

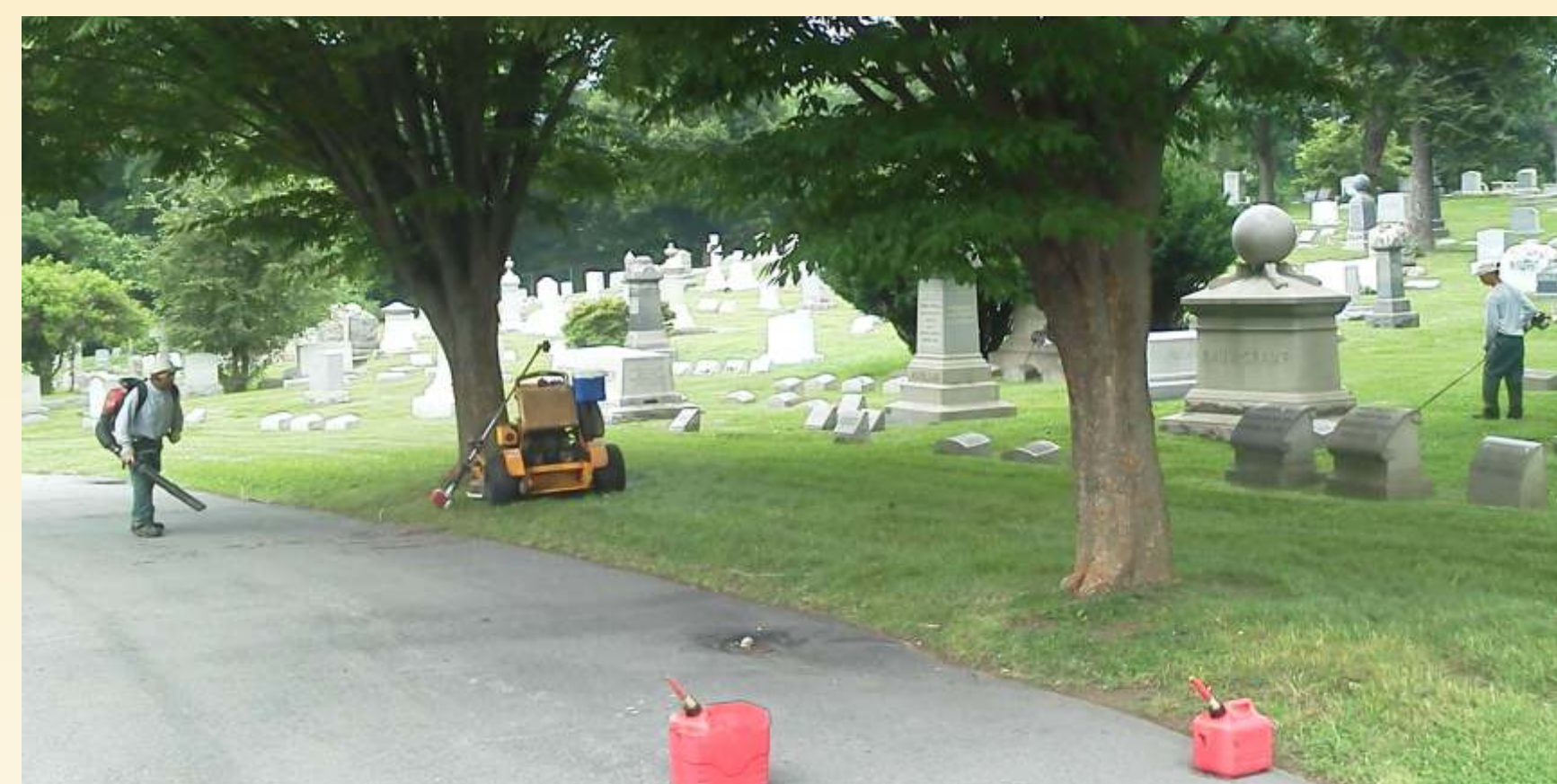
# Green Cemeteries: A Green Path to Perpetual Care

## What is a green cemetery?

A green cemetery utilizes burial techniques that memorialize the deceased with minimal environmental impact. Goals achieved in a green cemetery include ecologically important factors such as the conservation of natural resources, reduction of carbon emissions, and protection of worker health, in addition to the restoration and preservation of habitat. At West Laurel Hill Cemetery in Bala Cynwyd, KMS Design Group is proposing that the perpetual care of the site be carried out by nature, rather than a lawn mower. Designed to begin as a meadow, the site will gradually progress to a climax forest over time. While visiting burial sites, family and friends will be able to view the gradual evolution of their loved ones' final resting place. As the cemetery plots are filled and the meadow succeeds to woodland, maintenance diminishes and ecological benefits increase. Ultimately, a cemetery in a climax forest will need little or no maintenance, it will offer shade, and cover for wildlife, and stormwater will be absorbed into the leaf cover on the forest floor. This permanently preserved land will leave a perpetually lasting legacy for those who are buried within it.

## Issues with traditional cemeteries

Cemeteries are everywhere. As a final resting place for our loved ones, we all want cemeteries to be respectful, comfortable, and permanent. *In a traditional cemetery, what does this mean?* "Perpetual Care" traditionally requires human intervention and a constant battle with natural forces. When grass grows, we mow it. When weeds take over, we spray them with chemicals. When it rains, water quickly runs off into pipes.



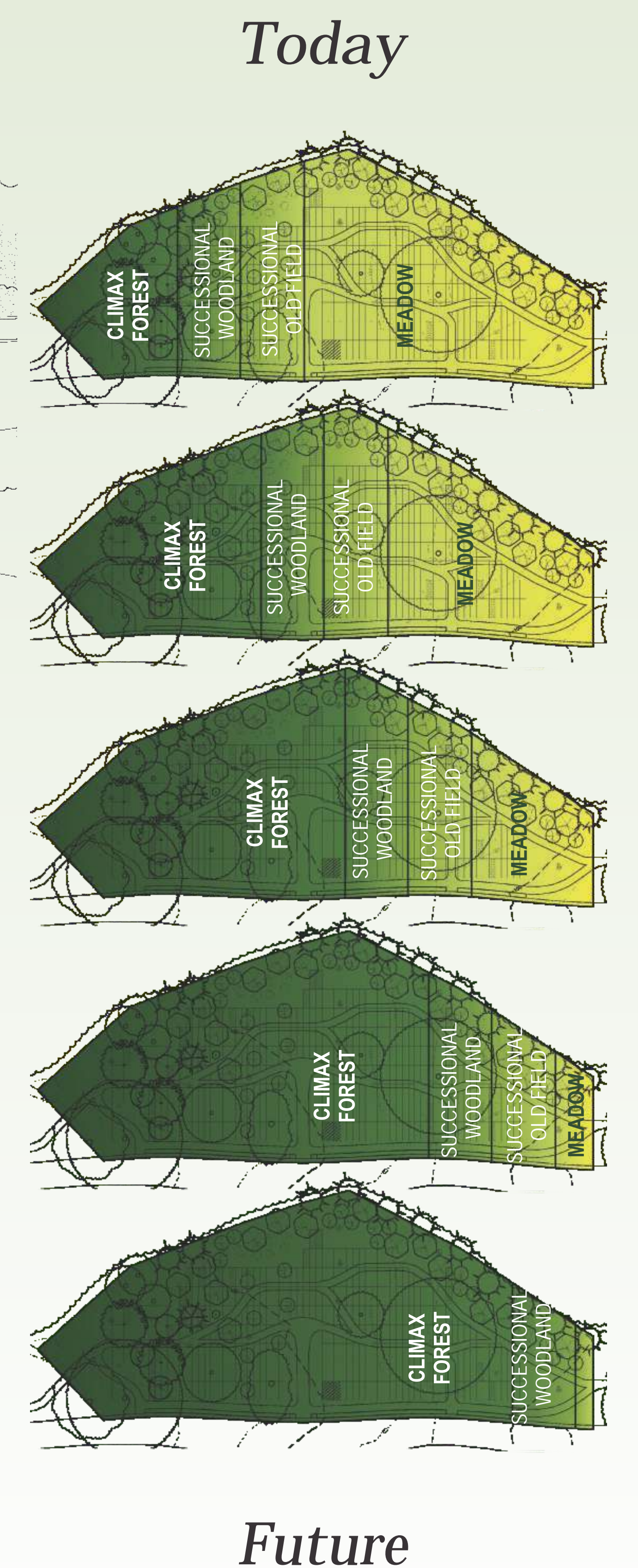
The problem with this accepted philosophy of care is that it is unsustainable. Lawnmowers pollute the air, and use unrenewable resources. Fertilizers and pesticides pollute our water and can lastingly have unintended negative impacts on humans, flora, and fauna. Stormwater runoff erodes streams, floods our homes, and depletes the aquifers from where we get our life-giving water. Most importantly, perpetual or eternal care requires intervention by humans forever!

"Traditional" burials involve toxic embalming fluids, non-degradable caskets, and other unsustainable practices that impose a heavy footprint on the environment.

## Case Study:

West Laurel Hill Cemetery

KMS Design Group is working to restore a portion of West Laurel Hill Cemetery to an ecologically diverse native habitat.



Typical Successional Restoration Cross-Section

