

MEMORANDUM

TO: KEN RUKAVINA, PE, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

FROM: AMY SEERATY, SENIOR PLANNER

DATE: AUGUST 12, 2022

SUBJECT: MAJOR GRADING PERMIT (CASE NO. PLGR2022-0030) TO IMPROVE AREA 2 AT 27501 S. WESTERN AVENUE (GREEN HILLS MEMORIAL PARK); APPLICANT/OWNER – GREEN HILLS MEMORIAL PARK

RECOMMENDATION

Approve a Major Grading Permit to conduct 844.8 yd³ of balanced on-site grading to accommodate the installation of vaults associated with earth interments along with ancillary site improvements in unimproved portions of the Alta Vista Gardens and Inspiration Slope areas in Area 2 of the City Council-approved Master Plan for Green Hills Memorial Park, subject to the Conditions of Approval in Exhibit "A".

BACKGROUND

On June 16, 2022, pursuant to Condition No. 2.a(6) of City Council Resolution No. 2021-66 (Attached), Green Hills Memorial Park submitted a Major Grading Permit application requesting to conduct grading to accommodate the installation of vaults associated with earth interments in unimproved portions of the Alta Vista Gardens and Inspiration Slope areas in Area 2 of the Council-approved Master Plan of Green Hills Memorial Park. The application was deemed complete for processing on July 18, 2022.

On July 21, 2022, a 15-day public notice was provided to all property owners within 1,000-foot radius of the project site for comments. Staff received no comments in response to the public notice.

SITE DESCRIPTION

Green Hills Memorial Park is a cemetery located at 27501 S. Western Avenue in the northeast corner of the City, bordering the Cities of Lomita, Rolling Hills Estates and Los Angeles. The cemetery was first established in 1948 and, at the time, was located within an unincorporated area of Los Angeles County. The property became part of the City of Rancho Palos Verdes when the "Eastview" area was annexed in 1984. The property is approximately 121 acres in size, and is a privately owned and operated cemetery facility within the City's Cemetery Zoning District. The cemetery is bordered by residential uses to the north and south, a major street to the east (Western Avenue) and Rolling Hills Covenant Church and Palos Verdes Reservoir to the west.

The operation of the cemetery is governed by a Conditional Use Permit (CUP), most recently amended by the City Council on December 7, 2021, pursuant to Resolution No. 2021-66. The cemetery operates every day of the week, and consists of interments, mausoleum buildings, one office building, a mortuary, a chapel, a flower shop, and a maintenance yard and related buildings.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Applicant requests approval to conduct 844.8 yd³ of balanced on-site grading to accommodate the installation of lawn vaults associated with earth interments in unimproved portions of the Alta Vista Gardens and Inspiration Slope areas in Area 2 of the Master Plan. Also proposed are 3-foot-high walls and benches adjacent to family estate areas and walkways, and upright memorials up to 3 foot high. See Table No. 1 below for grading quantities and aerial image for project locations.

Table No. 1- Grading Quantities and Areas

Location	Grading		Project Area (ft ²)
	Cut (yd ³)	Fill (yd ³)	
Alta Vista Gardens	290.4	290.4	3,028
Inspiration Slope	132	132	1,383
TOTAL	422.4	422.4	4,411

Aerial Map of Proposed Project (outlined in red)

Source: City GIS, retrieved July 18, 2022



DISCUSSION

Major Grading Permit

The Master Plan allows Area 2 to be developed with earth interments. Pursuant to Condition No. 2.a(6) of Resolution No. 2021-66, grading for development shall be permitted throughout the property, provided that the Director determines that the grading substantially complies with the Master Plan.

The proposed project consists of 844.8 yd³ grading balanced onsite to accommodate the earth interments in an unimproved area of the site. Condition No. 6 of Resolution No. 2021-66 permits approximately 53,000 yd³ of grading in Area 2. To date, 19,542 yd³ of grading has been conducted in Area 2 to accommodate earth interment sites, including 16,125 yd³ of grading that was approved in 2013 to construct the Inspiration Slope Mausoleum. The proposed 844.8 yd³ of grading combined with the previous 19,542 yd³ of grading conducted in Area 2, results in a total grading quantity of 20,386.8 yd³, which is less than the overall 53,000 yd³ of maximum allowed permitted grading.

The project also involves the construction of walls that will be located around semi-private estates, between the family estates, and at the edges of the sites. The proposed benches will be located at the north and south ends of the family estates. Also proposed are upright memorials, which are allowed up to 3 feet high per the CUP.

The proposed grading, walls and benches are consistent with the findings made by the City Council for the Master Plan, and the proposed use is permitted for Area 2. Therefore, the proposed project substantially complies with the Master Plan and the City Council-adopted Resolution No. 2021-66.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Environmental Assessment

On April 24, 2007, pursuant to P.C. Resolution No. 2007-32, the Planning Commission adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for Case No. ZON2003-00086 (Conditional Use Permit No. 55 Revision "D") for the Green Hills Cemetery Master Plan. In adopting the MND, the Planning Commission found that there would be no significant adverse environmental impacts resulting from the adoption of the Green Hills Cemetery Master Plan with the incorporation of mitigation measures. Subsequently, there were separate addendums approved for miscellaneous improvements, which were determined to be within the scope of the previously adopted MND.

The City Council conducted annual reviews of the Applicant's compliance with the Conditions of Approval associated with the CUP for the Master Plan on multiple occasions, with the most recent in 2022. The City Council approved revisions to the CUP consistent with the CUP findings as part of the 2016, 2017, 2019, and 2020 annual reviews, and in 2021 for roof-top interments on the Inspiration Slope Mausoleum. No further environmental review was considered necessary as the modifications to the Conditions of Approval reduced the impacts of on-site operations on adjacent properties; constituted minor alterations to existing structures or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of use.

The proposed project involving 844.8 yd³ of on-site grading to accommodate the installation of lawn vaults has been determined to be in compliance with the Conditions of Approval for the Master Plan (Resolution No. 2021-66), as evidenced in the discussions under 'Grading Permit' above and will not introduce new or intensify environmental impacts. Therefore, the proposed project is within the scope of the previously adopted MND and no further environmental review is necessary.

Public Correspondence

Staff received no public comments in response to the public notice issued on July 21, 2022.

Neighborhood Advisory Committee

The project was discussed at the July 26, 2022 Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) meeting, and no major concerns were raised by any of the NAC members.

Permit Streamlining Act

Pursuant to the Permit Streamlining Act, since the application was deemed complete on July 18, 2022, the action decision deadline is September 16, 2022.

CONCLUSION

Based upon the discussion above, staff recommends the Director approve a Major Grading Permit to conduct 844.8 yd³ of balanced on-site grading to accommodate the installation of vaults associated with earth interments along with ancillary site improvements in unimproved portions of the Alta Vista Gardens and Inspiration Slope areas in Area 2 of the City Council-approved Master Plan for Green Hills Memorial Park, subject to the Conditions of Approval in Exhibit "A".

Approved pursuant to staff's Recommendation.

Accepted:  Dated 8-12-22
Ken Rukavina, PE
Director of Community Development

ATTACHMENTS

- Conditions of Approval – Exhibit "A"
- CC Resolution No. 2021-66
- Project Plans

Exhibit "A"
Conditions of Approval
Green Hills Memorial Park
Grading Permit (Case No. PLGR2022-0030)

General Conditions:

1. This approval by the Director of Community Development of the City of Rancho Palos Verdes allows 844.8 yd³ of balanced on-site grading including 580.8 yd³ of balanced grading in the Alta Vista Gardens section of the Masterplan, consisting of 290.4 yd³ cut and 290.4 yd³ fill; and 264 yd³ of balanced grading in the Inspiration Slope section of the Masterplan, consisting 132 yd³ cut and 132 yd³ fill, to accommodate the installation of vaults associated with earth interments along with ancillary site improvements (which include 3-foot-high walls and benches and upright memorials up to 3 foot high adjacent to family estate areas and walkways) in Area 2 of the Master Plan. Fill may be stockpiled in the approved area of Area 6, pursuant to Condition No. 9.b.
2. The Conditions of Approval under Resolution No. 2021-66 shall remain in full force and effect, until and unless amended in the future by the City Council.
3. Prior to the submittal of plans for Building and Safety Plan Check, the Applicant shall submit to the City a statement, in writing, that they have read, understand, and agree to all conditions of approval contained in this Exhibit "A". Failure to provide this written statement within 90 days following the date of this approval shall render this approval null and void.
4. The Applicant shall indemnify, protect, defend, and hold harmless, the City, and/or any of its officials, officers, employees, agents, departments, agencies, and instrumentalities thereof, from any and all claims, demands, lawsuits, writs of mandamus, and other actions and proceedings (whether legal, equitable, declaratory, administrative or adjudicatory in nature), and alternative dispute resolutions procedures (including, but not limited to arbitrations, mediations, and other such procedures) (collectively "Actions"), brought against the City, and/or any of its officials, officers, employees, agents, departments, agencies, and instrumentalities thereof, that challenge, attack, or seek to modify, set aside, void, or annul, the action of, or any permit or approval issued by, the City and/or any of its officials, officers, employees, agents, departments, agencies, and instrumentalities thereof (including Actions approved by the voters of the City), for or concerning the project.
5. Approval of this permit shall not be construed as a waiver of applicable and appropriate zoning regulations, or any Federal, State, County, and/or City laws and regulations. Unless otherwise expressly specified, all other requirements of the City of Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code shall apply.
6. Pursuant to Condition No. 2.a(1) of City Council Resolution 2021-66, the Director of Community Development is authorized to make minor modifications through a Grading Permit to the approved plans and any of the conditions that will achieve substantially the same results as would strict compliance with such plans and conditions. Any substantial change to the project shall require approval of a revision by the final body that approved the original project, which may require new and separate environmental review.

7. The project development on the site shall conform to the specific standards contained in these Conditions of Approval or, if not addressed herein, shall conform to the cemetery development standards of the Rancho Palos Verdes Municipal Code (RPVMC), Conditions of Approval, including but not limited to height, setback, and lot coverage standards.
8. Failure to comply with and adhere to all of these Conditions of Approval and the conditions of approval set forth in City Council Resolution No. 2021-66 or future related Council-adopted Resolutions, may be cause to revoke the approval of this grading permit pursuant to RPVMC Section 17.86.060, or administrative citations as described in RPVMC Section 1.16.
9. In the event that any of these conditions conflict with the recommendations and/or requirements of another permitting agency or City department, the stricter standard shall apply.
10. Unless otherwise designated in these Conditions of Approval, all construction shall be completed in substantial conformance with the plans stamped APPROVED by the City with the effective date of this Exhibit "A".
11. This approval is only for the items described within these Conditions and identified on the stamped APPROVED plans and is not an approval of any existing illegal or legal non-conforming structures on the property.
12. All construction sites shall be maintained in a secure, safe, neat, and orderly manner, to the satisfaction of the City's Building Official. All construction waste and debris resulting from a construction, alteration, or repair project shall be removed on a weekly basis by the contractor or property owner. Existing or temporary portable bathrooms shall be provided during construction. Portable bathrooms shall be placed in a location that will minimize disturbance to the surrounding property owners, to the satisfaction of the City's Building Official.
13. The construction site and adjacent public and private properties and streets shall be kept free of all loose materials resembling trash and debris in excess of that material used for immediate construction purposes. Such excess material may include, but is not limited to: the accumulation of debris, garbage, lumber, scrap metal, concrete, asphalt, piles of earth, salvage materials, abandoned or discarded furniture, appliances or other household fixtures. All landscape pruning, including but not limited to grass, leaves, branches, fertilizer, etc., shall be properly stored in areas with minimal visual impact to adjacent homeowners, and shall be stored in appropriate containers and disposed of in a lawful manner.
14. When not being used in the daily operations of the cemetery, equipment and supplies shall be stored in areas with minimal visual impact to adjacent homeowners or in the maintenance yard if possible. Equipment and supplies shall be neatly stacked so they do not pose a safety hazard or become a property maintenance issue. All landscaping equipment and vehicles, and all vehicles used for maintenance and/or burial preparation shall be stored in the maintenance yard.

15. Construction and grading activities, including but not limited to equipment warm up, geologic investigations, interments excavation for placement of vaults and installation or removal of large landscape materials or landscaping maintenance shall be limited to 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on weekdays only. Notwithstanding the foregoing, within 120 feet of any property line abutting a Residential Zoning District, no construction or grading, including grading operations to prepare sites for earth interments, shall occur before 9:00 a.m. or after 3:30 p.m. All equipment shall be equipped with a muffler to reduce on-site grading and construction noise levels.
16. All proposed on-site grading activities including, but not limited to, noise and dust prevention techniques shall comply with Resolution No. 2021-66, and the associated Conditions of Approval and Mitigation Monitoring plan including for the project site for this permit.
17. Construction shall not interfere with pedestrian or vehicular circulation, including ingress and egress to the Applicant's property.
18. **Prior to any permit issuance**, all applicable soils/geotechnical reports shall be approved by the City's Geologist.
19. **Prior to any permit issuance**, all applicable drainage plans shall be reviewed and approved by the City Engineer.