



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: July 9, 2015

PROJECT

Final Real Property 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

NCPC FILE NUMBER

MP45/MP304

NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER

12.10(05.00)44121

APPLICANT'S REQUEST

Approval of final master plan

SUBMITTED BY

United States Department of Defense
Department of the Army,

PROPOSED ACTION

Approve

REVIEW AUTHORITY

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

ACTION ITEM TYPE

Consent Calendar

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Department of the Army submitted a Final 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 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

- SAHNC primarily 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:

Approves the Final Real Property Master Plan for the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery for use by the Commission as a guide for future reviews of individual site and building projects at the Cemetery.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	April 2015 – comments on draft master plan
Remaining actions (anticipated)	None

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06/26/15

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, and low density residential development is to the east. Fort Totten Park is a National Park Service property located 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.

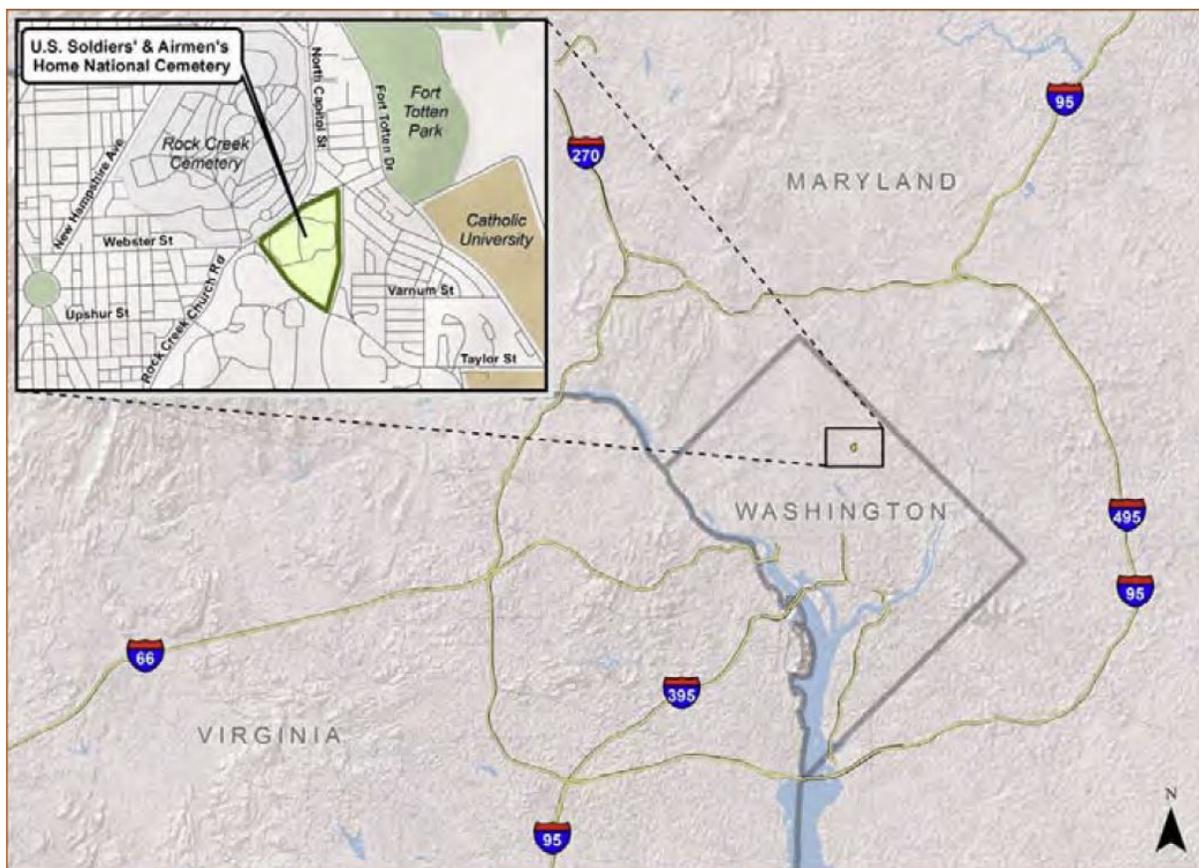


Figure 1: Site Location

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 final master plan does not include a separate long or short term element. There are only seven projects proposed in this master plan.

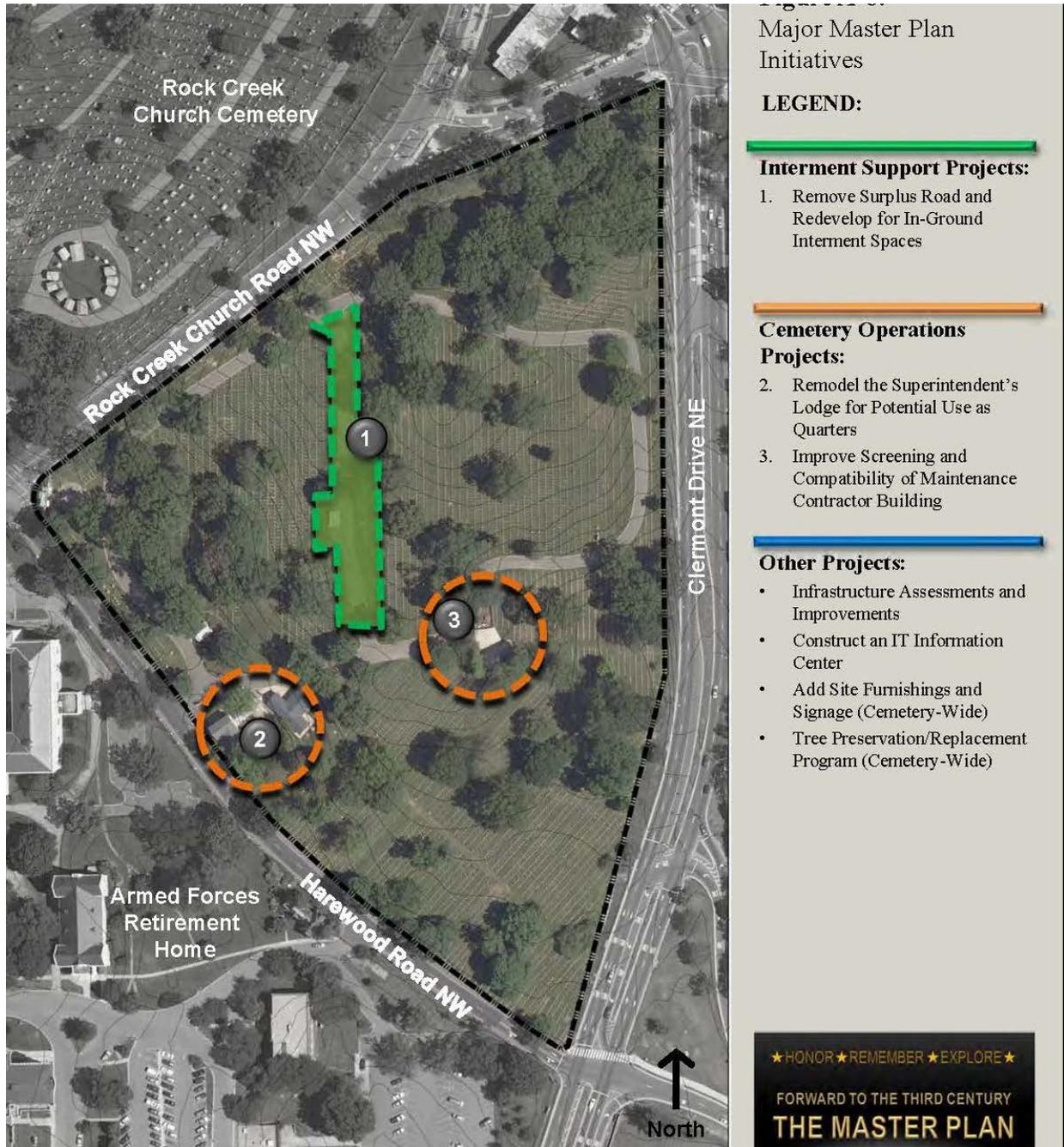


Figure 5: Master Plan Projects

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 is generally supportive of the proposed elements in this master plan. This plan includes goals to provide additional internment space, renovate the Superintendent's Lodge, and improve the visitor experience to and around the site. Therefore, it is the staff recommendation that the Commission **approve the Final Master Plan for the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery for use by the Commission as a guide for future reviews of individual site and building projects at the Cemetery.**

Analysis

The Army has proposed the following projects in the final master plan: new interment space; the historic Superintendent's Lodge renovation; additional screening around the contractor building;

an interpretive kiosk; infrastructure projects; site elements such as seating and signage; and tree preservation. The Commission commented on these projects in April 2015.

The Army has included the entire cemetery as a contributing historic element, therefore the proposal to remove the north-south roadway from the middle of the cemetery could affect archeological resources below it and the surrounding historic landscape. As part of the May 2015 Commission Action on the draft master plan, the Commission requested 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. In a letter dated May 7, 2017, the Army responded that it will undertake further historic and archeological study if the proposed removal of this roadway proceeds. Staff is satisfied with the Army's response.

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff determined that the SAHNC Final 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 Final Master Plan that: seek to preserve the key attributes of the site; provide a safe and accessible environment; enhance visitor experience; provide new internment capacity; and use resources wisely.

The SAHNC Final 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 final 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 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 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."