

***Tucson Citizen***

October 17, 2007

**Reburials cost county \$15M million**

By Garry Duffy

The dead buried under downtown are long gone, but they left behind quite a bill. Pima County has sunk almost \$15 million into the project to unearth and rebury the deceased, most of whom have lain for over a century in what was then the official cemetery of a territorial town but are now beneath city streets and downtown buildings. Over 1,100 bodies have been exhumed at the site of the new Joint Courts Complex that is to rise east of Stone Avenue, south of Toole Avenue, north of Council Street and west of Grosetta Avenue.

Pima County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry estimated that the expanded archaeological project, expected now to be completed in March, will set the courthouse timetable back about two years.

The courts complex was approved by voters in a November 2004 bond. Voters approved \$76 million for the project. Other county funds would have contributed to the then-overall estimated cost of \$94 million. The latest county estimate is \$134 million, including the cost of the archaeological work, Mike Tuinstra, director of the Pima County Facilities Management Department, said Tuesday.

Adding to the increased cost of the complex were unanticipated jumps in the costs of construction materials and the acquisition of the property, Tuinstra said.

"It's in a state of flux," Tuinstra said of the design and eventual cost of the complex. Construction was expected to start next year.

County officials and the archaeological contractor on the job, Statistical Research Inc., knew the location was the site of the city's old National Cemetery. But records about the numbers and alignment of burials were sketchy.

The law requires the county to exhume and rebury all of the remains.

The Pima County Board of Supervisors last week approved an additional allocation of \$4.9 million for the archaeological project. It was the second supplemental allocation this year. The first was for \$8.9 million.

The latest allocation was made necessary after archaeologists found more bodies than expected under a segment of the site near Council Street and the Chicanos por la Causa offices at North Stone and East Alameda streets, said Roger Anyon, project manager for the Pima County Cultural Resources Division.

"We found one area under Council where there are much denser burials and a much more complex burial pattern than anticipated," Anyon said.

Numerous unmarked burials were expected to be found during the project, but officials and archaeologists were working "educated guesses" at best when starting the work, Anyon said.

The exhumation work will not extend to any burials that likely lie beneath the Chicanos por la Causa building. They will remain undisturbed, Anyon said.

Also buried at the complex site are the remains of soldiers attached to the old Camp Lowell, which was located near present-day downtown.

The archaeological project may be the most extensive and expensive undertaken in the downtown area of any American city to make way for a public complex, Huckelberry said.

"This is probably the largest historic graveyard operation in the country," he said. Huckelberry said the county had no choice but to keep approving additional allocations for the archaeological project.

Huckelberry said the county might have looked at alternate locations for the courts complex if the added costs and project completion time were known earlier.

"If we knew about this in advance, we probably would have (found some other location)," he said.