City of Dana Point*  
(949) 248-3588  
[snicholas@danapoint.org](mailto:snicholas@danapoint.org)

*Please be aware that the effective March 1, 2018, City of Dana Point Community Development and Public Works Public Counter "walk in" Business Hours are Monday through Friday 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Counter services after 3:30pm will remain available by appointment only.*

**From:** k h [<mailto:kristynbythesea@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 23, 2019 12:07 PM  
**To:** Sean Nicholas  
**Subject:** Re: Gloria Dei



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**Sean Nicholas**

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**From:** Vivian Dang <[viviandang6@gmail.com](mailto:viviandang6@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 01, 2019 5:33 PM  
**To:** Sean Nicholas  
**Subject:** About Permit 18-0021 at Gloria Dei Church

Hi Sean Nicholas,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Vivian Dang and I grew up in the adjacent neighborhood at 33182 Mesa Vista Dr, Dana Point, CA 92629 right up the street from Thunderbird park. It has come to my attention that Gloria Dei Church, right down the street, is proposing the location for columbarium use.

I'd like to say that I strongly oppose this permit and proposition. Will the public be notified about a hearing date for the application once a date has been set? I would like be present and have an opportunity to voice my opinions.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Warmly,  
Vivian Dang

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Vivian T. Dang  
University of California, Los Angeles  
Class of 2019 || MSN, RN  
Class of 2015 || Psychobiology B.S.  
[viviandang6@gmail.com](mailto:viviandang6@gmail.com)

**PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT**  
**CUP18-0021(M)**  
**OCTOBER 28, 2019**  
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**Sean Nicholas**

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**From:** nga chau <ngahuy5541@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 01, 2019 5:50 PM  
**To:** Sean Nicholas  
**Subject:** Issue concern Gloria Dei (MCUP 18-0021)

Hello Sean Nicholas, Senior Planner city Dana Point,

My name is Nga Chau, owner at 33182 Mesa Vista Dr, Dana Point, CA 92629, which is walking distance to Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.

Since we moved here in 2004, during that time we've seen church expanded and now with this proposal asking for a columbarium installation which has turn this neighborhood church into something that is way inappropriate for our community.

We're deeply concern and strongly oppose this project.

Respectfully Nga Chau

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**Sean Nicholas**

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**From:** Huy Dang <huy8dang@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, August 04, 2019 8:08 PM  
**To:** Sean Nicholas  
**Subject:** Opposition to Minor Conditional Use Permit 18-0021 @ Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Hello Sean Nicholas, Senior Planner city Dana Point,

My name is Huy Dang, owner at 33182 Mesa Vista Dr, Dana Point, CA 92629, which is walking distance to Gloria Dei Church.

Since we moved here in 2004, during that time we've seen church expanded to its current size. Now with this proposal asking for a columbarium installation which has turn this neighborhood church into something that is way inappropriate for our community at large and specifically our Thunderbird area.

We're deeply concern and strongly oppose this project.

Respectfully, Huy

Cell: 949.910.4248

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To: Planning Commission of the City of Dana Point

Roy Dohner	Chair	Term expires March 2023
Mary Opel	Vice-Chair	Term expires March 2021
Scott McKhann	Commissioner	Term expires March 2021
Eric A. Nelson	Commissioner	Term expires March 2023
Danni Murphy		

Dana Point City Council Members, City Manager, and City Clerk

Joseph L. Muller, Paul N. Wyatt, Jamey Federico, Debra Lewis, Richard A. Viczorek

Mark Denny, and Kathy Ward

From: Irene Fascher - Resident of Dana Point, CA

RE: Please include my comments in the record ( minutes ) for this meeting .....

MinorConditionalUsePermit18-0021(M):A

MinorConditionalUsePermittoallowtheinstallationof  
acolumbariumwithintheexistingcontemplationgarden at the rear of  
theprojectsite.The proposedcolumbariumIs  
aconditionallypermittedancillaryuseintheCommunityFacilities(CF)  
ZoningDistrict.Thesubjectsite islocatedat 33501 Stonehill Drive.

**ISSUES TO CONSIDER BEFORE MAKING A DECISION:**

**POINT #1:**

It seems peculiar and somewhat of an anomaly that a Columbarium (a room or building with niches for funeral urns to be stored) would be placed in a "Contemplation Garden" that was accepted as part of a contribution to the City of Dana Point's "Art in Public Places".

Reference:

**PUBLIC ART IN THE CITY OF DANA POINT**

The City of Dana Point values art and works hard to ensure that as the City grows, so do the opportunities for public art contributions. Located throughout the City's parks, streets and

structures are an assortment of art pieces with styles ranging from classical to modern. Many of them reflecting the City's rich history but all of them contributing to the unique beauty that is Dana Point. In 1994 the City established an Art in Public Places program to incorporate art into new developments. Some of the art shown below are the result of the City's implementation of that program. For more information on Dana Point's Art in Public Places program, please [click here](#).

GloriaDelLutheranChurch/GloriaDeiLutheranChurchofDanaPoint submitted their "multiple donations" to the City of Dana Point as a requirement for Art in Public Places due to their construction of a new sanctuary in lieu of a monetary contribution to "Art in Public Places" fund. If I remember correctly the Contemplation Garden was part of the church's donation in addition to the stained glass windows, bell tower, cross, etc. There was much discussion at the Planning Meeting when this was discussed as to whether the donations met the criteria for Art in Public Places.

To date, Gloria Dei's contribution of a Contemplation Garden to "Art in Public Places" has not been added to the City of Dana Point's Art in Public Places on the city website, nor any of their other donations.

<http://www.danapoint.org/residents/arts/dana-point-public-art/dana-point-public-art>

If a visitor or resident were to drive by the church they would not know that an "Art in Public Places" piece or pieces would be located at the church. There is no signage.

Columbariums many times are associated with a cemetery. This request seems at odds for an "Art in Public Places" donation. It does not contribute to the unique beauty that is Dana Point, it is a repository for funeral urns.

#### POINT #2

Many residents of Dana Point may not understand that a cemetery (columbarium) with urns will be placed at the church. The Mission San Luis Rey is a huge mission in Oceanside and has large grounds surrounding the mission church to accommodate a cemetery. The location at Gloria Dei is limited and there are many cemeteries in Orange County that residents can utilize....i.e. Pacific View in Newport Beach, etc. I am not aware of other churches that have cemeteries or columbariums on site. This would be an interesting piece of research to follow up on before a decision is made. Perhaps tabling this issue until more information is available would be prudent.

#### POINT #3

This MinorConditionalUsePermit opens the door to many other "unusual requests" which are at odds with the City of Dana Point's Art in Public Places stated mission. Dana Point is being branded as a Surf City ( Linear Park & Hobie Memorial - "Art in Public Places" donation from South Cove Development ) as well as Dana Point's emphasis on tourism with the many 5 star hotels in the area. With many new developments coming into Dana Point in the Lantern District, the donations from these projects to Art in Public Places needs to be carefully considered so they match the purpose of Art in Public Places. This request sets a precedent for unusual requests.

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Please consider all these points when making a decision and consider how this affects "Art in Public Places".

Thank you for considering all aspects of this request from Gloria Dei Lutheran Church.

Irene Fascher

**Supporting Document 4: Minutes from the July 3rd Administrative Public Hearing**

**CITY OF DANA POINT  
PLANNING DEPARTMENT  
ADMIN HEARING ACTION MINUTES**

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July 3, 2019 11:06 a.m. – 12:16 p.m.	City Hall City Council Chambers 33282 Golden Lantern Dana Point, CA 92629
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**CALL TO ORDER ADMIN HEARING**

Hearing Officer **Kurth Nelson** (Principal Planner) called the Admin Hearing for Minor Conditional Use Permit CUP18-0021 for 33501 Stonehill Drive, Dana Point, CA 92629 to order at 11:06 a.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Staff Present: Kurth Nelson (Principal Planner), Sean Nicholas (Senior Planner), and Staci Hudson (Senior Administrative Assistant)

**Item 1: Minor Conditional Use Permit 18-0021:** A request to modify approval of Conditional Use Permit 13-0006 to install memorial niches in an existing bench seat wall within the Gloria Dei Lutheran Church Contemplation Garden. A Minor Conditional Use Permit is required to allow a columbarium as an ancillary use to existing religious and educational uses. The subject site is located within the Community Facilities (CF) zone at 33501 Stonehill Drive.

Applicant: Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Address: 33501 Stonehill Drive  
(APN: 628-211-02)

**Kurth Nelson** (Principal Planner) provided a brief presentation and was available for questions from the public.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

**Jackie Lewis** (Dana Point) spoke in opposition to the project, stating economic concerns including property values and potential future expansion of the project site.

**Brian Bousman** (Dana Point) spoke in opposition of the project, stating economic concerns.

**Lieia Smith** (Dana Point) spoke in opposition to the project, citing the project goes against her religious beliefs.

**Darnelle Maher** (Dana Point) spoke in opposition of the project, voicing concerns regarding the noticing of the project, noise and dust pollution from construction, and property values.



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CITY OF DANA POINT  
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

July 3, 2019

ADMIN HEARING ACTION MINUTES

11:06 a.m. – 12:16 p.m.

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**Deepa Iyengar** (Dana Point) spoke in opposition to the project, stating the columbarium goes against her religious beliefs and that there a lack of precedent in Dana Point for this type of project. She also protested the timing of the meeting before a holiday.

**Mark Ellis** (Dana Point) spoke in favor of the project and encouraged neighbors to visit the project site.

**George Karambelas** (Dana Point) voiced concerns regarding noticing, and spoke in opposition to the project for religious and fiscal reasons.

**Dennis Pysz** (Dana Point) spoke in favor of the project, stating that property values would not be affected and the church does not have any current plans for future expansion.

**Kristyn Hill** (Dana Point) spoke in opposition of the project, voicing concerns regarding the potential effects on children, property values, and noise and dust pollution from construction.

**Carrie-Lynn Lewis** (Dana Point) spoke in opposition to the project and had concerns about the effects that the columbarium and funeral services would have on the children attending Sunday school.

**Quynh Smith** (Dana Point) voiced her concerns for her grandchildren and expressed her desire for Dana Point to remain a happy, tourist destination.

**Liane Schuller** (Aliso Viejo, Gloria Dei Member) stated that the church is not planning to expand further and the installation of the columbarium would be quick with little disturbance to the neighborhood. She additionally noted that the services would be small and quiet.

**David Mattson** (Dana Point, Gloria Dei Pastor) spoke in support of the project, stating the church does not have further expansion plans, but is hoping to add the columbarium to provide requested services to their members. He also spoke on economic concerns, maintaining that the church would not be listed as a cemetery on online searches.

**Curtis Heyne** (Dana Point) spoke in opposition to the project, voicing his concerns for his property values, as he is a new homeowner in Dana Point. He opposed the idea of the church profiting from the columbarium and wanted more information regarding potential financial gains. He also voiced concerns regarding noticing.

**Jacqueline Barr** (Dana Point) indicated she had concerns regarding parking and homelessness at the church.

#### I. ADJOURNMENT

**Kurth Nelson** (Principal Planner) adjourned the meeting at 12:16 p.m.

## Are property values affected by next-door graveyards?

October 31, 2016 | By [Jake Appleman](#)

Baltimore real estate agent Lynn Ikle was showing a property to a prospective buyer. Things looked promising — lush landscaping and a backyard pool — until they explored far back into the property, behind the pool, and came across a cemetery.

“Ew,” the client said.

“We left that property, and they bought a different home,” remembers Ikle.

From small family burial plots on historic properties to cemeteries woven into the cultural fabric of many of America’s biggest cities, there are plenty of areas where people can live among the dead.

A 2013 study by real estate agency Redfin found that while properties with headstone-related considerations might spend a longer time than average on the market, home sales weren’t adversely affected. Interestingly enough, the homes closest to the graveyards sold for more on average (per square foot) than those farther away.

“There are also often strict zoning rules about development in these areas, which limits new inventory, putting upward pressure on prices,” says Ikle. “It’s also common for older homes near cemeteries to have recently been gutted and renovated, further increasing their value.”

### Homebodies

If a buyer’s tastes lean toward old and historic homes, it’s more likely they’ll have to come to terms with the reality that it might be impossible to get the original owners to

move out. It was very common to bury family members on the property for either cultural reasons or the lack of a municipal cemetery while the country was being settled. Now, buyers more often than not embrace the presence of the graves as part of the home's history.

But even if you'd rather live in a modern subdivision than an 18th-century farmhouse, there's still a chance your dream home might be near a resting place. As modern urban development encroached into previously rural areas, it's now not uncommon to find family cemeteries tucked into suburban neighborhoods or on larger properties in the ex-burbs.

There's even a small family burial ground adjacent to Ralph Wilson Stadium, home to the Buffalo Bills.

These small family plots can lead to big issues for developers. Homeowners may not mind the ancestors, but dealing with their descendants can be a whole different matter.

A number of laws and statutes govern and protect cemeteries and graveyards. Some, like those of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, can be quite comprehensive about matters like care and upkeep or affording access to the family members.

Developers and even municipalities can face issues with such laws and historic societies when graveyards are concerned. In 2009, a group of Kansas City, MO, preservationists won a ruling from a Missouri appeals court to stop the city from moving four cemeteries in order to develop a motorsports park. In 2010, celebrity fashion designer Diane von Fürstenberg was granted a zoning permit for up to 20 headstones on the property of her New Milford, CT, home.

## Dying to Get In

Some buyers get creeped out by graveyards, but that situation is a rarity in highly competitive real estate markets.

“I think one reason it comes up so rarely is that people do so much research online and look at homes on a map on their Redfin app or website before seeing a home in person,” says Ikle. “They know a lot about the home’s location, and if it’s near something that’s unsavory to them they won’t waste time to go see it.”

Philadelphia real estate agent Blakely Minton remembers a time when homebuyers could afford to be pickier. Now, though, Minton notes a good school system is more important for many prospective buyers than nearby tombstones, a sign that living near a graveyard is more for younger folks.

“The older generation tend to have a more negative feel toward living so close to the deceased,” says Minton. “Or as one of my buyers put it: She didn’t want a constant reminder of her next stop.”

Dark humor aside, in cities that have become more and more crowded over time, living in and around graveyards is unavoidable for many. This holds especially true in spread-out cities like Philadelphia and Baltimore that were colonized long before most of the U.S.

Graveyards that have been around for quite some time can become a part of the neighborhood character. Congressional Cemetery in Washington, D.C., was revitalized by the dog walkers of the community and has become a destination for tourists. Events such as Outdoor Yoga Mortis, The Tombs and Tomes Book Club, and the “Dead Man’s Run” 5K race are hosted there.

“I think it just has to do with geography and location,” says Ikle. “Cemeteries in cities are often located in the older, historic centers of town. Most people would say that these neighborhoods with historic homes, buildings, monuments, and cemeteries have ‘character,’ and that’s something a lot of buyers look for when choosing a neighborhood.”

### **Quiet Neighbors, Lush Lawns**

The option of a toned-down neighborhood within the confines of a bustling urban environment is also a selling point.

“In densely populated neighborhoods, a cemetery next door can offer some privacy you wouldn’t otherwise get in a populous area,” says Ikle. “It’s one way to feel like you’re not living ‘on top’ of other people. Living near a cemetery also can often mean less traffic in your neighborhood.”

Adds Minton: “I tell buyers ‘these neighbors will never complain about noise or borrow your stuff!’”

Of course, graveyard maintenance varies in quality from location to location. A well-maintained cemetery can add to the mystique of the neighborhood whereas a poorly maintained one can act as an eyesore that drops property values. To that end, Ikle encourages all prospective buyers to look closely at the view out of each window before buying a home.

“I think the relative proximity of the living spaces to the graveyard is another factor,” says Ikle. “If your own yard is so small that it feels like the cemetery is your backyard, or you look out your windows and all you see are tombstones, that’s more likely to turn buyers off.”

*This article was originally published by The Home Story on October 28, 2015.*

<http://www.thehomestory.com/are-property-values-affected-by-next-door-graveyards/>

#### QUIET NEIGHBORS

## Homes near cemeteries sell for 13% more than ones near the living

By [Vickie Elmer](#) October 31, 2013

Don't be afraid to buy a home near a graveyard. It might actually be a better investment.

Redfin [dug up the data](#) and found that those within 50 feet of a cemetery sell for 13% more per square foot than others further away. The average price per square foot was \$162 for grave-view residences versus \$142 to \$150 a square foot for those more than 100 yards away, the national real estate firm reported.

"The gravestones are a part of history. They're pockmarked and windblown and eroded," says Blakely Minton, a Redfin agent in Philadelphia. She notes that clients, for example, love to live near the historic [Old Pine Church Cemetery](#).

The findings reverse what you might think to be true. Great school districts and modern kitchens command premium prices, but nearby burial grounds might be harder to accept. Many people fear death or dying, or don't want a daily reminder of their loss. Some just find graveyards spooky.

When Minton shows a home near a cemetery, she knows what to say: "They're very quiet neighbors."

Even a haunted house isn't horrific to sell. [Six in 10 people in a Realtor.com survey](#) this fall said they might consider buying one—but most would want a significantly [slashed price](#), especially if there's supposed to be a ghost living there. (The problem is common enough that the National Association of Realtors has prepared a so-called [Field Guide](#) for agents on how to deal with "stigmatized properties.")



Redfin's research on homes near cemeteries was based on more than 96,000 US homes, condos and townhouses sold from January 2012 to September 2013 in 90 metropolitan areas. Redfin researchers found 5,433 cemetery boundaries with a home within 1,000 yards to include in its data set.

Homes with a view of tombstones do have one downside: They take longer to sell. They're on the market 48 days on average versus 39 to 41 days for homes more than 500 yards away from a graveyard, Redfin reports. So while the price is higher, sellers need a pint of [patience](#) to scare up a buyer. Minton notes another selling point: "You're pretty popular on Halloween."

<https://qz.com/142027/homes-near-cemeteries-sell-for-13-more-than-ones-near-the-living/>

## Is buying a house near a cemetery a grave mistake?

By Jan Buchholz — Senior Staff Writer, Austin Business Journal

Oct 29, 2013, 3:47pm EDT

A blog [I posted Monday about haunted houses](#) — real homes tainted by stories of apparitions and levitating objects — captured interest from a few avid ghost hunters and a spat of traumatized real estate agents. It also drew notice from the data-diving folks at Redfin, the Seattle-based brokerage company that's making inroads into Austin.

Based on recent analysis, Redfin concludes that houses near cemeteries are not severely impacted by the proximity of dead people. In fact, it says such properties actually sell for more. For instance, Redfin counted 221 transactions involving properties within 50 feet of a cemetery. They sold for an average of \$162 per square foot. Redfin compared that data to the 60,170 transactions that involved properties located 1,000 feet away from a cemetery. Those averaged out at \$145 per square foot.

"Cemeteries make very quiet neighbors," said [Blakely Minton](#), a Redfin agent in Philadelphia, in a statement.

That's why some buyers actually like the idea of a nearby grave site.

That being said, properties located adjacent to cemeteries do take longer to sell, Redfin discovered. Of the 221 transactions analyzed, those properties required an average of 48 days to sell compared to 39 days for properties more than 500 yards away.

"There will always be a group of people who might love all the specifications of the house, but the creepy factor may prevent them from even touring the home," said [John Malandrino](#), a Redfin agent in Chicago, in the statement.

Another agent agrees that the closeness of a cemetery gives some buyers an "uneasy" feeling.

"(But) the pros are that most likely there would be no chance of future development on the site of the cemetery," added [Lynn Ikle](#), a Redfin agent in

Baltimore, in the statement. “There’s usually well-maintained open space. It’s quiet and many cemeteries are picturesque.”

If the thought of a cemetery nearby isn’t a deal killer for you, here’s the five cities with the most listings near cemeteries: Baltimore with 172, Philadelphia with 157, Chicago with 115, Boston with 50 and Atlanta with 41.

<https://www.bizjournals.com/austin/blog/real-estate/2013/10/is-buying-a-house-near-a-cemetery-a.html>

## I Bought a Home Next to a Cemetery, and You Won't Believe What It's Like

By [Jeanne Sager](#) | Feb 6, 2018

As the owner of a home located across the street from a cemetery, I hear the joke “Wow, I bet the neighbors are quiet!” more times than I care to count.

In the past 15 years of living here, I've learned that cemeteries make people highly uncomfortable, provoking nervous laughter as they remark on the proximity of those graves to my own front lawn. It also dampens my home's price: According to research by [realtor.com®](#), the median home price in ZIP codes with a cemetery sink about 12% lower than similar homes in other areas without a collection of corpses 6 feet under. That's just about the same [drag on prices](#) one would experience with a homeless shelter nearby, although not as bad as a strip club.

Still, I'm here to say that living next to a cemetery is downright dreamy—at least to me. Here's why you shouldn't be scared off by spirits.

### The ghosts aren't too rowdy

I'm kind of kidding here, but since superstitious sorts always ask me if I ever see ghosts, let me just say that, in my experience, we might suspect there's *one* ghost lurking around. Cabinets occasionally open of their own accord, as does our front door, almost as if I'm being beckoned to get up from my work and go enjoy the sunshine outside.

I've come to the conclusion that this “ghost” is **Floyd**—the man who built this house, lived in it for many years, and (all according to his granddaughter, who still lives in town) is now buried in the cemetery just a stone's throw from my front porch.

While some may find it creepy that my home's former owner is buried nearby, I actually find it comforting to have him looking over us. (Thanks, Floyd.)

The visitors aren't obnoxious, either

There are a handful of funerals each year, when the sounds of an excavator digging into the earth rouse me from my bed. Visitors stream in from out of town, and each side of our small country road is lined with the cars of mourners. But most visitors keep to themselves. They leave a few flowers on the appointed grave and plant flags on Memorial Day and Veterans Day, but otherwise are as quiet and respectful as you'd ever hope your neighbors' visitors to be.

The peace and quiet

For much of the year, the cemetery is calm and peaceful. The stone border along one side has become a favorite spot for my tween daughter to hide, lying across the warm stones on a summer afternoon, the sun cutting through the trees while she works her way through a book.

In a town bustling with activity at soccer and T-ball fields, the fire department, and the post office, the cemetery is our eye in the storm. We go there when life is chaotic, and we need a few moments to chill out and find our peace.

We've had it with traditional neighbors

Peace is exactly what I was looking for when my husband and I embarked on buying our first house. After marriage, we rented a series of apartments where we saw and heard everything. And I do mean *everything*.

Like? Oh, one downstairs neighbor (and our landlord) liked to urinate in our backyard in the middle of the day. Another favored blasting **Fleetwood Mac** at 4 a.m.

By the time we cobbled together the funds for a down payment, we'd both had enough of neighbors.

So when our real estate agent drove us down a quiet, rural road, past the chain-link fence that encloses the cemetery, and pulled into the driveway of a mint-green, two-story [Cape Cod](#) located across the street from the graveyard, I brightened. I knew even then that the cemetery would raise a few eyebrows, but I didn't care one bit.

Since a cemetery is generally not seen as a selling point, the homeowner—Floyd's wife—was happy to negotiate on the price and give us a deal. She moved out, but upon dying returned "home" to be buried beside Floyd, across the street from where she raised their four kids—and where I'm now raising my own.

Honestly, I couldn't ask for better neighbors. The people in the cemetery don't care if I put up a white fence or a gray one. They don't complain when I forget to wheel the garbage cans away from the curb. They don't have a dog that bites or a cat that poops in my sandbox.

Instead, I like to think of them as friendly spirits, watching over me and my family. After all, it's their home too.

*Jeanne Sager has strung words together for the New York Times, Vice, and more. She writes and photographs people from her home in upstate New York.*

<https://www.realtor.com/advice/buy/i-bought-home-next-to-cemetery/>



## The Neighborhood Features That Drag Down Your Home Value—Ranked

By [Yuging Pan](#) | Mar 28, 2016

When it comes to real estate clichés, “Location, location, location” has all other contenders (including “Not a drive-by!”, “Cash is king!”, “Is that your checkbook or are you just glad to see me?”, and “Worst house, best street”) beat by a mile. Not only has it been in use since at least 1926 (according to the [New York Times](#)), but it's utterly and inarguably *true*.

More than any other single factor, when you buy a home in a good location, it's usually a solid long-term investment. And being the unabashed optimists we are here at [realtor.com®](#), we focus most on the factors that help maximize your home's value. But hey, life—and real estate— isn't always rainbows and unicorns. So this week we decided to take a look at the *downers*: those things that actually keep you from getting top dollar from your home.

The list itself probably won't surprise you, but the numbers just might. Who would have thought that it's a worse investment (by far!) to buy in a bad school district than near a strip club or a homeless shelter? Beyond strippers, that is.

So how'd we do it? We looked at home prices and appreciation rates in U.S. ZIP codes where a specific drag-me-down facility such as a power plant is present. For each facility, we calculated the drag, or a “location discount,” by comparing the median home price of the ZIP codes with that facility with the median price for all homes in the same county. We limited our scope to the 100 largest metropolitan areas, since rural communities have lower home prices and slower appreciation.

Got it? Have a look at the list based on how badly your home's value will get dinged:

Keep in mind the difference between **causation** and **correlation**: Does having a cemetery or shooting range in the neighborhood cause home prices to drop? Or are those businesses drawn to the area because of cheap real estate? We don't have a definite answer, but their presence is generally a sign that a neighborhood is the opposite of up-and-coming. Judge your investment accordingly.



## Hospital

### The drag: 3.2%

Hospitals are awesome, right? Having a great one within easy access is just about every homeowner's goal. But easy access is one thing, and being woken up by ambulance sirens—or, god forbid, medical helicopters—at 3 a.m. is quite another. Among homeowners who sold in 2015, those near a hospital generally got 3% less than an average home in the same county would get, based on our sales deed records and hospital location data from [data.medical.gov](https://data.medical.gov). In the world of real estate price demerits, 3% isn't a lot, so clearly plenty of people are willing to overlook some noise and chaos in favor of nearby medical care.

## Shooting range

### The drag: 3.7%

According to most research, it's not the guns or the people who shoot them that the neighbors of shooting ranges object to most; it's more the *idea* of the places and, in some cases, the noise of gunfire, especially outdoor gun ranges. More perceived problems: environmental concerns, including the lead that leaches off spent shells, potentially poisoning soil and water. Last year, a closed gun club in San Francisco triggered \$22 million in cleanup fees, the [San Francisco Chronicle](https://www.sfgate.com) reported. We used gun range locations from [wheretoshoot.org](https://wheretoshoot.org).

## Power plant

### The drag: 5.3%

There are more than 8,000 power plants across the U.S., according to the [Environmental Information Agency](https://www.epa.gov). Much as we are grateful for the modern convenience of electricity (thanks, **Ben Franklin**!), the huge facilities spur more NIMBY (“not in my backyard”) movements than anything this side of waste treatment facilities. The most frequently cited reason: safety concerns. The perceived dangers of living near a power plant vary dramatically depending on type, from the seemingly harmless solar to the dreaded nuclear. In general, having a power plant in the neighborhood is associated with lower property prices.

## Funeral home

### **The drag:** 6.5%

Some people believe you get bad spiritual energy from living near a funeral home; some just dislike the traffic caused by service workers and funeral attendees; and others fear that the smoke from a crematorium is toxic. But plenty of folks just find them seriously *creepy*, an unpleasant constant reminder of our own mortality. Our analysis of property values near funeral homes listed on [legacy.com](https://www.legacy.com) seems to confirm the stigma. Properties near a funeral home see a 6.5% drop in price compared to all homes in the same county.

## Cemetery

### **The drag:** 12.3%

Call it superstition, call it irrational fear, but there's an awful lot of people who find the prospect of living near lots of buried bodies unpleasant or downright terrifying (see: Funeral homes). To be fair, there are some people who seriously dig how quiet the neighbors are, but they're outnumbered by the haters. To do the research, we used a list of federal and state cemeteries operated by the [Department of Veterans Affairs](https://www.dva.gov) and found that the median price of ZIP codes with a cemetery is about 12% lower than neighboring areas.

## Homeless shelter

### **The drag:** 12.7%

Homeless shelters can be unloved and unwanted misfits in residential areas. Even though there's no rule that homeless shelters are usually accompanied by higher rates of crime, shelters *do* certainly attract motley groups of people, necessitate emergency calls, and require more police in otherwise quiet, safe neighborhoods. Shelter locations, listed on [homelessshelterdirectory.org](https://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org), are often limited to less prime areas in the city where home values are about 13% less.

### High concentration of renters

**The drag:** 13.8%

Does a cluster of rental buildings—or lots of them—lower the property value in a neighborhood? Many homeowners have pondered this. While it's hard to do an analysis down to every property, we found that ZIP codes with a higher-than-average concentration of renters have lower property values compared to the county they are located in—by 14%. The data are from the [American Community Survey](#).

### Strip club

**The drag:** 14.7%

Catering to adult vices—and often (rightly) associated with loud music and less-than-savory visitors—a “gentlemen's club” is an unwelcome neighbor on the block. We tracked nearly 2,000 strip joints listed on [stripclublist.com](#) and ranked the category high on our “unwanted” list. In one extreme case, the crime-plagued neighborhood of Washington Park in East St. Louis, IL—the ZIP code 62204—has 10 strip clubs. How do they all compete? It saw only a handful of homes sold in the past three years, with a median price of \$10,000.

### Bad school

**The drag:** 22.2%

While a top-performing school is definitely a plus for your property value, a bad school is a complete, out-and-out disaster. A school where one teacher handles a class of 40 students with a slim graduation rate is usually an indicator of a deprived neighborhood. The median home price of ZIP codes with schools that receive a 1 to 3 rating (out of a possible 10) from [GreatSchools.org](#) is only \$155,000.

<https://www.realtor.com/news/trends/things-that-affect-your-property-value/>

## Living next to a cemetery has its pros and cons

Published February 16, 2018 12:01AM

By Day Marketing

Buyers who realize the home listing they are perusing is next to a cemetery may be prompted to think of the classic 1982 horror movie "Poltergeist."

Near the end of that film, it is revealed that the haunted house of the protagonist is built on land that was once a graveyard – and that the developer moved the headstones, but failed to relocate the bodies.

Even if they aren't worried about malevolent spirits, buyers may still be scared away from a property located adjacent to a cemetery. At the same time, many people have discovered that these residences have a number of benefits. Some homeowners have even taken to residing in former caretakers' homes located within the cemetery, joking that they live in a gated community.

Another bit of dark humor illustrates one of the biggest benefits of living next to a cemetery: you have a lot of neighbors, but they sure are quiet. Jeanne Sagar, writing for the National Association of Realtors, says buyers are often unpleasantly surprised to find that they have moved in next to raucous or inconsiderate neighbors. The dead tend to keep to themselves, so a cemetery is a comparatively peaceful place to have next door.

You'll still need to be prepared for some activity if the cemetery is active, however. This will include funeral processions, earth movers used to dig graves, and noise from lawn mowers or other maintenance equipment.

Cemeteries will also have people drop in during their open hours. Family members pay respect to a loved one, and community groups plant flags on the graves of veterans. Leslie Mann, writing for the Chicago Tribune, says larger cemeteries have even attracted tour groups to visit famous graves and take rubbings of headstones.

In general, these visitors are respectful and will not be permitted into the cemetery after sunset. However, buyers may feel that they have less



privacy if there are no shrubs or other barriers between the cemetery and their home.

While some older graveyards have fallen into disrepair, active ones are typically well-maintained. The site is landscaped to have an attractive layout of trees, hedges, and other natural features. Grounds crews work to mow the grass, trim branches, and otherwise keep the cemetery looking nice.

This work often makes living next to a cemetery akin to having a home next to a park. It is almost certain that the site will remain open space and not given over to development. Families may find it an interesting experience to peruse the graves, or to walk, jog, or ride bikes on the paths that wind through the cemetery.

Still, some buyers might be uncomfortable with the idea of being so close to a cemetery. Even if you aren't worried about ghosts wandering over to haunt the home, you may not like the idea of living next to a reminder of one's mortality.

There are conflicting ideas on how the proximity to a cemetery affects its appeal on the market. The National Association of Realtors determined that these homes typically sold for 12 percent less than comparable properties – making them a steal for buyers, but a potential drag when it comes time to sell. Christin Camacho, writing for the real estate site Redfin, says the company determined that being near a cemetery didn't result in lower home values, but that these homes spent more time on the market.

If you are considering a home located near a cemetery, it can be helpful to inquire about how the site is maintained. Mann says you might ask questions such as how many funerals are held there and how many plots are left.

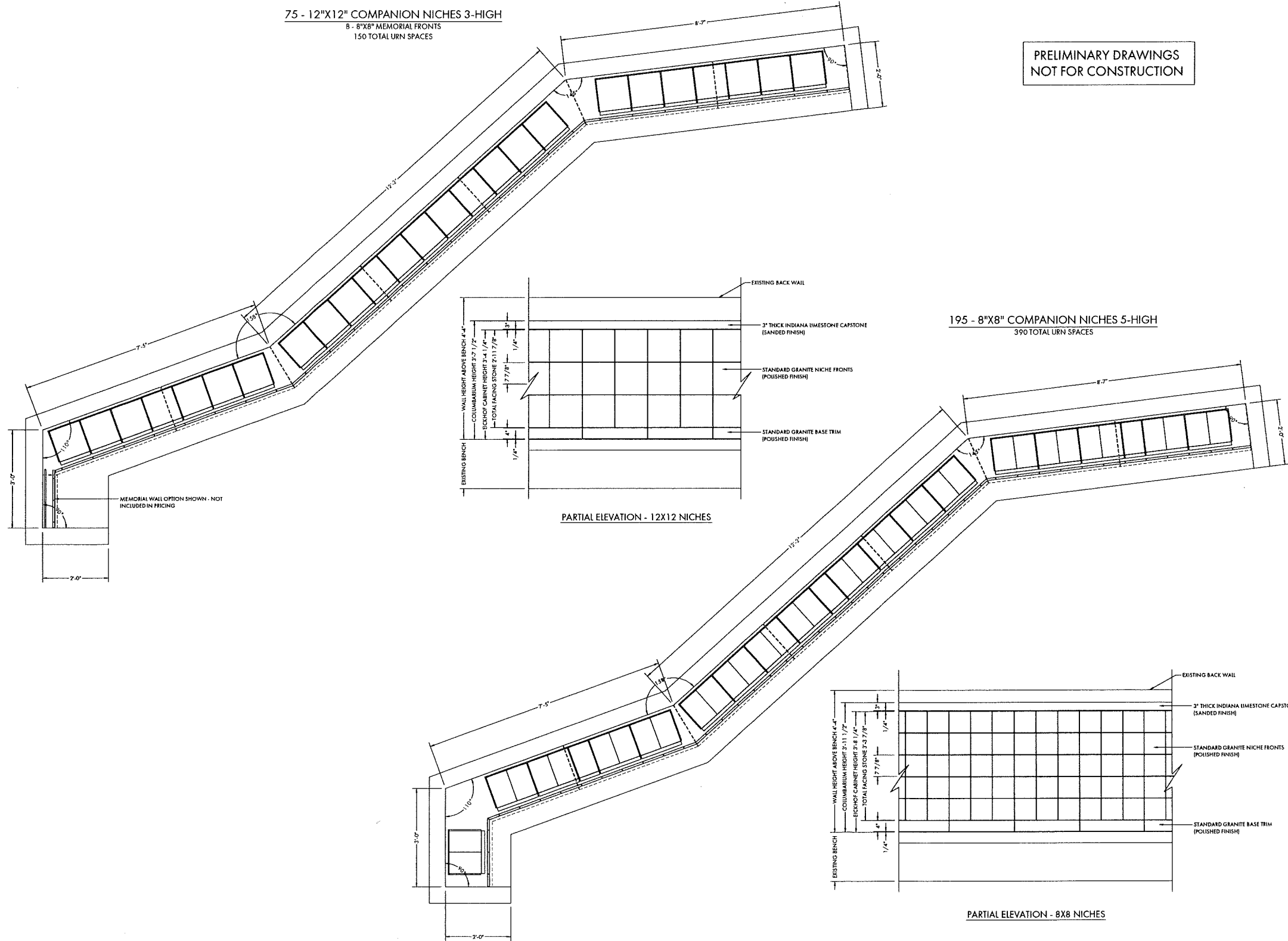
<https://www.theday.com/article/20180216/BIZ04/180219659>

**Supporting Document 6:**

Proposed Plans

ATTACHMENT

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REVISIONS:

SCALE: 3/4" = 1'-0"

JOB NUMBER:

**17148**

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**1 OF 1**