



HOW TO COMMENT

We look forward to your review of the ***Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground***. This report includes four management approaches for the African Burial Ground. We are very interested in receiving public comments to help us determine the most appropriate management alternative to recommend.

Comments will be accepted for 30 days after the date of the report's release. If you wish to respond to the material in this document, you may submit your comments by any one of several methods, outlined below.

You may mail written comments to:

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You may submit your comments electronically at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/>. Please click on <Plans/Documents Open for Comment> and go to *Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground*.

You may also hand-deliver comments at public meetings, to be announced in the media following release of this document.

Our practice is to make comments, including the names and addresses of respondents, available for public review. Some or all of this information may be included in the Final Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their address from the planning record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety. This method listed above for public comment submittal stems from court rulings concerning the release of public comments, and it is included as recommended by the Office of the Solicitor, Department of the Interior.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The National Park Service extends sincere appreciation to GSA Administrator Stephen Perry. Mr. Perry has made the African Burial Ground a priority and has supported the NPS in its efforts to assist with completion of the memorialization and interpretive components. His commitment both reinvigorated this effort and inspired the National Park Service.

The National Park Service also wishes to express its appreciation to the individuals and organizations outside of government that dedicated considerable time and energy to ensuring that the African Burial Ground and those buried there be treated appropriately.

Dr. Sherrill Wilson, Director of the Office of Public Education and Interpretation, was instrumental during NPS 2004 outreach efforts. She and her staff provided assistance throughout the process.

Through great personal effort, Atim Oton and other former consultants and associates of the former IDI Construction, Inc., located a copy of the 1998 Public Survey for the African Burial Ground Interpretive Center. The survey provided information on the vision and concerns for the African Burial Ground expressed by the community at that time. As a result, the National Park Service was able to incorporate this material into this planning process.

The following individuals and organizations dedicated to the African Burial Ground and those buried there contributed generously of their time, energy, and creativity, in the determination that the burial ground and its remains be treated appropriately. Their willingness to continue this effort during the many years since rediscovery of the site is a tribute to their enduring commitment to the first Africans in America. Many continued their involvement, made their opinions heard, and contributed substantially to the preparation of *Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground*.

Friends of the African Burial Ground
Committee of the Descendants of the Ancestral Afrikan Burial Ground
Former Howard University Research Team members
Former African Burial Ground Federal Steering Committee members
Memorial Advisors
OPEI volunteers
Peggy King-Jorde
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

The National Park Service team also thanks the representatives of the many organizations and the interested citizens who contributed information and participated in discussions, workshops, and public meetings. The insights they provided inform this report.

Consultation by the following agencies and their able and concerned staffs was also important to the NPS throughout the planning process:

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Army Corps of Engineers
General Services Administration
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1987, the General Services Administration (GSA) began planning for the construction on a new federal building in Lower Manhattan at 290 Broadway. Four years later, construction workers encountered skeletal remains of individuals interred in the historic African Burial Ground, and thus began a long process of rediscovery, community involvement, research, and problem solving that accompanies planning for the treatment of an historic resource.

The GSA entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) in 1989. Later modified in 1991, the agreement required a research design, the excavation of exposed human remains, a scientific analysis of disturbed remains, and the eventual reinterment of remains; the development of an appropriate memorial and an interpretive plan for the site were also required. The Secretary of the Interior designated the African Burial Ground as a National Historic Landmark in 1993. Throughout the 1990s, many other organizations, agencies, and community members engaged in active dialogue to discuss the complexities of managing and memorializing the site. The African Burial Ground has the potential to become a place of reflection, interpretation, and learning, and it has already prompted an important civic discussion on how the presence of enslaved Africans in New York demonstrates an oft-forgotten community's contribution to the prosperity and culture of one of the United States' great cities.

The site at 290 Broadway dates to at least the eighteenth century, but reaches back possibly to the early seventeenth when enslaved Africans were first recorded in the Dutch-ruled city. Because those of African descent could not be buried within New Amsterdam's city walls, an area of steep hills known as the *Kalch-hook* became the burial ground for the black community's deceased.

The English took control of New Amsterdam in 1664 and renamed it. New York became a prosperous port and eventually operated as a hub for the African slave trade, serving both as a way station for supplies and as a market for purchasing the enslaved. Under the English, restrictions on the enslaved were tightened and formalized into a slave code, but numerous rebellions broke out in the eighteenth century, with two major incidents occurring in 1712 and 1741. By the eighteenth century the black population, enslaved and free, had increased, and an estimated ten to twenty thousand people of African descent had been buried in what has come to be known as the African Burial Ground. As the city expanded after the Revolutionary War, the site was gradually filled to accommodate the construction of more buildings, and within a few generations memory of the African Burial Ground seems to have been lost to New Yorkers until 1987.

Upon rediscovery of the African Burial Ground in 1987, community opposition to the federal government's treatment of the site prompted the creation of the Federal Steering Committee for the African Burial Ground. In 1993, the Committee recommended seven guiding principles for the site, with the key concern of reintering the unearthed remains. That year a Howard University team began the painstaking process of archeological, historical, and physical anthropological research. Concurrent with this research, planning began for future management and interpretation of the site. In 1997, the GSA hosted competitions for the design and construction of an African Burial Ground memorial and interpretive center. In April 2005, the winning memorial design by Rodney Leon of AARRIS Architects was announced.

The GSA sought help from partner agencies and organizations in facilitating the successful



implementation of a plan for the African Burial Ground. The National Park Service was asked to provide direction for facilities development and interpretive planning and to assist in the selection of the memorial. In response, the NPS initiated a civic engagement process that consisted of Listening Sessions with community leaders and activists, during which the NPS introduced its role and planning strategies, listened to concerns, and identified other parties who have an interest in the site's future. Two public meetings to explore the significance and meanings of the African Burial Ground were also held in May 2004 in Brooklyn and Harlem. The public feedback was rich in ideas and insight. Seven strands of thought emerged.

- The African Burial Ground is tangible evidence of slavery in the North.
- The African Burial Ground is sacred space.
- The African Burial Ground shows the African contribution to the prosperity of New York City.
- The African Burial Ground demonstrates that the enslaved Africans were not a homogeneous people, but a group of individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- The African Burial Ground is a reminder that slavery still exists in the world.
- The African Burial Ground can and should tie into related Lower Manhattan points of interest.
- The African Burial Ground should be a place to educate and reach people on various levels.

The civic engagement process resulted in several additional meetings: the Memorial Forums, where the public reviewed and commented on the five finalist memorial designs; two Visitor Experience Workshops, where advice was solicited from those already interpreting the site; and the Research Roundtable, where scholars discussed historical themes and how best to represent the stories associated with the African Burial Ground.

The combination of public involvement and scholarly participation has formed a foundation for a suggested site mission statement. This statement, created by the NPS, provides the basis for two major management objectives: “honoring and learning.” This mission is achievable if the future management structure for the site is designed to:

- Preserve and protect the internationally important resources and values of the African Burial Ground
- Provide knowledge of its history and meanings
- Connect and reconnect the past and present
- Sustain and expand knowledge through continued research
- Take the lead in making the African Burial Ground a model for the care and interpretation of a sacred site
- Partner with like-minded organizations and agencies.

The future character and management of the African Burial Ground will be important factors in stimulating widespread public understanding and appreciation of its historic and social significance to the American people and to those who may visit from around the world. Visitor facilities worthy of the magnitude of the African Burial Ground's importance must be capable of accommodating the intellectual and physical needs of all who seek an understanding of the site, its history, the people interred there, the times in which they lived, and the burial ground's continuing relevance to today's society.



A review of the history of the African Burial Ground and the NPS civic engagement process also provided the foundation that led to the development of three primary suggested themes. These themes are derived from the mission statement and communicate core concepts and messages that all audiences should have the opportunity to explore and understand.

Rediscovery of the Burials Reshapes History Theme: Rediscovery of the African Burial Ground demands that history be retold and forever altered by a more complete understanding of the African Diaspora, the scope of efforts to enslave Africans, the nature of resistance to dehumanization, and the role played by Africans and Americans of African descent in building New York City and shaping its culture.

Struggle for Human Rights Theme: The African Burial Ground demonstrates how individuals, singly and collectively, can create lives that transcend the inhumanity of forced immigration and enslavement, the burdens of the harshest labor, and the repression of cherished cultural and societal practices.

Treatment of Sacred Sites—Sankofa and Scholarship Theme: Guided by the spirit of Sankofa (a West African Akan concept and symbol that exhorts us to “learn from the past to prepare for the future”), efforts to preserve, study, and commemorate the African Burial Ground have triggered a vigorous activism and dialogue on the treatment of sacred sites, ancestral remains, and sites of conscience in New York City and around the globe.

The NPS signed on as a partner in shaping the future of the African Burial Ground for the primary purpose of guiding the planning process for the management of this special place. Taking into account the scholarship completed for the site, the public input, and the suggested mission and goals, the NPS drafted four management alternatives for consideration. While each alternative is different, all four—if implemented effectively—meet the following criteria:

- Capability and capacity to manage
- Protection of the basic resources associated with the African Burial Ground
- Provision of interpretation, education, and quality visitor experiences
- Assurance of safe and accessible facilities for visitor use
- Ability to achieve operational efficiencies
- Ability to undertake partnerships and cooperative actions
- Use of research as a component of implementation
- Provision for public participation in planning and programming.

The four management alternatives are outlined below. The first two assume that the African Burial Ground continues as a National Historic Landmark (NHL). The third and fourth alternatives involve a more permanent role for the NPS and would operate within the framework of a National Monument, National Historic Site, or National Memorial designation. It is important to note that appropriate federal executive or congressional authorizations would be required for any future designation of the African Burial Ground beyond its present National Historic Landmark status. Funding for all of these options would be subject to the availability of appropriations and contingent upon other competing priorities.



Management Alternatives

Alternative A

National Historic Landmark with Continuation of GSA Administration and Implementation of Present Plans in Existing Space at 290 Broadway

The GSA would complete the present plans to develop an interpretive center in the space available at 290 Broadway; staff would be hired to manage the two-thousand-square-foot facility, or operations would be contracted out to an experienced institution. Accessibility would be limited to weekdays, and resources would include the memorial and a small interpretive center. Although limited exhibits and tours would be available, space would not be adequate to host larger groups, and casual “passing-by” visitors would not likely choose to enter due to security requirements.

Alternative B

National Historic Landmark – Implementation of Present Plans in Existing Space at 290 Broadway with Administration by a State or Municipal Agency and Conveyance of Management of the African Burial Ground Memorial Under the Historic Surplus Property Program

This alternative is similar to Alternative A, except that the site would be under the management of either an agency of the State of New York or an agency of the City of New York. The GSA would complete the present plans for the two thousand square feet of space at 290 Broadway, but the new state or city manager could choose to develop facilities at another site. Accessibility, staffing, and scope for Alternative B are nearly identical to Alternative A.

Alternative C

National Monument / National Historic Site or National Memorial Designation with Emphasis on Extensive Educational Outreach

The African Burial Ground would become a unit of the National Park System with externalized programming that primarily occurs off-site via multiple partnerships. The two thousand square feet of space at 290 Broadway would become an educational outreach hub, and a heritage trail of related sites would be created throughout Lower Manhattan. A key component of continued civic engagement would be through an African Burial Ground Federal Advisory Commission. Implementation of Alternative C would significantly increase project visibility, although visitor accessibility to 290 Broadway would still be restricted to weekdays.

Alternative D

National Monument / National Memorial Designation with Expanded African Burial Ground Facilities, Programming, and Visitor Center

As in Alternative C, the African Burial Ground site would be designated as a National Monument, a National Historic Site, or a National Memorial. What sets this alternative apart from preceding ones is its active response to the constraints posed by the current facility at 290 Broadway. While the two-thousand-square-foot space would still be utilized for educational programs, the visitor experience would be greatly enriched at an additional facility—up to nine thousand square feet—within the NHL boundary. External programming would be less intensive than that found in Alternative C, but the African Burial Ground would still be linked to a heritage trail, and the visitor facility would be open seven days per week. A Federal Advisory Commission is recommended to assist in planning and programming.

The National Park Service will conduct two public meetings to gather comments on this draft report and to receive written and electronic comments from the public, the latter on a web site, 30 days after the report is released <<http://park.planning.nps.gov>>. The report will then be finalized, submitted to GSA, and released to the public. Additional GSA financial responsibilities or any potential NPS management of the African Burial Ground would also have to be considered in light of competing priorities for existing units of the national park system and other programs.



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