



MANAGEMENT AND USE OF CEMETERY LAND IN THAI BINH CITY: CURRENT SITUATION AND SOLUTIONS

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Received 09 October 2024; Accepted 23 December 2024

Abstract

Thai Binh city - is the provincial capital and the political, economic, and socio-cultural center of Thai Binh province, one of the 04 satellite cities of the Southern Red River delta region, currently a Type 2 city under Thai Binh province. In more than 20 years of construction and development, Thai Binh city has had a high growth rate and is striving to become a Type 1 city under the province by 2025. Along with the development process, the city always pays attention to environmental protection issues, striving to build Thai Binh city to develop quickly and sustainably, in which the city mentions the issue of planning and managing cemetery land in the area - one of the sources that can cause environmental pollution in the city. The research will evaluate the current status of land use and management as well as propose solutions to improve the efficiency of land use management of cemeteries and graveyards, contributing to ensuring the needs of society as well as ensuring environmental factors for sustainable development in the research area.

Keywords: Cemetery land; Cemetery; Thai Binh city; Environmental protection.

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.63064/khtnmt.2024.647>

1. Introduction

Thai Binh city is the economic, cultural, social, scientific, and defense center of the province and is also one of the 8 cities in the Northern coastal region. Located 110 km from Hanoi's capital, it is also the traffic hub of the province. In more than 20 years of formation and development, Thai Binh city has had significant changes and developments. With the growth rate of economy, culture, and society, Thai Binh city is currently an

area attracting many workers to live and work, the pressure on socio-economic infrastructure is increasing, and the issue of environmental protection is also an urgent issue for sustainable city development, especially in the context of the city striving to become a Type 1 city under the province.

A cemetery (graveyard) is a public land used to bury the dead (according to the Vietnamese Dictionary, page 656). In Vietnam, the concept of cemetery

land and graveyard is not clearly defined but is often referred to as the resting place of the deceased. Cemeteries are places where the deceased are buried in different burial forms and are managed and built according to planning (according to Clause 1, Article 2, Decree No. 23/2016/ND-CP on construction, management, and use of cemeteries and crematoriums). However, while cemetery land is a concept that refers to land areas that are centrally planned to serve burial purposes, cemetery land is land that, although having the same purpose, is not planned, and is still scattered, fragmented, and spontaneous.

Cemetery land, NTD cemetery land is an important and top concern issue in urban areas in Vietnam, including Thai Binh city. As the economy develops under the influence of urbanization and industrialization, people's needs increase, and the issue of etiquette is increasingly important and urgent. According to the orientation, Thai Binh city 2030 will expand by nearly 2 times compared to the present, and the demand for land in general and land for cemeteries, funeral homes, and crematoriums; Land for ash storage facilities is also very large to serve the people. If the management and planning of cemeteries are not synchronized and not strictly managed, the risk of environmental pollution in the city is very high. The study will assess the current situation and propose solutions to improve the effectiveness of cemetery land management, associated with the goal of sustainable development and environmental protection in the study area.

2. Methodology

2.1. Investigation methods, document, and data collection

Secondary data: Collect data on natural conditions, socio-economic conditions, land management, and use in 2023 at state management agencies and public service units in Thai Binh city.

Data on current land use status in 2023: Including investigation and collection of data on cemetery land and cemeteries in Thai Binh city. Data on planning, land use plans; technical infrastructure, environmental landscape, etc.

2.2. Method of data synthesis, comparison, analysis, and processing

The collected data will be analyzed and synthesized using Microsoft Excel software. The data after being synthesized will be used as a basis for comparison, evaluation, and discussion, especially for evaluating the current status of cemetery land use and management, thereby providing a basis for proposing solutions to improve the effectiveness of cemetery land management and use in the research area.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Current status of cemetery land management and use

According to land statistics in 2023, Thai Binh city has 87.5 hectares of cemetery land with 650 cemetery locations distributed in 16/19 wards and communes. Specifically as follows:

Table 1. Current status of cemetery land use in Thai Binh city

No.	Administrative unit	Current status of cemetery land use		Number of Cemetery Areas
		Land area (ha)	Percentage (%)	
1	Bo Xuyen ward	0	0.0	0
2	De Tham ward	0	0.0	0
3	Hoang Dieu ward	6.8	7.8	47
4	Ky Ba ward	3.8	4.3	09
5	Le Hong Phong ward	0	0.0	0
6	Phu Khanh ward	3.6	4.1	01
7	Quang Trung ward	0.6	0.7	03
8	Tien Phong ward	2.5	2.9	05
9	Tran Hung Dao ward	2.1	2.4	01
10	Tran Lam ward	5.7	6.5	14
11	Dong Hoa commune	5.2	5.9	36
12	Dong My commune	4.2	4.8	15
13	Dong Tho commune	3.0	3.4	09
14	Phu Xuan commune	16.3	18.6	134
15	Tan Binh commune	6.9	7.9	72
16	Vu Chinh commune	8.7	9.9	163
17	Vu Dong commune	4.0	4.6	49
18	Vu Lac commune	5.5	6.3	43
19	Vu Phuc commune	8.6	9.8	49
Total		87.5	100.0	650

Source: Collected and compiled data

Through the synthesis of collected statistical data, the number of cemeteries in Thai Binh city is 650, of which 01 city-level cemetery is located in Phu Khanh ward (City People's cemetery); 01 provincial-level cemetery is the provincial martyrs' cemetery (Tran Lam ward); The remaining 26 are commune and ward-level cemeteries scattered in 16/19 wards and communes. According to the data table, the communes and wards with high cemetery areas are Phu Xuan commune with 16.3 hectares, accounting for 18.6 % of the total cemetery area of the city with 134 cemetery points; Quang Trung ward has the lowest area of 0.6 hectares, accounting for 0.7 % of the cemetery area of the city. 03 inner-city wards without any cemeteries are Bo Xuyen ward, De Tham ward, and Le Hong Phong ward.

Up to now, 70 % of cemeteries have had surrounding walls and drainage

infrastructure built such as in Tran Hung Dao, Tran Lam, Phu Khanh, Phu Xuan wards,... However, many communal cemeteries have not yet had surrounding walls built such as Hoang Dieu, Quang Trung, Tan Binh, Vu Dong, Vu Phuc,... More or less causing environmental pollution affecting the surrounding environment.

Regarding the supervision work, currently, basically communal cemeteries have a management board to supervise and ensure security in these areas.

Through the results of the actual survey, in the general planning content, in the current status section, most of the projects only stop at the level of stating the name, location, and area of the existing people's cemeteries, completely not mentioning the current status of planning management and construction of

cemeteries. The construction of cemetery land use planning is integrated into the general land use planning, the norms for this type of land are not specific, so it mainly relies on the implementation results of previous years, and previous periods to calculate the area for the next period, without analyzing the effectiveness of land use. Therefore, the planning is often broken, leading to the situation that cemetery land planning is almost only a formality.

3.2. About funeral homes

Regarding funeral homes, the city currently has 01 funeral home located at the Tran Lam ward Medical Center, which is solidly and modernly invested in accordance with regulations with a scale of 0.81 hectares, exploited and operated by Truong Duong Funeral Services Company Limited.

3.3. About assigning investors to build and operate cemetery infrastructure

Regarding the work assigned to enterprises, currently, there is only 01 city-level cemetery in Phu Khanh ward that has been assigned land to invest in building and operating cemetery infrastructure, with regulations on operations, synchronous infrastructure, and ensuring environmental hygiene.

In general, the cemetery areas in the area have been invested in and built, but they are quite scattered. Some communes have 2 - 3 cemeteries, causing waste of land funds and difficulty in ensuring environmental hygiene conditions. Not to mention the small cemeteries that have not been relocated to centralized cemeteries for a long time are also potential sources of environmental pollution and loss of urban beauty. In addition to the martyrs' cemeteries of the province, communes, and wards, the remaining public

cemeteries still practice cremation, which greatly affects the environment.

3.4. The concept of cremation is still promoted

Currently, people have not fully accepted the method of cremation due to the concept of customs and practices. Therefore, the choice of cremation is still widely used. According to the City People's Committee, the current rate of cremation in the area is only about 27 % (meeting the standards of Type 2 urban area according to Resolution No. 1210/2016/UBTVQH13 dated May 25, 2016 of the National Assembly Standing Committee on urban classification), but it is still quite low compared to the current trend and when the city is upgraded to a Type 1 urban area, according to regulations, this rate must reach at least 30 %. With the above situation, there is a risk of greatly affecting the environment around the cemetery area, especially the water and air environment [1].

3.5. Planning for the future

According to the general planning until 2035 with a vision to 2050 approved in 2023 and the land use planning until 2030 Thai Binh city approved until 2030, the city will maintain the current status of cemeteries and cemetery sites with an area of 87.5 hectares, not opening new or expanding new cemeteries and sites. Gradually close the cemeteries when they are full, and only accept burial cases. According to the planning, the city's burial needs will be transferred to 2 cemeteries planned for the province in Kien Xuong district and Quynh Phu district, and the aim is to use cremation methods.

For the city funeral home, it is expected to invest in an additional funeral home located in the northern hospital campus near Long Hung Street with a scale of 1

ha and by the criteria of Type 1 urban area (according to Resolution No. 1210/2016/UBTVQH13 dated May 25, 2016 of the National Assembly Standing Committee on urban classification, a Type 1 urban area must have 2 funeral homes) [3].

4. Forecasting demand and proposing solutions to improve the efficiency of cemetery land management and use in Thai Binh city

4.1. Forecasting demand

According to the general planning, by 2035, Thai Binh city will expand and merge 10 more communes from Vu Thu, Kien Xuong, and Dong Hung districts with an expected total area of 570 thousand people, and by 2050 it will be 700 thousand people. Thus, the demand for cemetery land is also very large, so it is necessary to have fundamental measures to solve the needs of the people while ensuring environmental sanitation according to the criteria of a Type 1 urban area. The forecast demand for cemetery land is 0.06 ha/1000 people [2]. Thus, if the population increase by 2035 (currently 208,162 people) is converted to 361,838 people, the demand for cemetery land will increase by 21.71 hectares, and by 2050, the increase will be 491,838 people, the demand for cemetery land will have to increase by 29.51 hectares.

4.2. Proposing solutions to improve the efficiency of cemetery land management and use in Thai Binh city

a. Propaganda and mobilization work

The City People's Committee needs to strengthen propaganda and mobilization work so that people better understand their responsibilities in environmental protection, and not carry out burials at small, unplanned, and spontaneous locations. Promote the use of

modern burial methods such as cremation to increase the rate to about 50 % or more by 2035 and over 90 % by 2050. At the same time, raise people's awareness of environmental protection at cemeteries.

b. Regarding planning

The City People's Committee does not plan to expand and add new cemeteries and recommends that the Thai Binh Provincial People's Committee accelerate the planning and construction of provincial-level cemetery projects to reduce pressure on cemeteries in the city.

At the same time, the City People's Committee is considering closing cemeteries in inner-city wards early before 2035, only accepting burials until the occupancy rate reaches 100 %.

With the urgent need for burial land for the deceased in Thai Binh city today, it is necessary to quickly implement the general cemetery planning and supplement the detailed planning of 1/500. In parallel with the addition of the 1/500 detailed planning, it is necessary to supplement and promulgate regulations on construction management according to the cemetery planning. The content of the proposed management regulations provides specific and clear solutions for landscape architecture management such as regulations on burial forms in the entire cemetery and in each component area: Unification of architectural style, height, finishing materials, and color; Regulations for each type of burial (burial, sand burial, cremation, etc.).

c. Regarding the specialization of management and exploitation

The City People's Committee develops a policy mechanism and assigns enterprises to bid and manage, exploit, and trade cemetery infrastructure in areas without synchronous infrastructure, water

supply and drainage infrastructure, and surrounding walls.

d. Strengthening management

Enhance the State's management role in the management of people's cemeteries: The State management agencies directly performing the function of managing people's cemeteries are the Department of War Invalids and Social Affairs, People's Committees of communes.

Strengthen the inspection and handling of violations of construction planning and environmental sanitation at commune-level people's cemeteries.

Perfecting unified and appropriate economic policies (fees, collection fees) in the management, use, and operation of people's cemeteries. In addition to legal regulations, the People's Committee needs to study and issue specific regulations on management and operation fees, sanitation fees for commune-level people's cemeteries;

Improve the capacity of cadres and cemetery management boards to manage people's cemeteries; Thai Binh province and functional departments need to learn from cemetery management experiences in other urban areas in and outside the country.

The City People's Committee and the People's Committees of communes and wards in the area shall strengthen the inspection and handling of violations related to the use of cemeteries to avoid affecting the surrounding environment.

Issue regulations on the management of local people's cemeteries to effectively manage and exploit cemeteries.

5. Conclusion

The entire Thai Binh city has 87.5 hectares of cemetery land with 650 cemetery points, some cemeteries have been invested in synchronously

and spaciouly, but there are still some cemeteries that have not been built with surrounding walls, water supply, and drainage infrastructure; There are no general regulations on operating regulations; The cremation rate in the area is about 27 %, meeting the standards of Type 2 urban area but is still not high compared to the general trend. The people's cemeteries in the city lack long-term planning, leading to consequences such as environmental pollution, affecting land use planning,... due to loose management, messy arrangement of graves, many levels, arbitrary burial areas not according to regulations. The city has planned to move cemetery land needs to provincial cemeteries according to the direction and orientation of the Provincial People's Committee and gradually closed inner-city cemeteries according to the roadmap, which is also a highlight in environmental protection actions. Therefore, it requires synchronous solutions, from many different perspectives, to manage public cemeteries to minimize negative impacts on the economic, social, and environmental development of the surrounding area.

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