



The State of the
Anchorage Municipal Park
Cemetery

The Past

Some background on the AMPC

- Executive Order # 2242, dated August 31, 1915, established the Anchorage Cemetery encompassing 16.39 acres with a 5.96 acre reserve.
- Executive Order #2836, dated April 10, 1918, authorized dividing the cemetery into tracts, half of which could be sold to religious or fraternal organizations.
- The Anchorage Cemetery was the only burial ground in Anchorage until the 1940s when the National Cemetery opened on Fort Richardson.
- Angelus Memorial Park opened in south Anchorage in the early 1950s.
- Tract owners and friends and relatives of deceased operated and maintained the cemetery until the mid-70s when the public pressured the Muni to take an active role in the Cemetery's management.
- AMPC was placed on the National Park Service National Register of Historic Places in 1993.

EXECUTIVE ORDER.

ALASKA

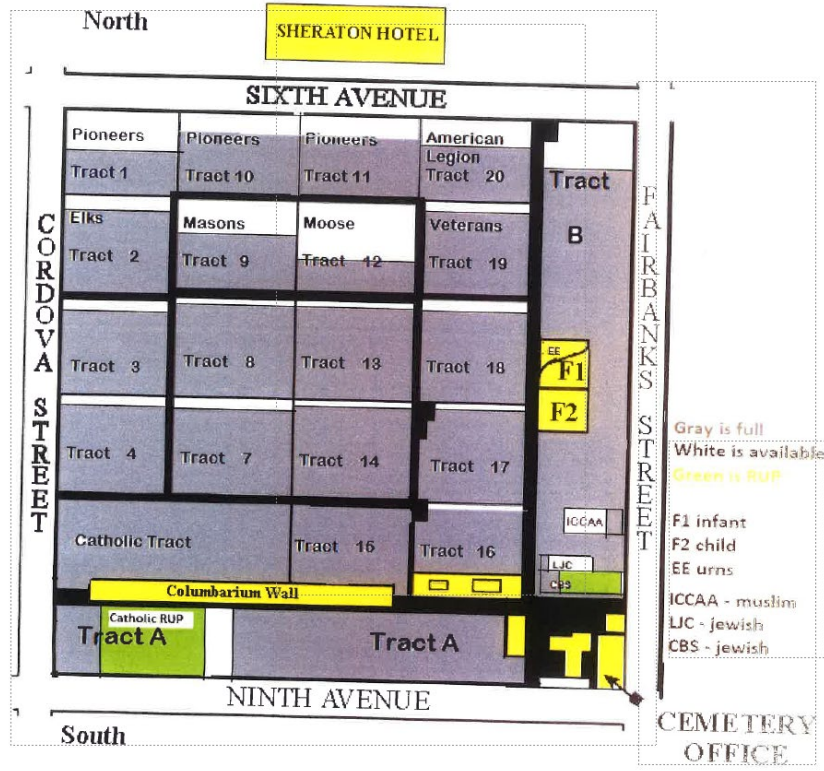
Anchorage Townsite.



Under the provisions of the Act of Congress, approved March 12, 1914 (38 Stat., 206), entitled: "An Act To authorize the President of the United States to locate, construct, and operate railroads in the Territory of Alaska, and for other purposes", it is hereby ordered that the tract of land designated as a "Cemetery Reserve" on the plat of Anchorage Townsite with South and East Additions, approved May 8, 1916, be subdivided into appropriate tracts or blocks and the Secretary of the Interior is hereby authorized to dispose of such tracts or blocks at private sale to religious or fraternal organizations qualified to hold title to real estate, at an appraised price to be fixed under such rules and regulations as the Secretary may prescribe; Provided, that not more than one half in the aggregate of said "Cemetery Reserve" shall be so sold; and Provided further, that at least one half of said Reserve shall be surveyed into burial lots of suitable size which shall be open to burial privileges by the public without charge for the land, a record of such burials to be kept as may be directed in said regu-

lations and turned over to the municipal authorities when the town is incorporated, and that a patent shall then be issued to said authorities for all portions of said "Cemetery Reserve" remaining unsold.

The White House,
10 April, 1918.





Some of our most famous residents

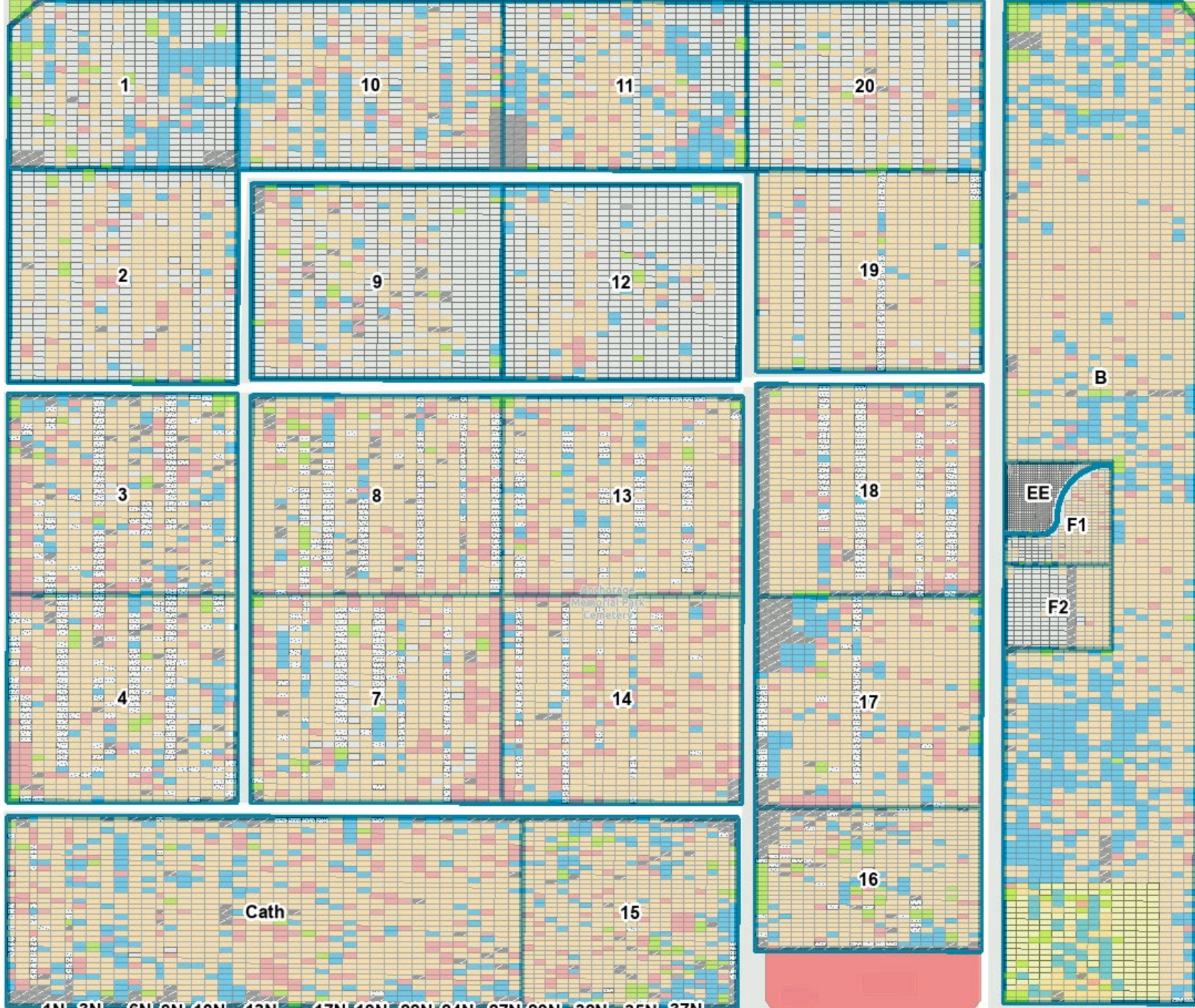
The present



One of our newest residents

Details

- AMPC has about 14,000 guests, including unmarked graves and Jane and John Does. In short, record-keeping issues dating back to the territorial days.
- There are still over 2,000 reservations, many unconfirmed or in the private tracts.
- Anchorage Memorial Park Cemetery is out of public burial space for regular casket burials.
- Last year, private tract owners began to transfer a small number of spaces to AMPC to use for immediate burials.
- AMPC is contacted weekly with people desperate to find affordable burial space for themselves and their family members.



Blue-reservations
 Pink/tan-burials
 Green-trees
 Grey-monuments
 White-open

The Future of the Cemetery

The cost of running a one hundred and eleven year old cemetery



But what is really on resident's minds is that Anchorage needs more (affordable) burial space!!!

Anchorage has fewer cemeteries than other cities its size because:

- It's a young city
- It has a lot of land
- Some burials occurred in smaller nearby communities
- Cultural practices (Alaska native and cremation rates) affect demand

How many cemeteries should Anchorage have?

- There's no simple answer to this question...
- Real world comparisons with cities our size across the US:
 - Orlando (~310k)-10-20 cemeteries (mix of historic and modern parks)
 - Cincinnati (~310k)-20+cemeteries (older city means many historic sites)
 - Pittsburgh (~300k) 30+ if we count small churchyards in a very old city
 - Irvine (~310k) fewer than 10 cemeteries (newer, planned city)
- Even though these cities are similar in population, Anchorage is very different in:
 - Geographic isolation (far from other urban areas)
 - Land area (Anchorage is much larger physically)
 - Role (it functions more like a regional capital for all of Alaska)

A typical benchmark

- Across U.S. cities, a common planning rule of thumb is 1-2 acres of cemetery land per 1,000 residents (long-term, including future need)
- If Anchorage wanted to behave like a 'normal' city, it would need to add roughly 250 to 500 acres of cemetery land or 10-20x its current footprint

But, Anchorage doesn't need that much space (yet)

- Cremation replaces land
 - With about 75% cremation, land demand drops dramatically
 - A columbarium can replace dozens of acres of graves
- Larger, denser use of land
 - Double-depth, stacked graves
 - More efficient layouts than historic cemeteries
- Adjusted 'realistic need' for Anchorage
 - 80-150 acres total, not 300-500
 - Even then, Anchorage is still underbuilt, but not critically so.

Bleak results

- Anchorage still has burial space overall in Angelus Memorial Park, but it is unaffordable for many residents and therefore inaccessible for them
- Anchorage Memorial Park Cemetery ran out of traditional, affordable plots in 2024 and there was never a back-up plan
- There are no longer spots left for public assistance burials

Other ideas

- Enlarging AMPC to the east to Gambell Street
- Encouraging churches to add indoor (or outdoor) columbarium to their spaces
- Spreading the word widely about the municipal need so the next time a bond is written, it is supported by the public

Thank you for your time!

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