

Home At Last: Honoring Our Veterans With A Veterans Cemetery In Orange County



GRAND JURY 2018-2019

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SUMMARY

By population, Orange County is the sixth largest county in the United States and is the largest county in the State without a veterans cemetery. It is home to more than 115,000 veterans. In Southern California, the closest veterans cemeteries with burial spaces still available are in San Diego and Riverside counties. The legislative pursuit of a veterans cemetery in Orange County began with the January 2014 introduction and later passing of State Assembly Bill 1453. The California Department of Veterans Affairs was directed to work with Orange County governmental agencies to plan and develop a Southern California veterans cemetery at the City of Irvine's former Marine Corps Air Station El Toro. As of May 2019, two cities are under consideration for a State operated veterans cemetery in Orange County: Anaheim and Irvine.

The 2018-2019 Orange County Grand Jury investigated the historical background, issues and various factors that affect the timeliness, location and sustainability for a State Veterans Administration Cemetery in Orange County. A key finding of the research and interviews is that there is consensus and overwhelming support for a veterans cemetery in Orange County. The Orange County Grand Jury has identified four potential sites and summarized the relative strengths and weaknesses of each site. The Orange County Grand Jury recommends a process to resolve ongoing conflicts to overcome delays.

Photo of Arlington National Cemetery, Washington DC



Source: 2018-2019 Orange County Grand Jury

REASON FOR THE STUDY

Five years have elapsed since discussions began to open a State Veterans Administration Cemetery (veterans cemetery) in Orange County, the most populous county in the State without one. The closest cemetery for veterans, with space available, is Riverside National Cemetery. There is a growing interest in, and demand for, an Orange County veterans cemetery. The various sites currently being considered for an Orange County veterans cemetery are supported by veterans groups as well as other public and private organizations. Two potential veterans cemetery sites in the City of Irvine have been either previously or currently supported by the California State Legislature. California Veterans Administration (CalVet) has completed a comprehensive planning and analysis report (Owen Report) for one of the City of Irvine potential veterans cemetery sites.

Veterans groups and other Orange County residents have become frustrated that progress towards opening a veterans cemetery in Orange County has been hindered by political infighting. The continued lack of progress in the negotiation between the relevant entities and a lack of general understanding of the underlying issues by Orange County residents, prompted the 2018-2019 Orange County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) to conduct an investigation to gather information for the benefit of Orange County residents. This report will describe the dynamics that have resulted in the on going delay in establishing a veterans cemetery in Orange County.

METHOD OF STUDY

Extensive research was conducted that included reviewing confidential and publicly available reports and documents, media reports and articles and information gathered from numerous interviews. The Grand Jury interviewed, in person or by telephone, multiple State, County and city officials and private sector stakeholders that are interested in opening an Orange County veterans cemetery in a timely and financially responsible manner. The Grand Jury toured all four potential veterans cemetery sites.

BACKGROUND AND FACTS

At present, Orange County is the most populous county in the state without a veterans cemetery, with approximately 115,000 veterans in residence (See Reference 1). In 2014, discussions began among veterans groups and local officials about the possibility of locating a veterans cemetery in Orange County. Several veterans groups proposed locating a veterans cemetery on the former Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, in the City of Irvine. A portion of the former Marine Corps Air Station El Toro was designated as, and is being developed into, the Great Park. The Great Park has been designated for arts and recreation use and is currently under development. The Great Park area is owned by the City of Irvine along with some other parcels on the former

Marine Corps Air Station that are outside of the Great Park designated area. Other portions of the former Marine Corps Air Station are owned by selected developers. In 2018, a site in the City of Anaheim was identified as an additional option for a veterans cemetery..

Federal and State Veterans Administration Cemetery policies have specific criteria and standards that govern veterans cemetery planning, design and operations, including site location.

According to national veterans administration cemetery specifications, a greater than 40 mile distance is required between national cemeteries. All four potential sites are within this distance, therefore the sites are not eligible for national designation. Presently, the two closest veterans cemeteries with burial space available are located in Riverside and San Diego counties.

This report focuses on a State designated veterans cemetery in Orange County. A brief history and the relative merits of the four potential sites are summarized below. **Amended and Restated Development Agreement (ARDA)**

Description and History

The portion of the former Marine Corps base which became known as the ARDA site, is adjacent to, but not part of the Great Park according to the Irvine City Council. The City provided the Grand Jury with a judgement in an Orange County Superior Court case that made the following finding: “*The city-owned ARDA-site is not in the Great Park*”.¹ Prior to 2010, it was owned by a developer. In that year, the developer and the City of Irvine entered into an agreement whereby the city was granted ownership of the ARDA site. In exchange, the developer received relief from certain city-imposed requirements and retained a right of first refusal to acquire and develop the site.

In early 2014, veterans organizations, the City of Irvine and the State of California began discussions about a possible veterans cemetery on the ARDA site. The City of Irvine pledged funds in support of developing the first phase of a veterans cemetery at ARDA. In 2017, the Irvine City Council reversed its position of support for the ARDA site and offered a “land swap” with the developer for the Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway site (see below). In 2018, the citizens of Irvine rejected that land swap by defeating the Measure B referendum by a 63 percent vote.

A comprehensive development plan (Owen Report) for a veterans cemetery on the ARDA site was completed in 2016. The plan called for a 125-acre veterans cemetery costing \$77 million with an initial phase completion date of 30 months from the start of the project. Two years later, that estimate was increased by approximately \$14 million. To date, this remains the only detailed comprehensive development plan with definitive cost estimates of any of the four

¹ Bill Sandlin, et.al. v. Molly McLaughlin, et.al. Orange County Superior Court case #30-2018-00975288-CU-WM-CJC

potential Orange County veterans cemetery sites: ARDA, Golf Course, Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway, Gypsum Canyon (91/241).

Distinctive Characteristics

Positive Aspects

- The ARDA site is the only proposed site to have a completed in-depth development plan with development costs sufficiently defined.
- Some veterans groups have indicated an interest in developing parts of the ARDA site as a veterans memorial, utilizing some existing buildings, the original control tower and portions of the former Marine Corps base runway.
- Use of this site for a cemetery would have no impact on Great Park development plans.

Negative Aspects

- Of the three proposed Irvine veterans cemetery sites, the ARDA site has the highest potential commercial land value for other purposes.
- The site has the highest cleanup cost projections, due to building and runway demolition and soil contamination.
- There is some resistance in the City of Irvine to the use of this site for a cemetery.

Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway

Description and History

The Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway site is on a portion of the former Marine Corps base and is not part of the Great Park. The site is adjacent to the Great Park, located near the north side of the junction of Interstates 5 and 405 in the City of Irvine. The parcel is owned by a local developer. The Irvine City Council proposed the Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway site as an alternative to the ARDA site. Later, after the Irvine City Council decided against the ARDA site, the State of California designated this site as a potential option (see Legislative History). In June 2018, Measure B, an exchange with the City of Irvine for the ARDA site, was rejected by the citizens of Irvine. The Grand Jury learned that some individuals misinterpreted this vote as a rejection of the Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway site as a veterans cemetery.

Distinctive Characteristics

Positive Aspects

- The site is currently recognized as the designated veterans cemetery site by the State of California (see Legislative History).
- The site potentially has the lowest development costs for use as a cemetery because of the anticipated low soil contamination.

Negative Aspects

- The site must be purchased from the private owner.
- A recent local initiative, Measure B, rejected the “land swap” involving this site and the ARDA site. The result implied to some that its use as a veterans cemetery is unacceptable to the majority of the voting citizens of the City of Irvine.
- No definitive cost estimates have been developed.
- California Assembly Bill (AB) 368, presently pending in the State Assembly Appropriations Committee, is changing the proposed site for the veterans cemetery back to the ARDA site rather than this site.

Golf Course

Description and History

This portion of the former Marine Corps base is part of the Great Park and has been designated as a potential golf course. In 2018, after the ARDA/Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway “land swap” was rejected by the citizens of Irvine, this site was offered as an alternate site for the cemetery by the Irvine City Council. To date, only cursory development cost estimates have been calculated by City of Irvine staff employees. Centrally located in the Great Park, this site’s use as a cemetery would have substantial impact on the current Great Park development plan.

Distinctive Characteristics

Positive Aspects

- The current Irvine City Council supports this site.
- Less building demolition will be required; however, soil contamination issues have not been formally evaluated.

Negative Aspects

- The selection of this site would disrupt the current Great Park plan. Use of this site for a cemetery would reduce the acreage of the Great Park designated for recreational use.
- No definitive cost estimates have been developed.
- The site has a 1,000 foot radius circle designated by the FAA for airline navigation purposes that cannot be used for anything else.
- To date, the California State legislature has not recognized this location as a possible veterans cemetery.

Gypsum Canyon (91/241)

Description and History

The Gypsum Canyon (91/241) site is located in the City of Anaheim near the southeast intersection of the California State Route 91 and California State Route 241 (toll road). As this site was donated to the County of Orange by a local land owner and developer, no land purchase is necessary. In 2018, the County charged the Orange County Cemetery District (OCCD) with the responsibility for developing it into a public cemetery. Approximately half of the acreage is currently stable enough to proceed with the initial phase; the other half will require some effort to stabilize the ground before use. The OCCD has been investigating the option of developing two distinct sections: a public cemetery and a veterans cemetery. In this case, some developmental and operational efficiencies may result from common management. Presently, the Anaheim City Council has not determined its official position in opposition to, or in support of, this site being used as a public and/or veterans cemetery.

Distinctive Characteristics

Positive Aspects

- This site offers a picturesque location with a view of open space and rolling hills.
- There is the possibility of a cooperative arrangement with the OCCD for the development, operation and maintenance of two distinct cemetery facilities (veterans and public) on the site, creating potential cost savings.

Negative Aspects

- This site has no relationship to or history with current or former military installations.
- This site location is not central to Orange County as it is located on the eastern perimeter.

- This site may have higher costs for infrastructure support (i.e., access and utilities).
- This site will require management of unstable land for future expansion phases.
- No cost estimates have been developed.

For more detailed information, see Appendix J.

Legislative History

January 2014: AB 1453 is introduced to create a State Veterans Administration Cemetery in Orange County.

July 2014: The Irvine City Council adopts City Council Resolution No. 14-92 by a 5-0 vote, which designates the 125-acre parcel known as the Amended and Restated Development Agreement (ARDA) site as the best site for a veterans cemetery.

January 2015: AB 1453 is signed into law. The legislation directs CalVet, in cooperation with Orange County, to develop plans and cost estimates to develop the veterans cemetery on the ARDA site. The legislation included \$5 million to be used for planning of phase one of a veterans cemetery. The report generated eventually becomes known as the Owen Report.

March-April 2016: A veterans group suggests the City of Irvine consider a “land swap” of the ARDA site for the Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway site owned by a developer. The developer would receive the ARDA site in return.

June 2017: The City of Irvine adopts Resolution No. 17-39 by a 3-2 vote, to identify the Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway as the preferred site for the veterans cemetery and authorizing the City to pursue the land swap. Senate Bill 96 follows, which includes amendments to Military and Veterans Code section 1410, changing the site for the veterans cemetery from the ARDA site to the Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway site. This is the current state of the law as it applies to a state operated veterans cemetery in Orange County as of the writing of this report.

June 2018: Measure B, which authorizes the needed zoning change for the land swap, is defeated by the citizens of Irvine. These election results and Senate Bill 96 create a conflict regarding the site location for a veterans cemetery.

February-April 2019: Assembly Bill 368 is introduced by Assembly member Quirk-Silva, then amended. The purpose of this bill is to amend Military and Veterans Code section 1410 to be consistent with Measure B, changing the proposed site for the veterans cemetery back to the ARDA site.

FINDINGS

In accordance with *California Penal Code* Sections §933 and §933.05, the 2018-2019 Grand Jury requires (or, as noted, requests) Responses from each agency affected by the Findings presented in this section. The Responses are to be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

Based on its investigation, titled “Home At Last: Honoring Our Veterans With A Veterans Cemetery In Orange County”, the 2018-2019 Orange County Grand Jury has arrived at eight principal findings:

F1: There is private and public sector significant interest in, and support for, establishing a veterans cemetery in Orange County.

F2: Although four sites are under consideration, to date, only two veterans cemetery locations in the City of Irvine have been recognized for potential funding by the State.

F3: In the City of Irvine, competing political and financial interests have caused delays in veterans cemetery site selection.

F4: Use of the ARDA property for a veterans cemetery will reduce potential tax income for the City of Irvine compared to other proposed sites.

F5: Site development cost estimates and site valuations identified to date vary widely.

F6: Completion of the veterans cemetery project will require multiple sources of funding; some funding has been available in the past.

F7: There is no known opposition to the use of the Gypsum Canyon (91/241) property as a veterans cemetery from the Anaheim City Council, Orange County veterans groups, or the OCCD.

F8: The City of Irvine and OCCD, at their City of Anaheim site, could both be interested in developing a veterans cemetery at their respective properties. The State and CalVet, however, will support only one veterans cemetery in Orange County.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with *California Penal Code* Sections §933 and §933.05, the 2018-2019 Grand Jury requires (or, as noted, requests) Responses from each agency affected by the Recommendations presented in this section. The Responses are to be submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court.

Based on its investigation titled “Home At Last: Honoring Our Veterans With A Veterans Cemetery in Orange County”, the 2018-2019 Orange County Grand Jury makes the following three Recommendations:

R1: By November 30, 2019, the Irvine City Council should decide which, if any, site within its borders to pursue for a veterans cemetery. Site selection efforts should validate the cost and valuation information. **(F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6)**

R2: By November 30, 2019, the OCCD, in coordination with the Orange County Board of Supervisors and the City of Anaheim, should decide whether to pursue developing both a public cemetery and veterans cemetery on the Gypsum Canyon (91/241) site. Site selection efforts should validate the cost and valuation information. **(F1, F6, F7)**

R3: By December 31, 2019, in the event that both the City of Irvine and OCCD seek to pursue a veterans cemetery, the Grand Jury recommends that a joint City of Irvine and OCCD Veterans Cemetery Selection Committee be established that includes a representative of the Board of Supervisors to determine which of the respective sites will be endorsed. **(F1, F5, F6, F8)**

RESPONSES

The following excerpts from the California Penal Code provide the requirements for public agencies to respond to the Findings and Recommendations of this Grand Jury report:

§933(c)

“No later than 90 days after the grand jury submits a final report on the operations of any public agency subject to its reviewing authority, the governing body of the public agency shall comment to the presiding judge of the superior court on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of the governing body and every elected county officer or agency head for which the grand jury has responsibility pursuant to Section 914.1 shall comment within 60 days to the presiding judge of the superior court, with an information copy sent to the board of supervisors, on the findings and recommendations pertaining to matters under the control of that county officer or agency head or any agency or agencies which that officer or agency head supervises or controls. In any city and county, the mayor shall also comment on the findings and recommendations. All of these comments and reports shall forthwith be submitted to the presiding judge of the superior court who impaneled the grand jury. A copy of all responses to grand jury reports shall be placed on file with the clerk of the public agency and the office of the county clerk, or the mayor when applicable, and shall remain on file in those offices. . . . ”

§933.05

“(a) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury finding, the responding person or entity shall indicate one of the following:

(1) The respondent agrees with the finding.

(2) The respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding, in which case the response shall specify the portion of the finding that is disputed and shall include an explanation of the reasons therefor.

(b) For purposes of subdivision (b) of Section 933, as to each grand jury recommendation, the responding person or entity shall report one of the following actions:

1) The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.

(2) The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a timeframe for implementation.

(3) The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a timeframe for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency or department being investigated or reviewed, including the governing body of the public agency when applicable. This timeframe shall not exceed six months from the date of publication of the grand jury report.

(4) The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation therefor.

(c) However, if a finding or recommendation of the Grand Jury addresses budgetary or personnel matters of a county agency or department headed by an elected officer, both the agency or department head and the board of supervisors shall respond if requested by the grand jury, but the response of the board of supervisors shall address only those budgetary or personnel matters over which it has some decision-making authority. The response of the elected agency or department head shall address all aspects of the findings or recommendations affecting his or her agency or department.”

Comments to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court in compliance with Penal Code §933.05 are required from:

Responses Required:

Findings:

Orange County Board of Supervisors:	F1, F5, F6, F8
Orange County Cemetery District Board of Trustees	F1, F6, F7
City of Irvine, City Council	F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, F6

Recommendations:

Orange County Board of Supervisors:	R3
Orange County Cemetery District Board of Trustees	R2, R3
City of Irvine, City Council	R1, R3

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APPENDIX

A: Two Possible Veterans Cemetery Sites in the City of Irvine

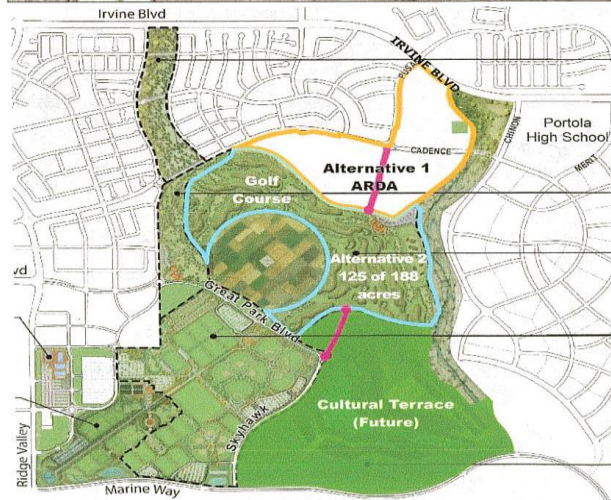
(Area “C” is the ARDA Site and Area “D” is the Golf Course site)

PROMISE AND BETRAYAL: The Essential History of the Great Park Veterans Cemetery Project, 2014-2019

APPENDIX A - MAPS



MAP 1: The 2010 award-winning Great Park Master Plan, pictured here, included a 200-acre Great Park Canyon [A] and stream emptying into a Lake [B]. Also pictured here is the original 125-acre Great Park Veterans Cemetery site [C] that, from 2014-2016, was planned, designed and approved by the City, State (CalVet) and the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs.



MAP 2: This City-provided map shows the proposed location for the Veterans Cemetery (Alternative 2), replacing two-thirds of the proposed golf course that was to be developed by FivePoint.

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Source: “Irvine Community News & Views”

Used with Permission

B: Photo of Former El Toro Marine Air Station Structures on the ARDA site.



Source: 2018-2019 Grand Jury

C: Future Golf Course Property Site City of Irvine



Source 2018-2019 Grand Jury

D:

Future State Veterans Cemetery Strawberry Fields/Bake Parkway Site



Provided to the Grand Jury with permission by the City of Irvine

E: Conceptual Plan for a State Veterans Cemetery at Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway



CONCEPTUAL DESIGN PLAN

CONCEPT PLAN SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Provided to the Grand Jury with permission by the City of Irvine

F: Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway Site City of Irvine



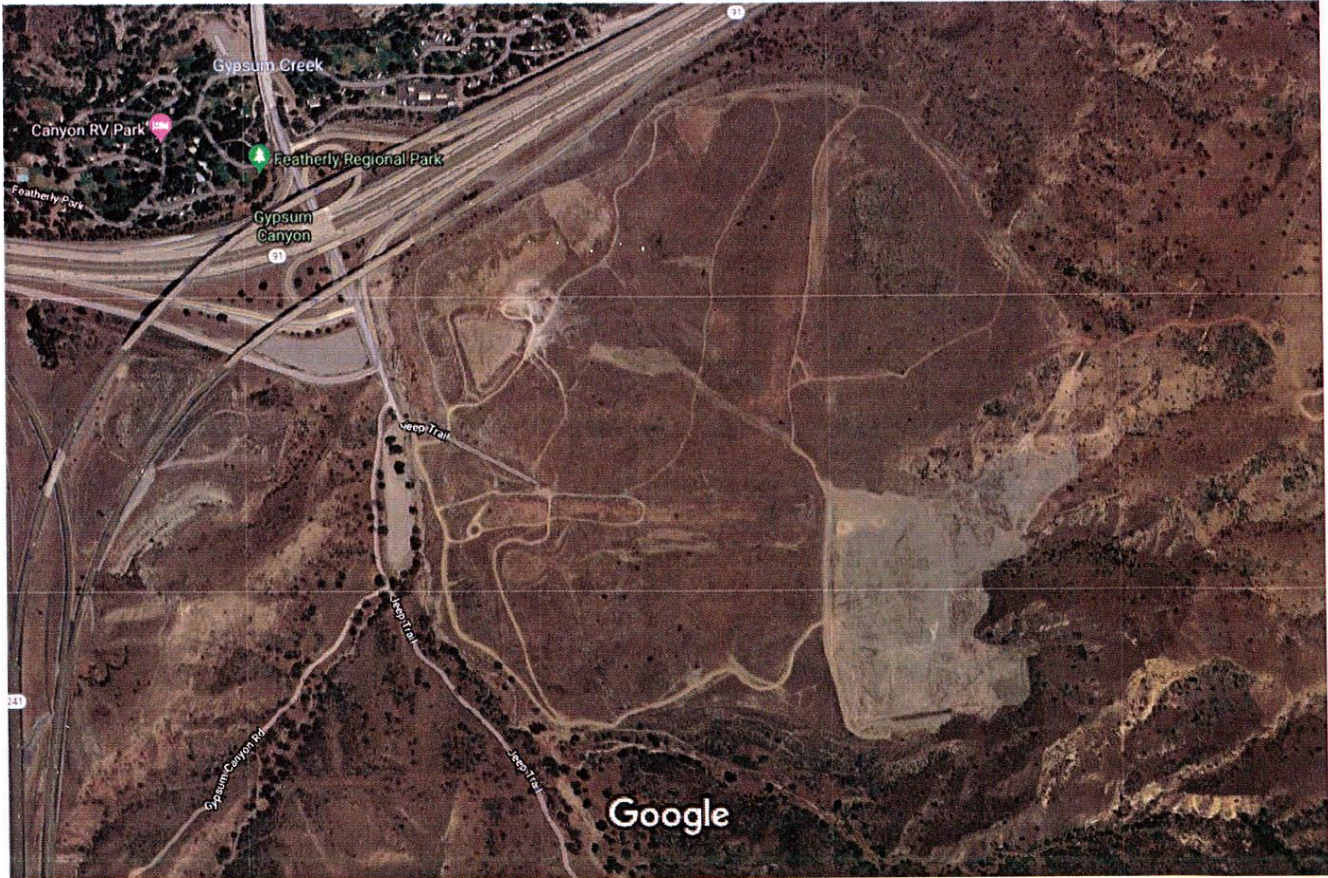
Source: 2018-2019 Grand Jury

G: Photo of Gypsum Canyon (91/241) Site in the City of Anaheim



Source: 2018-2019 Grand Jury

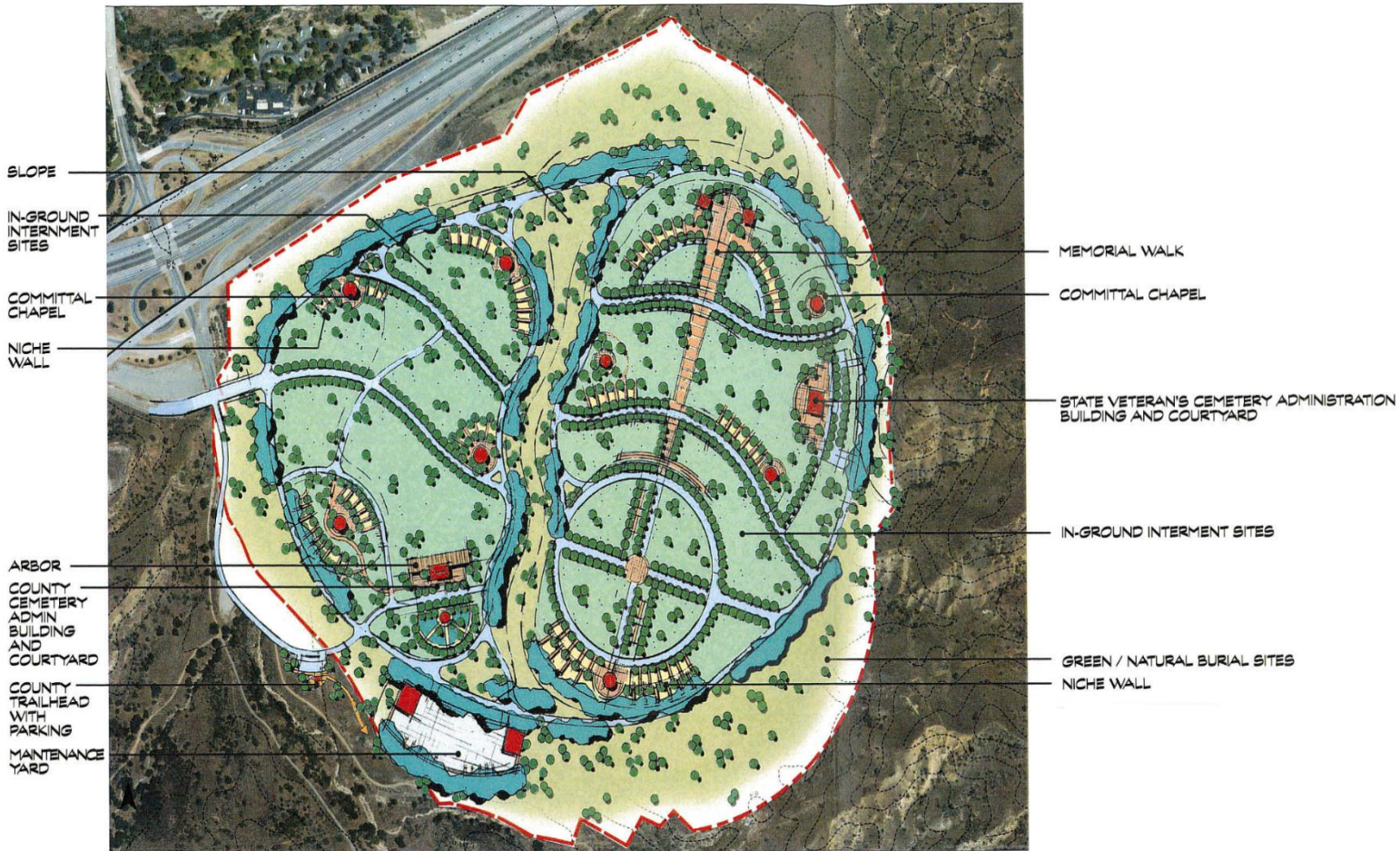
H: Aerial Photo of Gypsum Canyon (91/241) Site in the City of Anaheim 2019



Imagery ©2019 County of San Bernardino, DigitalGlobe, U.S. Geological Survey, USDA Farm Service Agency, Map data ©2019 Google 500 ft

Source: Google Maps

I: Conceptual Design of an OCCD Public Cemetery and Separate Veterans Cemetery for the Gypsum Canyon (91/241) Site in the City of Anaheim



SITE STUDY
GYPSUM CANYON CEMETERY DEVELOPMENT
ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

Source: OCCD and RJM Design Group

Used with Permission

J: Chronology of key City of Irvine Great Park Veterans Cemetery, Marine Corps Air Station El Toro and Orange County Veterans Cemetery - related history.

- **March 17, 1943:** Marine Corps Air Station El Toro is commissioned.
- **June 27, 1993:** The federal base closure panel decides to close El Toro by 1999.
- **July 1993:** The Orange County Board of Supervisors proposes to oversee El Toro base-closure planning with an advisory council made up of cities and business and community interests.
- **January 1994:** The El Toro Reuse Planning Authority is formed with participation by the County of Orange, and the cities of Irvine and Lake Forest.
- **July 2, 1999:** El Toro officially closes.
- **May 2001:** The City of Irvine unveils a new citizen-sponsored initiative to overturn 1994's Measure A and replace aviation uses with the Orange County Great Park.
- **March 5, 2002:** Voters pass Measure W, eliminating the planned airport uses at El Toro.
- **March 6, 2002:** The Department of the Navy announces that, rather than giving the land to the county or a city, it instead will sell the base.
- **March 2003:** The County of Orange and City of Irvine adopt a property tax transfer agreement, necessary for the annexation of the El Toro base.
- **Nov. 12, 2003:** Local Agency Formation Commission votes to allow the city of Irvine to annex the 4,700-acre base property, which includes a parcel that will remain under the jurisdiction of the Federal Aviation Administration.
- **Dec. 5, 2003:** The first meeting of the Great Park Corporation board.
- **Jan. 14, 2004:** City of Irvine completes annexation of the old base property.
- **Feb. 16, 2005:** The Navy's auction of El Toro ends, with a developer buying the former base for \$649.5 million.
- **July 12, 2005:** The Developer pays the balance of \$649.5 million total due to the Navy and takes over ownership. The company also presents the first installment of the \$201 million in developer fees for construction of the Great Park to the city of Irvine.
- **Jan. 23, 2006:** Ken Smith organization design team picked by the Great Park Board to create the park master plan.
- **June 20, 2006:** The 2005-2006 Orange County Grand Jury releases a report on the Great Park titled "The Orange County Great Park: Whose Park is It?" and subtitled "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."
- **June 22, 2006:** The Great Park Board unanimously adopts 12 sustainability goals for the park that are intended to conserve water, reduce energy use, recycle materials, honor the land's history, educate park visitors about environmental preservation and integrate environmental-friendly features into every aspect of the park.
- **July 5 and 6, 2006:** Designers meet with the public to discuss themes of the park – accessibility, artistic concepts, recreational trails and a military memorial.
- **July 11, 2006:** The Irvine City Council votes to reject the findings and recommendations contained in the Grand Jury report that criticized the governance of the Great Park. The decision included the City drafting a response to the report. The Council also earmarked

\$300,000 for any lawsuit. At the same meeting, the City Council accepts a pledge by the Developer to sponsor the Great Park Balloon.

- **Sept. 13, 2006:** A proposal to allow the same developer to build 5,875 more houses at the Great Park wins preliminary City Council approval. Under the plan, the Developer would reduce by 30 percent the commercial and industrial development originally expected at the former El Toro Air Station. The proposed transaction also calls for the Developer to give 402 acres to the Great Park Corporation for inclusion in the public portion of the park, bringing the size of the public portion of the park to 1,749 acres.
- **Oct. 12, 2006:** Ken Smith organization design team releases a draft master plan for the Great Park. Revisions to the design reveal for the first time how the 1,347-acre park and its neighboring housing developments and commercial projects will interact.
- **January 2007:** The last major pollution cleanup at the old El Toro base begins. Thirty-five pumps begin drawing up 390 gallons of polluted groundwater per minute, around the clock. The remediation is expected to cost the federal government \$42 million and take 30 years.
- **October 2009:** The Developer transfers title of Amended and Restated Development Agreement (ARDA) site to the City of Irvine.
- **March 2014:** The Irvine City Council approved support of State Assembly Bill 1453 that provides for the California Veterans Administration (CalVet) to develop a conceptual plan that could be used as part of an application to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for a grant proposal for a State run veterans cemetery on the City of Irvine 125-acre site known as the ARDA.
- **September 2014:** State Assembly Bill 1453 is signed by Governor Jerry Brown and enables CalVet to contract with the California Department of General Services (DGS) to manage the overall development of a State veterans cemetery on the ARDA site. DGS and CalVet contracts with the private sector Owen Company that developed the “Concept Plan for the Southern California Veterans Cemetery.”
- **June 2016:** The 333 page \$500,000 CalVet Concept Plan for the Southern California Veterans Cemetery is finalized and the report is available on the City of Irvine website, “2016 Concept Plan for the Veterans Cemetery in the Great Park”. This concept plan includes a first phase 30-month timeline for a State-managed and -operated veterans cemetery on the Irvine ARDA site to be constructed and opened at a projected cost of over \$77 million. This first phase would accommodate burials for the first ten years.
- **April 2017:** The City of Irvine City Council, at their April 4 meeting, votes in favor of proceeding with working with CalVet and the U.S. Veterans Administration to develop the 125-acre ARDA site with the goal of opening on Veterans Day 2019. Included in this approved City Council motion was the City of Irvine’s commitment to provide funds toward this project from its Great Park account. Later, in this same meeting, as it was concluding, one of the Irvine City Council members changed a prior vote, resulting in a new motion being passed by Council members opposed to the ARDA site being used for the veterans cemetery. This new motion reduced the amount the City of Irvine would contribute to Phase 1, giving the State and Federal governments a three-month deadline

to provide their share of Phase 1 costs and lastly directing Irvine City staff to pursue a possible land-swap alternative if the State failed to meet the funding amount and timeline defined in the City Council's approved motion.

- **May 2017:** Assemblywoman Quirk-Silva received support from Governor Jerry Brown to include \$30 million in the pending State appropriation to be used towards Phase 1 of the State veterans cemetery project on the ARDA site.
- **June 2017:** The Irvine City Council votes to identify the Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway site as the preferred site for the veterans cemetery and authorizes the City to pursue the "land swap". One of the outcomes of this decision resulted in the cancellation of the potential State \$30 million grant for the ARDA site. There was concern by some in the Irvine community of the accuracy and equity of the proposed "land-swap" that included appraisal values of the Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway site, appraised as agricultural use, at \$68 million and the ARDA site, appraised as parkland use at \$4 million.
- **June 2017:** The purpose of California State Senate Bill 96 was to amend California Military Veterans Code section 1410 to change the specified site from the former Marine Corps Air Station El Toro to the Bake/Parkway site aka Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway. In June 2017, the Strawberry Field/Bake Parkway site referenced in Senate Bill 96 was concurrently in the process of being swapped with the ARDA site, In June 2018, City of Irvine voters by a majority vote of 63 percent defeated Measure B thereby rejecting the "land swap".
- **December 2018:** The Irvine City Council instructs its City Manager to perform an analysis on using the Great Park area designated to become an 18 hole golf course as an alternative site. Results from this study have not yet been released.
- **December 2018:** The Orange County Board of Supervisors assigned to the OCCD the land [Gypsum Canyon (91/241)] that had been previously donated to the County. The land is to be used exclusively for either open land, or a cemetery (either public, veterans, or a combination). OCCD is currently evaluating the Gypsum Canyon (91/241) site for possible public cemetery, possibly combined with a veterans cemetery. The Grand Jury is not aware of any official or formal process underway by City, County or State officials to plan a veterans cemetery at this site.
- **February to May 2019:** State Assembly Bill 368 was introduced and was approved by a 10 to 0 vote by the State Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs. Assembly Bill 368 has been forwarded to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. This Bill's intent is to supersede the previously approved Senate Bill 96 and will establish the City of Irvine ARDA site as the designated site for the State veterans cemetery. The intent of Assembly Bill 368 is to amend California Military and Veterans Code section 1410. There are concurrent congressional efforts underway to gain United States Department of Veterans Affairs financial support for a veterans cemetery in Orange County.