

African Burial Ground National Monument General Management Plan

Newsletter 1 • Spring 2009

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Letter From the Superintendent

Dear Friend of the African Burial Ground National Monument,

What will visitors learn, feel, and experience when they visit the African Burial Ground in 2019, or 2029? Will this unique National Park Service site in downtown Manhattan realize its full potential as a site of conscience that educates and inspires succeeding generations of visitors?

These are important questions. And as we embark on developing a plan for the future of the African Burial Ground, we would like you to help us begin to answer them.

As a unit of the National Park System, the African Burial Ground is required to draft a General Management Plan (GMP). A GMP is a blueprint intended to guide the National Monument for 15 to 20 years. It deals with facilities, resource management, visitor experience, education, and potential partnerships. It tries to anticipate our audiences and their needs, as well as find ways to engage new communities of interest so that all facets of society will understand and appreciate the importance of the African Burial Ground.

The African Burial Ground, unlike most other National Park Service (NPS) sites that have larger footprints and resources, is a place that tells the story of a people, their struggle for freedom, and their immeasurable contributions to a city and a nation. How we will tell that story over the long term is an integral part of providing increased public knowledge and why we are reaching out to you.

Please accept my personal invitation to participate in an Open House for the project on June 9, 10 and 11 at different locations throughout the City.

We want to update you on some new developments at the African Burial Ground, such as the opening of the new visitor center in early 2010, but more importantly, we want to hear from you and get your thoughts as we develop a long-term plan for the National Monument.

Thank you in advance for your participation. We look forward to seeing you.

Tara D. Morrison, Superintendent



OPEN HOUSE

Tuesday, June 9, 2009 – 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Brown Memorial Baptist Church, 484 Washington Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

SUBWAY: Take the “C” train to Clinton-Washington and walk one block. Church is on corner of Gates and Washington.

Wednesday, June 10, 2009 – 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm

**Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change,
200-214 West 135th Street, New York, NY**

SUBWAY: Take the “2”, “3” trains to 135th Street and walk one block west to Adam Clayton Powell Blvd, cross the Blvd and school will be on your left. **OR** Take “B”, or “C” Trains to 135th Street and walk two blocks east to Adam Clayton Powell Blvd. School will be on your right

Thursday, June 11, 2009 – 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm

290 Broadway, 30th Floor, New York, NY.

Please bring passport or photo ID for entry.

SUBWAY: “A”, “C”, trains to Chambers Street, turn right on Chambers Street, then left on Broadway and building will be on right. **OR** “1”, “2” trains to Chambers Street, turn left on Chambers Street, and then left on Broadway and building will be on the right.

Join us at one of these Open Houses for an informal opportunity to meet our planning team, get more information about the African Burial Ground and to share your ideas and comments.

Establishment of the National Monument

Located in Lower Manhattan, the African Burial Ground contains the remains of an estimated 15,000 Africans who were banned from being buried within the New York City limits in the 17th and 18th centuries. The previously forgotten site underscores the neglected history of slavery and the contributions made by Africans in New York to the building of early America. The African Burial Ground was unearthed in 1991 during pre-construction testing for a federal office building at Broadway and Duane Streets. Significant protest from the African descendant community and others resulted in community involvement with decisions about how to proceed with the project. Archeologists exhumed 419 remains and scores of artifacts for study and subsequent re-internment. The site was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1993. After a decade of scientific research organized and directed by Howard University, the remains and funerary objects were reburied on October 4, 2003.



In order to determine the best long-term management option for the African Burial Ground, the NPS conducted a

planning process on behalf of the General Services Administration (GSA) that resulted in the report *Draft Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground*. Many of you participated in that effort. The report led to a Presidential Proclamation in 2006 establishing the African Burial Ground National Monument and transferred management of the 0.34 acre section of the burial ground from GSA to the NPS. The Presidential Proclamation included a requirement that a General Management Plan be prepared for the African Burial Ground National Monument.

The forthcoming GMP will use the information learned from the *Draft Management Recommendations for the African Burial Ground* as a springboard. We will review what we heard and learned from that experience, seek your advice for improving our interpretive and educational efforts and, together, chart a sustainable and exciting future for the African Burial Ground National Monument.

Getting Involved **Now** with the GMP

Ideas, expectations and concerns about the future of the NPS site are expressed by interested individuals, organizations and agencies and recorded at the beginning of a GMP. Some of the topics that we are interested in hearing from you about are:

- Methods for protecting the entire African Burial Ground.
- Ways that the African Burial Ground can remain a site of international importance without negatively impacting

its physical site and surroundings.

- Kinds of engaging, educational and exciting experiences that should be available to visitors of all ages and backgrounds.
- Best ways to show the African Burial Ground's significance and meanings to visitors unable to physically visit to the site.
- Local, national and global communities, organizations, businesses and civic groups that



might be interested in partnering with African Burial Ground staff.

- Ideas for how the African Burial Ground could become a better local community partner.

We look forward to hearing from you and welcome other ideas that you believe the plan should address. Suggestions and comments will be collected at the Open Houses, through the website, and by sending a comment form to the National Monument's address on page four.

Other ways to keep involved with the GMP include:

- Stay connected to the project by reviewing information on the website <http://www.nps.gov/afbg>, where you can also sign up for event alerts and more.
- Attend Open Houses and other African Burial Ground events.
- Share your ideas, questions and comments.
- Encourage your neighbors and friends to visit the African Burial Ground and to also become involved.

THE AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN:

Building on the Past, Envisioning the Future

The foundation for decision making in all units of the National Park Service comes from their GMP. A GMP lays out a vision for the site and provides guidance for management over the next 15-20 years. General management planning offers an open, structured decision making process that encourages and considers ideas and comments from many different people and groups. These ideas and comments are matched with

scholarly and scientific information and analysis. The GMP must also comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This means that impacts to the social, cultural and natural environments surrounding the site will be taken into consideration. Several possible visions for the future of the site (called alternatives) will be developed and analyzed before a preferred direction is selected.

Happenings at the African Burial Ground National Monument

It's been a busy year and a half at the African Burial Ground, and the next 18 months promise to be even more so. Here are some accomplishments and others coming soon:

Recognizing Preservation Efforts

Last year, the African Burial Ground was honored by winning the nation's highest award for historic preservation achievement, the *Preserve America Presidential Award 2008*. (<http://www.preserveamerica.gov/news-08paawards.html>). We are grateful that efforts to preserve the burial ground have not gone unnoticed by those at the highest levels of government.

Preparations are currently under way for the transfer of the African Burial Ground archival collection from the General Services Administration to the National Park Service on October 1 of this year. We look forward to taking responsibility for the collection as it represents important ways to further foster understanding and reflection about this sacred place.

Launching the New Visitor Center

On the horizon is the much anticipated new visitor center, currently under construction in the first floor of the Ted Weiss Federal Building at 290 Broadway. This new center will feature a 20-minute film and exhibits that explore the history of life in Africa, as well as life of Africans in early New Amsterdam/New York. Other exhibits will highlight the archeological



Reaching Out to Students and Teachers

This year, a project to connect young people to the African Burial Ground in conjunction with the upcoming release of Ken Burns' new documentary, "*The National Parks: America's Best Idea*", was awarded a grant from the National Park Foundation. Opportunities to connect youth to the National Monument is a priority for us, and grant programs enable us to reach a younger and more diverse audience. The new visitor center will enable us to offer educational programs for school and youth groups in a single location.

During the summer, the African Burial Ground is hosting a Teachers Institute. If you're an educator and want to learn more about this opportunity, go to www.nps.gov/afbg/forteachers/learning-from-the-past-lessons-from-new-york-city-african-burial-ground.htm.

and skeletal biology research, and the early efforts to preserve the burial ground following its rediscovery. The new center is expected to open in early 2010.

Outreach Events

In addition to welcoming friends and visitors to the site, we also look for opportunities to go out and make new friends. Some of our outreach efforts this year included participating in the South Africa Day Freedom Festival on

May 2 in Brooklyn's Cuyler Gore Park, and this July we will be exhibiting at the NAACP Centennial Convention here in New York City.

We are happy to announce the current visitor center will be open one Saturday each month throughout the summer of 2009. For these dates and other updates about what is happening at the African Burial Ground, please visit us at www.nps.gov/afbg.

Planning Process for the General Management Plan

ESTIMATED TIME FRAME	PLANNING ACTIVITY	WAYS TO BE INVOLVED
Spring 2009	Scoping – identify concerns, expectations, and comments related to the site with the public, government agencies and other stakeholders.	Review newsletter and send us your ideas and concerns. Attend an Open House, learn about the project and voice your ideas and concerns.
Fall/Winter 2009	Develop and Present Preliminary Alternatives – Outline different possible futures for the park and provide opportunities for review and comment by public, partners, government agencies and other stakeholders.	Review newsletter and send us your ideas and concerns. Attend an Open House and comment on the preliminary alternatives.
Spring/Summer 2010	Prepare and Distribute a <i>Draft General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement</i> - Review and comment by public, partners, government agencies and other stakeholders.	Attend an Open House and voice your ideas and concerns. Review the <i>Draft GMP/EIS</i> and provide written comments.
Fall 2010	Revise <i>Draft Plan</i> and Prepare a <i>Final General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement</i>	Review the <i>Final GMP/EIS</i> .
Winter 2010	Implement the Approved Plan – Prepare and issue a “Record of Decision” and implement plan as funding allows.	Work with African Burial Ground NM to implement the plan.



US Department of the Interior
National Park Service
African Burial Ground National Monument
290 Broadway, 1st Floor
New York, NY 10007

FIRST CLASS
US POSTAGE
PAID
BOSTON MA
PERMIT 473

This newsletter is a publication of the National Park Service, African Burial Ground National Monument. For additional information please contact Superintendent, African Burial Ground National Monument, 290 Broadway, 1st Floor, New York, NY 10007; by email at afbg_gmp@nps.gov; or call 212.637.2019. Visit us on the web at www.nps.gov/afbg.