

# Where will Connecticut's veterans be laid to rest? Cemetery running out of burial plots

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MIDDLETOWN, Conn. — One of the state's most sanctified pieces of property is in desperate need of expansion. The [Connecticut Veterans Cemetery](#) is running out of places to bury our state's most dignified dead.

The Department of Veterans Affairs says they've been trying everything to make the current property work by building more above ground mausoleums and columbariums but time is running out.

The neatly arranged rows of limestone in Middletown mark the final resting place for [Connecticut's](#) bravest men and women. "It's a very special place," remarked Ken McClellan, a retired Lieutenant Colonel and current President of the Greater Middletown Military Museum.

The Connecticut Veterans Cemetery is running out of room. "There are currently fewer plots available than there are veterans living in Connecticut by several orders of magnitude and we do need more room," said McClellan.

In a statement, the Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs said it is, "experiencing usage rates that will reach capacity in 2027. The current property cannot accommodate."

There's plenty of surrounding land available including at the adjacent Calvary Cemetery, but instead, the city wants to sell 90 acres of open space about a mile and a half away and it's not well received by all.

"Clearly this is a blatant use of leveraging the veterans to try to do a land grab. This land has nothing to do with the veterans. This is all about back door deals with politicians," remarked a Middletown resident who wanted to remain anonymous.

He told FOX61 the process hasn't been transparent and he thinks he knows why. "I think this land is not just for a cemetery, I think they are talking about putting a

prison here, who knows. But once it's given over to the state it's out of our hands.

Those 90 acres is adjacent to the Whiting Forensic Hospital for the criminally mentally ill. In 2022 state lawmakers passed a bill to replace the aging facility. "No matter what is going to be developed there will affect property values."

Neighbors also have concerns about chemicals like formaldehyde used in the embalming process leaching into the aquifer that recharges the city water supply. "There have been no reports of any leakages or environmental concerns to date," replied McClellan.

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McClellan told FOX61 it's crucial to find land in the immediate area. "There are veterans who have relatives there. So to close this one and open another one means those families are going to be in different cemeteries."

The good news is that 90-acres of city owned open space might not be the only option. There are two privately owned adjacent expansion parcels that could double the size of the current cemetery. "There's ample land right next to the cemetery. Why aren't they doing that?"

"There are a lot of options, and I think it's just a matter of finding a reasonable compromise," added McClellan.

FOX61 reached out to Middletown Mayor Ben Florsheim to ask what the next move is after this plan ran into such resistance at the last common council meeting. We have not heard back. Only 738 plots remain in this current cemetery.

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