



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: April 2, 2015

PROJECT

Draft Master Plan

U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery
Harewood Road, NW, Rock Creek Church Road, NW and Clermont Drive, NE
Washington, DC

SUBMITTED BY

United States Department of Defense
Department of the Army,

REVIEW AUTHORITY

Advisory
per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(a) and (b)(1)

NCPC FILE NUMBER

MP45/MP304

NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER

12.10(05.00)44121

APPLICANT'S REQUEST

Approval of comments on draft master plan

PROPOSED ACTION

Approve with comments

ACTION ITEM TYPE

Staff Presentation

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Department of the Army submitted a draft Real Property Master Plan for the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery (SAHNC). This is one of the nation's oldest military cemeteries and occupies approximately 16 acres of land adjacent to the north of the Armed Forces Retirement Home in Northwest, Washington, DC. SAHNC conducts on average seven interments per year. The cemetery has over 14,000 gravesites, including many that date back to the Civil War.

KEY INFORMATION

- One of the oldest military cemeteries in the country. It serves the Armed Forces Retirement Home.
 - The cemetery was established in 1861 and has been in use ever since.
 - Currently, there are an average of seven interments per year.
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RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Supports the draft Master Plan for the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery, including the restoration of the historic Montgomery Meigs-designed Superintendent's Lodge which has been significantly altered over time.

Requests that the Army undertake further study to determine historic and archeological resources likely to be affected by the proposed removal of the north/south roadway.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	None
Remaining actions (anticipated)	– approval of Final Master Plan

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03/26/15

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Site

The U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery (SAHNC) is located approximately four miles north of the U.S. Capitol. It is a 16-acre site bounded on the east by North Capitol Street NW/ Clermont Drive NE, on the north by Rock Creek Church Road NW/ Allison Street NE, and on the southwest by Harewood Road NW. SAHNC can be characterized as a mature, serene cemetery environment. The Armed Forces Retirement Home is south of the site, Rock Creek Cemetery is west of it and low density residential development is to the east. Fort Totten Park is a National Park Service property approximately a block to the northeast.

The cemetery slopes downhill from southwest to north with a high point at the intersection of Harewood Road and Rock Creek Church Road, NW. This cemetery is surrounded by a fence and there are only a few structures located on it. These structures are the Superintendent's Lodge, a carriage house, a maintenance contractor building and a committal structure. The only other significant structure located in the cemetery is the Logan Mausoleum, named for Major General John A. Logan.

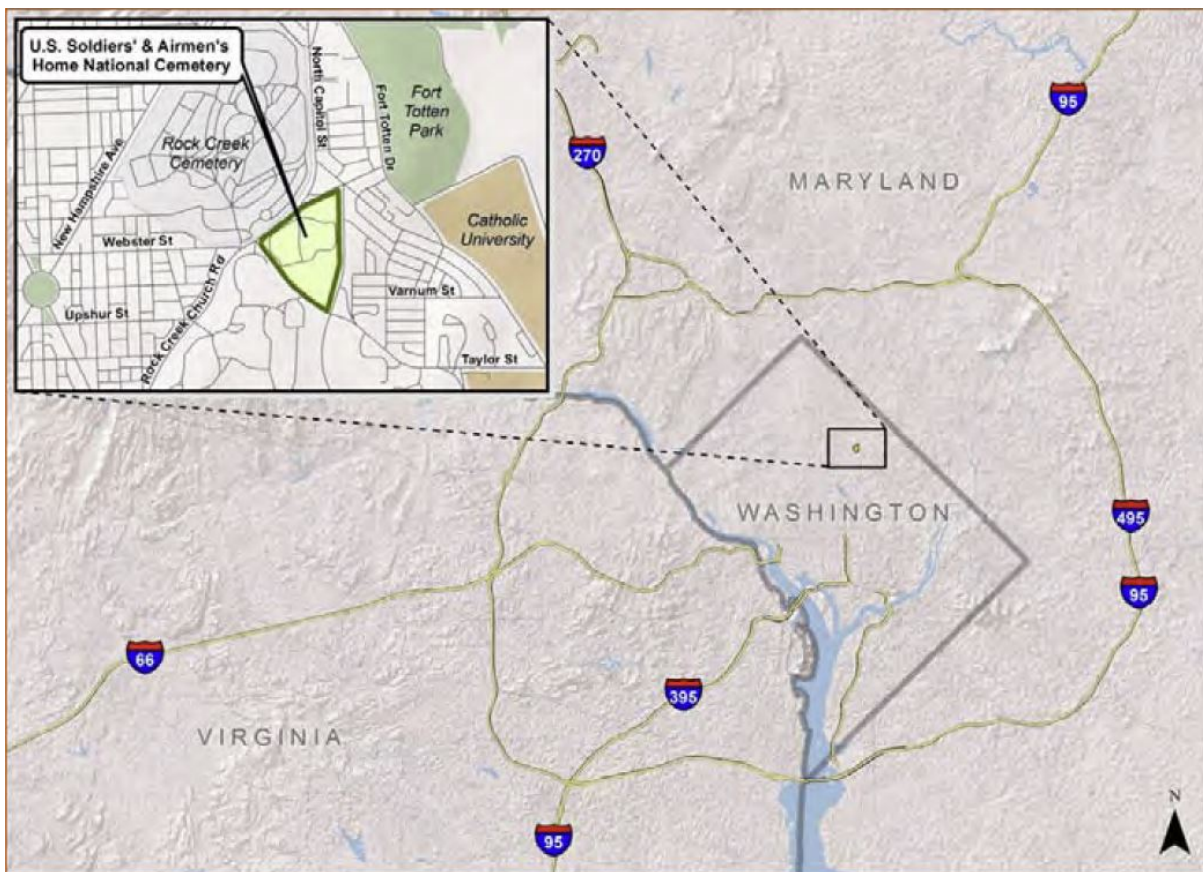


Figure 1: Site Location

Pedestrian access to the cemetery is available at the vehicular entrance next to the Superintendent's Lodge along Harewood Road, NW. There is a ceremonial pedestrian entrance (with a locked gate) at the western corner of the cemetery at Harewood Road and Rock Creek Church Road, NW. This entryway features a ceremonial ornate gateway and flag pole / plaza area.

SAHNC is served by an internal loop road beginning at Harewood Road NW in the vicinity of the Superintendent's Lodge. A connecting roadway runs in a north/south direction through the site and bisects the loop road.



Figure 2: Site with Tree Cover

Background

The cemetery was established in July 1861, three years prior to the establishment of Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. One of the most famous people buried at the SAHNC is Major General John Logan. He was an Illinois politician who rose through the ranks in the Union Army during the Civil War. Following the war, he was a founding member of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a fraternal organization comprised of veterans of the Civil War from the Union Army, Navy and Marines. He was elected its third Commander-in-Chief in 1867. Major General Logan, as head of GAR, establishing Decoration Day, now known as Memorial Day, which he designated as May 30, 1868. Major General Logan also had a long political career holding office in the Illinois state Senate and the U.S. Congress in both the U.S House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. He is interred in the Logan Mausoleum, which is located on the SAHNC site. A statue of him now stands in the middle of Logan Circle, where his house still stands.



Figure 3: Logan Mausoleum

Another structure, the Superintendent's Lodge, is located at the entrance to the cemetery along Harewood Street, NW and contains the Superintendent's Office and was once used as a residence. Brigadier General Montgomery C. Meigs, an important engineer and designer for the Army Corps of Engineers, designed all Superintendents Lodges for National Cemeteries in 1871. The Army notes that the Meigs designed lodge building at SAHNC has been significantly modified over time. There is a carriage house next to the lodge and it is currently only used for storage and public restrooms. The only other structures are the maintenance building and committal structure, which are contemporary structures.



Figure 4: Superintendent's House

Proposal

The Army has proposed this master plan as a coordinated effort in conjunction with the Arlington National Cemetery. This draft master plan does not include a separate long or short term element. There are only seven projects proposed in this draft master plan.

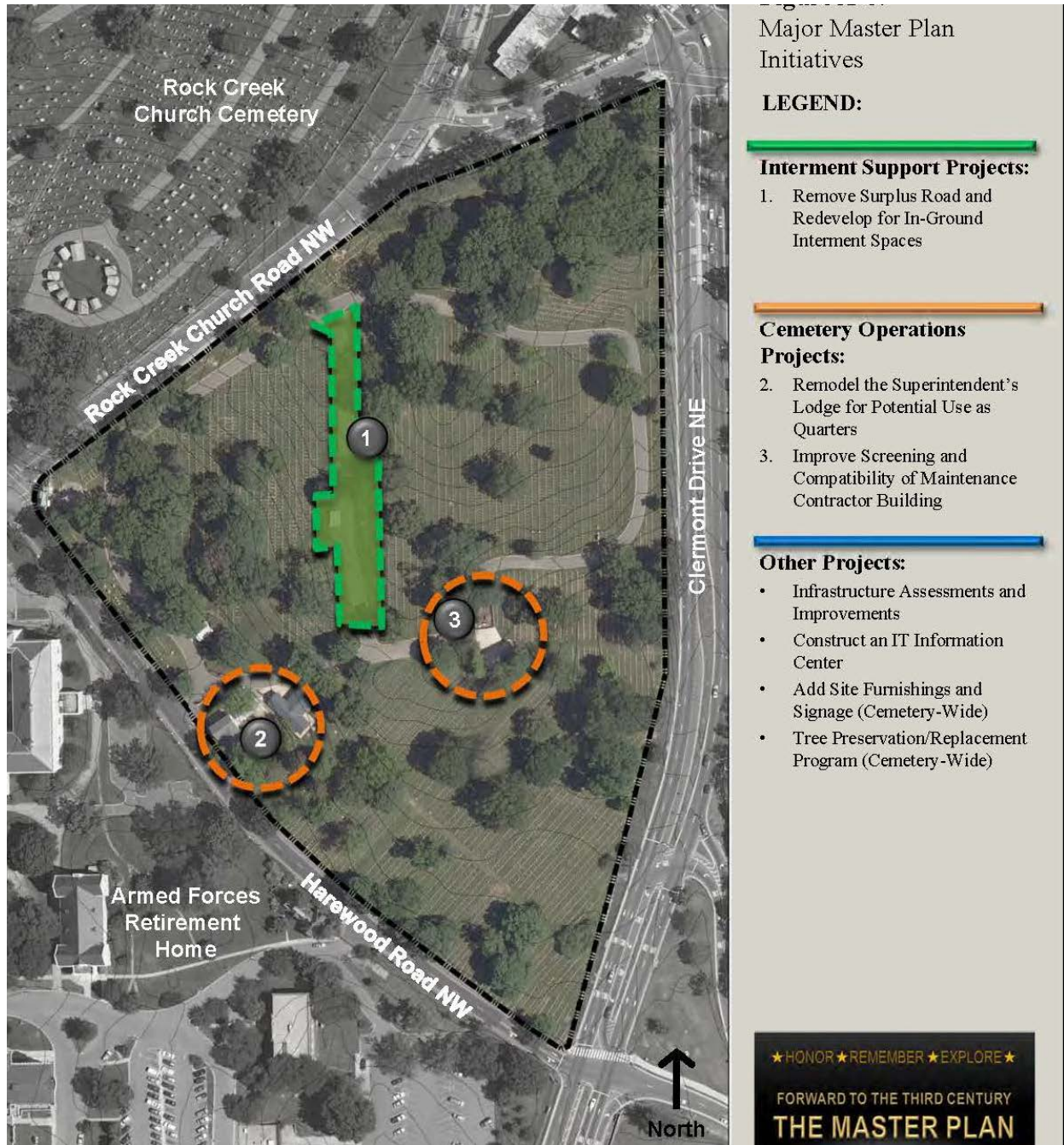


Figure 5: Master Plan Projects

These projects are identified in Figure 5 and are as follows:

1. In-Ground Interment Spaces - Remove the north/south roadway located between Section P/Q and Section L and convert the ground into in-ground interment space to extend the active life of the cemetery. This could create the opportunity for up to 200 - 300 new in-ground interment spaces and is a long-term project given interment capacity is not a pressing issue at this time.
2. Superintendent's Lodge Renovation - Undertake a structural evaluation of the Superintendent's Lodge and carriage house to determine requirements for renovation and use as a living quarters. The original stable building should be remodeled for better storage utilization, better restroom accommodations, and to potentially provide an office/interpretive area.
3. Operations Projects - The fencing around contractor materials should be changed to a stone or brick boundary wall to screen materials instead of the contemporary chain link fencing that is transparent, modern and not in keeping with the architectural style and visual quality of the cemetery.
4. Infrastructure Projects - Undertake an inventory and assessment of current pavement and stormwater utility conditions and develop capital project requirements to bring systems to desired standards. Install conduit and materials necessary to support installation of an IT information kiosk in the cemetery.
5. Site Elements - Signage and seating are currently inconsistent across the cemetery. While there are some benches available, additional resting places would be beneficial. A consistent design vocabulary for signs and seating should be installed across the cemetery (see ANC Design Guide for recommendations).
6. Tree Preservation - Continue to evaluate, monitor, and maintain the health of the existing specimen trees and vegetation and continue with a pro-active tree replacement program in order to maintain the iconic image and identity of the cemetery.
7. Exterior Improvements - Work with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) to repair sidewalks outside the cemetery perimeter that are currently in need of repair.

II. PROJECT ANALYSIS/CONFORMANCE

Executive Summary

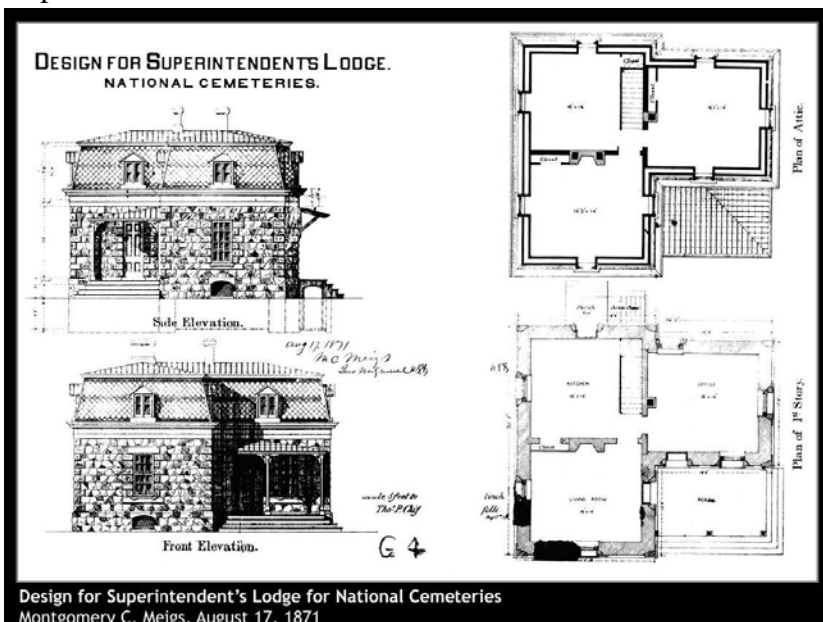
Staff reviewed the draft SAHNC master plan and is generally supportive of the elements being proposed. This plan includes projects to provide additional interment space, renovates the Superintendents Lodge, and improve the visitor experience to and around the site. Therefore, it is the staff recommendation that the Commission **support the draft Master Plan for the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery, including the restoration of the historic Montgomery Meigs-designed Superintendent's Lodge which has been significantly altered over time.**

Analysis

The Army has proposed as part of this draft master plan the following projects: additional interment space, the renovation of the historic Superintendent's Lodge, additional screening around the contractor building; an interpretive kiosk, infrastructure projects, site elements like seating and signage, and tree preservation.

The proposal to remove the north-south roadway from the middle of the cemetery to increase interment space could affect archeological resources below it and the historic landscape as the Army has included the entire cemetery as a contributing element. The Army acknowledges in its environmental assessment that it will need to conduct further research to determine the exact nature of the impacts to historic properties, but it did not expect these to be adverse impacts. As the Army moves forward with this plan, staff **requests that the Army undertake further study to determine historic and archeological resources likely to be affected by the proposed removal of the north/south roadway.** Staff understands that roadway removal project would reduce the overall amount of impervious surface at the cemetery. Staff also understands that the existing loop road will continue to provide access around the cemetery for vehicles regardless if the north / south road is removed. Staff supports the removal of impervious surface area whenever possible on federal land and the north / south roadway does appear to be unnecessary for circulation purposes.

The Army is proposing to renovate this building as a residence and the carriage house for storage, public restrooms and possibly incorporate an interpretive area. Staff supports the renovation of the historic, Meigs-designed Superintendent's Lodge (Figure 6) which the Army states has been significantly altered since it was originally built. The carriage house has also been altered and staff supports the proposal to improve visitor amenities by renovating the restrooms and adding an interpretive area.



Design for Superintendent's Lodge for National Cemeteries
Montgomery C. Meigs, August 17, 1871

Figure 6: Superintendent's Lodge (Montgomery Meigs – 1871)

Staff supports the proposal to add more appropriate screening for an area around the contractor building on the cemetery. This project will improve the area around the building by removing the existing chain link fencing and replace it with a masonry screen wall.

Staff supports all of the other proposed projects as well. Adding an interpretive kiosk to provide information about the cemetery is important as it will allow SAHNC to describe its place in history. Improving infrastructure,

developing a tree replacement program and adding seating and signage will help to provide a better visitor experience for and around the cemetery.

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff determined that the SAHNC draft Master Plan is not inconsistent with policies contained within the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. Staff is supportive of the goals identified in the draft Master Plan that: seek to preserve the key attributes of the site; provide a safe and accessible environment; enhance visitor experience; provide new interment capacity; and use resources wisely.

The SAHNC draft Master Plan is consistent with the policies contained within the Preservation and Historic Features, the Federal Environment and the Visitors Elements including the following:

- Identify and protect its historic properties and disseminate information about their significance to the public.
- Incorporate new trees and vegetation to moderate temperatures, minimize energy consumption and mitigate stormwater runoff.
- Support publicly accessible federal visitor attractions on federal property throughout the region.
- Encourage visitor interest in federal visitor attractions, including less frequently visited attractions in the region, by employing the use of brochures and multimedia materials.

Relevant Federal Facility Master Plan

While this is an old cemetery that has been in existence since 1861, staff was unable to locate any previous master plans on file.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, the Army developed a programmatic environmental assessment (EA) for the draft master plan at the SAHNC. This EA included two alternatives: a no build alternative and the proposed actions. It evaluated the impacts of the proposed actions on the following: land use and sustainability, air quality; noise; topography; soils and geology; water resources; biological resources; cultural resources; socioeconomics; traffic and transportation; utilities; and visual and aesthetic resources.

Based on the analyses contained in the Programmatic EA, the Army stated the proposed action alternative would result in:

- Minor short-term adverse impacts to air quality, noise, soils, water resources, biological resources, socioeconomics, utilities, solid waste, and hazardous waste due to construction.
- Minor long-term adverse impacts to air quality, water resources and hazardous waste due to the increase in interment area to maintain.
- Minor long-term benefits to sustainability, water resources and biological resources due to the decrease in impervious surface area.
- Continued generation of minor amount of solid waste due to interments.

- Long-term benefits to traffic and transportation as well as utilities due to the proposed infrastructure improvements.
- Long-term benefits to the views within the cemetery due to the replacement of the chain-link fence around the contractor's materials storage yard.

The Army determined that although the development of the draft SAHNC Master Plan is an undertaking, its preparation does not have the potential to cause adverse effects on historic properties. The Army has committed to conducting Section 106 evaluation of the projects on a case-by-case basis in the future.

The Army prepared and submitted a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) dated October 30, 2013 to conclude its NEPA responsibility. As this is a master plan, NCPC has an advisory review authority and does not have a separate NEPA responsibility.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The Commission typically requires that applicants conduct Section 106 consultation under the National Historic Preservation Act at the time master plans are submitted for review. However, given the limited nature of the projects included in the master plan, the Army intends to conduct a specific Section 106 review at the time of project design and implementation. This is consistent with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation regulations which allow agencies to conduct non-destructive project planning activities before completing compliance with Section 106. As this is a master plan, NCPC has an advisory review authority and does not have a Section 106 responsibility.

III. CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the proposal at its March 11, 2015 meeting. The Committee forwarded the draft master plan to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were: NCPC; the General Services Administration; the National Park Service; the District of Columbia Office of Planning; the District Department of Transportation; the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts reviewed and approved the SAHNC Master Plan at its January 22, 2015 meeting. In correspondence to the Army, the Commission members "...expressed their support for the principles and goals of the plan that will guide the Army in its major initiatives to create and develop new interment areas; to improve the accommodations for families, staff, and veterans; and to enhance the visitor experience. Considering the limited land available to the cemeteries for future expansion and the ongoing need for gravesites, they recommended minimizing the allocation of land for purposes unrelated to cemetery use."