



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, archaeology, 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



African American historic sites in the vicinity of the African Burial Ground

- Fort Amsterdam 1**
- Broadway 2**
- Fraunces' Tavern 3**
- Downing's Oyster House 4**
- The Wall 5**
- Wall Street Slave Market 6**
- 1712 Slave Revolt 7**
- African Free School 8**
- St. Peter's Church 9**
- Dr. James McCune Smith 10**
- Pinkster Celebration 11**
- 1741 Executions 12**
- Road To Harlem 13**
- 1863 Draft Riots 14**
- Land of the Blacks 15**
- African Burial Ground 16**
- Frederick Douglass 17**
- Abyssinian Baptist Church 18**
- Mother AME Zion Church 19**
- Ruggles' Boarding House 20**



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.
- 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.