



Chapter 5  
MISSION GOALS



**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.

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

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



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.