



# Draft Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground



**This report has been prepared to provide the General Services Administration and the public with information about the resources of the African Burial Ground in New York City, New York, including potential alternative management frameworks. Publication and transmittal of this report should not be considered an endorsement or a commitment by the National Park Service to seek or support either specific legislative authorization for the project or appropriation for its implementation. Authorization and funding for any new commitments by the National Park Service will have to be considered in light of competing priorities for existing units of the national park system and other programs. For additional copies or more information contact:**

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**Cover:** *The African Burial Ground.*

**Artist:** Charles Lilly.



## 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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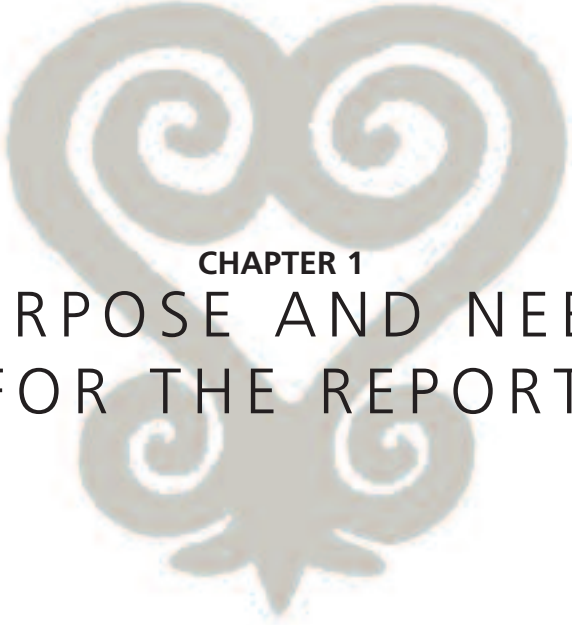
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CHAPTER 1  
PURPOSE AND NEED  
FOR THE REPORT



**T**hrough the survival of the African Burial Ground in the heart of New York City, the past reaches across time to teach the present. The lives of those interred “outside the wall” of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New York City remind the living of the ever-present struggles for human freedom and dignity. Examination of the human remains reveals how resolutely the burial ground occupants resisted injustice, even when faced with the inhumanity of forced emigration and enslavement, harsh labor in a strange land, and the repression of cherished cultural and societal practices.

New York City’s African Burying Ground National Historic Landmark (NHL) is one among few U. S. landmarks that memorializes the struggles of Africans, forcefully brought here and enslaved, and those of so many of African descent who have endured the injustices of slavery, segregation, and discrimination. The site reminds us that slavery existed as an institution not only in the South, but in New York City, as well as in other northern colonies and states. Above all, the burial ground is a place to acknowledge the persistent humanity exhibited by those subjected to these injustices throughout history. It offers truths concerning our collective national heritage that most have never been fully taught and many have conveniently chosen to excise from our national memory. For individuals of African descent, the African Burial Ground represents a journey of mind and spirit where one may reconnect with beginnings, ancestry, and heritage; bring together the stories of those interred there, and explore the continuing relevance of those stories to life today. To all who may visit, the African Burial Ground presents an opportunity to clearly understand, acknowledge, and celebrate the vital contributions of generations of Americans of African descent to New York City, our nation, and the world. It is a place of national significance and, for many, a spiritual shrine, a cherished place of preserved memory, once paved over and forgotten and recently rediscovered. Today, it is recognized as a

national treasure and partially preserved, in large part through persistent and effective citizen action. With appropriate, sensitive stewardship, the African Burial Ground is poised to become a permanent place in the American conscience.

This summary report, which keeps in mind the importance of the African Burial Ground to U. S. history, has been prepared by the National Park Service (NPS) at the request of the General Services Administration (GSA). The report summarizes the history of the African Burial Ground, proposes a mission statement, identifies the site’s nationally significant elements and basic resources and values, and presents for public discussion alternatives regarding the burial ground’s future management. Finally, the report provides a summary of a suggested interpretive plan that would enable the nation’s citizens and others to fully understand the site’s meanings and importance to our history and society. GSA also requested that the NPS’s representatives become active participants in the selection of an appropriate memorial to be placed at the African Burial Ground. A separate report will present the results of that important assignment.

## Background and Scope

In 1987, the GSA began planning construction of a federal building at 290 Broadway. Subsequently, in March 1989, the GSA entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 established the ACHP to ensure that federal agencies act as responsible stewards of our nation’s cultural resources when agency actions affect historic properties. The Memorandum of Agreement, amended in December 1991 after the discovery of human skeletal remains at the burial ground site, requires the GSA to:

- Develop and implement a research design for the cemetery and other archeological sites within the project area
- Sensitively remove all exposed human remains



- Analyze the human remains and associated grave artifacts
- Reinter the human remains and associated grave artifacts
- Develop a memorial, site interpretation, and a public outreach program.

To fulfill the requirement to develop a memorial, interpret the site, and engage in public outreach, the GSA undertook the following:

- Contracted in 1993 with John Milner Associates to establish the Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI) to provide for public outreach. OPEI has sponsored numerous events and programs, developed educational materials, and conducted tours of the African Burial Ground and associated resources at 290 Broadway.
- Contracted in 1997 with IDI Construction, Inc., to undertake interpretive center design work on the ground floor of 290 Broadway. IDI produced preliminary interior designs and interpretive plans, but no longer holds a contract with GSA.
- Developed and implemented in December 1997 a memorial design process with the creation of a GSA Source Selection Executive Board (SSEB) to conduct the process of selecting a memorial. The SSEB was aided by a Memorial Advisors Committee comprised of design professionals of African descent. GSA announced the selection of the memorial design on April 29, 2005.

Five pieces of public art associated with the African Burial Ground were funded through GSA's Arts-in-Architecture Program. GSA prepared and printed brochures on each piece and currently displays the work at 290 Broadway. GSA and the British Broadcasting Corporation also funded a sculpture and accompanying brochure, both of which are now on display.

Understanding the need for an organization with expertise in interpretive and manage-

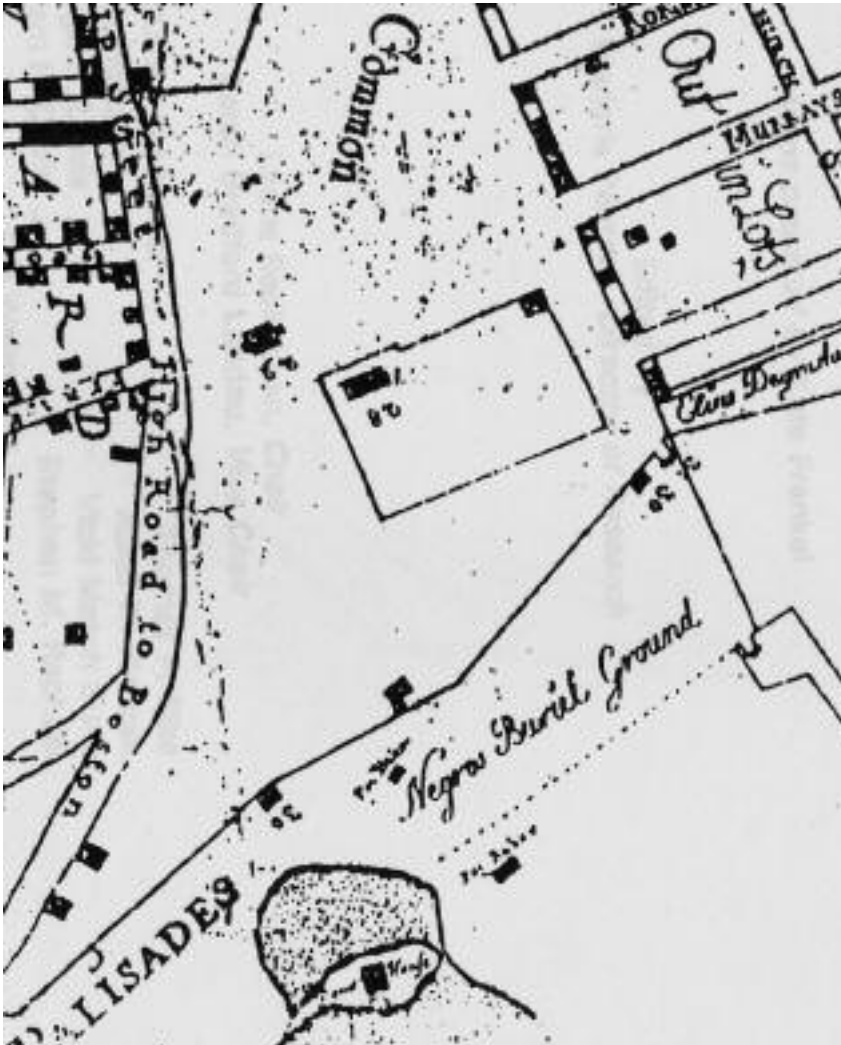


ment development, the GSA requested technical assistance from the NPS in 2003. The NPS has as its core mission the preservation and interpretation of significant natural and cultural resources of the U. S. and its territories. It is responsible for the National Register of Historic Places and for stewardship of the National Historic Landmarks Program. In 1993, the "African Burying Ground" was designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) by the U. S. Secretary of the Interior, bringing

**View of African Burial Ground Site, 1991.**

*Courtesy of U.S. General Services Administration*





1755 map of the "Negro Burial Ground."

with its formal NPS interest in the site. (This report uses the term African Burial Ground, since it is the name commonly recognized in the larger New York community).

In September 2003, the NPS entered into an interagency agreement with GSA to provide a variety of technical assistance services relating to the African Burial Ground. These services include planning, design, programming, and operations related to interpretive facilities, and participation in the SSEB deliberations for the memorial design. The specific services to be provided by NPS are identified in three technical assistance support agreements that flow from the interagency agreement. They include:

- Support Agreement 1: provides for the NPS's assistance in the selection of a design for the African Burial Ground exterior memorial, and for its active participation on the GSA's SSEB.
- Support Agreement 2: provides for NPS to (1) make available technical assistance services relating to the planning, interpretive media design, programming, and operations of the African Burial Ground and related interpretive functions and facilities; and (2) design and implement a civic engagement process for assessing public receptivity to proposals for the future development and operations of the African Burial Ground and related interpretive facilities.
- Support Agreement 3: provides for NPS's assistance to the GSA in management of the latter's contracts with IDI, Inc. (no longer in effect) and with John Milner Associates for the Office of Public Education and Interpretation.

This report describes the outcome of work performed under Support Agreement 2.

The NPS entered into an agreement with the GSA for several reasons. First, NPS recognizes the African Burial Ground as one of America's nationally significant places, with enormous potential for (1) telling the story of the early African experience in New York City and the nation, and (2) increasing public knowledge of the critical contributions of enslaved and free Africans to the foundation and growth of New York City and the nation. The NPS also saw an opportunity to provide for effective community input in defining the significance and meanings of the African Burial Ground and in helping to determine future interpretation of this precious resource.

The NPS's technical assistance team effort was purposely structured not simply to concentrate on the memorial site adjacent to 290 Broadway and the two thousand square feet within 290 Broadway that had been intended as an interpretive center, but to include analy-



ses of the entire African Burying Ground NHL and other locations within the City of New York that are related to the site's meanings, themes and stories. The African Burying Ground NHL includes the roughly seven acres (the extent that the boundaries are understood, to date) that are described in the NHL nomination. The NPS technical assistance team considered facilities and operational needs for implementing effective programming using both the GSA's previously planned facilities at 290 Broadway and those related to a potentially more complete visitor experience and expanded interpretive and educational opportunities.

During the course of its work, the NPS technical assistance team received many public comments calling for the establishment of an African American Museum in the City of New York. Creating such a museum was beyond the tasks set in the GSA/NPS agreement, and neither GSA nor NPS has received congressional authorization either to study the feasibility of a museum or to provide for its construction. On April 28, 2005, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton introduced a bill in the United States Senate (S-970) that, if enacted, would designate the African Burial Ground as a National Historic Site and a unit of the National Park Service, and establish an African Burial Ground International Memorial Museum. Congressman Jerrold Nadler introduced a companion bill into the United States House of Representatives (H.R. 3581) on July 28, 2005. Nothing in this report would impede the development of a museum associated with the African Burial Ground or the African American experience in New York City.

## Report Contents

This report examines the potential mission and significance of the African Burial Ground as a site for visitation and reflection. It seeks to identify the basic resources and values associated with the African Burial Ground and suggests themes that the public may use to gain an understanding of the site, its history, and its relevance to today's society. Additionally, the NPS technical assistance

team has developed a range of possible alternatives for the future management and operation of the African Burial Ground and its related visitor facilities. Succeeding chapters are described below.

### Chapter 2: Historic Background of the African Burial Ground

Chapter 2 provides an African Burial Ground historical time line within the context of New York City history. The chapter also presents an overview of critical decisions made concerning African Burial Ground interpretation and activities that resulted from the GSA construction of the federal building at 290 Broadway. It summarizes the various studies and work contracted for by the GSA with John Milner Associates, OPEI, IDI Construction, Inc., Howard University, and the Army Corps of Engineers.

### Chapter 3: Civic Engagement

Chapter 3 describes the process of dialogue, discussion, and public input that informed this report. It highlights the wide range of materials consulted to determine public interests and opinions, records of workshops with OPEI staff and volunteers, and documentation of NPS meetings with consulting professionals. Each type of information helped establish a working knowledge base and ultimately facilitated the report's findings.

### Chapter 4: Elements Underlying Interpretation and Education

Chapter 4 identifies the underlying elements upon which the African Burial Ground alternative interpretation and educational suggestions are built. It proposes a mission statement for the site and explores its national significance, identifies its basic resources and values, and sets forth suggested themes that could be used to convey the significance of the African Burial Ground and its meanings to a wide variety of audiences. The chapter also discusses other factors that affect administration of the site.



### **Chapter 5: Mission Goals**

Chapter 5 offers suggested mission goals (those goals to be achieved by managers) that provide the basis for management alternatives in the document and for potential operational use by future site managers. These goals provide a suggested framework for sound decision making in the future.

### **Chapter 6: Choices for the Future**

Chapter 6 presents a range of potential organizational alternatives for managing and interpreting the African Burial Ground. Management alternatives must respond to the site's mission and significance, be technically feasible, distinct from one another, and meet the requirements of law.

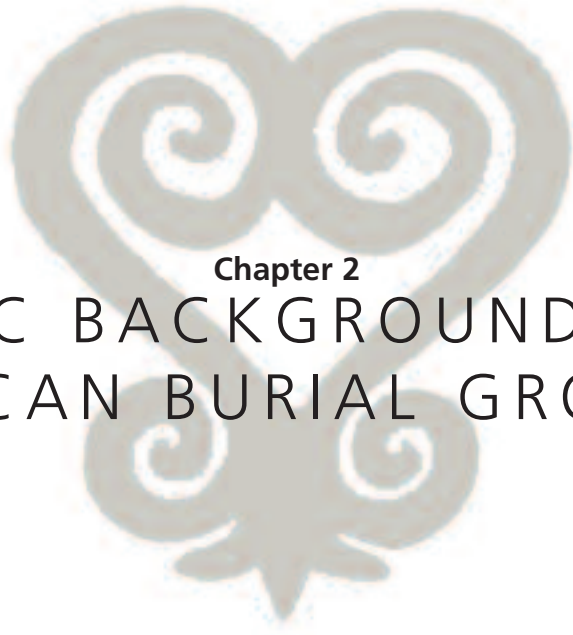
### **Chapter 7: Long-Range Interpretive Plan Summary**

Chapter 7 provides a suggested approach for enhancing audience understanding of the mission and the significance of the African Burial Ground and for increasing support for its protection and preservation. This chapter also identifies suggested goals that could guide interpretive programming. The various interpretive pieces in this chapter are intended to serve as suggested tools for choosing appropriate interpretive media, for setting priorities, and for achieving interpretive goals. The chapter also contains guidance on interpretive messages, audiences, activities, and practical issues that may need to be addressed no matter

which management alternative is chosen.

Upon releasing this summary report for a 30-day comment period, NPS will conduct two public meetings in Brooklyn and Manhattan, to receive oral and written comments. After consideration of the public comments, the findings of this summary report will be revised, as appropriate, and a final, more detailed report will be released to GSA and the public.

In developing this report, the National Park Service's technical assistance team reviewed existing studies and the previous and ongoing contributions of many organizations and individuals. Of primary importance to this study's findings, however, is the productive interaction between members of the NPS team and the many organizations and citizens who provided written comments and participated in conversations, meetings, and workshops conducted during the course of this endeavor. The NPS technical assistance team is indebted to all who have given of their time and talents up to this point and hopes that others will contribute as well. The demonstration of commitment to the African Burial Ground and the thoughtful visions for its preservation are cause for confidence that it shall never be neglected again. The NPS team is hopeful that in the following pages readers will recognize the important contributions they have made to our findings. The team also expresses its appreciation for the cooperation extended by staff of the General Services Administration during the course of its work.



Chapter 2

HISTORIC BACKGROUND OF THE  
AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND



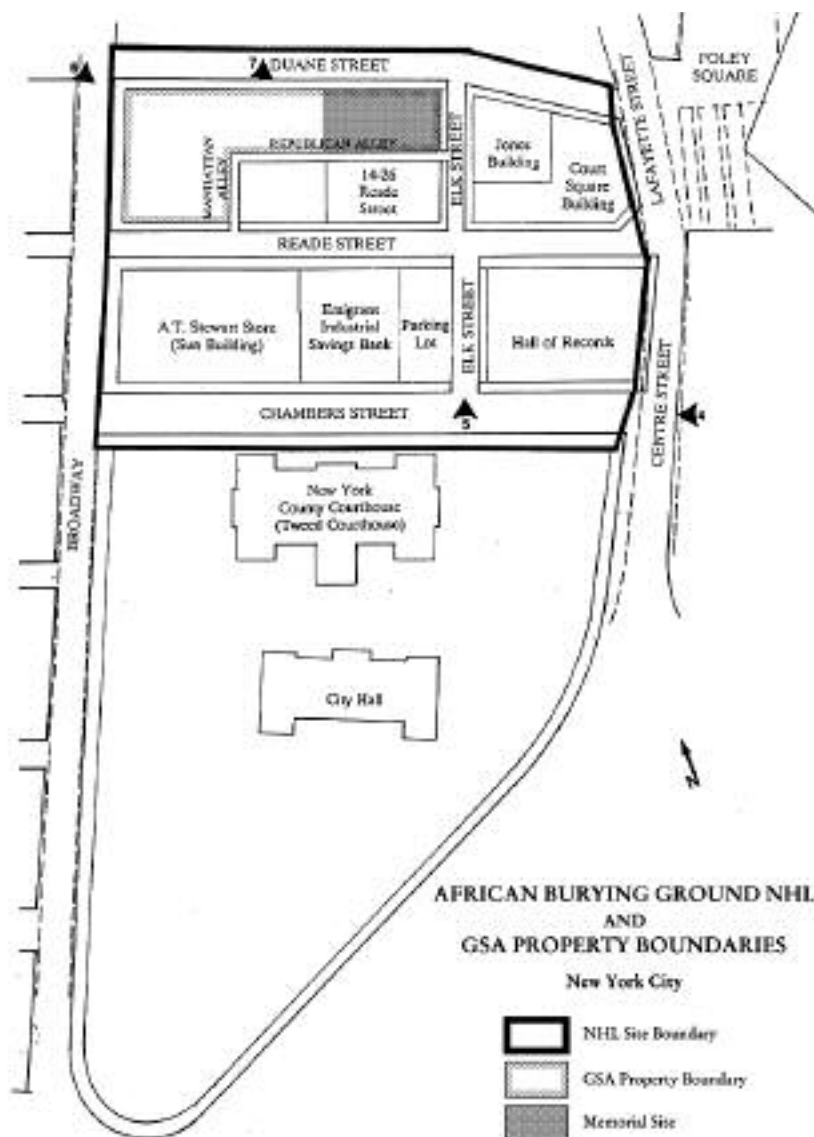


## The African Burial Ground Site

**T**he African Burial Ground is a deeply buried archeological site in Lower Manhattan, New York City, the remains of a cemetery used for free and enslaved Africans primarily during the eighteenth century. The site covers approximately seven acres bounded by Duane Street on the north, Chambers Street on the south, Centre and Lafayette Streets on the east and Broadway

Map showing the boundaries of the African Burial Ground.

*Courtesy of National Park Service*



to the west. It is located in Block Numbers 153, 154 and 155 in the Borough of Manhattan in the heart of the city's civic center area.

The preservation of archeological remains of the early burial ground in the current heavily developed urban setting of Lower Manhattan is explained by the topography of the area and land alterations that took place in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to facilitate the expansion of New York City to the north. The cemetery was located in a ravine that led east-northeast from the area of Broadway toward the "Collect Pond" which was a deep spring-fed pond. During the late 1700s and early 1800s, the ravine and Collect Pond were filled with soil and rock from the leveling of nearby hills and high ground along Broadway to facilitate the extension of streets and the laying out of building lots.

The African Burial Ground offers important archeological evidence of significant aspects of the lives of people buried there. The site reveals evidence of the institution of chattel slavery that took peoples from their native Africa across a vast ocean to a world of forced servitude. The research has revealed the physical scars that hard work, difficult living conditions and violent society left on their bodies as well as evidence of how they maintained their cultural identity despite the control exercised over them. It chronicles their contribution to the development of New York City and how the building of the city covered their burial place. The site is an important reminder that slavery had a strong and immediate presence in the northern colonies, in addition to the economic relationship between the northern mercantile class and plantation owners who used enslaved laborers on their properties in the southern colonies and the West Indies. The African Burial Ground has also served as a significant local focal point for people interested in learning about their past, educating others about the African Diaspora, and addressing its effects on peoples to this day.



## Significance of the African Burial Ground

The African Burial Ground was designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior on April 19, 1993. National Historic Landmarks are nationally significant historic places designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. The following section examines the significance of the African Burial Ground using a condensed version of the significance statement from the landmark nomination and supplemented with findings from the research conducted by the Howard University team that studied the archeological, historical, and physical anthropological aspects of the site and from other scholarly and management sources relevant for understanding the site.

The African Burial Ground is of national significance because of its unprecedented potential to yield information about the lives of Africans and African Americans in an eighteenth-century urban context. Approximately one-third acre of the seven-acre site was archeologically excavated and has yielded information of major scientific importance. The site held spiritual, social and cultural meaning for this predominantly enslaved population, and the survival of the burial ground provides a unique opportunity to acknowledge and preserve their history. This site may well be the only preserved urban eighteenth-century African burial ground in the Americas. The 419 individuals whose remains were excavated from the African Burial Ground represent a much larger population who played a role in the formation and development of American society.

The first Africans arrived in New Amsterdam around 1625 (although a record of the precise arrival date is unknown). Under Dutch rule, enslaved Africans worked on building the fort, mills, and new stone houses. In 1664, the British conquered the Dutch colony, and New Amsterdam became New York, named

for James II, the Duke of York, the principal investor in the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa. Many privileges and rights accorded to enslaved and free Africans under the Dutch were rescinded within forty years of the switch to British rule. Enslaved Africans were then subjected to a highly restrictive legal system, one which was put in place to secure England's valuable colonial possessions in the Western Hemisphere and which resulted in severe physical and social coercion.

The slave trade was integral to the development of the eighteenth-century British colonial system. This system was based on the



establishment of settler colonies in the West Indies and North America, on the use of coerced labor to extract wealth from the land, and on the profitable trading of enslaved peoples. The institution of trans-Atlantic chattel slavery is one of the tragic consequences of the European conquest of the New World. The African Diaspora constitutes one of the most significant demographic, cultural, and economic phenomena in world history, and it was a key element in the British colonial structure and in the development of the Americas.

During the eighteenth century, New York was one of four important northern shipping

**New York City's Common Council designated the Meal Market at the foot of Wall Street as the authorized site for the purchase, sale and hire of enslaved laborers in 1711.**



points in the Atlantic trading network, along with Philadelphia, Boston, and Newport. As labor was scarce throughout the colony and free immigrants preferred to earn their living by farming, New York merchants depended on enslaved laborers to operate the port and supplement the pool of skilled craftsmen in such trades as ship carpentry and printing. They also were employed in heavy transport,

By the onset of the Revolutionary War, slavery was firmly imbedded in American life. The common image of bondage only on southern tobacco or cotton plantations must be adjusted, for slavery was also a way of life in the North. Although American slavery has been the subject of a vast historical literature, slave communities in the North have received less attention than those of the South. And, as

a rule, slave life in the eighteenth century is much less understood than that of the nineteenth. This is partly due to the extreme scarcity of accounts by Africans and African Americans in the early period, whereas for the nineteenth century, historians can turn to a larger body of recorded narratives of people once enslaved.

The richness of the record from New York City's African Burial Ground is clearly extraordinary compared to other African burial sites that have been studied and is clearly significant well beyond the local context.

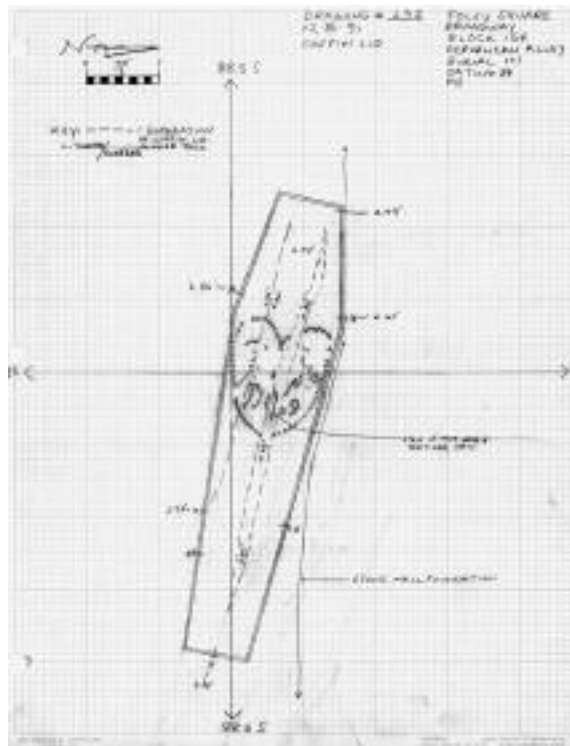
Archaeologists and physical anthropologists from around the world have expressed interest in the finds. The site provides new insights into the biological life-course of people who were enslaved and transported from Africa or born into slavery in America. It provides an extremely important body of data to be made available for comparative research.

Because the burial ground was used for at least one hundred years, analysis of archeological remains from the site may allow researchers to address questions about changes in American social and economic life during the colonial period and the period of the early republic: How did the treatment of



**Coffin lid with Sankofa symbol made of metal tacks.**

*Courtesy of U.S. General Services Administration*



construction work, and domestic labor, as well as in farming and milling.

At least 6,800 African slaves were imported into New York between 1700 and 1774. Approximately 2,800 (41.2 percent) were brought directly from Africa, while the other 4,000 were brought via the West Indies or one of the other American coastal ports, typically Charleston. In addition to enslaved Africans, there were numerous free Africans in New York. Some of the free Africans were descendants of people who had been freed by the Dutch West India Company during its tenure in New Amsterdam.



enslaved Africans or the quality of life of free Africans change over the course of the eighteenth century, as evidenced in nutritional profiles, diseases, causes of mortality, and injuries? Did the funerary practices of Africans in New York change over time? Is the process of cultural transformation visible in the material record? These are questions that await the completion of the archeological analysis and reporting on the site and its integration with information from the skeletal biology and history studies.

The examination of burials from this site revealed that a distinction could be made between African-born and American-born individuals, contributing to the development of a base-line biological profile of the first generation of the African Diaspora. Advanced analytical techniques may make it possible to determine the regions of origin in Africa of some of the individuals who died in colonial New York. This will contribute evidence to scholarship on the geography of the colonial trade in human beings, as well as an opportunity to study origins of cultural practices. Based on the results of their genetic, historical, and archeological research, the Howard team determined that the origin and affiliation of most of the people buried in the African Burial Ground was from a variety of known states and empires mainly, but not exclusively in West and West Central Africa. Additionally, chemical analyses and ethno-historical research suggest that most of the adults buried in the African Burial Ground were African-born and had survived the trans-Atlantic passage to the Western Hemisphere. On the other hand, those who died under age eight appear to have been born in New York. Some individuals may have grown up in the Caribbean.

The physical anthropological research provides information about nutrition, disease, physical stress, and injuries of individuals excavated from the cemetery. These conditions often leave traces on the bones and teeth, which are preserved in the human skeleton. Measurement of skeletal trace elements, dental enamel development, skull

base, height, stature, and bone histology and lesions provide data that are important in reconstructing individual biological histories. Studies of enamel defects provide information on stress in the population of children interred in the African Burial Ground.

Individuals between the ages of nine and sixteen showed high stress that perhaps can be linked directly to the slave trade, as this was the prime age range for individuals subjected to enslavement and the trans-Atlantic passage. The data also suggests that infant and childhood health were worse for individuals who were born in New York than those who were probably born in Africa and died as adults in New York. Analysis of the age and sex of the human skeletal remains indicated that mortality was greatest for infants 0-5 months (9.6 percent), adults 30-34 years old (9.1 percent), and adults 45-49 years old (8.3 percent). Mortality for children under 16-years-old was 43.2 percent based on a sample of 301 individuals, and 55.3 percent of them died by the age of two. The skeletal biology study consistently found evidence that suggests strenuous labor began at an early age for at least some individuals.

In addition to the biology of individuals and populations, study of human remains from intact burials yields information about funerary practices and even religious belief. For example, the position and orientation of the graves at the African Burial Ground is very uniform, pointing to strong religious precepts. Social relations within the community may be indicated by the spatial arrangements of burials and apparent relationships between some of the interments. The discovery of women buried with newborns or still-born babies is an example of how the site evokes the poignancy of family life and death in a long-vanished community. Funerary practices embody core aspects of cultural and symbolic systems, and for enslaved people in the colony of New York, this may be all the more significant because funerals offered a chance to express cultural identity in an unsupervised context. Even though laws prohibited customary night funerals and gatherings of large numbers of Africans, the evi-





dence from the burial ground indicates that it continued as a focus of community identity for nearly a hundred years.

During the eighteenth century, New York had a much larger African population than either Philadelphia or Boston, and a slightly higher population proportionally than Newport. In 1703, there were approximately 700 Africans in New York, or 14.4 percent of the population. The numbers grew to 2,444 by 1746, representing 20.9 percent of the population, and peaked at 3,137 by 1771, though by then Africans were again only 14.3 percent of all New York residents. It should be noted that prior to 1756, all Africans, enslaved or free, were counted simply as “negroes” or “blacks” in the New York censuses. Most Africans lived in the small area of the city proper, at the southernmost tip of Manhattan, and this concentration increased as the century progressed and African ownership of farmlands to the north of the city constricted. Enslaved Africans were owned by people in all walks of life, including artisans, merchants, clergy, and mariners.

On plantations, quarters for enslaved Africans were normally set apart, and can be easily identified for archaeological study. In cities, however, most of the enslaved lived in their owners’ houses, and a separate material record cannot be readily isolated. The material culture of a slave neighborhood or household in New York cannot be studied in the same way as that of most other ethnic groups. For this reason, it is, ironically, the burial place of such a community that provides the clearest opportunity to observe a distinguishable material record of their lives.

The African Burial Ground and nearby Common were important in other aspects of the culture of African New York in the eighteenth century. During the “Pinkster” Day celebrations held in what is now City Hall Park (the exact location may have been the African Burial Ground itself), Africans from as far as forty miles away joined residents in “beating banjos, singing African songs, drinking, and worst of all, laughing in a way that

seemed to set their very hearts rattling within their ribs” (James Fenimore Cooper, *Satanstoe* [New York: American Book Company, 1937]). Pinkster Day was Christian Pentecost or Whitsuntide, but its celebration in New York, Philadelphia, and other Middle Atlantic colonies and states took on a distinctly African air.

The location of the African Burial Ground itself was symbolically and socially significant in the life of early New York. Forbidden to inter their dead in church cemeteries, and probably wishing to attain a degree of privacy and autonomy in their funerary practices, New York’s Africans appropriated a parcel of ground outside the town, in a “remote” place. Thus today this site symbolizes both the oppression under which enslaved peoples lived in America, and their ability to persist in honoring their African heritage while forging a new culture. It is also significant that many of those buried at the site probably helped materially in the building of the city that chose to build over rather than formally acknowledge their final resting place. The subsequent history of this sacred ground symbolically underscores European Americans’ systematic denial of the importance of the contribution of African Americans to the development of our nation toward an urban, industrial world power.

Ethnic groups in America each have individual histories of arrival, encounter, struggle, assimilation, and persistence of cultural heritage. The relationship between Africans and the larger society in the British colonies and the newly formed nation during the eighteenth century was largely determined by the legal institution of slavery and its economic and social correlates. Thus the experience of the ethnic group “African Americans” needs to be understood as different from that of other immigrant groups.

## Project History

In 1987 GSA began planning for increased federal agency office, courtroom and support space in the Civic Center/Foley Square area of Lower Manhattan. In March 1989, GSA



and the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP) entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that addressed GSA's responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 to consider any effects on historic resources that might result from its proposed construction of a federal building at 290 Broadway.

Heritage Conservation and Interpretation, Inc (HCI) subcontracted with GSA's environmental review consultant to assess the potential for historical and archeological resources in the project area at 290 Broadway where GSA was proposing to construct a thirty-four-story office tower with a connected four-story pavilion adjacent to Duane Street. The parcel of land at 290 Broadway was identified as part of the city's "Commons" (public lands used first for communal purposes such as grazing cattle and, later, as the site for the city's public institutions). Maerschallck's 1755 "A Plan of the City of New York from an Actual Survey" identified an area labeled as the "Negros Burial Ground", located immediately north of the city's palisade and adjacent to a fresh water pond called the "Collect". An earlier reference to the burial ground was found in a letter dating from 1712. Since Trinity Church banned the burial of Africans from its cemetery in 1697, earlier use of the area for burials may have occurred.

HCI concluded initially that the cemetery would not have survived the land disturbance associated with the construction of foundations, basements, utilities and other infrastructure during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries except in one area where the existence of Republican Alley might have limited ground disturbance. Archeological testing began on the site on May 20, 1991 and later that month, after the removal of strata that included human remains disturbed by earlier construction, intact human burials were encountered beneath Republican Alley. The soil profiles of the excavations indicated the sloping nature of the original topography of the area and the extent of the overlying 16 to 28 feet depth of landfill that protected portions of the burial ground from nineteenth

and twentieth century construction. HCI and Lehman College's Metropolitan Forensic Anthropology Team (MFAT) began excavation of the burials in September 1991.

In December 1991, the General Services Administration, the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation, and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission amended the Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement to more specifically define the responsibilities of GSA. The amendment called for preparation of a research design to assist in structuring the investigations, and defined actions including Analysis and Report Preparation; Public Involvement; Reburial, Curation and Disposition; and Site Interpretation.

In June 1992, GSA engaged John Milner Associates to assume administration of the project as it had grown beyond the capacity of HCI to manage. At the end of July, GSA temporarily halted the excavation. From late September into early October, excavation of partially excavated burials was finished and the site closed down. Approximately one-third acre of the seven-acre site was excavated.

During the year, researchers from Howard University had articulated the importance of a project research design that would approach examination of the African Burial Ground from an African Diasporan perspective and would carefully examine the archeological, historical, and physical anthropological records to understand how subjugating African people to enslavement in this northern colony affected them physically and culturally. The Howard University team and John Milner Associates collaborated to prepare a research design for the analysis phase of the archeological excavation of the African Burial Ground. GSA subsequently negotiated a contract with Howard University to conduct research on the archeology, history, and skeletal biology of the site with Dr. Michael Blakey as Principal Investigator.

Concurrent with the excavation of the



human burials at the project site came public and political protests reaching from local to federal levels, eventually resulting in the cancellation of a portion of the construction project. The descendant African Diasporic community reacted strongly against what it viewed as the desecration of the remains of their ancestors by the federal government. Their discussions and meetings with GSA did not produce answers and responses that they felt addressed their concerns about the treatment and preservation of the African Burial Ground and those interred there.

Shortly after excavation of the human remains began in September 1991, New York City Mayor David Dinkins became involved in questioning GSA about the project. Various meetings and press conferences followed along with the formation of advisory groups into mid-1992. Congressional hearings in New York City led by Illinois Congressman Gus Savage, Chairman of the Committee on Public Works and Transportation Subcommittee on Public Buildings and Grounds resulted in a call for a halt to excavation on the site which occurred on July 29, 1992.

A decision was made that a federal advisory committee of primarily descendant African community leaders and professionals should be established to make recommendations to GSA with regard to its Section 106 responsibilities for the African Burial Ground. In October 1992, the Federal Steering Committee for the African Burial Ground, New York, NY was established by the Administrator of GSA in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act to represent the interests of the community and make recommendations to GSA and Congress regarding the present and future activities affecting the pavilion portion of the federal construction known as the African Burial Ground. Shortly after the establishment of the Federal Steering Committee, President George H. W. Bush signed Public Law 102-393 directing GSA to abandon construction of the pavilion and authorizing funds for redesign of the pavil-

ion site and memorialization of the African Burial Ground. In 1993, the Federal Steering Committee presented seven recommendations on how the African Burial Ground and the history of the African presence in New York City should be commemorated. Although these recommendations largely paralleled the Section 106 agreement, they differed in several significant ways including a recommendation for a museum.

After completion of the field portion of the data recovery program, GSA undertook completion of the remaining requirements of the Memorandum of Agreement through a series of contracts and agreements with consultants, agencies, and organizations.

GSA contracted with John Milner Associates in 1993 to manage, staff, and operate the Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI) to provide information to the New York community and the public at large about the evolving research efforts involved in rediscovering information about the lives and deaths of Africans in early New York.

During the mid-1990s, GSA engaged the NPS Harpers Ferry Center (which conducts interpretive planning and design) for assistance in preparing a scope of work for the design of the African Burial Ground interpretive program. In 1997, GSA advertised for design and construction of an interpretive center to be located on the first floor of the federal building at 290 Broadway. This contract was awarded to IDI Construction, Inc., of New York City on April 29, 2000. Although IDI did start work on the project, late in 2004, IDI and GSA mutually agreed to the termination of the contract. NPS is currently assisting GSA in developing the interpretive program for the African Burial Ground, of which this management recommendations report is a part.

On December 29, 1997, GSA launched its design competition with a request for proposals for the exterior memorial to be constructed on the former pavilion site. The National Park Service (NPS) under their



2003 Interagency Agreement assisted GSA in completing the selection of the memorial design. On Friday, April 29, 2005, Rodney Léon was announced as the designer who will create the African Burial Ground memorial.

Throughout the 1990s and into the next decade, the local descendant stakeholders had continued to pressure GSA to proceed with completion of its obligations to implement both the legal requirements of the Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement and its Amendment, as well as the resolutions of the Federal Steering Committee. Of particular significance to the local community was the commitment to reburial of the human remains.

The African American community had grown increasingly impatient with the slow progress of the technical analyses called for in the Section 106 agreement. The long-awaited reburial ceremonies for the 419 individuals and their associated artifacts finally occurred in 2003. GSA contracted with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture to organize events marking the return of the human remains from Howard University in Washington, D. C., to their final resting place in New York City. Activities began in Washington, D.C. on September 30, and culminated with reburial ceremonies at the African Burial Ground in New York City on October 4. Commemorative events were also held in Baltimore, Maryland; Wilmington, Delaware; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Newark, New Jersey as the coffins containing the remains of four selected individuals (one adult male, one adult female, one male child, and one female child) passed through these cities in route to New York where they were placed into a wooden crypt with the other 415 individuals excavated from the cemetery.



In 2002, GSA engaged the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Louis District, Curation and Archives Analysis Branch to manage the Howard University contract for research on the archeology, history, and physical anthropology of the site as well as to plan for the curation of the data from the site. The skeletal biology and history components of the research were completed in late 2004 and are available on GSA's project web site ([www.africanburialground.gov](http://www.africanburialground.gov)). The archeology research report is nearing completion.

At the request of GSA, the Army Corps was also engaged to assist with the long-term curation of the associated records generated from the archaeological investigations conducted at the African Burial Ground site and the analysis of the excavated remains and artifacts. GSA is responsible for ensuring that these African Burial Ground records are maintained in compliance with the standards and requirements of the Curation of Federally-Owned and Administered Archeological Collections (36CFR Part 79) regulation. The Army Corps examined and evaluated nine potential repositories for the African Burial Ground Collection and has presented its findings and recommendations to GSA.

**Procession moves up Broadway to the African Burial Ground, where 419 remains were reinterred in October 2003.**

*Courtesy of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture*







Chapter 3  
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



## GSA and NPS Civic Engagement

**E**ffective public participation was required to accomplish the tasks assigned to the National Park Service by the interagency agreement between the GSA and the NPS.

It is NPS policy that “all National Park Service units and offices embrace civic engagement as the essential foundation and framework for creating plans and developing programs. Civic engagement is a continuous, dynamic conversation with the public on many levels that reinforces public commitment to the preservation of heritage resources, both cultural and natural, and that strengthens public understanding of the full meaning and contemporary relevance of these resources. The foundation of civic engagement is a commitment to building and sustaining relationships with neighbors and communities of interest” (NPS Director’s Order 75A, November 2003). The NPS believes that the African Burial Ground deserves the strongest education and interpretive program, and that it requires the permanent support of a broad constituency, including an informed and committed public, to achieve that goal. Effective civic engagement could begin that connection between management and public.

Since many individuals and organizations had been previously involved and a great deal of important public comment already existed, both the GSA and the NPS agreed that the NPS needed to thoroughly study and incorporate public and other input into NPS recommendations. Sources for such input included the Memorandum of Agreement for the African Burial Ground with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, the recommendations of the Federal Steering Committee for the African Burial Ground, the work of the Office of Public Education and Interpretation, and the scopes of work and process identified by the GSA, especially regarding development of the interpretive

center and memorial competitions.

All parties understood that successful relationships would be crucial as the work proceeded, and it was critical to acknowledge that relations regarding the African Burial Ground between the federal government and the interested organizations and members of the public were not working. First, there was the widespread belief that the exhumation of the bodies by the government and the construction of a building over a portion of the burial ground were, fundamentally, acts of desecration. Many people would participate in this project with the aim of assuring the protection of African ancestors, not to assist the federal government. Also, because the project had proceeded so fitfully over more than a decade, many questioned the capacity of government to provide consistent management, and to remember and keep promises. These factors and others placed an imperative on the importance of consistent relationships and communication. Early discussions among the NPS, the OPEI, the GSA and others always included soliciting help in identifying organizations and individuals who had either been involved with the African Burial Ground over the years or who might have a natural interest in planning for its future. Insofar as possible, previous discussions and writings about the protection, interpretation, and research of the African Burial Ground were collected and consulted. Hundreds of pages of reports, newsletters, and other documents were read; videotapes of earlier public meetings and documentary films were reviewed, and files were searched. Thanks to the persistence of committed members of the public, copies of old surveys were located, reviewed, and utilized as complements to more recent opinion and comment.

All civic engagement efforts started with listening. Informal meetings and Listening Sessions were the focus of the preliminary outreach effort. Those meetings were with organizations and individuals who were known to be committed to demonstrating proper respect for the Africans who had been buried at the site, and known to be dedicated



to assuring that the story and meaning of the African Burial Ground would never be forgotten again.

## Listening Sessions

These early informational meetings were held with people who had a particular stake in the African Burial Ground and who would understandably expect to be consulted as soon as possible. They were also the people who would help assure consistency and continuity. During listening sessions, NPS introduced its staff, explained the agency's role, listened to the participants' concerns and issues, and requested participant involvement in the upcoming effort. The OPEI director, Sherrill Wilson, Ph.D., was instrumental in identifying and contacting critical individuals. In all, five listening sessions were held between January and March 2004.

Listening sessions were held with the following groups:

1. OPEI volunteers
2. Friends of the African Burial Ground and others identified by Ayo Harrington of that group
3. Individual advocates who had been specifically identified by the director of OPEI, Dr. Sherrill Wilson
4. The Committee of the Descendants of the Ancestral Afrikan Burial Ground.

## Public Meetings

After the five listening sessions, members of the NPS planning team met in April 2004 with the GSA, with citizens who had attended the listening sessions, and with other interested parties and organizations, to plan upcoming public meetings.



### Determining Meaning, Significance, and Character

Two meetings were held in May, one in Brooklyn at Medgar Evers College on May 25, 2004, and the other in Harlem at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture the next day. Each meeting's objective was to elicit information that would convey what the African Burial Ground meant to the community, what it should reveal to visitors, what stories should be interpreted, and what design characteristics should be reflected in facilities. The following sentiments were gleaned from comments the public shared with us during those meetings.

- Acknowledge that the ancestors were the first and most prominent “commodities” traded on Wall Street.
- That people managed to hold onto their traditions despite all the abuse—perseverance by ancestors to hold onto their cultures despite the abuse imposed upon them by the United States government.
- Show how New York City has changed over time and the major contributions

Participants discuss the meaning and significance of the African Burial Ground at a May 2004 NPS public meeting held at the Schomburg Center.

*Courtesy of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture*



Participants at a GSA/NPS forum at Medgar Evers College in June 2004 view the five final designs for the African Burial Ground memorial.

*Courtesy of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture*

Africans made to New York and New Amsterdam. They were not just “beasts of burden,” but made many contributions to America.

- History has been buried and is not open, and everyone doesn’t know it. The people that wrote history did not include the ancestors and their histories, and got history wrong. The ancestors were excluded.
- Desecration of the graves is a horror understood by many cultures—how the graves and people in them could be treated as if they were nothing, in the way they were dug up.
- How they were treated when they were living was echoed in how they were treated after they died and when they were dug up.
- Anger and rage that open the door to other factors. With this you will go and seek the answers you are looking for. The site should be a place for dialogue, healing, prayer.
- Remembrance—something that touches the spirit of every person who visits.

- It was a crime against humanity.
- Faith, joy, hope for the future.

#### Memorial Forums

NPS and GSA conducted five public forums in 2004 from June 12 through 17—one in each of New York City’s boroughs. The forums sought an exchange of ideas, goals, and concerns that could inform the five finalist designers’ efforts to bring their initial schematic designs to a more complete state, in preparation for the final round of evaluation. Public comments by those who attended the forums and by those responding online showed a wide range of opinions about the appearance of the future memorial. Some advocated minimal treatment of the site, while others wanted to see a

prominent memorial that would prevent a once hidden history from becoming obscured again. Most important to note is that the public expressed and confirmed, time and again, at all five forums, that the memorial site must be treated as a sacred place, one that both demonstrated and required respect, dignity, and reverence. Another recurring theme was that the memorial must honor all African ancestors (not just those interred on-site), and be seen as a powerful symbolic expression of their endurance, cultural identity, and contributions to New York City and the nation.

The following comments were among those received following the June forums.

“This design is not appropriate for the African Burial Ground. The site is sacred, and I would like to see it remain as is with maybe an eternal flame and a bench that we can sit on.” (Re: Groundworks)

“It respects us. There was peace.” (Re: Eustace Pilgrim and Christopher Davis)

“This is my favorite design by far. I think this project allows for all people, young and old. I can see happy moments (cele-





bration) and time of reflection. All seven elements are essential—maybe more space for kids.” (Re: AARRIS Architects)

“No, because of the artist. The wall should reflect the kings and queens of Africa, then ships, achievements, and the dove (freedom). The death and life of the slaves will let people of today see our free spirit when they leave the burial ground site. ...no feeling for slaves.” (Re: Joseph DePace Architect)

“Nothing! Nothing! Nothing must be built on the burial site! It must be preserved as a cemetery!” (General response to any design)

“Nice park, but not for this ground. It’s like making a park on top of a cemetery—just add a few swings. I can see it now: eating, drinking, and garbage. Not at this cemetery. I like the running water along the walls, maybe.” (Re: McKissack and McKissack)

## Visitor Experience Workshops

The first of two Visitor Experience Workshops was held on August 6, 2004, at 290 Broadway in New York City. Twenty-eight persons attended, including OPEI staff, the NPS team, and other NPS professionals with expertise in such areas as African American history sites, urban parks, park operations, partnership parks, education, archeology, the arts, and other related disciplines. Also participating were representatives from New York City public history institutions that have experience with the African Burial Ground.

Built on previous work (public meetings, surveys, reports, recommendations), discussions centered on four main areas: the identification of potential targeted audiences, challenges to interpretation, concepts and ideas for developing interpretive themes, and desired visitor experience. Options were discussed and priorities were identified about specific audiences, concepts for themes, desired tone and approach, and desired visi-

tor experiences. The discussions informed recommendations and options that appear in Chapter 7 of this report.

A significant finding was that the space on the first floor of 290 Broadway (two thousand-plus square feet), although in desirable proximity to the memorial site, is plagued with so many access, security, and visitor-support barriers that its use seems infeasible, except perhaps for small groups who make prearranged visits during Monday through Friday business hours. If desired future audiences include drop-in visitors, larger groups, and/or weekend access, other, more appro-

## Roundtable Comments

“... the story of forgetfulness. Forgetfulness is a political strategy to control history. You remember things that are politically advantageous and forget things that aren’t.”

“...it’s important to keep in mind that the physical construction and the economic development of New York City, which was a major international shipping port during this time, would not have been possible without the heavy intensive labor of Africans.”

“First and foremost, African people pursued their own interests; they did not see themselves as someone else’s property. They saw themselves as human beings. And what we hope in our report is that we show that more than anything; these are human beings who tried to live as human beings, despite the fact that there were these people trying to keep them in a subordinate position and trying to keep them as property.”

“Involuntary migration to the New World and especially to the Northeast and to New York City is critically important. We’re a country of immigrants, but involuntary immigration is a very different experience.”

“The other part of the story is that they found ways to survive in spite of the fact that all of this was happening to them. They did that by empha-





### Roundtable Comments (Continued)

sizing their humanity. We can't not talk about all of those things. It's there in the remains."

"...the history and the skeletal biology really speak to each other, so we understand that the politics and the economics of what was happening in the slave trade actually directly impacts what was going on in New York."

"The African Burial Ground supplies irrefutable evidence of the presence of slaves in New York City and then the country. The 1701 census—40 per cent of households included enslaved Africans. So that almost half of the households within New York City included slaveholders."

"The African Burial Ground can be a beacon, not only to tell the story of the Africans in New York City, but in Delaware, in Maryland, from Albany to Argentina—and that's primarily that they are 'colony builders.' That, to me, would be the greatest hope: that a child or adult would think of the word slave as being synonymous with colony builder."

"Looking at the material goods and trying to understand the kinds of economic activities these people were participating in leads you to some very important questions about the mobility of Africans, connections among Africans in northern urban areas and southern areas, seamen who spent time in New York but had traveled the world. Looking at the material culture can lead you to [understand] ... context."

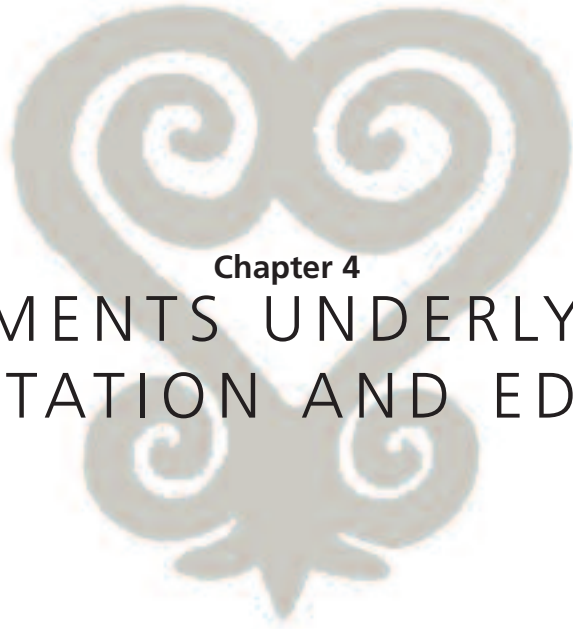
"We approached this from a diasporic perspective because we understood the New York Africans didn't just spring up in New York; they came from elsewhere [originally].... What we discovered was a great deal of diversity in terms of the origins of black people, and not just in origins, but in experiences as well. ...they are bringing certain cultural differences with them. So the task they had in terms of their humanness as opposed to their status as property was to try to blend these different cultural practices and become one people."

priate, locations for interpretive facilities must be sought.

The second Visitor Experience Workshop was with the OPEI volunteers on September 18, 2004, at the OPEI offices at 201 Varick Street. Eighteen persons attended. The volunteers were asked to describe desired audiences, the desired visitor experience, and challenges to interpretation. They offered ideas for promoting the future interpretive program and expressed frustration about the process and length of time it has taken to have the African Burial Ground recognized. Volunteer comments echoed those expressed in other forums.

### Research Roundtable

The roundtable held in Philadelphia November 5–6, 2004, engaged 15 scholars in discussions about current scholarship on the African Burial Ground. The roundtable included members of the Howard University research team that has been studying the site for the last 12 years, as well as other scholars in the fields of physical anthropology, archeology, and African American history. The Howard University team presented synopses of their history, skeletal biology, and archeological reports. In several panels, Howard researchers who had studied the specific site were teamed with scholars who have studied African and African American history and anthropology as they relate to early America. Each panel of scholars addressed one or two specific questions so that a range of scholarship related to the site could be discussed. The questions ranged from the role African Americans played in the development of New York City to ways in which the African Burial Ground can help tell the story of African contributions to New York City. The panelists considered what stories are best illustrated by the burial ground, the meanings the site has for people today, and the reasons it is nationally and internationally significant.



**Chapter 4**

**ELEMENTS UNDERLYING  
INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION**



**T**his chapter serves as the foundation for those that follow. It includes a suggested mission statement for use by the managers of the site, the reasons for the African Burial Ground's national significance, the basic elements and values of the site, suggested primary interpretive themes, and other factors that influence planning and operations. These underlying elements, as a whole, are suggested as the touchstone for future management policies and actions, ensuring consistency and assisting in prioritizing goals.

The following underlying elements have been synthesized by the NPS technical assistance team from the comments of those gathered at the respective public meetings and by other comment methods, from the literature and scholarly research on the subject, and from a review of the existing legal requirements that relate to the African Burial Ground.

### **Mission Statement**

The African Burial Ground will, of course, always remain the final resting place of New York inhabitants who contributed to the development of the city in another time. The following suggested mission statement provides the basis for honoring and learning about those interred and the times in which they lived. The statement contains the fundamental criteria against which the appropriateness of all future planning, operational decisions, and actions can be tested. Although any mission statement should generally remain constant over the long term, it may evolve as a result of new discoveries, research, and scholarship. The one presented here is an expression of what was heard during public meetings and by other comment methods as shared assumptions about the burial ground's role as a site of national significance and international importance.

Following is the suggested mission statement.

#### **Preserve and Protect Resources and Values**

The fundamental mission of the African

Burial Ground is to preserve and protect the nationally significant resources and the dynamic cultural and community values associated with the African Burying Ground National Historic Landmark. The basic principle guiding management of this hallowed ground is to bring forth and honor the memory of those who are buried in this historic place.

#### **Provide Knowledge**

Multidisciplinary activities related to the African Burial Ground will heighten understanding, increase needed dialogue, re-educate society, and publicly acknowledge the importance of a rich variety of subjects, including:

- the history of the enslavement of Africans
- the history of northern slavery and denial of human freedom in New York, and by extension, the northern states
- the stories of resistance to the inhumanity and brutality of enslavement
- the resilience of African cultural practices
- the lives and circumstances of early Africans and African Americans in New York City, including social mores and burial customs and traditions
- the contributions of Africans and Americans of African descent to the development of New York City
- the relevance of the African Burial Ground and the people of that time to the history of this nation and contemporary society
- the struggle of today's community activists to preserve, protect, remember, and celebrate the African Burial Ground and those interred there.



### **Connect and reconnect the past and present**

The African Burial Ground will strengthen descendant connections to the ancestral past by offering a place of pilgrimage, remembrance, reflection, and celebration.

### **Sustain and expand knowledge**

The African Burial Ground will be a repository of scientific and scholarly knowledge. It will encourage ongoing and new research and dialogue about the site and its history, preservation, and interpretation.

### **Lead**

The African Burial Ground will serve as a model of research, preservation, interpretation, and management of a sacred site and burial ground.

### **Partner / Build coalitions**

The African Burial Ground will seek collaboration with city, regional, national, and international organizations and sites to promote research, understanding, and dialogue on enslavement and resistance to enslavement, as well as on the preservation and treatment of comparable sacred sites and burial grounds within New York City and beyond.

## **Significance**

Statements of significance clearly state why, within a national and international context, the site's resources and values are important enough to warrant recognition and preservation. They describe the factual rationale for national recognition and provide a foundation for the creation of primary interpretive themes.

Based on scholars and reports, significance statements document the findings of comparative analysis with such terms as "largest collection," "most diverse representation," "possessing the greatest integrity," "oldest," and "best remaining example." The main criterion is that the information base be broad enough to support statements of relative significance within a national context (and regional or global, if appropriate). As with the mission,



our understanding of the significance of the resource may evolve over time as a result of major new scientific discoveries, scholarship, or legislation.

The suggested significance statement here consolidates those from many sources, including:

- National Historic Landmark Nomination (1993)

### **Excavation at the African Burial Ground, 1991.**

*Courtesy of U.S. General Services Administration*





Artifacts such as buttons, beads, pins, and cuff links were found during excavation.

*Courtesy of U.S. General Services Administration*

- Federal Steering Committee Report (1993)
- Surveys conducted by Peggy King-Jorde for the General Services Administration (1998)
- Comments received from the public during the NPS planning process (2004)
- Comments by various subject-matter experts from the Howard University research team (2004)
- Final research reports on history and skeletal biology produced by Howard University (2004).

The following factors make the African Burial Ground nationally significant:

#### Size and scope

As the final resting place for thousands of Africans in New York, the eighteenth-century African Burial Ground may well be the largest, earliest, and only known and preserved urban African burying ground.

#### Potential for expanding scientific knowledge

The African Burial Ground has unprecedented potential to yield scientific and cultural information about the lives of Africans and African Americans in an eighteenth-century urban North American context. The human remains of the burial ground are from the earliest populations of Africans in America (believed to be the first population of remains to have undergone a careful scientific excavation and examination), which is expected to lead to development of a significant baseline biological profile of the first generations of the African Diaspora in North



America. The site reveals significant new knowledge on African heritage, customs, and sacred rituals.

#### **Spiritual connection of past to present**

As the final resting place for thousands of Africans who lived, labored, and died in colonial New York, the African Burial Ground is a tangible and enduring spiritual memorial, strengthening the connection between contemporary Americans of African descent and their forebears who were enslaved in eighteenth-century New York. The African Burial Ground is irrefutable testimony to the suffering of the original Africans in New York and underscores the magnitude of their contribution to the city. It is a testimony to the perseverance of their descendants and others in protecting and celebrating that heritage.

#### **Insights on northern enslavement and international trade**

Although American slavery has been the subject of a vast historical literature, slave communities in the North have received less attention than those in the South, and the focus has been on the relationship between the New York mercantile class and the raw materials produced by slave labor plantations in the South. The research findings that are associated with the African Burial Ground provide a more comprehensive and irrefutable view of the direct role of enslaved peoples in the history and growth of New York City, and by extension, the United States. The findings highlight New York's role as a major Northern shipping point in the Atlantic slave trading system, with an economy that depended on the productivity of slave labor to function and to supplement its pool of skilled craftspersons.

#### **Insights on the history of New York and the United States**

The African Burial Ground's existence helps provide the truth to history by documenting the widespread enslavement of Africans in New York and the North; it presents a rare opportunity to reconstruct the lives and conditions experienced by those enslaved. The history of the site underscores the systemic

denial by European Americans of the importance of the contributions of African American men, women, and children to the development of New York City and to the economic foundations of the United States.

#### **Unique potential to expand cultural understanding of New York and the nation**

Plans to mark the burial site with a memorial, open new interpretive facilities, and host commemorative cultural events, and the presence of related artistic works that have been placed in 290 Broadway, collectively expand the nature of the multicultural milieu of New York City.

#### **Role in community mobilization and expression of cultural identity**

The African Burial Ground is an important catalyst for community organization and action. It is the embodiment of a common heritage and identity for Americans of African descent who have come together to preserve and respect this hallowed plot of land as sacred ground.

### **Basic Elements and Values**

Certain resources and values are those determined to be fundamental to achieving the mission of a park or other preserved area. Identifying the African Burial Ground's basic elements and values helps ensure that all planning is focused on what is most important about the site and its history.

#### **Resources**

- The archaeological site designated as the African Burying Ground National Historic Landmark, including its features, human remains and associated artifacts
- The memorial site east of the federal building at 290 Broadway, where there are between 200 and 300 burials within the backfilled footprint of the cancelled four-story pavilion and where the remains of 419 individuals were reinterred in October 2003
- The archives, artifacts, and bioskeletal study samples associated with the GSA



### African Burial Ground Project

- The memorial that is constructed at the site

#### Values

- The spiritual focus, contemplative nature, and celebrative commemoration of the place and its transcendent power

### Suggested Themes

Although many professional disciplines use the term theme, interpretive themes take a particular form and consist of specific elements that together communicate the core concepts and messages intended for audiences to understand and explore. They are derived from a site's mission and capture the essence of a site's significance. Interpretive themes are descriptive statements that inspire connections to resource meanings. They do this by expressing the relevant ideas, meanings, concepts, beliefs, and values that support increased audience understanding and appreciation of the site's resources, which are the desired interpretive outcomes.

Interpretive themes link universal human experiences that transcend time and culture (intangibles) with a site's stories and its tangible resources. Well-conceived themes embody broad concepts, open minds to new ideas, introduce multiple points of view, and encourage audiences to discover ideas that have relevance to their own lives. These themes help answer the basic questions, "So what?" and "What does this have to do with me?" A range of topics and stories related to a site's meaning and significance can illustrate a particular theme.

After a review of the history of the African Burial Ground, many public meetings, and interviews, three major suggested interpretive themes were developed by the NPS technical assistance team for the African Burial Ground. (These themes are explored in depth in Chapter 7 of this report.)

#### **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.*

### Other Factors: National Historic Landmark Status

Decision makers should always be aware of special mandates when establishing a direction for the management of a culturally significant resource, because such mandates further define what is appropriate, and they could potentially conflict with the mission and significance of the site. The major mandate affecting the African Burial Ground is its status as a National Historic Landmark (NHL).

Because the African Burial Ground is a prominent case before the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation (ACHP), flowing



from its responsibilities under the Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (HPA), a brief discussion of the HPA and GSA's Memorandum of Agreement with the ACHP follows.

The purpose of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, is to preserve, protect, and maintain the historical and cultural heritage of our nation for the present and future enjoyment of the public. The act sets forth certain responsibilities for those entrusted with stewardship of NHLs. Section 106 of this act states that the head of a federal agency, having direct or indirect jurisdiction over any federal or federally funded project in any state, and the head of a federal department with authority to grant license must, before the onset of the project, take into account the effects on any district, site, building, or structure that is included in, or eligible for inclusion in, the National Register. This condition must be considered before any federal monies are expended for a project. The head of a federal agency must also allow for comments to be made by the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation in regard to the project.

The African Burial Ground is a National Historic Landmark (established under the Historic Sites Act of 1935) and is on the National Register of Historic Places. The 1991 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)

between the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and GSA required GSA to:

1. develop and implement a research design for the burial ground and other archeological sites within the project area
2. sensitively remove all exposed human remains
3. analyze the disturbed human remains and associated grave artifacts
4. re-inter the human remains and associated grave artifacts
5. develop a memorial, interpretive site, and public outreach program.

Additionally, GSA was required to submit quarterly reports to ACHP and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission summarizing actions taken to comply with the amended MOA.

Some of these obligations have been met, and others proceed toward conclusion. Under any proposed management alternative, other than continuing GSA management of the site, however, a new or amended memorandum of agreement with ACHP would be advisable, if not required.









**T**his chapter sets forth suggested mission goals (those goals to be achieved by managers) for the African Burial Ground. Mission goals broadly articulate the ideals the manager will strive to attain at the burial ground. They are expressed as the desired conditions for resources, visitor experience, facilities and visitor use, and partnerships. Mission goals and the methods for achieving them will shape the look and feel of the site and the way it will operate.

The suggested mission goals and accompanying management statements for the African Burial Ground are common to all the management alternatives that follow in Chapter 6.

### **Mission Goal One: Cultural and Natural Resource Protection**

*Cultural resources and values contributing to the significance of the African Burial Ground are stabilized, maintained, protected, and managed consistent with its cultural importance.*

*Natural resources and values (primarily the soundscape, lighting and air quality, and vegetation associated with the memorial site) are managed to maintain and improve the experience within the site and adjacent neighborhood, as well as to protect and promote appreciation of the African Burial Ground's cultural resources.*

To achieve this mission goal, site managers and partners must understand the nature and significance of the site's resources, both as an ensemble and also in a larger historical and geographical context. Research by scholars is a key to such understanding and to making well-informed decisions. The following statements are intended to inform future specific management actions taken to achieve this mission goal.

1. All resource management actions recognize that the African Burial Ground is a sacred place and respect the signifi-

cance and meanings of the site.

2. Resource management decisions are based on adequate scholarly and scientific information, thorough research, planning, and consistent monitoring, and conform to applicable policies and regulations.
3. The African Burial Ground contributes to and acts as a repository for the public's knowledge about its resources and their associated values.
4. Management provides venues for observances and acts to protect and sustain cultural practices associated with the African Burial Ground.
5. Significant cultural resources, including landscapes, archeological sites, and collections, are documented, stabilized, preserved or maintained, and treatments are consistent with the management and interpretation alternative selected for the African Burial Ground.
6. African Burial Ground collections, including historic archives, artifacts, and objects, are stored and displayed in centralized, accessible, secured facilities and protected according to certification standards set by the American Association of Museums.

### **Mission Goal Two: Audience Experiences—Interpretation**

*The African Burial Ground is a catalyst for diverse audiences to understand, appreciate, and form their own intellectual and emotional connections to the meanings of resources associated with the site and related history, so as to promote preservation of memory and understanding of contemporary relevance.*

To achieve this mission goal, site managers and partners will convey the broad context and full significance of the site to visitors. A variety of excellent interpretive programs



based on the site will be provided. Visitors will be able to make connections to their own interests and understand the historic resources and stories in ways that are individually most meaningful. The following statements are intended to inform future specific management actions taken to achieve this mission goal.

1. Audiences investigate the rediscovery of the African Burial Ground and the multiple opportunities it provides to shape their views of history by enriching their knowledge of the major role played by peoples of African descent in the development of New York. Further, they discover that extensive enslavement existed in the North during its early history. They appreciate that the restoration of memory flowing from the rediscovery of the African Burial Ground deserves to be widely shared.
2. Audiences explore the full extent of the African Burial Ground, i.e., not only the memorial site, but also the burial ground's larger boundaries, as well as the many sites in Lower Manhattan that related to the lives of those laid to rest outside the old city's wall. Visitors have opportunities to become aware of:
  - a. historical perspectives, i.e., the history and historical context of the burial ground and the lives of those interred
  - b. the evolving experiences, roles, and contributions of African Americans in New York City and the North, such as in the fields of law, religion, art, construction, music, etc.
  - c. the differing cultural perspectives shaped by race, class, gender, geographic origin, and age.
3. Audiences begin to recognize and acknowledge the inhumanity, brutality, and forced labor endured by the enslaved, their resistance to such conditions, and the residual effects of



enslavement, including segregation, discrimination, and the deliberate and/or careless omission of such information from recorded history and memory.

**A youth group views the African Burial Ground site from outside the gate during a Saturday visit.**

4. Audiences engage in the process of rediscovery, preservation, investigation, and interpretation of the African Burial





Ground and understand that preservation is achieved through determined action by citizens, even if only a small group.

5. The African Burial Ground offers programs, facilities, and services that accommodate a variety of learning styles and behaviors, in order to address the diverse needs of visitors. In addition, programs and services are geared to visits of various lengths.
6. Visitors have access to information about themes, activities, and programs that allow them to make informed decisions about the ways to experience and learn about the African Burial Ground and related sites.
7. Audiences have opportunities to engage in dialogue about the history and contemporary issues associated with the African Burial Ground, to record their reflections, and to listen to or see what others have said or created.
8. The interpretive program encourages a sense of pride about the contributions of all Africans and their descendants who helped to build New York and the nation, and offers opportunities to honor those who endured the harsh realities of slavery, inhumanity, and discrimination. Audiences have opportunities to express their feelings and thoughts related to a thorough retelling of the African Burial Ground stories.
9. Audiences have opportunities to extend their “visits” by acquiring reading materials reflecting recent scholarship, as well as other appropriate mementos of the site and its significance.

### **Mission Goal Three: Audience Experiences—Facilities**

*All audiences feel welcome and safely enjoy high-quality interpretive experiences and*

*superlative facilities appropriate to the mission of the African Burial Ground, and are satisfied with the accessibility, range, and quality of the facilities and services.*

*Audiences observe, protect, and sustain cultural practices associated with the African Burial Ground and those interred there.*

To achieve this goal, site managers and partners make available safe, accessible, appropriate facilities to facilitate understanding and enjoyment of the site’s resources. Visitor facilities must be appropriate to the site’s purpose, convenient, and not impair significant site resources. Facilities for management must provide efficient support for operations, maintenance, and preservation activities. Events and celebratory opportunities must be consistent with the site’s purpose and significance, and not harmful to site resources or to other visitors’ experiences.

1. Recognizing that some, but not all, of the interested public will physically visit the African Burial Ground, a combination of on-site, off-site, and virtual venues and other interpretive media are available to audiences.
2. Since the African Burial Ground consists of a number of different facilities, such as the memorial and an interpretive center, audiences can choose activities that are appropriate at each of the facilities. The place of reinterment must be considered a sacred site that is treated with respect and reverence. Audiences will conduct themselves in ways appropriate to the sacredness of the site.
3. Visitors are welcomed and safely access the African Burial Ground buildings and visitor amenity areas, and off-site locations that support interpretation of the African Burial Ground’s primary stories.
4. African Burial Ground facilities, programs, and sites are universally accessi-



ble. Universal design accommodates the needs of the physically less mobile or immobile, and of those with visual and aural impairments. Full accessibility involves more than physical access to a structure, however; it refers to access to programs as well. Programming addresses a range of limitations through materials provided to compensate for impairments (such as captioning on AV programs, Braille materials, audio-enhancement devices, and sign language interpretation). For audiences that may not have physical access to the site, there will be other educational and interpretive opportunities available.

5. Those who choose to celebrate the lives of the ancestors are not only accommodated, but encouraged, in part by site design.
6. Audiences are invited to actively participate in the stewardship of the African Burial Ground and related sites.

### **Mission Goal Four: Operational Efficiency**

*The organization that manages the African Burial Ground is responsive and flexible, efficiently using all available resources to accomplish its mission. African Burial Ground facilities, infrastructure, and services are coordinated to efficiently support operational needs, including interpretation and resource management.*

To achieve this goal, site managers and partners make available safe, accessible, and appropriate facilities to enable the successful administration and maintenance of the African Burial Ground. Related facilities provide efficient support of interpretation, administration, maintenance, and preservation activities.

1. Administrative facilities efficiently accommodate African Burial Ground needs.

2. Staff safely accesses and uses facilities and management areas.
3. Staffing levels are sufficient to support sustained and integrated research and interpretive programming, and to maintain African Burial Ground resources.

### **Mission Goal Five: Partnerships and Cooperative Actions**

*The management of the African Burial Ground increases its operational capacity through cooperative efforts with other public and private organizations that understand and support the site's mission to protect and interpret the African Burial Ground.*

*The African Burial Ground participates with the local and regional community in developing strategies to achieve mutual benefits in the areas of resource protection, tourism, and transportation, and to promote a safe and satisfying visitor experience.*

To achieve this goal, managers build on the existing history of activities with volunteers and support organizations, cooperating with private, local, state, and federal partners to protect resources and tell the stories of the African Burial Ground and its role in American history.

1. The African Burial Ground partners with federal, state, and local government, nonprofits, and private landowners to achieve protection and enhancement of cultural and natural resources adjacent to the African Burial Ground; and to address regional linkages.
2. The African Burial Ground collaborates with the local and regional community to develop strategies to achieve mutual benefits in the areas of resource protection, tourism, and way finding, and to promote a safe and satisfying visitor experience.



3. The African Burial Ground joins local communities, state agencies, and other partners in efforts to protect, enhance, and interpret nonadjacent cultural and natural resources related to the mission of the burial ground.
4. The African Burial Ground works with partner agencies and organizations to assist with and leverage fundraising efforts, using an entrepreneurial approach to explore a wide range of alternate financial resources to defray capital and operational costs, and to enhance the visitor experience.
5. The African Burial Ground leads a program of active civic engagement with existing and new communities of interest.
6. Cooperative programming and shared information links the African Burial Ground to associated sites not only in New York, but around the country and the world.

### **Mission Goal Six: Research Component**

*Research associated with the African Burial Ground contributes to the reframing of the public's knowledge of slavery and the African experience in the United States, and*

*of the history of New York. Specifically, research focuses on the early origins of enslavement in New York, its physical and cultural impact on the enslaved, and the struggle of the enslaved to retain their cultural identity. The research acts as a catalyst for ongoing historical dialogue.*

To achieve this goal, managers build on the existing research agenda and provide for scientific exploration of the resources. They cooperate with private, local, state, and federal partners, and the public, to both protect resources and tell the stories of the African Burial Ground and its role in American history.

1. Specifically, research demonstrates the origins of enslavement in early New York, a colonial and gradually urbanized setting in the North.
2. The ongoing research (cultural landscape and urban anthropology, archeological investigation, etc.) is guided by active collaboration with the subject-matter-associated academic community and informs all interpretive and preservation efforts.
3. Associated materials will be made accessible to the academic community for ongoing research in a manner that protects and preserves the resources.



**Chapter 6**

**CHOICES FOR THE FUTURE**





**T**his chapter examines alternative futures for the African Burial Ground. It describes four possible management scenarios, along with facilities and staffing requirements. Expanded programming from that currently offered is assumed in all alternatives, and estimated costs are discussed for each. Costs include facilities and associated staffing, and are expressed in 2005 dollars. The NPS technical assistance team conducted a charrette with architects, exhibit designers, and interpretive professionals to estimate space, exhibit and staffing needs for each alternative. Facilities needs resulting from the charrette were also confirmed utilizing a model developed by the National Park Service to determine visitor facility requirements in units of the National Park System. The relationship of the alternatives to interpretation and educational programming is more fully discussed in Chapter 7 of this report.

While recognizing that many possible management alternatives exist, the NPS technical assistance team believes that continued, but vastly improved governmental stewardship of the site is a primary element for future success. The recognized national and international significance of the African Burial Ground, the importance of the stories it represents to the history of this nation, the opportunities it provides for public discourse on the meanings and impacts of slavery and the quest for freedom—all of these reasons argue for continued public stewardship.

The future character and management of the African Burial Ground will be important factors in stimulating wide-spread 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 importance of the African Burial Ground, 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. The manager of the African Burial Ground must be capable of nothing short of excellence in providing interpretive and educational programming at the memorial, within the National Historic Landmark boundary, through educational and community-based partnerships, and with related resources in the City of New York, the nation, and beyond.

The site's management must be financially sustainable, capable, inclusive, outreaching, and receptive to interpreting the many and multi-layered meanings of the African Burial Ground to the human mosaic that is our present world's society. It must also be committed to partnerships with knowledgeable scholars and Americans of African descent in continuing the research that has led to our recent knowledge of those interred, and the circumstances in which they lived and died.

Throughout the course of this assignment, the NPS technical assistance team has attempted to widen the scope of public involvement in determining the selection of an African Burial Ground Memorial, defining the significance and meanings of the burial ground and the stories that should be told, and how citizens of all nations may better understand the lives of those interred and their contributions to New York City and our society. Any future management entity for the African Burial Ground should consider inclusion of an effective vehicle for continued and expanded community involvement in the development and implementation of programming and to assist in decision making for the site. The value of an advisory body was widely identified, both to provide advice in future operations, and to provide an additional, more dynamic process for continuing public engagement. The symbolism of the African Burial Ground to so many, along with its past and most recent history, argues for an actively engaged citizenry in determining its future.



## Current Conditions

The African Burial Ground National Historic Landmark comprises seven acres in Lower Manhattan (refer to map on page 8). To the public that may visit intentionally, or simply find it by chance discovery, it is temporarily marked and visible only as a small, green space on Duane Street, around the corner from heavily traveled Broadway. This green space will be the site of the forthcoming African Burial Ground Memorial. No identification marks the boundaries of the remainder of the NHL.

If one knows it exists beforehand, and is up to venturing through the security screening procedure into the Federal Building at 290 Broadway, floor and wall artwork and statuary can be viewed. These are works that interpret the African experience in New York City and beyond.

Educational programming for the site is implemented through a current GSA contract that provides, among other tasks, for OPEI to develop educational materials, implement events and program planning, and conduct educational group tours within and outside of 290 Broadway. OPEI sponsors events and film festivals, provides materials and holds classes and tours at the site. It employs a corps of dedicated staff and volunteers in its endeavors. OPEI is provided office space in a separate GSA building at 201 Varick Street. It utilizes the lobby and meeting space on upper floors in 290 Broadway on an as needed basis for programs and school group events. Present costs to GSA for the services provided by OPEI are approximately \$1 million per year, not including the provision of office space and meeting facilities.

There are currently no completed facilities at the site permanently dedicated for use by visitors.

## Criteria for Design of Management Alternatives

The management alternatives presented below are all designed to enable implementation of

the suggested mission of the African Burial Ground outlined in Chapter 4, and achieve the suggested mission goals discussed in Chapter 5. Each alternative is identifiably different in approach or management, and each achieves the site's suggested mission. They differ in organization and scale, emphasis and capacity to deliver a full range of visitor services. All, however, meet the following basic criteria in varying levels:

- capability and capacity to manage
- protection of the basic resources associated with the African Burial Ground
- provision of interpretation, education and quality visitor experiences
- safe and accessible facilities for visitor use
- ability to achieve operational efficiencies
- ability to undertake partnerships and cooperative actions
- research is a component of implementation
- public participation in planning and programming as an important element of management

## Management Alternatives

Four management alternatives appear to offer feasible pathways for future administration of the African Burial Ground. The first two operate within the present National Historic Landmark designation of the African Burial Ground and the last two involve potential designation of the African Burial Ground as a National Monument or National Memorial. The latter two alternatives would provide a permanent role for the National Park Service in administering the site as a unit of the National Park System. Discussions with state, city, and Manhattan Borough officials, as well as state and federal elected officials, emphasized the need to develop a management system that would be the optimal national park



and partnership system. Appropriate federal executive or congressional authorizations would be required leading to any future designation of the site beyond its current NHL status, and for any permanent operational role involving the NPS.

## **Alternative A**

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

Under this alternative, GSA ownership, responsibility for management, and maintenance of the monument would continue with the addition of an interpretation/educational facility on the ground floor of 290 Broadway. The space in 290 Broadway would be completed as presently planned for exhibits and visitor contact. GSA would either hire staff to manage the facility and provide visitor services or contract with a nonprofit organization, similar to OPEL, to provide for services. Should GSA choose the latter option, it would be necessary for them to ensure that its contracted entity is exceptionally qualified with capabilities and extensive experience in providing quality visitor services and equally extensive capabilities and experience in providing quality interpretive and educational programming. The agency should seek an experienced educational or museum affiliated institution for this role should this alternative be implemented. GSA should also consider establishing an appropriately representative advisory body for continuing participation in the planning, programming and activities associated with the African Burial Ground. Limited partnerships with other related sites are envisioned, as well as outreach to schools and community organizations.

The facility would be in operation only on weekdays due to GSA security concerns and lack of available security staff on weekends. The African Burial Ground visitor experience envisioned by this alternative would involve visiting the newly constructed memorial and completion of a small interpretive/education facility in approximately 2,000 square feet of space on the ground floor of 290 Broadway.

Limited exhibits and educational materials and programs would be available at the site, and tours would be conducted at the memorial, within the larger NHL, and to related resources in the City of New York. Access would require visitors to pass through security into 290 Broadway. Additional orientation and meeting space in 290 Broadway would need to be provided for larger school and visitor groups. Office space for staff would have to be provided by GSA, or be contributed to in overhead as part of the costs of the contractual relationship between GSA and the contracted managing organization.

While the implementation of this alternative would provide a higher level of public understanding and appreciation of the African Burial Ground than currently available, the ground floor space in 290 Broadway, at 2,000 square feet, would not provide adequate accommodations for larger numbers of visitors, therefore limiting the opportunities for many to comfortably experience the exhibits inside the building. While visitors could enter the federal building to visit the center and view the lobby artwork and statuary, many casual or passing-by visitors would likely choose not to enter due to the requirement that they pass through security screening at the entrance. With outside interpretive talks and programming made available, additional visitors would be provided with a more complete experience at the memorial.

The 2,000-square-foot facility at 290 Broadway would need to be designed to provide space for exhibits, orientation and information desk, interpretive sales and storage, staff restrooms and internal pedestrian circulation.

Space would be required outside of the 2,000 square feet at 290 Broadway for a visitor seating area in the adjacent lobby, an educational programs and demonstration space provided on an as-needed basis, a staff library, storage for items left at the memorial, visitor restrooms, staff offices, an interpretive work area, a conference room, general storage, a staff break room, and a staff locker room and changing area.



Staffing for this alternative would require an estimated 13 full-time positions including:

- 1 Site Manager
- 1 Chief of Visitor Services
- 1 Education Specialist
- 1 Interpretive Support Specialist
- 5 On-site Interpretive Guides
- 2 Educational Outreach Specialists
- 1 Museum Technician
- 1 Administrative Assistant

The costs associated with this alternative are estimated at approximately \$2 million for construction, exhibits and related work at the 290 Broadway facility, plus slightly over \$565,000 for construction of additional office, meeting, and educational programming space in 290 Broadway or at another location in close proximity. The estimated annual rental cost for the necessary ±1,900 square feet of space outside of the 290 Broadway interpretive/educational facility is estimated at slightly over \$108,000. Annual costs for staffing, expressed in 2005 dollars, are estimated at slightly over \$1,115,000 including a figure representing 20 percent of staff salaries for operating expenses.

## Alternative B

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

Under this alternative, GSA would complete its plans for the 2,000 square feet of space in 290 Broadway as an interpretive/educational facility. GSA would request that an agency of the State of New York (for example the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation - OPRHP), or the City of New York (for example the Department of Parks and Recreation - NYCDPR) operate and manage the facility, providing interpretive and educational programming comparable to that outlined in Alternative A. OPRHP operates numerous historic sites in the State of New York and NYCDPR operates parks, monuments and historic houses, the latter through the Historic House Trust, a nonprofit corporation.

Any required federal, state or municipal executive and/or legislative authorizations would also need to be obtained by the respective governmental entities. The managing state or local agency could choose to establish its own expanded visitor facilities outside of 290 Broadway, although the expense may be higher than utilizing GSA space for this purpose. Office and meeting space for educational programs would be required in addition to the approximately 2,000 square feet of space at 290 Broadway.

GSA could also convey the newly completed African Burial Ground Memorial adjacent to 290 Broadway, to either OPRHP or NYCDPR, under the Historic Surplus Property Program. The Historic Surplus Property Program allows state, county and local governments to obtain surplus federal properties at no cost if the property is listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Historic Surplus Property Program is a partnership jointly administered by the National Park Service and the General Services Administration that identifies federal historic properties eligible to be transferred. Applications for transfers of historic surplus property are reviewed by the National Park Service. The primary component of the required application is the "Program of Preservation and Utilization," which includes three major sections: a preservation plan, a use plan, and a financial plan.

The visitor experience, conducted only on weekdays under this alternative (unless the space at 290 Broadway is not used), would be comparable in type and scope to that provided under Alternative A. Staffing requirements are anticipated to be the same as presented in Alternative A.

This alternative also anticipates that either the state or local managing agency would establish a formal representative advisory board to assist in planning and developing programs and activities at the African Burial Ground.





Costs associated with construction, exhibits, furniture, and required additional space for offices, a meeting room for group educational purposes, etc., are expected to be comparable, as well. Staffing requirements are anticipated to be basically the same as presented in Alternative A.

## **Alternatives C and D**

### **Management by the National Park Service**

The African Burial Ground would potentially be designated either as a National Monument, a National Memorial or a National Historic Site and would become a unit of the National Park System, administered by the NPS. Units of the National Park System can be designated in two different ways: by Presidential Proclamation (National Monument) under the Antiquities Act of 1906, or by legislation enacted by Congress (National Parks, National Memorials, National Historic Sites, etc.) and signed by the President. Units of the National Park System established by Presidential Proclamation may only consist of land or structures currently owned by the federal government. Congress, however, can enact legislation establishing a unit that also comprises additional areas.

In the case of the African Burial Ground, establishment of a National Monument by Presidential Proclamation could include only the African Burial Ground Monument, the memorial site, and any federally owned properties that may be associated with the monument, such as visitor facilities at 290 Broadway. Alternatively, with congressional designation, the entire African Burial Ground NHL could, potentially, be placed within the boundary of the unit. Being within a boundary does not necessarily require additional land or building acquisition by the National Park Service, nor are there generally additional regulatory requirements for private or other public agency property owners or tenants. Legislation (S-970 and H.R. 3581) was introduced in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives in 2005 to designate the African Burial Ground as a National Historic

Site to be administered by the National Park Service.

The NPS technical assistance team evaluated the African Burial Ground in relation to existing units of the National Park System and other protected sites to determine if comparable historic resources and similar thematic content to that suggested in this report are already represented in the National Park System or protected by other public and non-public organizations. The analyses disclosed that while there are a number of units of the National Park System and programs administered by the NPS, and other sites that address African American history and slavery, none focus comprehensively on slavery in the north or at such an early period in the history of the United States. The analyses concluded that the African Burial Ground is a resource with a compelling national story that is not already adequately represented in the National Park System or protected and interpreted by other organizations.

The team also analyzed the feasibility of NPS administration of the site. The area of the African Burial Ground NHL is certainly of a size and configuration that can be managed efficiently. Costs associated with administering the site, given its national importance and location in New York City, appear to be feasible assuming that anticipated costs are consistent with current and future NPS budget priorities. Effective public/private partnerships and associated fund raising to augment any future federal investments would, of course, assist in accelerating completion of capital improvements and in expanding any federally funded programmatic offerings.

## **Alternative C**

### **National Monument/National Memorial Designation with Emphasis on Extensive Educational Outreach**

Under this alternative, the African Burial Ground would be designated a National Monument, National Memorial or National Historic site and would become a unit of the



National Park System, administered by NPS. Management of the memorial would be conveyed by GSA to the NPS.

This alternative would significantly externalize the programming associated with the African Burial Ground through outreach, community-based education, guided and self-guided tours of the memorial and NHL, and cooperative programming with related sites within the City of New York and elsewhere. In this scenario, the lobby space at 290 Broadway, adjacent to the memorial, would serve as a visitor contact station with additional exhibit panels, and the approximately 2,000 square feet would house an educational outreach hub. The building would be open during weekdays, but staff would have access on weekends and outreach programming at other locations could occur seven days a week.

This alternative would provide basic services for a national park experience. If necessary, the currently available space could be modified to ensure that basic park needs are met for the foreseeable future without additional facilities. Given fiscal constraints and the demands from existing national park units, this alternative would require the least federal investment in the near term, if the decision is made to transfer management to the National Park Service.

Visitors would explore the memorial and the NHL, as well as related sites in Lower Manhattan. Partnerships would include extensive programming with the New York City Board of Education, primary and secondary schools throughout the metropolitan region, universities and colleges, community and youth organizations and many other organizations and institutions within the region, the nation and the world.

Under this alternative, the thrust of African Burial Ground interpretive and educational programming would be less focused at 290 Broadway, itself. Rather, the majority of programming would be provided off-site through educational, community and institutional partnerships. The development of a marked New York City African Experience Trail, linking

sites in Lower Manhattan related to the meanings and stories associated with the African Burial Ground and the African and African American experience in the City, complete with self-guided tours, signage, wayside exhibits and interpretive and educational materials, could be an important additional focus. Use of the Internet and distance learning techniques would permit those unable to visit the site to learn of its history, meanings and lessons.

A key element of the alternative would be the establishment of an African Burial Ground Federal Advisory Commission to continue and expand the civic engagement that has so effectively focused the public's attention on the significance and meanings associated with this site in the past decade and a half. Comprised of civic leaders, historians, educators, researchers, and other committed and knowledgeable persons, the Commission would act as a catalyst for continued citizen involvement. It would be charged with the responsibility to advise the NPS on planning and construction of facilities, exhibits, and the myriad partnership, interpretive and educational initiatives and events that should be undertaken to increase public understanding and appreciation of the African Burial Ground. It could be given the authority, too, to accept monetary and other donations to enhance facilities, programs and partnerships associated with the site and its meanings. The establishment of an endowment for the African Burial Ground would greatly add to its long-term fiscal well-being.

Implementation of this option could significantly increase the visibility of the African Burial Ground and widen the understanding of its significance and meaning in the City of New York, the metropolitan region, the nation and the world. It offers extensive opportunities to forge relationships here, nationally, and abroad to bring to citizens of our own and other nations an understanding of the meanings and impacts of slavery, segregation, discrimination and freedom.

Design of the approximately 2,000 square feet



at 290 Broadway would be allocated for staff operations with space for a staff library, archival and collections storage, offices, interpretive work space, general storage, staff break room, staff locker and changing space, staff restrooms, and internal pedestrian circulation.

Space requirements outside of this location would be required for exhibit panels in the lobby, administrative space and a conference room.

Staffing for this alternative would require an estimated 15 full-time positions including:

- 1 Site Manager
- 1 Chief of Visitor Services
- 1 Educational Specialist
- 1 Interpretive Support Services Specialist
- 1 Community Planner
- 8 Park Rangers (Education/Outreach)
- 1 Administrative Technician
- 1 Museum Technician

The costs associated with this alternative are estimated at approximately \$1,226,000 for construction, furniture, 25 external wayside exhibits, and related work within the 2,000 square feet at 290 Broadway. Additional costs of approximately \$400,000 will be necessary for exhibit panels in the lobby of 290 Broadway and for construction of administrative office space in 290 Broadway or at another location in close proximity to the memorial. The estimated annual rental cost for the necessary ±720 square feet of space outside of the 290 Broadway educational hub is estimated at approximately \$26,500. Annual costs for staffing, expressed in 2005 dollars, are estimated at approximately \$1,312,000 including a figure representing 20 percent of staff salaries for operating expenses.

## Alternative D

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

Under this alternative, as in Alternative C, the African Burial Ground would be designated a

National Monument, National Memorial or National Historic Site and would become a unit of the National Park System, administered by NPS. Management of the memorial would be conveyed by GSA to the NPS.

This alternative addresses limitations posed by 290 Broadway for visitor use, in terms of its adequacy of space and accessibility, and most important, its potential limitations on the quality of the visitor experience. While the previous alternatives conform, in large part, to the constraints of existing GSA planned space and building security concerns, this alternative responds to the probability that a nationally significant site, as internationally linked as the African Burial Ground, will attract sizeable levels of visitation. Those who journey here, whether from near or far, will seek facilities and programming that are easily accessible and capable of portraying the true essence and scale of importance of the history, meanings and implications of the African Burial Ground to our national story. The alternative enhances the programming outlined in Alternatives A, B, and C with additional visitor facilities located in close proximity to the site. It provides a more complete visitor experience for those seeking to understand the African and African American experiences in New York City, and their lasting impacts on the world's collective human experience.

This option would have to be phased in over time, given that the development of an additional site would be subject to the availability of funds and would be subject to the availability of appropriations and may need to compete with other federal projects.

Under this alternative, the facilities would be open seven days a week, the approximately 2,000 square feet on the ground floor of 290 Broadway would serve as an education center and student laboratory, primarily used for organized school and youth group visits. Another visitor facility, comprising up to 9,000 square feet, would be located within the NHL boundary in space to be determined and contain exhibits, a multi-purpose space, book store and adequate comfort facilities to serve an



expanded visitor base. Interpretive, educational and administrative staff would also be housed at the new facility. This visitor facility, like the Independence Visitor Center in Philadelphia (which is outside of the security screening area for the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall), would not require the extensive security procedures now necessary for entry into the federal building at 290 Broadway.

Plans for any additional facility would have to go through a thorough review by the NPS Development Advisory Board and be ranked according to the NPS construction priority-setting process before any funds would become available. Significant changes, including size, scope, and location could occur as a result of these reviews.

Outreach programming would be somewhat less than that provided in Alternative C, but the addition of adequate facilities for the African Burial Ground would provide significantly expanded opportunities for on-site educational programming and interpretation of the memorial, the NHL and related resources in Lower Manhattan, including the development of a New York City African Experience Trail. The focus of interpretation and education would be more evenly divided between on-site and externally directed programming. A recent survey conducted by GSA at the NPS technical assistance team's request, confirms that adequate rental space for an alternative visitor facility is available in very close proximity to the site of the future African Burial Ground Memorial.

The African Burial Ground Federal Advisory Commission suggested in Alternative C is also an integral part of this alternative. The availability of more adequate facilities and wider programming will increase the challenges, but enhance the opportunities available to the Commission.

Under this alternative the design of the approximately 2,000 square feet at 290 Broadway would be allocated for educational use and include a memorial viewing area, a history and science laboratory, library, rest-

rooms, interpretive work area, and storage. The alternative also calls for exhibit panels to be placed in the adjacent lobby of 290 Broadway.

The up to 9,000-square-foot off-site visitor facility in close proximity to the memorial would be designed to provide an entry foyer, space for visitor orientation, hearing device distribution, interpretive materials storage, information desk, an exhibit area, multi-purpose/auditorium space, new discovery use, audio/visual storage, and computer learning center. Space would also be provided for memorial memento storage, interpretive sales and storage, restrooms, offices, interpretive work space, general storage, and staff break and locker rooms. The facility would be a full service visitor center.

Staffing under D would require an estimated 17 full-time positions including:

- 1 Superintendent
- 1 Chief of Visitor Services
- 1 Education Specialist
- 1 Interpretive Support Services
- 1 Community Planner
- 7 Park Rangers (on-site)
- 3 Park Rangers (education/outreach)
- 1 Administrative Technician
- 1 Museum Technician

Costs associated with this alternative for an educational center and student laboratory at 290 Broadway are approximately \$1,721,500. Costs for a new visitor facility in close proximity to the African Burial Ground Memorial are approximately \$5,200,000. The estimated annual rental cost for the new facility, is approximately \$484,300.

Annual costs for staffing, expressed in 2005 dollars, are estimated at approximately \$1,500,000 including a figure representing 20 percent of staff salaries for operating expenses.

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.



	ALTERNATIVE A	ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
<b>MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE</b>	<i>NHL - Continuation of GSA Administration and Implementation of Present Plans in Existing Space at 290 Broadway.</i>	<i>NHL – Implementation of Present Plans in Existing Space at 290 Broadway With Administration by a State or Municipal Agency and Conveyance of the African Burial Ground Memorial Under the Historic Surplus Property Program.</i>	<i>National Monument/National Memorial Designation With Emphasis on Extensive Educational Outreach.</i>	<i>National Monument/National Memorial Designation With Expanded African Burial Ground Facilities, Programming, and Visitor Center</i>
<b>OWNERSHIP AND OPERATION</b>	GSA Continues to Manage and Operate African Burial Ground Memorial and Visitor Facility at 290 Broadway, or Contracts Operations of Visitor Facility and Programming to Nonprofit Corporation.	GSA Conveys African Burial Ground Memorial to State or Local Agency Under Historic Surplus Property Program. State or Local Agency Manages and Operates Visitor Facility and Programming at 290 Broadway.	GSA Conveys African Burial Ground Memorial to NPS. NPS Manages and Operates Facilities at 290 Broadway Primarily as an Educational Outreach Hub with Extensive External Programming.	GSA Conveys African Burial Ground Memorial to NPS. NPS Manages and Operates Facility at 290 Broadway as Education Center and Student Laboratory and Develops and Operates a Full Service Visitor Center in Close Proximity to Memorial.
<b>290 BROADWAY</b>	Serves as Interpretive/Educational Facility, and is Completed as Currently Planned with Limited Exhibits and Programs. Additional Space Required.	Serves as Interpretive/Educational Facility, and is Completed as Currently Planned with Limited Exhibits and Programs. Additional Space Required.	Serves as Educational Outreach Hub for External Programming and Visitor Contact. Additional Space Required for Limited Exhibits.	Serves as Education Center and Student Laboratory. Additional Lobby Space Required.
<b>CORE PROGRAMMING</b>	Primarily at 290 Broadway Facility with Limited Exhibits, Interpretation of the Memorial, and Continuation and Expansion of Current Educational Programs, Tours and Events.	Primarily at 290 Broadway Facility with Limited Exhibits, Interpretation of the Memorial, and Continuation and Expansion of Current Educational Programs, Tours and Events.	Primarily at Off-Site Locations Through Extensive Educational Programming and Cooperative Activities with Related Sites. Self-Guided Tours of the Memorial and to Related Sites along African Descendant Experience Trail.	Youth Educational Programs at 290 Broadway Center/Lab. Interpretive Walks/Talks, Exhibits, Special Programs and Events at New Visitor Facility. Guided Tours to Related Sites along African Descendant Experience Trail.

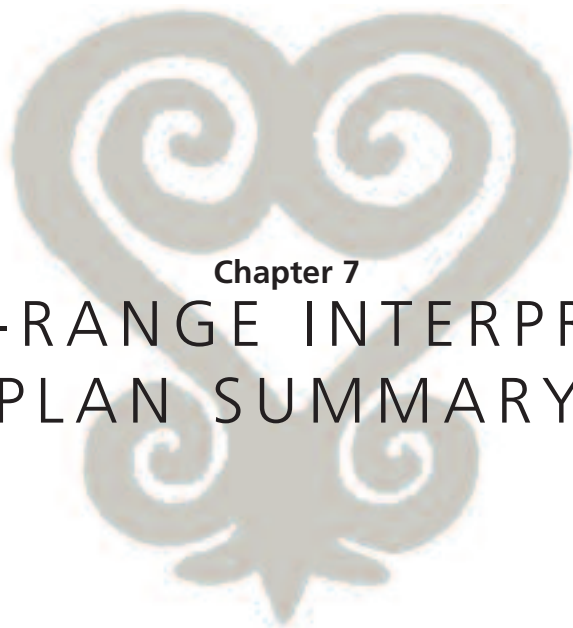




	ALTERNATIVE A	ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
<b>MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE</b>	<i>NHL - Continuation of GSA Administration and Implementation of Present Plans in Existing Space at 290 Broadway.</i>	<i>NHL – Implementation of Present Plans in Existing Space at 290 Broadway With Administration by a State or Municipal Agency and Conveyance of the African Burial Ground Memorial Under the Historic Surplus Property Program.</i>	<i>National Monument/National Memorial Designation With Emphasis on Extensive Educational Outreach.</i>	<i>National Monument/National Memorial Designation With Expanded African Burial Ground Facilities, Programming, and Visitor Center</i>
<b>GSA ROLE</b>	Management and Continuing Financial Responsibility for Memorial and 290 Broadway Interpretation/Educational Facility. Contracts with Nonprofit for Operations and Programming.	Maintains 290 Broadway Interpretation/Educational Facility and Permits State or Local Agency to Operate Center Through Cooperative Agreement. Conveys Memorial Through Historic Surplus Property Program.	Maintains 290 Broadway Facility and Permits NPS to Operate Educational Outreach Hub and Contact Station. Conveys Memorial to NPS.	Maintains management of 290 Broadway Facility and Permits NPS to Operate Education Center/Student Laboratory. Conveys memorial to NPS.
<b>NPS ROLE</b>	Limited Technical Assistance Under existing Authorities.	Limited Technical Assistance Under Existing Authorities. State or Local Operator of Memorial May Qualify for Save America's Treasures or Challenge Cost Share Grants.	NPS Assumes Full Management and Operations of 290 Broadway Facility and management of Memorial.	NPS Assumes Full Management and Operations of 290 Broadway Facility, New Visitor Center, and management of Memorial.
<b>PARTNERSHIPS</b>	Continuation and Limited Expansion of Existing Partnerships.	Type and Scale of Partnerships Determined by State or Local Agency.	Full Range of Educational and Interpretive Partnerships with Schools, Universities and Community Organizations, as well as with Managers of Related Resources. National and International Partnerships.	Full Range of Educational and Interpretive Partnerships with Schools, Universities and Community Organizations, as well as with Managers of Related Resources. National and International Partnerships.



	ALTERNATIVE A	ALTERNATIVE B	ALTERNATIVE C	ALTERNATIVE D
<b>MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE</b>	<i>NHL - Continuation of GSA Administration and Implementation of Present Plans in Existing Space at 290 Broadway.</i>	<i>NHL – Implementation of Present Plans in Existing Space at 290 Broadway With Administration by a State or Municipal Agency and Conveyance of the African Burial Ground Memorial Under the Historic Surplus Property Program.</i>	<i>National Monument/National Memorial Designation With Emphasis on Extensive Educational Outreach.</i>	<i>National Monument/National Memorial Designation With Expanded African Burial Ground Facilities, Programming, and Visitor Center</i>
<b>CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROVISIONS</b>	Existing Advisory Groups Serve Out Intended Purposes. Possibly, Representative Community Advisory Body Created for Planning and Programming Assistance.	Representative Community Advisory Body Created for Planning and Programming Assistance.	African Burial Ground Federal Advisory Commission Created for Planning, Development and Programming. Authorized to Receive Donations for African Burial Ground Related Activities.	African Burial Ground Federal Advisory Commission Created for Planning, Development and Programming. Authorized to Receive Donations for African Burial Ground Related Activities.
<b>ANNUAL STAFFING COSTS</b> (2005 Dollars)	13 Full-Time Staff @ <b>\$1,115,000</b>	13 Full-Time Staff @ <b>\$1,115,000</b>	15 FTEs @ <b>\$1,312,000</b>	17 FTEs @ <b>\$1,500,000</b>
<b>FACILITIES AND ANNUAL OFF-SITE or 290 BROADWAY ADDITIONAL SPACE RENTAL COSTS</b> (2005 Dollars)	Construction – 290 Broadway - <b>\$2,563,000</b> Rental (± 1900 sq. ft.) <b>\$108,000</b>	Construction - 290 Broadway - <b>\$2,565,000</b> Rental (± 1900 sq. ft.) - <b>\$108,000</b>	Construction – 290 Broadway - <b>\$1,632,250</b> Rental (± 720 sq. ft.) <b>\$26,500</b>	Construction – 290 Broadway – <b>\$1,721,500</b> Construction – New Facility – <b>\$5,200,000</b> Rental (± 9,000 sq. ft.) <b>\$484,300</b>



**Chapter 7**

**LONG-RANGE INTERPRETIVE  
PLAN SUMMARY**



**A** long-range interpretive plan is a framework for an effective interpretive program. It identifies appropriate services and desired experiences for audiences, and it addresses management challenges.

In this case, the alternatives for future management of the African Burial Ground (found in this report, Chapter 6, “Choices for the Future”) are under consideration as of this writing, so some decisions cannot be made at this time. The specific mix of interpretive media (such as film, publications, and exhibits, and directional, informational, and interpretive signage), staff services, and decisions about particular partnerships will depend on as yet unknown factors, including management, staff, funds, and actual facilities, as well as the design of the interpretive center.

### Sources and Civic Engagement

In preparing this plan and envisioning the site’s future, the NPS used material from a great many sources. Public comments provided useful information about the nature and tone of visitor experiences that were desired for the site. People have, over the past decade, as well as in the recent public meetings, shared their deeply held feelings about the African Burial Ground significance, its meanings, atmosphere, and audiences. As a result of this input, the information that interpreters share with the visiting public will encourage a memorable, seamless experience at the burial ground memorial site and interpretive center and will allow interpreters to sensitively and appropriately facilitate visitors’ experiences.

### Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes for a site are derived from the site’s mission and capture the essence of its significance. The African Burial Ground’s mission and significance have been addressed in Chapter 5, and a summary appears below for reference. Interpretive themes link uni-

versal, human experiences that transcend time and culture (intangibles) with a site’s stories and its tangible resources. Well-conceived themes embody broad concepts, open minds to new ideas, introduce multiple points of view, and encourage audiences to discover ideas that have relevance to their own lives. Interpretive themes help answer the basic question, “So what? What does this have to do with me?” A range of topics and stories related to a site’s meaning and significance can illustrate a particular theme.

Interpretive themes are expressed in a single-sentence format. Single words or groups of words are not considered themes; they are topics or areas of interest. Since good themes can accommodate new information as it comes to light, as well as embody broad basic core concepts and help inspire connections, three to four themes, well crafted, generally encompass a site’s story, however complex.

Following the African Burial Ground mission and significance statements below are the interpretive themes that grow out of them. Each draft theme is followed by representative examples of the types of stories, content, and information that could be covered under that theme. (The content examples are not intended as all-inclusive inventories limiting the interpreter to only what is listed here.)

**Mission**, outlined below, describes the purpose of the site.

- Preserve and protect resources and values associated with the African Burying Ground National Historic Landmark.
- Provide knowledge to educate society about the African story in New York City.
- Connect and reconnect the past and present.
- Sustain and expand knowledge by acting as a repository of scientific and scholarly information and by encouraging new research and dialogue.



- Lead and serve as a model for research, preservation, interpretation, and management of a sacred site.
- Partner and collaborate with others to promote research, understanding, and dialogue on the African experience in New York City and on the preservation of sacred sites.

**Significance**, outlined below, describes the factual rationale for national recognition of the site.

- The burial ground's size and scope, as the final resting place of ten to twenty thousand Africans; it may well be the largest, earliest, and only preserved urban African burial ground.
- Its potential for expanding scientific and

cultural knowledge about the lives of Africans in a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century urban, northern context.

- Its spiritual connection of past and present as a tangible and enduring spiritual memorial, strengthening the connection between ancestor and descendant.
- The insights it provides on northern enslavement and international trade and the irrefutable role of enslaved peoples in the growth of New York City.
- The insights it provides on the history of New York and the United States, by documenting enslavement in New York City and reconstructing the lives of the enslaved.
- Its unique potential to expand cultural

**Final African Burial Ground memorial design by finalist Rodney Leon, AARIS Architects.**





knowledge of New York and the nation, as the site reveals significant new information about African heritage, customs, and sacred rituals; and it offers a place to host commemorative cultural events.

- Its role in community mobilization and expression of cultural identity, as a catalyst for community action and as the embodiment of a common heritage for Americans of African descent.

## Interpretive Themes and Examples of Content

### 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 African Americans in building New York City and shaping its culture.*

This theme offers opportunities to focus on stories related to the impact that rediscovery of the African Burial Ground has and will have on our most basic understanding of history. It is about opening minds to a different historical reality. It is about completing the historical picture by adding bodies of color to the labor force that built and sustained New York (and other colonies). It adds slavery to the lexicon of northern and urban histories. It inserts Diaspora into descriptions of trade and culture. It is about chronicling the lives of all New Yorkers and restoring a forgotten community to the central roles—in politics, economics, and culture—that its members played in the growth and development of a great city. Its exploration redrafts the historical narrative by including the voices of resistance that repression tried to silence. This theme redefines assimilation by celebrating cultural persistence and vitality.

This theme reaches beyond reestablishing the presence of Africans in colonial New York. Its meaning also must help rewrite the story

of New York City itself, encompassing all its multicultural, multiracial populations. This theme will provide context by interpreting not only the oppressed, but also the oppressor—those enslaved as well as those who profited from enslaving others (an estimated 40 percent of New York households in the eighteenth century included someone enslaved). To complete the rewrite of history, this theme must address those who, by policy and action, forced the burial ground outside city limits and then allowed it to be defiled and forgotten by “progress.”

Finally, as this theme brings a new vision of history into focus, it also becomes clear that the stories associated with the African Burial Ground transcend the date of the last gravesite. They reach across time to include systematic and continuing attempts to deny the existence of marginalized peoples, as well as their resistance to those attempts. The desecration of New York’s African graves, as growth claimed more and more Manhattan acres, forced African Americans to adapt in new places and with new expressions of identity. As Dr. Sherrill Wilson (director, Office of Public Education and Interpretation) has argued, in this context the “burial ground may be a place of death, but it is also the birthplace of New York’s African American community.”

#### 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.*

Through the “bone biographies,” as one researcher referred to them (the history of an individual that can be determined or read from examining his or her bones), preserved in the African Burial Ground, this theme focuses on people, on how they lived and died, and on what they believed and treasured. It seeks to humanize the burial ground’s stories by addressing the origins of the persons buried there, their quality of life, how



they changed from African to African American, and how they resisted enslavement.

To establish context, this theme first looks at what the African Burial Ground reveals about cultural origins, forced immigration, and the diversity and complexity of the African Diaspora. The theme provides a window onto the ideas and practices carried to the colonies from African and Caribbean sources, the influence that African cultures had on New Yorkers, and the extent of acculturation experienced by Africans forced to come to America.

This theme seeks understanding of the many transformations, both personal and societal, that accompanied the growth of New York. It explores the artifacts found in the graves and what they reveal about the preservation of cultures in the face of forced relocation and repression. The theme also conveys contemporary expressions of culture as they have been tempered by several centuries of New York's polyglot environment. The theme explores which elements of culture entered through New York's gateway and, for people faced with a fundamental struggle for humanity, which elements endured, and which changed?

Although the graves uncovered in the 1990s account for only a small sample of the total number of remains committed to Manhattan's earth during a century, they do contain archaeological evidence with intriguing indications of the quality of life experienced by New York's early Africans and African Americans. Malnutrition, disease, skeletal trauma and injuries, and infant mortality all reflect the quality of life in New York as well as contributing causes of death.

This theme does not explore only hard data, but also the universally understood feelings of all human beings—joy, grief, hatred, fear, defiance, defeat, and rebellion, along with love and care of homeland, family, and friends. The theme is also about the attempt to create a sense of self that transcends

enslavement. In addition, it considers the sacred and secular place that the African Burial Ground occupied in the lives of Africans and African Americans (as well as Europeans and European Americans) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and since.

Circumstances then and now, however, force consideration of this theme beyond context and even emotion. The theme necessarily addresses the contemporary relevance of the extraordinary repression and attempted ethnocide that accompany enslavement. It also includes consideration of how human beings react and resist and how individuals retain their humanity while being subjected, in the course of their everyday lives, to inhuman treatment in its many forms, from physical to psychological. And, lest the audiences engaged in interpretation of the African Burial Ground assume that the daily struggle for human rights belongs solely to the past, this theme is a reminder that “forgetfulness” can be an effective, calculated strategy for marginalizing the dispossessed of any era. Thus, the theme connects the modern concept of activism with the activism the early Africans showed in establishing their burial ground and preserving their culture at this site.

#### **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 save, 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.*

This theme adds the voice of the African ancestors to a modern-day saga of preservation and scholarship. The Sankofa discovered on the coffin of the remains known as Burial 101 sent a powerful reminder to the present: We must go back and reclaim our past so that we can move forward, in order to understand why and how we came to be who we are today. Appropriately, then, this theme focuses



on recent attempts to preserve, retrieve, interpret, and commemorate the past represented by the African Burial Ground.

This theme connects audiences to the specific site, addressing the question, What happened here? It invites audiences into the process of rediscovery by sharing stories of the multidisciplinary scholarship applied to the site in innovative ways—in history, archeology, anthropology, skeletal biology, and art, for example. It urges examination of the questions scholars ask, the implications of those questions, the answers researchers are finding, and even the academic debates that ensue. It explores how we know what we know as well as describing the limitations of current scientific inquiry that leave some questions unanswered.

This theme also chronicles the perseverance and power of community involvement and activism, underscoring the value of learning from the past and shaping the nature of scholarly inquiry. It asks, Why is the African Burial Ground, situated amidst the hustle and bustle of everyday life in one of the busiest cities in the world, relevant today? What issues reside at the core of how the site will be treated? Rooted in contemporary life, this theme engages and challenges audiences to think about both past and present. It squarely contains the “So what? What does this have to do with me?” test of interpretation by encouraging dialogue on the meaning of rediscovering history and the extent to which actions in New York can and cannot inform the treatment of other burial grounds and culturally sacred sites. It connects the tangible and intellectual discoveries associated with the African Burial Ground to the less tangible and more emotional and spiritual impacts that those discoveries can have on life in the twenty-first century.

For the descendant African community, the theme also explores the sense of pride, sacrifice, and belonging expressed by former New York City Mayor David Dinkins: “Until a few years ago, African American New Yorkers had no site to call our own. There was no

place which said, we were here, we contributed, we played a significant role in New York’s history right from the beginning. Now we—their descendants—have the symbol of our heritage embodied in Lower Manhattan’s African Burial Ground. The African Burial Ground is the irrefutable testimony to the contributions and suffering of our ancestors.” As Dinkins described it, “we were here” (we lived and built our lives here, rejoiced in our culture and died here) combines with the power of “we are here.” The theme encompasses the spirituality of a place where the dispossessed and their descendants, particularly those of the African Diaspora, can meet, reflect, and remember in silence, with ceremony, or through cultural expression. But it also explores the contributions that cultural expression, the fine and performing arts, and education can make in integrating the burial ground and similar sites into the everyday lives of many diverse audiences.

## Challenges Facing Interpretation

The African Burial Ground has many assets upon which to build an effective interpretive program, including evocative and compelling stories, an emerging body of engaging scholarship, professional staff, and passionate and dedicated supporters. It faces challenges as well, as any site does. Planners, interpreters, and site administrators must consider these issues and seek interpretive solutions wherever practicable. Using program design, interpretation can build on the site’s strengths to overcome obstacles and help solve management issues.

The challenges and issues facing interpretation are summarized here.

- Visibility, orientation, and way finding
- Mixed use of a federal office building
- Security
- Space, facilities, and amenities
- Time constraints (visitor schedules and availability of 290 Broadway)
- Information, documentation, and research



- Many languages and cultures touched
- Political interest
- Partnership opportunities, adequate funding and staffing
- Developing appropriate interpretive methods to tell a story that has strong emotional impact, whose resources are underground, and that has few artifacts or historical objects directly associated with it
- Extending the interpretive experience

## Target Audiences for the Immediate Future

There is a huge potential audience for this story. Many people relate to sacred sites, and this one contains the heart of the American story, with all its painful contradictions. Of course, all visitors who arrive at the site will be served through the interpretive program, but it is important to identify on which audiences to focus first in the planning, so that programs and facilities can be shaped around their needs. Defining the targeted audiences for the immediate future is significant in determining and focusing the types and, ultimately, the effectiveness of interpretive programming and development.

As interpretive facilities are developed, the audiences targeted initially for interpretive programming and community outreach are:

- African Americans and the larger African descendant community
- Educators and students of all ages
- New York City metropolitan area population
- Tourists, business travelers to Manhattan, and tourism industry employees
- Opinion leaders in the community, media, and politics

## Developing a Plan of Action

The next step in the planning process identifies what audiences can expect to experience via on- and off-site interpretive programming, and it matches the tool to the task, i.e., selects the best interpretive technique to carry out

each identified task.

Many discussions and listening sessions with staff, scholars, descendant community representatives, and attendees at public forums resulted in eight essential components of a successful interpretive program for the African Burial Ground. By describing the desired audience experiences for each of these essential components, planners can also identify the best interpretive media and actions to achieve the desired results.

## Essential Components of Interpretive Programming for the African Burial Ground

Considering the factors identified in the previous pages, the essential components of a well-rounded interpretive program for the African Burial Ground are identified here.

### 1. Building Awareness of the African Burial Ground and Providing Pre-Arrival Information

Audiences must be informed of the existence of the burial ground, discover what it is, and learn about related public programming.

### 2. On-site Orientation and Accessibility

As audiences arrive on-site, visiting options must be explained clearly. Access for all must be available and convenient.

### 3. Inspiration, Reflection, Commemoration, and Celebration

The African Burial Ground will be a place of pilgrimage and spirituality, a quiet environment for reflection, and a respectful venue for appropriate ceremony and celebration of cultural practices associated with the burial ground and the culture of those buried there, as well as their descendant communities.

The burial ground will explore meaning as well as facts.

### 4. Telling the Stories

The interpretive themes identified in this plan will help audiences understand the significance of the burial ground. Interpretive



## The African Burial Ground and related historic sites







media and programming will first introduce and then explore significance.

Media and programming will accommodate different learning styles, including hands-on participation in discovery.

Media and programming will connect stories to physical settings, such as the site of reinterment, the larger footprint of the burial ground, and the “sites of life,” i.e., the African homelands, the Caribbean, and the New York homes and work sites of the early generations of Africans and African descendants.

### **5. Education Programs**

Educators will be encouraged to use the burial ground as a tool for learning and teaching through a carefully planned educational program for many grade levels and for traditional and nontraditional learners.

### **6. Departure and Post-Visit**

Interpretive media and programming will elicit audience reaction, challenge audiences to rethink the present based on new knowledge of the past, and encourage post-visit learning and activism.

### **7. Outreach to Audiences**

Outreach programming will reinforce the continuing relevance of the stories associated with the burial ground, particularly the continuing struggle for human rights and the role played by sacred places and sites of conscience in the twenty-first century.

A variety of off-site programming (historical, cultural, and spiritual) will sustain existing connections with community and descendant groups and forge new ties.

### **8. Information Source**

The African Burial Ground management will ensure an accessible repository for related research and information.

Strategies must be designed to disseminate the findings of continuing research and investigation and to accommodate continued input from descendant and academic communities.

## **Component 1: Building Awareness of the African Burial Ground and Providing Pre-Arrival Information**

Audiences will be informed of the existence of the burial ground, discover what it is, and learn about related public programming.

### **Desired Audience Experiences**

Interpretive programming will build awareness and provide information before audiences arrive at the site, in order to:

- Establish the African Burial Ground as an important destination.
- Build audience anticipation.
- Explain that other sites have interpretive links to the story.
- Provide clear directions to the site and related venues.

### **Recommended Actions**

- Develop plan to promote the African Burial Ground.
- Heighten visibility and awareness of the site along the streets surrounding the burial ground.
- Keep opinion leaders and the tourist industry informed and up-to-date on developments at the site.
- Prepare a plan to attract new audiences by making on-site visits easier.

## **Component 2: On-Site Orientation and Accessibility**

As audiences arrive on-site, visiting and activity options must be explained clearly. Access must be available and convenient, ensuring that the greatest number of visitors, regardless of ability, can participate in or benefit from programs.



### **Desired Audience Experiences**

Interpretive programming will help meet orientation and accessibility needs in the following ways:

- Facilitate self-directed interaction with the site where appropriate, and provide personal guidance when necessary.
- Facilitate multiple “entries” into the African Burial Ground stories and not insist on a single way to see and understand the site.
- Explain that visitor activities should be respectful of the site, as, for example, the memorial site, considered sacred, should be treated with reverence.
- Offer choices that acknowledge and respect cultural and experiential differences.
- Help audiences grasp the physical size and the numerical scope of the burial ground (about seven acres and ten to twenty thousand persons).
- Provide all audiences with access to interpretive materials.

### **Recommended Actions**

- Provide on-site orientation through signs, brochures, and/or a contact station.
- Mark the size and scope of the historical burial ground and relate it to other Manhattan sites in order to tell the larger story.
- Offer orientation at satellite sites. Identify all portals of entry to the perimeter of the burial ground, and introduce audiences to themes, facilities, and programs of the African Burial Ground.
- Ensure accessibility, i.e., make it possible for the greatest number of people, regardless of ability, to participate in or benefit from programs or activities.

## **Component 3: Inspiration, Reflection, Commemoration, and Celebration**

The African Burial Ground will be a place of pilgrimage and spirituality, a quiet environment for reflection, and a respectful venue for appropriate ceremony and celebration of cultural practices associated with the burial ground and the culture of those buried there, as well as their descendant communities. Programming will explore meaning as well as facts.

### **Desired Audience Experiences**

Interpretive programming will provide opportunities for inspiration, reflection, commemoration and celebration to:

- Honor and encourage a spirit of Sankofa, a West African Akan concept and symbol that exhorts us to “learn from the past to prepare for the future.”
- Acknowledge the emotions that accompany a thorough telling of the story.
- Encourage a sense of pride in the role played by all who helped build New York City, and honor those who endured the harsh realities of discrimination and inhumanity.
- Facilitate visitors’ need to celebrate or leave remembrances.
- Encourage audiences to record their reflections.
- Provide visitors with access to trained staff who are able to personalize the stories associated with the burial ground.
- Encourage the celebration of cultural practices linked to the burial ground.
- Use all appropriate means of cultural and artistic expression—including storytelling, oral history, music, and dance—to enliven and advance the burial ground stories, exploring connections between seven-



teenth- and eighteenth-century life and today's culture.

#### Recommended Actions

- Anticipate and prepare for strong emotions; treat deeply private ones (such as crying) with respect. Promote celebratory and commemorative activities.
- Use the planned memorial as the place for reflection on and commemoration of the sacred nature of the site.
- Encourage art, music, dance, and poetry as artistic expressions of the enduring meaning of the site.
- Develop a policy on remembrances left at the site.
- Identify and develop on- and off-site venues for a regular schedule of celebrations and special events, and explore closing Duane and Elk Streets for additional events space.

### Component 4: Telling the Stories

The themes identified in this plan will help audiences understand the significance of the African Burial Ground. Interpretive media and programming will first introduce and then explore significance. It will connect stories to physical settings (the site of reinterment, the larger footprint of the burial ground, and the “sites of life,” i.e., the African homelands, the Caribbean, and the New York homes and work sites of the early generations of Africans and African Americans).

#### Desired Audience Experiences

Interpretive programming will:

- Help audiences grasp the daily struggle of enslaved peoples for human rights and the inhumanity and brutality they endured.
- Help to personalize and broaden the view of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Africans in New York by exploring the

overlapping worlds in which they lived, not only their place of burial.

- Encourage audiences to explore African Burial Ground stories from multiple personal or cultural perspectives.
- Help visitors to become transported from their contemporary reality back in time, by using media such as film.
- Present visual images of New York City over time, and consider how the lives of New York City's Africans and African Americans influenced and were influenced by the changes that occurred in the city.
- Accommodate different learning styles.
- Introduce audiences, in ways that are culturally and spiritually appropriate, to the physical evidence and artifacts rediscovered in the burial ground, thereby satisfying their desire to see “real” things.
- Explore how we came to know what we know about the historical record and the science related to the burial ground to help audiences see and understand what has been discovered there.
- Help audiences learn about recent efforts to preserve, memorialize, and interpret the burial ground, through stories of organizational and individual activists.

#### Recommended Actions

Provide context for the stories of the African Burial Ground.

- Ensure flexibility in future programming, avoiding one-method-fits-all approaches to content or programming and operational logistics.
- Invite personal discovery and authentic experiences.



- Encourage personal exploration.

## Component 5: Education Programs

Educators will be encouraged to use the African Burial Ground as a tool for teaching and learning through a carefully planned educational program for many grade levels and for traditional and nontraditional learners.

### Desired Audience Experiences

Interpretive programming will develop and present educational programs to:

- Encourage participation by a wide range of public, private, and home school students and teachers. Educators will be partners in development, dissemination, and use of curricular materials.
- Encourage inclusion of the burial ground in programs of life-long learning and education.
- Actively seek opportunities to cooperate with others engaged in educational efforts.
- Facilitate easy use by educators.
- Provide information to educators interested in integrating the site's story into their own programs and lessons.

### Recommended Actions

- Make programming and design decisions about types and levels of offerings, on- and/or off-site delivery, and so forth.

## Component 6: Departure and Post-Visit

Interpretive programming will be designed to challenge audiences to rethink the present, using new knowledge of the past. It will trigger a process of post-visit learning and activism. On- and off-site visitors will be encouraged, via some form of capstone experience, to consider the burial ground's meaning to them and to define its relevance to their lives and future.

### Desired Audience Experiences

Departure and post-visit experiences will be facilitated by interpretive programming to:

- Provide links to other sites that are geographically nearby.
- Provide a capstone experience that summarizes and acknowledges the harsh realities of enslavement, recognizes the ongoing struggle for human rights, and facilitates discussion of controversial subjects related to the injustices associated with the African Burial Ground (from the time of first burial to the present).
- Encourage audiences to offer feedback about the connections that they felt with the site and its stories.
- Encourage contributions of time and money, not only to the African Burial Ground, but also to similar places.
- Provide opportunities for audiences to acquire reading materials or reminders of the site and its significance.
- Encourage return visits and assistance in spreading information about the site.

### Recommended Actions

- Connect to contemporary issues and take advantage of the direct relationships between them and many of the burial ground's primary stories.
- Extend and expand the interpretive experience by providing visitors with mementos, books, and audiovisual materials directly related to the site.
- Increase support through donations, volunteerism, and fund-raising.
- Provide staff time and opportunities for learning and discussing antecedents of contemporary issues.



## Component 7: Outreach to Audiences—Taking the Story to the Community

Outreach programming will seek and nurture a wider audience with the message of the continuing relevance of stories associated with the burial ground, particularly the continuing struggle for human rights and the role played by sacred places and sites of conscience in the twenty-first century.

### Desired Audience Experiences

Interpretive programming will conduct outreach into the community to:

- Actively disseminate the stories to communities around metropolitan New York.
- Help community audiences explore the contemporary relevance of the site.
- Build community support for the burial ground.
- Nurture pride in cultural practices linked to the burial ground.
- Encourage discussion within and among varied groups.
- Raise awareness of the role that sacred sites and sites of conscience can play in contemporary life.
- Sustain and expand a local, national, and international network of supporters.
- Respond to inquiries for information.
- Use appropriate on- and off-site symposia, conferences, public celebrations, and perhaps daily events to engage a variety of audiences in the stories and themes.

### Recommended Actions

- Reach out to the community with programs, partner with others, and link storylines.

## Component 8: Information Source

The African Burial Ground will support access for staff, scholars, and the general public to research and information. Programming will be designed to disseminate the findings of continuing research and investigation.

### Desired Audience Experiences

Interpretive programming will disseminate current and newly developing information to:

- Provide information to educators.
- Respond to inquiries for information.
- Use appropriate on- and off-site symposia, conferences, public celebrations, and daily events to share the burial ground story with a variety of audiences.

### Recommended Actions

- Incorporate and disseminate additional scholarship through means such as newsletters, changing exhibits, and so forth.
- Make technical information accessible to the public.
- Serve as a model for sacred sites.

## Staffing

This section identifies the staffing needed to interpret the African Burial Ground. It outlines staffing associated with the management options presented.

- Chief of Interpretation and Education: responsible for the overall interpretive program, site operations, and supervision of employees.
- Education Specialist: responsible for analysis and application of standards of learning in the three-state metropolitan area (New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut), partnerships with school districts, education program development, teacher workshops, and supervision of educators.





- Interpretive Support Services: responsible for developing and updating interpretive media (site bulletins, videos, trail brochures, waysides [outdoor exhibit panels] area way-finding signage, etc.), training staff, writing site newsletter, developing web site, coordinating volunteer program, and writing grants.
- Interpreters and Educators: Depending on the alternative chosen and the size and mix of staff, it is anticipated that there will be a strong outreach component and that a percentage of interpreters and educators will be off-site conducting programs.
  - Interpreters will staff interpretive facilities, memorial, and environs, providing orientation, programs, and walking tours for a wide range of visitors.
  - Educators specialize in presentations for organized school audiences that comply with established standards of learning. Most work will be done off-site.
- An ongoing relationship with scholars requires coordination to produce training materials and/or to help train staff in subject matter.
- Educational programming requires tailoring to the three-state metropolitan area (New York, New Jersey, Connecticut) and sometimes to local standards of learning.
- There is a real need for staff to develop three distinct types of skills: interpretation, delivery, and facilitation.

Topics to be addressed through training should include and not be limited to:

#### **Staff And Volunteer Training**

To ensure quality control and appropriateness, site managers should be involved with the planning, approval, training, monitoring, and evaluation of all interpretive services provided on behalf of the African Burial Ground.

Training should be comprehensive, active, ongoing, and planned in advance, in order to address new scholarship and freshen skills, strengthen employees' content knowledge, and provide solid grounding in interpretation philosophy, techniques, and presentation skills. Content training alone will not be adequate to develop staff performance.

Several actions identified earlier have time implications for staffing and training.

- Continuing use of volunteers necessitates defining future volunteer duties, recruiting, training, and periodic evaluation.
- Content: information about subject matter (scientific discoveries, historical periods, etc.)
- Supervision: course on basic supervisory skills and annual refresher courses
- Coaching and evaluating: supervisors coach staff to improve individual performance
- Interpretation philosophy: information about communication philosophy, understanding and analysis of various interpretive approaches and media
- Delivery, presentation, and interpretation skills; methods for delivering talks, tours, informal interpretation, organizing material; voice volume and projection, etc.
- Dealing with controversial and emotionally laden subjects and issues, such as race, religion, politics, economics, and others.
- Dealing with contemporary and historical issues, connecting the past with present-day relevance
- Facilitating skills for leading discussions.
- Volunteer coordination: how to administer a volunteer program



- Volunteer training: how to provide orientation, create programs, use interpretive methods, subject matter information, etc.
- Effective community outreach methods and approaches, and working with partners

## Research Needed to Support Interpretation

This section identifies additional research required to fully support the interpretive programming being recommended, as well as research that may be completed but is not currently readily accessible to interpretive staff and the public. In some cases more study is needed; in others, existing information must be located and shared.

Research needs can be completely identified only after staff begin to develop programs and field questions from visitors. Planning discussions to date, however, have already identified several broad research categories that should be assessed to determine recently completed research or topics where very little or no research exists.

Additional information on the following topics is needed (but not limited to):

- History of colonial New York City, particularly the history of slavery and the enslaved
- Everyday life of the people, both African American and European American, for comparison purposes
- Science, particularly related to remains (DNA, bioskeletal analysis, and anthropology related to groups identified at the burial ground)
- Genealogy, specifically information that might help descendants learn about their ancestors (DNA could play a role here as well).

## Library and Reference Needs

A developed, working staff library with readi-

ly accessible reference materials is critical to the successful implementation of the recommendations contained in this plan. It must be kept up to date so that staff can incorporate the findings of continuing research as it becomes available. Repositories of primary source materials and research will be housed elsewhere.

## Collection Needs

All human remains and objects uncovered during archaeological excavation were reinterred at the African Burial Ground in October 2003. The burial ground will not have a traditional museum collection of historical artifacts, but it will acquire and interpret certain types of materials, including reproductions and contemporary expressions of respect for the site.

As the interpretive program comes into focus, some specific three-dimensional items may be needed to produce engaging exhibits and presentations. As the site's program of special and commemorative events expands, special items may be borrowed for temporary display.

## Potential Partner Involvement

There are exciting possibilities for partnerships between the African Burial Ground and other local, national, and international institutions and organizations. These partnerships may take many forms—formal or informal, short- or long-term—but they should be outlined in writing and geared to respond to specific mutual needs.

Like all relationships, partnerships must be nurtured. They are commitments that demand significant amounts of time, work, and communication, and they should not be entered lightly. A few carefully selected relationships based on common goals and purposes are generally preferable and, in the long run, more feasible than a large volume of partnerships.

Specific partnership opportunities will become concrete when the management alternative is selected.



## Interpretive Programming, Facilities, and Operations Scenarios

Although there are many unknowns associated with the future of the African Burial Ground, several possible scenarios can be projected, based on the eight essential components of interpretive programming at the African Burial Ground and the actions identified to make those components a reality.

These scenarios will focus only on interpretive programming and how and where the variety of recommendations contained in this plan might be delivered (space/facilities and interpretive media). The scenarios are examples, written to help conceptualize the interpretive possibilities based on earlier discussions of themes, challenges, and desired visitor experiences outlined here in Chapter 7. They are structured around the alternatives described in Chapter 6.

### Interpretation Scenario 1 for Alternatives A and B

#### On-Site Interpretive Center Inside 290 Broadway

Directional signs at key points in city to guide visitors to burial ground from various locations.

Directional signs on and inside 290 Broadway.

Separate entrance to interpretive center from Duane Street.

Limited orientation and welcoming inside or near interpretive center.

Modest exhibits in interpretive center that introduce all primary themes, but focus mainly on stories directly associated with the site, including its history, rediscovery, archaeology, and science.

Context and connections to contemporary issues suggested in on-site exhibits, but fully developed at partner facilities, in publications, on web site, in audiovisual programming, and in educational programs.

Small sales area for additional reading materials.

Memorial provides contemplative space and limited commemorative space.

Guided and self-guided tours, landscaping, and signs that provide links to other Manhattan sites.

Extent of approximately seven-acre burial ground marked in some way.

Off-site educational programs offered to schools.

Artwork at 290 Broadway continues to remind on-site visitors of burial ground and commemorate its stories.

Space elsewhere in 290 Broadway (i.e., in addition to the 2000-square-foot interpretive center) provides room for audiovisual programming for groups; larger cultural or commemorative programs; seminars, conferences and workshops; multipurpose activity and educational space; restrooms; general storage; library and research; and staff administrative space.

Web site available to orient, provide context, and reinforce worldwide connections; includes calendar of events and provides web-based sales outlet for books and mementos.



## Interpretation Scenario 2 for Alternative C

### Hub Facility at 290 Broadway for Outreach Programming

Directional signs at key points in city to guide visitors to site from various locations.

Directional signs on and inside 290 Broadway.

Modest introductory exhibit inside 290 Broadway.

Expanded outreach to recruit new interpretive partners and develop extensive calendar of interpretive programming at community and partner venues.

Staff working at venues throughout Manhattan, carrying burial ground stories to new audiences.

Working with partners, staff develops and disseminates educational materials from 290 Broadway and coordinates on- and off-

site use of burial ground for educational purposes.

Staff administers mail-order sales operation focused on materials related to the African Burial Ground.

Memorial provides contemplative space and limited commemoration space.

Guided and self-guided tours, landscaping, etc. provide links to original boundaries of burial ground beyond memorial and to other Manhattan sites.

Artwork in 290 Broadway continues to commemorate burial ground stories.

Extent of approximately seven-acre burial ground marked in some way.

Web site available to orient, provide context, and reinforce worldwide connections; includes calendar of events and web-based sales operation.

## Interpretation Scenario 3 for Alternative D

### On-Site Educational Facility at 290 Broadway with Additional Interpretive Center Nearby

Directional signs at key points in city to guide visitors to site from various points.

Directional signs on and inside 290 Broadway.

Educational laboratory with support facilities (storage, restrooms, etc.) inside 290 Broadway.

Interpretive exhibits that introduce and explore all primary themes installed in facility outside 290 Broadway, supplemented by new publications (free and sales), revised web site, and new audiovisual programming.

Interpretive facility includes space for entry, orientation, and welcoming; audiovisual programming for groups; larger cultural or commemorative programs; seminars, conferences, and workshops; restrooms, general storage, library and research; and administration.

Additional reading materials on sale in interpretive center.

Memorial provides contemplative space and limited commemorative space.

Guided and self-guided tours, landscaping, and signs provide links to burial ground beyond 290 Broadway and to other Manhattan sites.

Extent of approximately seven-acre burial ground marked in some way.

Expanded outreach recruits new interpretive partners and develops an extensive calendar of interpretive programming at community venues.

Artwork in 290 Broadway continues to commemorate burial ground stories.

Web site orients, provides context, worldwide connections, calendar of events, web-based sales.



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### Documents

- National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for the African Burial Ground, November 1992
- Federal Steering Committee Recommendations for the African Burial Ground, 1993
- Planning documents produced by IDI for Interpretive Center design
- U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, St Louis District Mandatory Center of Expertise for the Curation and Management of Archaeological Collections: African Burial Ground Curation Management Plan and Recommendations, July 2004





### **Brochures**

#### *Brochures Produced for 290 Broadway*

- “The African Burial Ground”
- “Africa Rising”
- “America Song”
- “The New Ring Shout”
- “Renewal”
- “The Roger Brown Mosaic”
- “Unearthed”

#### *Brochures Produced by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation*

- “The New York African Burial Ground Project”

#### *Brochures Produced by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture:*

- “Rites of Ancestral Return: Commemorating the Colonial African Heritage”

### **Newsletters**

- *Newsletter of the African Burial Ground & Five Points Archaeological Projects, 1993-2004*

### **Interview:**

*Return to the African Burial Ground*, November 20, 2003, an interview with Michael L. Blakey

### **Public Meetings and Public Response Forms**

- Public survey for the African Burial Ground Interpretive Center, 1998
- Public meetings and forums, spring and summer, 2004

### **Visitor Experience Workshops**

- Summer 2004, New York City (2)

### **Resource Roundtable**

- November 2004, Philadelphia

### **Web Sites**

- [www.africanburialground.gov](http://www.africanburialground.gov)
- [www.lowermanhattan.info/history/did\\_youknow/did\\_you\\_know\\_that\\_68309.asp](http://www.lowermanhattan.info/history/did_youknow/did_you_know_that_68309.asp)
- [www.doi.gov/partnerships](http://www.doi.gov/partnerships)

## NOTES