



ANNA CHU/STAFF

Members of the Jewish community gather for a consecration ceremony to sanctify land that will become the Magen David Memorial Gardens, located off Las Colinas Road.

Jewish

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begun on the Jewish section of the 104-acre future site of Monte Vista Memorial Gardens, envisioned as a full-service cemetery by developer T.W. Starkweather.

When complete, Magen David — meaning “Star of David” — will serve the needs of Judaism’s three major divisions (Orthodox, Conservative and Reform) with sections to accommodate religious restrictions unique to each movement. The cemetery is designed to be green, meeting Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards and incorporating solar power, electric vehicles and water recycling. It also has its own water

source.

“The whole idea is to create a modern cemetery that will be there for 100-plus years,” said Ron Kahn, CEO of Magen David Memorial Gardens.

Besides upholding Jewish traditions for caring for the deceased, proposed features include walls made of Jerusalem limestone — similar to the stone making up the Wailing Wall — a facility large enough to handle receptions of up to 350 people, Jewish art and a design based on the Star of David. Cameras that can be operated remotely over the Internet will also be installed so loved ones can view their relatives’ burial sites from anywhere in the world.

The Jewish community numbers about 40,000 in Alameda County, with about 10,000 calling the Tri-

Valley home. A majority of Bay Area Jewish cemeteries serving the population are in Colma — others include Gan Shalom in Briones and sections of the Roselawn Cemetery in Livermore and cemeteries in San Mateo, Berkeley, San Rafael, San Jose and Oakland.

Rabbi Resnick said the new cemetery will both serve the entire Bay Area and connect Livermore to the broader Jewish population.

“(A cemetery) is really one of the central institutions of Jewish life,” Resnick said. “To have a Jewish cemetery right here in Livermore will help the community here be more of a part of the Bay Area community.”

Construction will be done in phases, the first of which will cover 2.5 acres

with room for about 7,000 burials. An additional 2 acres are set aside for growth. The full buildout, Kahn said, will take place over the next 20 to 30 years. Kahn said the first presales of plots will likely be done by the spring of 2015, with traditional Jewish burials performed on the grounds by the end of 2015.

“It will be a beautiful place that we think people will want to come to and will want to be buried there,” Kahn said. “The establishment of a Jewish cemetery is one of the first important steps to creating a vibrant community. We want it to honor past, present and future generations for years to come.”

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