



CHAPTER ONE

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

For 167 years, Oakland Cemetery has served as the municipal cemetery for the City of Atlanta. During its lifetime, Oakland has gone from a burial ground of necessity to a revered open space notable for its beauty and history. Today, Oakland remains an active cemetery, functions as passive open space, and is a historic site.

Oakland Cemetery is a National Register of Historic Places designated site owned by the City of Atlanta, which consists of publicly maintained areas and private burial lots. Historic Oakland Foundation (HOF) partners with the Department of Parks and Recreation to assist in the stewardship and preservation of Oakland for current and future generations.

HOF oversaw the development of a master plan in 2008. This master plan provided a framework for continued organizational growth and cemetery restoration efforts for the past ten years.

For the past decade HOF and the City of Atlanta have maintained their commitment to preserving the character of Oakland. Consequently, visitation has increased, and the cemetery's popularity and visibility have grown within the community. Concurrent with these improvements, the local area surrounding the cemetery has undergone dramatic changes through redevelopment and adaptive re-use. These changes have created new opportunities and a need to rethink how Oakland is managed and preserved.

This Master Plan addresses Oakland's needs in response to redevelopment around the cemetery, as well as additional challenges within its walls. It reviews Oakland's current conditions supported by new research and analysis with prioritized recommendations for implementation.

MASTER PLAN BY THE NUMBERS:

48 TOTAL ACRES

34 ACRES LEFT TO RESTORE

7 HISTORIC STRUCTURES TO PRESERVE

2 PROPOSED BUILDINGS
TO SUPPORT HOF'S MISSION

34 STRATEGIES

43.5 MILLION DOLLARS OF PROPOSED
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

20 YEARS TO IMPLEMENT

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The integrated approach to management and stewardship.

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Master Plan Update

Since the adoption of the last master plan in 2008, Oakland Cemetery and Historic Oakland Foundation (HOF) have seen many changes. From a damaging tornado and restoration to an economic recession and recovery, Oakland and its surroundings are a dynamic environment. HOF has managed this change so that the cemetery can be preserved and enhanced for future generations. The organization, in partnership with the City of Atlanta, has continued to implement a shared vision over the last decade. Some of the successes include:

- Restoration and recovery following the 2008 tornado totaling 2.5 million dollars in hard costs, volunteer services, and lost revenue
- Adoption of a new strategic plan for HOF in 2015
- Relocation of a new greenhouse to the original location of Oakland's 1899 greenhouse, in partnership with the Atlanta History Center and Buckhead Men's Garden Club
- Partial restoration of the "Old Cemetery" (also known as the Original Six Acres); the area around Bobby Jones' grave site; the Jewish Burial Grounds; and the African American Grounds
- Restoration of the Rev. Quarles lot by the Friendship Baptist Church, and installation of new pavers and pathways (City of Atlanta)
- Replacement of the hexagonal pavers along Old Hunter Street (City of Atlanta)
- Expansion of the amount of funding for landscape maintenance by 200%
- Development of a Tree Management Plan in 2012, and implementation of 66% of the plan
- Development and adoption of a Landscape Management Plan
- Implementation of a \$200,000 National Park Service matching grant that helped restore 33 mausoleums
- Increase in HOF membership by 450% in the last four years
- Expansion of programming to include new tours, special topic programs such as Malts and Vaults, Victorian Holiday, and all cell phone tours of the park
- Addition of new special events to include: Tunes from the Tombs, Arts at Oakland, and expanded Halloween tours
- Introduction of Salesforce, a management system to better track membership, sales, and visitors
- Development of relationships with multiple regional partners such as universities, civic groups, garden clubs, and other related non-profits

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Goals and Objectives

1. Update the current assessment of Oakland Cemetery and HOF to include new and updated evaluations of key elements.
 - a. Develop a more accurate Administrative History of Oakland Cemetery's development.
 - b. Evaluate the 2008 character areas and validate or modify.
 - c. Document the physical conditions of Oakland providing more in-depth analysis of existing buildings and hydrology.
 - d. Document past successes and changes since the adoption of the prior master plan.
 - e. Engage with stakeholders and visitors to learn about current issues and opportunities.
2. Identify strategies to help HOF meet its strategic mission and determine the long-term interests of the cemetery.
 - a. Incorporate criteria for decision making that align with HOF's strategic plan and consider critical needs and sustainability.
 - b. Develop strategies for the physical preservation and maintenance of Oakland.
 - c. Develop a preliminary opinion of probable costs to implement proposed strategies and restoration efforts.
 - d. Create a detailed prioritization plan that focuses on the most critical needs.
3. Create a master plan that serves HOF and the City of Atlanta for the next 20 years.
 - a. Develop a plan that is clear and readable for a variety of users.
 - b. Incorporate graphics and photographs that accurately represent Oakland's character and strategies.
 - c. Create a document that can be used to support a capital campaign.

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Plan Development and Community Engagement

In 2016, HOF selected Stantec Consulting Services Inc. to develop an update for the master plan. Stantec's planning and design team was led by Andrew Kohr, who previously worked on the 2008 master plan. Supporting Stantec was Morrison Design (historic architecture and space planning), and Irrigation Consulting Services (irrigation and water management). Stantec collaborated with the Master Plan Committee and HOF staff to develop the master plan update. The following process outlines approaches to stakeholder engagement, decision making, and prioritization.

- Developing a project website that could transition into a future capital campaign website
- Engaging the general public early
- Facilitating meetings with standing HOF committees
- Reengaging external stakeholders
- Conducting a web-based survey

- Developing a more accurate and detailed history of the site

The following narrative provides an overview of specific engagement efforts.

Website Development

Stantec developed a website to share master plan updates with the general public. This website will ultimately be used as the home of the future capital campaign. The website address is www.oaklandaliveatl.com.

Early Public Engagement

During Sunday in the Park in October 2016, a large mounted banner was posted near the HOF membership tent. The board's purpose was to gather input from the general public and learn specifically: where people lived, what they loved about Oakland, and what they would like to see improved. Responses were varied, but all were positive. Visitors love the cemetery and its events and would love to see more preservation occurring.



Guests of Sunday in the Park at the Old Fair Street Gate on Memorial Drive, October 2016.



Public wall from Sunday in the Park, October 2016.

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Expanded History

One goal of this master plan update was to gain a better understanding of the historic development of the cemetery. Past efforts were helpful but information had been scattered in multiple locations. Sara Van Beck, a volunteer and historic landscape researcher, conducted the historic research and developed a detailed outline. Consultant team member Brandy Morrison also conducted historic research as part of the Bell Tower Historic Structures Report. This research is summarized in Chapter 2.

Master Plan Committee

The master plan process was overseen by an ad hoc Master Plan Committee (MPC) comprised of staff and Trustees. The MPC met to review project progress and deliverables, as well as to provide guidance to staff on how to best present and implement recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

Committee Feedback

The consultant team met with the following Oakland committees at the outset of the project. These included: Development, Building and Grounds, Communications, and Outside the Gates. A new Capital Campaign Committee was formed during the development of the master plan. They were engaged to seek feedback on prioritization and implementation.

Committees shared many of the same sentiments, including the need for specific phasing and a steady, realistic pace for restoration. Multiple committees also mentioned that line items including estimated costs were important for phasing and monitoring progress.

A few of the top priorities for the Development Committee were generating perpetual and corporate donors, hosting and increasing frequency of major events, showing donor appreciation, and generally creating a full set of fundraising tools.

The Buildings and Grounds Committee provided feedback on specific conditions of paths, infrastructure, and space programming. While they acknowledged restoration of monuments as a top priority, they also recognized that universal access, walkways, historic structures, and infrastructure were critical elements in need of attention.

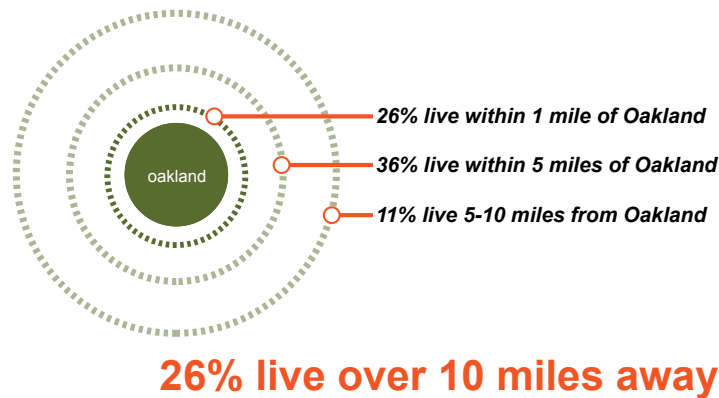
Similarly, the Outside the Gates Committee frequently mentioned access, both inside and approaching the cemetery. Meeting the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations, creating safe crosswalks, and repaving main roads and paths within the cemetery were top priorities. Managing vehicular access within the gates, and reaching out to surrounding neighborhoods for fundraising efforts were also frequently mentioned.

All committees noted the importance of programmed events, the need for increasing visibility and outreach, and a clearly phased plan for improvements that included all neighbors and visitors.

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Online Survey

The consultant team gathered community input through a web-based survey distributed from January to March of 2017. Over 300 people took the survey which included 22 questions and opportunities for open-ended responses. Survey responses reflected Oakland's integrated identity as a historic site, cemetery, and urban park. Improved access, special events/programming, and Oakland's shifting identity as a multi-functional urban public space emerged as dominant themes. Still, respondents made clear that sensitive preservation, natural beauty, and existing programming make Oakland unique and should be maintained. Many respondents echoed one visitor's words to "keep up the good work to maintain and ensure Oakland's significance and relevance to our great city." The following response summary provides insight on how visitors experience Oakland Cemetery.



Arrival

The survey reflected diversity in proximity and transportation options for Oakland visitors:

- Visitors traveling ten or more miles were nearly equal to those traveling less than one mile.
- The greatest portion of visitors (36%) traveled between one and five miles to Oakland.



- Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64%) have biked or walked to Oakland.
- 43% of respondents reported using multiple modes of transportation to visit Oakland (car, bike, walking, transit).

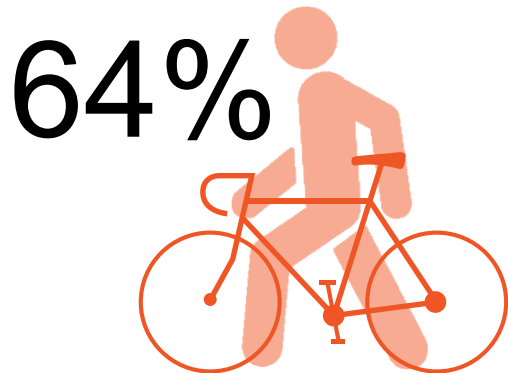
Favorite Spaces in Oakland

When asked which area of the cemetery they visit most frequently no single area was overwhelmingly visited more than others, emphasizing that Oakland in its entirety provides interest to visitors.

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Why People Come

The survey revealed special events a primary reason people visit Oakland Cemetery. Over 50% of all respondents had attended programmed annual events such as Tunes from the Tombs, Sunday in the Park, and Capturing the Spirit of Oakland. Aside from major events, visitors enjoy the variety of tours at least once a year, reflecting important family and group traditions.



**Nearly two-thirds of
responders have
walked or biked to
Oakland**

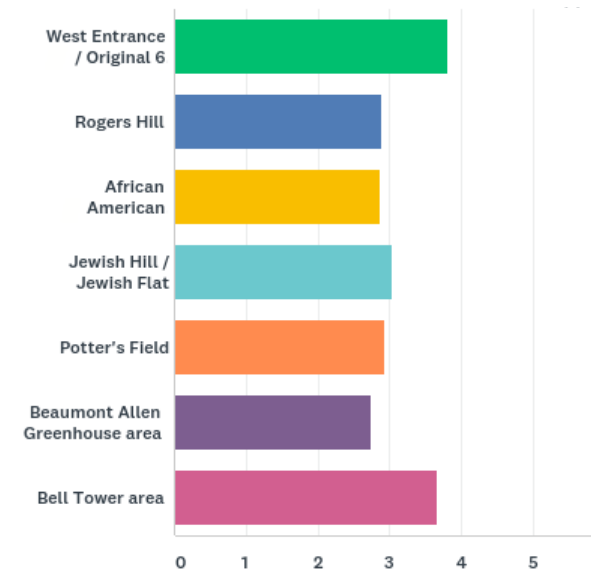
Why People Return

Visitors most often mentioned these topics as reasons they return to Oakland:

- Informed tour volunteers
- Stories of the past and history of Atlanta
- The beauty of the grounds and monuments
- Serenity and extreme peace
- “Feeling” the history
- Flowers
- Landscaping

Over 67% of all visitors, regardless of the purpose of their visit, were “extremely satisfied” with their visit to Oakland. Oakland is a centerpiece attraction to this area of the city and worthy of investment.

What Areas of Oakland Do You Visit Most?



The weighted average of all responses. While some portions of Oakland receive slightly more traffic, this chart demonstrates a balance of interest in all character areas.

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Ways to Improve

Visitors are seeking more diverse and frequent tour offerings, reduced cost, and generally a less exclusive perception of Oakland. When asked what additions or improvements visitors would prefer to see these topics were most often mentioned:

- Increasing interaction with the neighborhood
- Improving event parking
- Addressing event logistics
- Evolving the event program to include expanded tour offerings
- Expanding vending options
- Accommodating those with special needs
- Promoting access to MARTA
- Providing an additional entrance for people traveling from the east
- Improving bicycle parking and accessibility
- Improving signage to provide clear wayfinding
- Define vehicle access to preserve the cemetery's cultural experience

Volunteers Ride **Grounds** Residents
Seeing Kept **Grave** Tranquility **Stories** Art
Beautiful serenity **History** Taking
Peace Gift Shop **Tour** Environment **Learning**
Green Space **Flowers** Flora **Feeling** Plant Life **Gardens**
Experience

Respondents' most frequently used words and phrases when asked of their favorite part of experiencing Oakland.

External Stakeholders

HOF held two stakeholder workshops during the development of the master plan. On March 10, 2017, at Six Feet Under on Memorial Drive, Stantec presented background information to the master plan and focused on proposed recommendations that would enhance safety, livability, and visibility around the cemetery.



Stakeholder workshop in March 2017.

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Images of Oakland's many successful events.

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Master Plan Format

The Master Plan Update is organized into three sections:

- **Foundations:** this section frames the context for the master plan.
- **Strategies:** this section is comprised of chapters discussing specific elements of the cemetery and specific strategies that align with the mission of HOF.
- **The Master Plan:** this section provides recommendations for areas surrounding Oakland and synthesizes all strategies supported by a phasing plan.

The Strategies section of the master plan is organized to provide a reader an understanding of the importance of the specific topic, the current conditions of the cemetery as it relates to a specific topic, and a series of strategies that address identifiable concerns. Narratives and graphics support each strategy recommendation as outlined in the example graphic. This includes cost, funding sources, and a prioritization ranking based on the decision-making criteria outlined in the following section.



Steps Required for Implementation:

1. What are critical path steps for consistent progress?
2. What other strategies are involved, concurrent, or must be completed prior?



Cost Type:

Annual/Operating; Capital Improvement



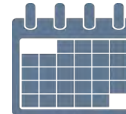
Cost Range:

Estimate encompassing low and high range



Partners:

Donors, Organizations, City Departments

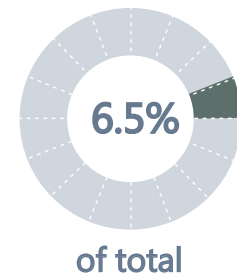


Duration:

Dates of implementation

The pie charts found on each strategy page reflect an individual strategy's proportion of total capital improvement costs. At right is a sample pie chart for the Land Acquisition strategy, found in Chapter 10. Due to its anticipated high-end cost of \$3,000,000, it is 6.5% of the high-end estimated total for capital improvements. Find more detailed distillation of anticipated costs in the Prioritization Plan spreadsheet found in Chapter 16.

Sample: Acquisition of Parcel



Shown as a percent of the estimated \$43.5M for all strategies



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Decision-Making Criteria

With dozens of maintenance, management, and infrastructure improvements needed, prioritizing future efforts requires comprehensive thought process.

While all priorities are important investments in Oakland's future, it is important to establish clear rankings, addressing life safety, physical infrastructure, and aesthetics/amenities. The continuity of Oakland as an integrated urban resource hinges on these critical improvements.

Standing on HOF's Mission Statement, the following six criteria were used to rank important projects throughout Oakland. Specific projects are defined as strategies with a corresponding prioritization ranking. "Partnerships," and "Critical" criterion aid in determining approach and urgency to projects.

For each identified strategy, the criteria are ranked on a scale from zero to three, ("0" for low priority, "3" for critical). Each strategy listed in the forthcoming chapters includes the associated graphic.

Preserve:

Does the proposed recommendation aid in reinforcing the character of that portion of the cemetery, reflecting accurate historical records and background of individuals buried there?

Restore:

Does the proposed recommendation repair physical hardscape while also providing accessibility to all users?

Enhance:

Does the proposed recommendation help to improve the ecological, aesthetic, and social functions of the cemetery and the long-term sustainability of HOF and the site?

Share:

Does the proposed recommendation help to improve the historic resource for visitors, neighbors, and researchers?

Partnerships:

Does the proposed recommendation provide opportunities to expand and/or establish relationships with outside organizers (including the City of Atlanta)?

Critical:

Does the proposed recommendation address an immediate need that threatens the integrity of a historic resource or the safety of visitors?



Example of the graphic chart to easily compare priority rankings.

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