

Landscape Master Plan

for

*God's Little Acre
Newport, Rhode Island*



*prepared for
The GLA Preservation Project Foundation*

by

Martha Lyon Landscape Architecture, LLC

2022

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*513 Broadway
Newport, Rhode Island 02840*

by

Martha Lyon Landscape Architecture, LLC
*313 Elm Street
Northampton, MA 01060
413-586-4178
www.marthalyon.com*

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INTRODUCTION

Established as part of land granted to Newport in 1640 by the Reverend John Clarke for the town's Common Burying Ground, God's Little Acre (GLA) contains the largest known collection of colonial-era gravestones for African and Black Americans – both free and enslaved -- in existence in the United States today. Within its one and one-half acres are the remains of hundreds of these early Americans, who had begun arriving in Newport by the late 17th century, and by as early as 1708 made up ten percent of the local population.¹ From the time of its first interments, GLA served the needs of the local Black community and others, and continued to do so well into the 20th century.² Etched into its earlier grave markers are examples of some of the finest work produced in the local 18th century carving shops, as well as one remarkable slate stone directly attributed to a local Black stone carver.³ The abundance of these artful stones sets GLA apart from other burial grounds for Black Americans dating to the colonial era, particularly those for the enslaved.



God's Little Acre as seen from the eastern edge looking westward with Farewell Avenue and the Braman Cemetery in the background. The colonial era burying ground contains the remains of hundreds of free Black persons and slaves.

Over the past three decades, the City of Newport and its residents have become increasingly concerned about the deteriorated condition of GLA, including its edges, circulation, plant materials, and gravestones. Several attempts have been made to respond to this concern. Members of the Stokes family have spread the word about GLA, its significance in the history of Newport, and its importance to the local Black community. In 2017, the city marked the property with a prominent sign, replacing a marker that had been lost in a 2011 storm. City crews began to regularly mow the lawn and trim trees, and a revived Historic Cemetery Advisory Commission (HCAC) secured funding for gravestone conservation. In 2021, the GLA Preservation Project Foundation (GLAPP) was formed to provide funding and assistance to the city and the HCAC for gravestone conservation and improved maintenance of

¹ The Negro in Colonial New England 1620-1776, Lorenzo J. Greene, 86 (citing from Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England, 1636-1792, Vol IV, 59)

² GLA contains some burials of non-Black persons, most notably members of the Greek immigrant community who began arriving in Newport in the 1890s.

³ Many other stones likely may contain the unattributed work of Black persons, given the record of enslaved Black laborers employed in local stone carving shops at the time.

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landscape features. To further complement these efforts, GLAPP suggested the creation of the foregoing Landscape Master Plan, to be developed in partnership with the city and HCAC.

Project Goal & Objectives

Through this project the City of Newport and GLAPP aimed to develop a plan for preserving and enhancing the God's Little Acre landscape. The plan's goal was to upgrade the property's physical condition so that GLA appears well-maintained and is recognized, acknowledged, and respected for its historical significance. Objectives for meeting this goal included enhancing the overall appearance, improving access, and clarifying circulation.



Method

To achieve this goal and meet the objectives, Martha Lyon Landscape Architecture, LLC (MLLA) collaborated with a committee comprised of representatives from GLAPP, HCAC, and Newport Department of Public Works to employ the following method:

GLA's border with Island Cemetery was one of the several improvements identified by the committee for the landscape program.

- **Landscape Program.** Working with the committee, MLLA developed a preliminary program of improvements to be included in the master plan and summarized them in writing.
- **Historical Review and Historical Significance.** MLLA obtained and reviewed existing historical documentation pertaining to the physical development of the GLA landscape, including written histories of Newport, historic maps and historic photos, gathered from the Rhode Island Historical Society, Newport Historical Society, Newport Public Library, and City of Newport (City Clerk). This documentation provided the basis for a brief illustrated and written history of GLA, as well as a "period of historical significance," the period or periods in time during which GLA reached its highest degree of integrity.
- **Mapping and Assessment.** Using data provided by the city and Brown University, MLLA prepared an existing conditions map of GLA in electronic (AutoCAD) format and updated the map with information gathered from the field. With the map, MLLA then conducted an assessment (including inventory, analysis, and evaluation) of the existing natural, built, and functional features. The inventory documented the existing features, while the analysis determined their condition and historical relevancy. Evaluation consisted of a series of preliminary recommendations for preserving the features.
- **Recommendations and Management Guidelines.** Based on the program, period of significance, and assessment, MLLA developed a set of specific recommendations for the treating the existing

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landscape, including improvement of entrances, circulation, fencing and plant materials (trees and ground covers). For each recommendation, MLLA prepared an opinion of cost calculated at the planning level to be used for the purposes of budgeting and/or fundraising. To accompany the recommendations, MLLA developed a set of management guidelines for use by the cemetery crews in caring for GLA including recommendations for maintaining trees and ground covers, as well as care of circulation routes.

- **Landscape Master Plan.** To complete the Plan, MLLA compiled the program, assessment, recommendations, budget projections, and management guidelines into a final plan document for use by GLAPP and the City of Newport.

Program of Improvements

At the start of the project, the committee identified the following improvements to be considered in the Master Plan:

- **The edge with Island Cemetery,** which has been demarcated with a rusty chain link fence. This edge needed to be creatively addressed, with several options presented for consideration.
- **Condition of the trees,** including the general risks posed by these, as well consideration of new tree planting new trees.



The entrance to Newport Common Burying Ground and God's Little Acre from Farewell Avenue has eroded and lacks a welcoming appearance.

- **Condition of the entrances,** which were eroded and appear messy in spots, and needed to be made more welcoming.
- **Circulation,** which needed to be clarified and improved for all visitors (by vehicle and on foot), including the approach roads.
- **Unmarked burials,** in the grassy area where large equipment currently unloads, need protection; an alternative site needed to be considered for unloading.

In addition, the committee requested that recommendations be made regarding establishment of a method for marking unidentifiable stones, and for recording (and possibly displaying) unreadable epitaphs.

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Guiding Principle

The God's Little Acre section of the Newport Common Burying Ground is one of the city's oldest intact historic landscapes, likely lying on original, mostly unaltered topography. Its landscape features, including grave markers, monuments, and plot details, are original works of art, many which were created by local artisans in Newport-based shops, furthering the landscape's historical importance. At the heart of this plan – its guiding principle – is ***the need to preserve these features, and place highest priority on safeguarding them against future damage and/or loss, following best practices in the field of historic preservation.*** All plan recommendations, including edge improvement, access, circulation and landscape management, are guided by this principle.

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A BRIEF HISTORY

The small patch of ground at the northern edge of Newport's downtown that is known as God's Little Acre, has served the needs of humans for centuries. Originally part of Native American lands, it became, in the mid-1600s, a place of interment for a new group of settlers, with a section at the northern end for the community's growing population of free and enslaved African and Black Americans. The site continues to serve as the final resting place for the dead today. The following narrative summarizes the physical development of the one and one-half acre landscape for the purpose of understanding its historical significance and the features that contribute to this significance.⁴

Beginnings: Before 1640

The first known inhabitants of the land that would become Newport were Native Americans, members of the Narragansett tribe who populated coastal Rhode Island, including Aquidneck Island, for thousands of years prior to European exploration and settlement. The Narragansetts maintained both summer and winter homes, living in the uplands during the winter months and migrating to the shore during summer. While no known archaeological evidence of Narragansett inhabitation has been uncovered in the area that would become God's Little Acre, local tradition holds that First Peoples settled in the vicinity.⁵

European settlement of Aquidneck Island began in the 1630s, when a group Puritans migrated south from Massachusetts, led by minister Roger Williams. Having been banished by the authorities in Massachusetts Bay, Williams fled to avoid deportation to England. He received a gift land on the Moshassuck River from the Narragansett Sachem, and founded a religiously-tolerant community, naming it Providence. Massachusetts authorities ordered other religious dissenters to leave, among them John Clarke, who, with William Coddington, surveyed



"Portrait of a Clergyman" done by Guiliam de Ville, believed to be of John Clarke, painted c. 1659. Clarke, along with William Coddington, founded Newport, and in 1640 granted land for a burying ground. (Redwood Library Collection)

⁴ Sources for the narrative history included books, maps, plans, photographs, reports and miscellaneous documents; a full listing appears in the bibliography, found in the Appendix to this Plan. Information about the settlement of Europeans at Aquidneck Island was derived from the Miantonomi Park Interpretive Plan, where original sources are cited.

⁵ An 1848 article in The Daily News Reported that the Common Burying Ground, of which God's Little Acre is a part, "was the burial place of the Indians, from time immemorial, and has been used such by our ancestors, from the first settlement of the Island, more than two hundred years ago." This claim is not known to have been further substantiated.

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lands on Aquidneck and founded Newport. Clarke, a minister and medical doctor, organized the first Baptist Church in Newport.⁶

Sometime in the first half of the 17th century, the first enslaved African workers were imported to New England. They likely arrived in Massachusetts, mainly from the Guinea coast of West Africa and often via the Caribbean Islands, and soon after were brought to Rhode Island to work on agricultural lands of the Narragansett Planters and in the various trades of Newport.⁷ Eventually, these Africans and their Black American descendants in Newport, both free and enslaved, engaged in crafts, furniture-making, spirit distilling, barrel-making, shipbuilding and the many other enterprises that fueled the colonial economy.⁸ The contributions of this early Black population played a critical role in the early development of Newport, as noted by Rev. Samuel Hopkins of the First Congregational Church at Newport, who, in 1787, reflected,

“[i]nhabitants of Rhode-Island, especially those of Newport, have had by far the greatest share in this [slave] traffic of all these United States. This trade in the human species has been the first wheel of commerce in Newport, on which every other movement in business had chiefly depended: that town has been built up and flourished, in times past, at the expen[s]e of the blood, the liberty and happiness, of the poor Africans; and the inhabitants have lived on this, and by it have gotten most of their wealth and riches.”⁹

Establishment: 1640 - 1830

In 1640, Clarke granted land at the northern edge of the new settlement for the purposes of establishing a burying ground. Local tradition holds that in deeding the land, he required that all persons could be interred within, including Blacks.¹⁰ By 1665, what was known as the Common Burying Ground had been laid out, and the first known burial took place the following year. In 1705, the one and one-half acres at the northern end of the burying ground became a place of interment for Africans, and in 1720, the first known burial of a person of African descent took place, that of Hector Butcher, “servant to Mrs. Ann Butcher of Barbadoes.”¹¹ Newport’s Black population grew rapidly during the early 1700s, and by 1774 had reached 1,246, over thirteen percent of the total population. This concentration of slaves or former slaves was the highest of any in the colony.

Interments at God’s Little Acre reflected this growth. By 1780, nearly several hundred known burials had taken place with many of the graves at God’s Little Acre marked by permanent slate tablet stones, carved in the shops of one of the region’s most prestigious stone carving families, some likely by Black

⁶ Allen, William, An American Biographical and Historical Dictionary, 220

⁷ The Narragansett Planters were a group of wealthy landowners who maintained large farms, or plantations, in south and southwestern Rhode Island

⁸ Sterling, John, et. al., Newport, Rhode Island Colonial Burying Grounds, 172

⁹ Sterling, 175 (reprinted from Hopkins’ October 13, 1787 Providence Gazette and Country Journal article, “Essay on the African Slave Trade”

¹⁰ Clarke, a Baptist minister founded of the 1st Baptist Church of Newport, now the United Baptist Church. As late as 1777, the 4th Baptist meeting house stood on the south side of the Common Burying Ground, facing Warner Street.

¹¹ Sterling, 172. Barbados and Newport were connected through Caribbean sugar cane plantations, and the production of sugar for use in the rum industry. Hector Butcher’s stone bears the earliest death date in GLA and the inscription reads, “Hector Butcher, Negro servant to Mrs. Ann Butcher of Barbadoes.”

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"A Plan of the Town of Newport in Rhode Island, dated 1777, shows the burying ground at the far northern end of town. Adjacent land uses include the 4th Baptist Church (on Warner Street) and alms and work houses along Farewell Avenue.

hands. Two hundred and twenty-nine such stones mark graves dating to the 1700s.¹² It is likely that little or no visual boundary separated God's Little Acre from the larger Common Burying Ground, as colonial era burial sites typically did not contain roads or paths.

After the Revolution and into the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Newport had a growing and active community of free Africans and African Americans. They established one of the nation's first mutual aid "African Union" societies, and many of its members and their families rest in God's Little Acre.¹³

¹² Knoblock, Glenn A., African American Historic Burial Grounds and Gravesites of New England, 170

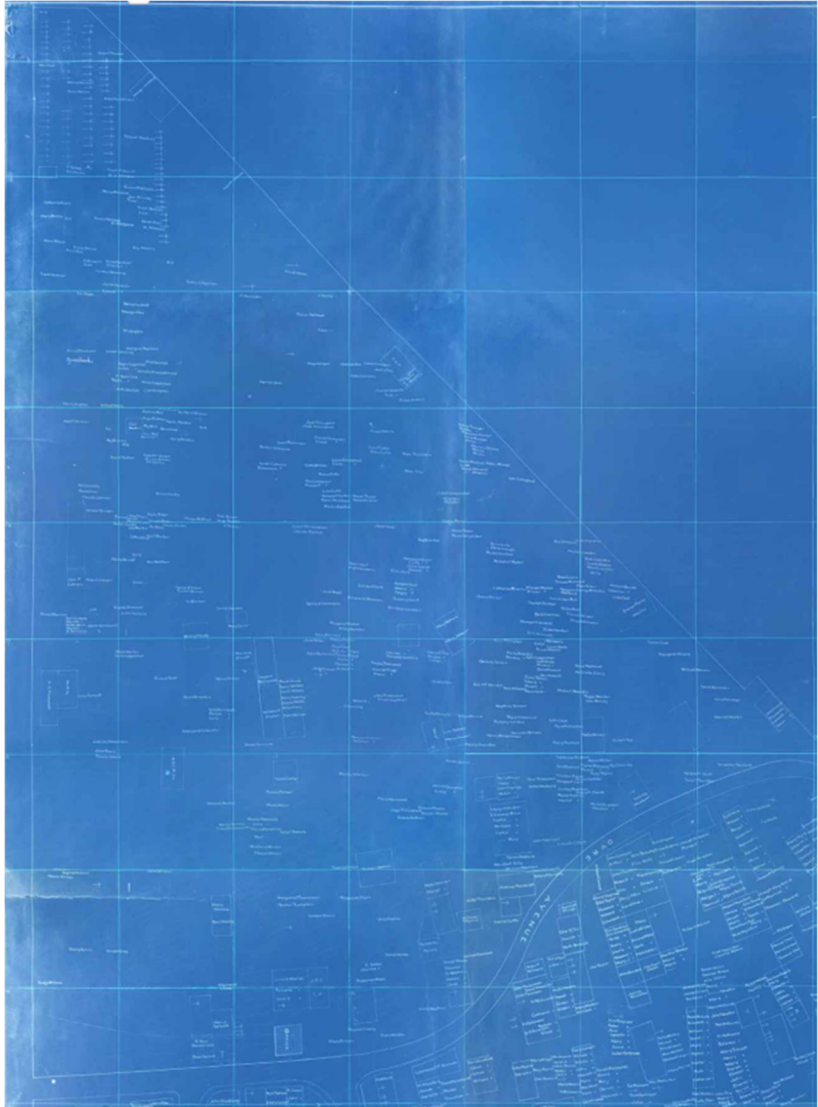
¹³ Harris, Early Black Benevolent Societies, 1780-1820, 608-620

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Contextual Change: 1830 - 1950

By the early 1800s, land for plots in the Common Burying Ground had become scarce, despite the town's having annexed a small cemetery on the southeast side of the Burying Ground known as Duck Factory Cemetery.¹⁴ This prompted the purchase a tract of land abutting the east side for a new cemetery. It remained a town-owned property having been laid out by Henry Bull and William W. Freeborn, for just twelve years. In 1848, the Town turned the site over to new overseers who formed a corporation and renamed it Island Cemetery. The Daily News reported on its establishment in January of that year:

“[s]ome few years ago, the Town purchased a lot east of the Burying Ground, in this place, and appropriated it for the last solemn resting plan of the dead. Several gentlemen were much interested in this matter, and have expended their time and services in arranging and beautifying the ground, and making it what it ought to be, a pleasant resort rather than a dreaded place, to be visited only when necessity demanded. – The lot was regularly laid out, with numerous paths running through it, and ornamental trees and shrubbery, arranged therein; the small lots or sections were all taken, and many families removed their friends from the old Yard. At this time, there are several hundred buried there, above whom neat tablets or monuments have been erected, and the yards are surrounded by



William H. Lawton's 1903 map of the Common Burying Ground included a detailed map of God's Little Acre. (Newport Historical Society Collection)

¹⁴ Duck Factory Cemetery was established on the site of a post-Revolutionary War textile factors for its former employees, with funds obtained from the sale and demolition of the property. (National Register Inventory-Nomination Form, 1974).

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firm iron fences and substantial granite posts, presenting a scene of uniformity to the eye.”¹⁵

The establishment of Island Cemetery changed the setting for God's Little Acre, providing a permanent green space to buffer its entire eastern edge and the northern tip.¹⁶ It is likely that improvements were made to the Common Burying Ground around the same time of Island Cemetery's establishment, fostering a transformation from a colonial-era burial ground to a modern cemetery. In 1848, the town appointed a committee to examine the burying ground, with a view to making improvements. The committee's work prompted the street commissioner to “cart and furnish gravel for the avenues which the committee had caused to be made in the old burial-ground.”¹⁷ These likely included the main roads, Dyre and Clarke Avenues, as well as the grass-covered Easton and Holmes Avenues, and creating three entry points. The addition of Dyre Avenue would have established, perhaps for the first time, a hard separation between God's Little Acre and the larger Common Burying Ground. At some point, before 1903, a shed was built at the south end of God's Little Acre along Dyre Avenue.¹⁸ A map of the property, created in 1903, confirms the existence of all three avenues, entry points, the shed, and a fence along the east edge.

The late 1800s brought a second peak of interments to God's Little Acre, with nearly 250 burials taking place between 1860 and 1920, and most marked with marble stones. In the first decade of the 20th century, 70 burials took place, the largest known number in a single decade of the property's long history. This peak reflects the number of Black Americans living and working in Newport, largely in the tourist/hospitality industry which burgeoned in the late 19th century. It also may document the flight of southern Blacks to the Northeast in attempt to escape Jim Crow laws, as several gravestones mention southern birthplaces in their inscriptions.



God's Little Acre as it appeared in 1965. The wood picket fencing separating the property from the adjacent Island Cemetery was replaced by a chain link fence.

Decline and Revival: 1950-Present

Burials at God's Little Acre after 1950 waned, with no interments taking place in the last decades of the 20th century. For many years, maintenance lagged, the property became overgrown, and gravestones overturned, suffered fractures and were lost or stolen. By 2009, the Rhode Island Genealogical Society noted in a special publication that the need for

¹⁵ The Daily News, January 18, 1848

¹⁶ The Braman Cemetery, located on the west side of Farewell Avenue opposite GLA was established in 1898.

¹⁷ An Historical Sketch of the Island Cemetery Company, 8-9

¹⁸ According to Ron Onorato, this shed held records.

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preservation of stones in the burying ground was urgent, “[t]he stones in this section are in noticeably worse condition than in the other parts of this burying ground...among the many broken, fallen, and scarred gravestones, ten are so damaged that the name cannot be read...nineteen footstones found without headstones indicate that the larger and more detailed headstones are lost.”¹⁹ Attempts were made to upgrade the fencing along the eastern edge, replacing a wood structure with chain link, and several Kanzan cherry trees were planted along this fence, presumably to further reinforce the boundary. Both the chain link fencing and trees gradually declined, as did much of the GLA landscape.

Despite this neglected condition, the significance of God's Little Acre and the larger Common Burying Ground did not go unnoticed. In the 1970s, Edwin Wilmot Connelly, director of the Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Exeter, Rhode Island, documented graves in the Common Burying Ground and directed the relocation of approximately 40 slate unearthed grave markers. Connelly's photographs, taken during the documentation process, were included in the 1974 application for the Common Burying Ground and adjacent Island Cemetery for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination noted that “[a]s a resting place for everyman and any man, the cemeteries reflect Roger Williams' concept of brotherhood.”²⁰ The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints (LDS) catalogued the interments at GLA through a project to document Newport's vital records.

In the mid-1990s, University of Rhode Island professor Ron Onorato and others surveyed the grave markers at GLA, with the intent of identifying missing stones, and in 1994 the City of Newport established a Common Burying Ground Advisory Commission to help revive and safeguard the property, including the GLA section. Redesigned in 2006 and renamed the Historic Cemetery Advisory Commission (HCAC), this entity first concentrated on the GLA trees, and two years later added regular mowing to the list of accomplishments. From 2006 to 2009, John Sterling, Barbara J. Austin, and Letty R. Champion attempted to document every gravestone in all Newport colonial burial areas. Their work led, in 2009, to the Rhode Island Genealogical Society's publication of *Newport, Rhode Island Colonial Burial Grounds, Special Publication No. 10* that included a complete listing of the graves in God's Little Acre keyed to the 1903 map, including names, dates of birth and/or death, and inscriptions. Other interventions included a stone resetting project, conducted by a Salve Regina professor, and fence restoration effort, financed by a private individual. Other efforts to document and commemorate the property



Elm trees, standing along Farewell Avenue. Efforts were begun in the 1900s by the City of Newport to replant this historic alley.

¹⁹ Rhode Island Genealogical Society, Special Publication No. 10, 2009

²⁰ National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Common Burying-Ground and Island Cemetery, 1974.

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include participation in the Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission's on-line data base of cemeteries and graves, as well as the 1696 Heritage Group's sharing of God's Little Acre's history and significance on the organization's website.

Concurrent with these documentation efforts was a program initiated in the 1990s by the City of Newport to replant the elm trees that once lined Farewell Avenue along GLA's western edge. Initial plantings included non-disease resistant elms; later plantings consisted of disease-resistant trees. Each tree was planted in the same spot as an original elm that comprised this historic allee.

Preservation continued into the 2010s and is still ongoing today. In 2017, leaders of the local Black community, the Stokes family, designed a prominent sign for GLA, replacing a 2005 marker that had been lost in a 2011 storm. Funding for the sign had been raised by the Historic Cemetery Advisory Commission and city crews fabricated the marker according to the Stokes' design. Other preservation efforts included funding from the city in 2017 to begin conservation treatment of gravestones, followed by a 2019 grant for similar work from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, secured by a newly revived HCAC. The founding of the GLA Preservation Project (GLAPP), a private foundation established to support preservation of the site's landscape and historic features, bolstered the work of the HCAC and City of Newport. During the writing of this master plan, a team of professional stone conservators completed a conditions assessment of GLA's 641 grave markers.

Period of Historical Significance

The Period of Historical Significance for God's Little Acre spans the 350-year period between 1665 and the present. During this time, the site was established as part of the larger Common Burying Ground and almost immediately became active, interring members of Newport's substantial population of free and enslaved Africans and Black Americans. And while burials at GLA continued through the 20th century with the most recent taking place in the last year, the colonial character of its landscape for the most part remains intact, and it is the simplicity of this character, specifically the unaltered topography and the artfully carved gravestones, that defines its historical significance. Efforts to preserve the property should honor this colonial heritage by introducing native plants, installing locally-sourced landscape features (such as fencing), and refraining from adding paved paths or roads.

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GOD'S LITTLE ACRE TODAY

The following section of the Plan assesses the existing conditions of God's Little Acre's landscape. Its purpose is to document the natural, built, and functional features; to analyze their condition; and to outline preliminary recommendations for improvement and long-term care. Together with the information about the property's historical development, this assessment provides a foundation for the overall Master Plan. *Note that a summary of the recommendations of the historic grave marker condition assessment, completed as a separate but parallel effort during the development of this plan, are included in the foregoing landscape assessment.*

Setting

Once situated at the northernmost edge of Newport's original settlement, the one and one-half acre, triangular God's Little Acre (GLA) now stands along the east side of Farewell Avenue, near its intersection with America's Cup Avenue. Most visitors to Newport, whether traveling from the east through Middletown or from the west via the Claiborne Pell bridge, pass GLA on their way to the city's wharves, harbor and main commercial area. Aside from the vehicular traffic along Farewell, GLA and the remainder of the Common Burying Ground rest in a cradled location, edged by two other larger cemeteries: Braman Cemetery to the west, and Island Cemetery to the north and east. This setting adds to GLA's character and enhances its overall visual appeal.



God's Little Acre, as seen from the southeast corner, looking northwestward. Braman Cemetery stands across Farewell Avenue (in the distance), and Island Cemetery borders the east side.

Edges & Views

GLA's edges both enhance and detract from its appearance. The strongest edge lies along the west side, where a five-foot height painted steel picket fence divides GLA from Farewell Avenue. A regular allee of American elm trees stands just inside this fence, and although missing a few trees, further reinforces this edge. To the south, Dyre Avenue separates GLA from the Common Burying Ground. Partially surfaced with gravel and compacted dirt, this winding route establishes a remarkably clear boundary. To the east, a partially intact, rusted chain link fence draws the line between GLA and Island Cemetery. Invasive vines, including wisteria, poison ivy and English ivy, cover some of the fence, furthering its

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unkempt appearance. Clusters of mature Kanzan cherry trees grow along much of the east side inside what's left of the fence.²¹

Views associated with GLA include pleasing vistas and less pleasing ones. Pleasing views – those which should be retained and enhanced – can be taken in from GLA's edges, looking across the landscape and its many historic grave markers and plot details. By removing diseased or dying trees and pruning the lower limbs of healthy trees, these views can be improved. Less pleasing views, including those of abutting properties looking through chain link fencing and across roads, can be enhanced by the addition of more edge tree plantings and replacement of dilapidated fencing.



A five-foot height iron picket fence lines the Farewell Avenue edge, providing a simple, graceful enclosure and a separation from the traffic moving along the street.

Access & Circulation

Visitors to GLA arriving by car typically enter at the southwest entrance off Farewell, and proceed northeastward through the Common Burying Ground, looping northward on to Dyre Avenue and continuing westward, eventually exiting back onto Farewell. The condition of these gateways is poor, with broken pavement meeting the adjacent sidewalk. GLA contains no roads of its own, and because of this, drivers must park their vehicles along the edges of Dyre and walk into the site. Lack of establish parking pull-off areas has resulted in makeshift parking spots at the edge of Dyre, carved out near the southeast corner of GLA. Some drivers also access GLA through Island Cemetery, leaving their vehicles parked on the side of the cemetery roads, and walking westward into GLA. No established walking path exists between Island Cemetery and GLA, and visitors accessing GLA have created a dirt wear path connecting the two sites, as



Dyre Avenue, surfaced in gravel and compacted dirt, winds along the southern edge of GLA (at right in photo). This road provides the only vehicular access to GLA, however pedestrians have several options for entering and moving through the landscape.

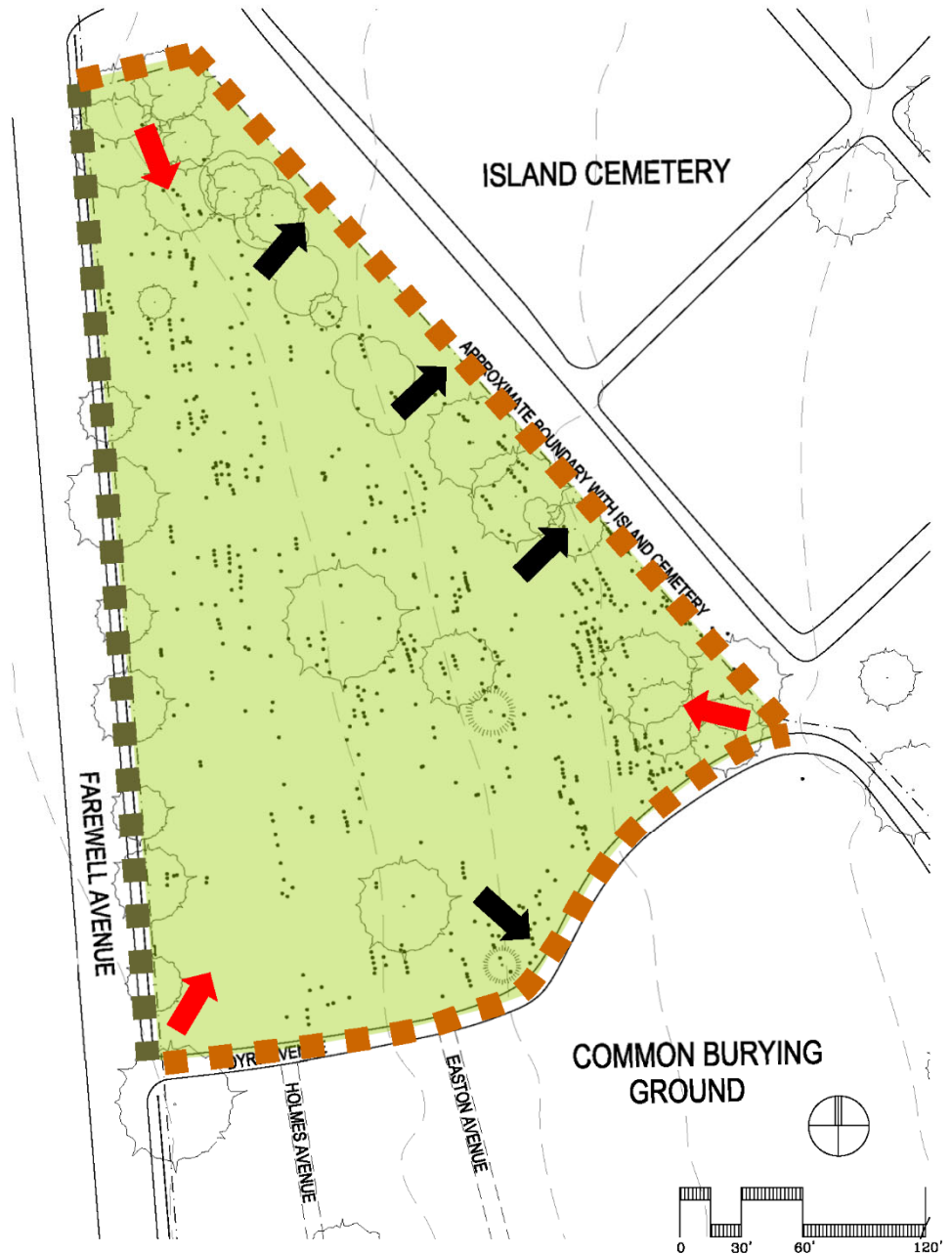
²¹ Note that most of the fence and some of the trees were removed while this plan was in process.

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a result. More access choices exist for visitors arriving on foot, principal among these is the Common Burying Ground gate, located along Warner Street. From here, pedestrians can enter the property and walk along Dyre or one of two grassed roads (Holmes and Easton Avenues) that lead directly through the Common Burying Ground northward to GLA.

Legend

-  God's Little Acre Section of the Newport Common Burying Ground
-  Stronger Edge
-  Weaker Edge
-  Pleasing View
-  Less Pleasing View








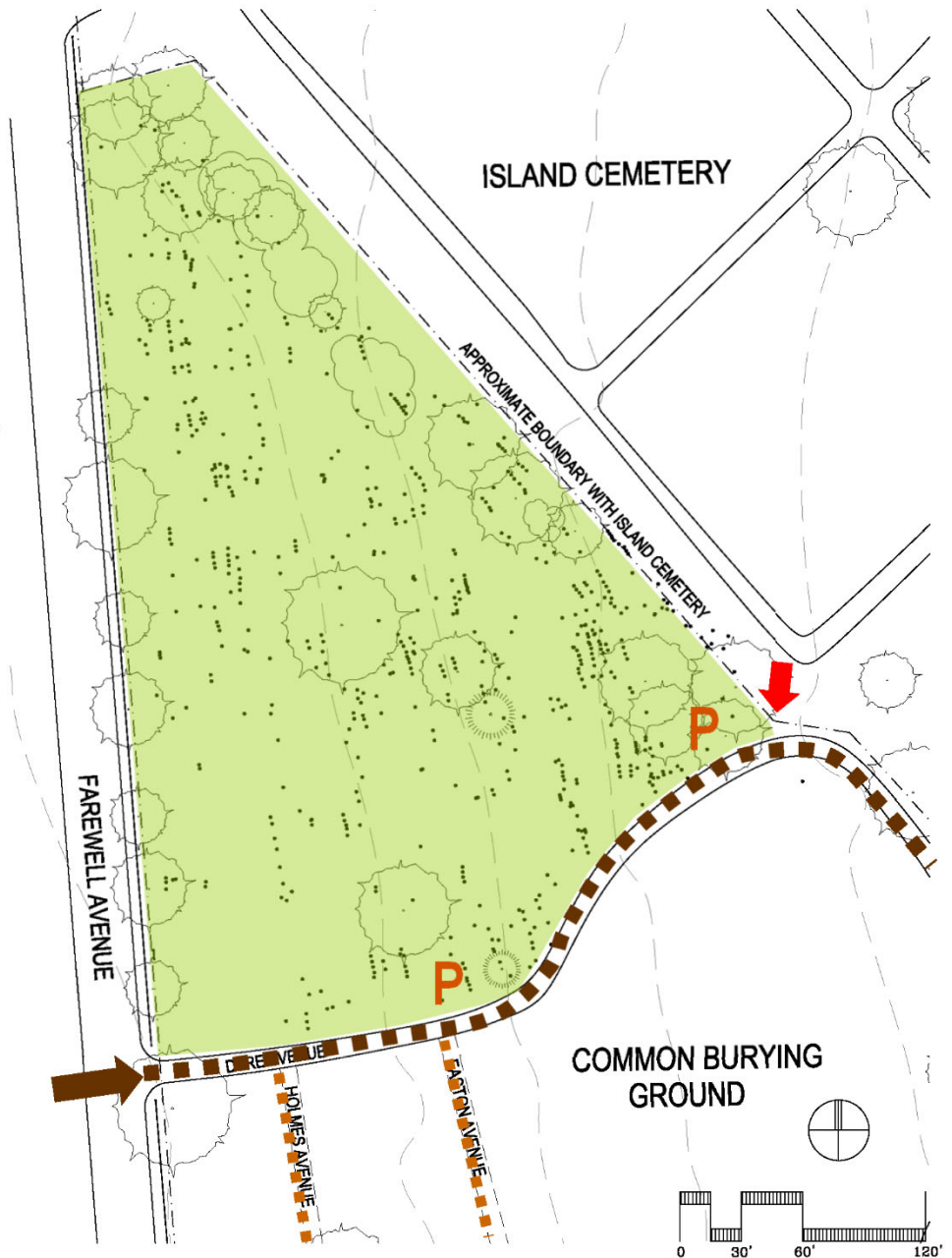
SETTINGS, EDGES & VIEWS

Landscape Assessment

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Legend

-  God's Little Acre Section of the Newport Common Burying Ground
-  Main Vehicular Route
-  Parking
-  Active Vehicular Entrance
-  Makeshift Pedestrian Entrance



ACCESS & CIRCULATION
Landscape Assessment

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Topography across GLA falls from east to west over slopes ranging from 8% to just over 3%. The steepest slopes lie at the higher elevations (closer to the eastern edge and Island Cemetery), and the grade lessens as it falls towards the west. Grades running south to north are nearly level, making access less onerous. As noted earlier, the site does not contain roads, nor does it hold walking paths. All visitors must travel on foot over a turf surface.

Given the age of the GLA landscape and the relatively unmanipulated character of its landform, it is highly likely that the topography is some of the rare unaltered ground in Newport. This feature, in and of itself, elevates GLA's importance as a rare historic resource.

Plant Communities

Two distinct plant communities exist in GLA, herbaceous perennials and trees. Grassy lawn covers all of the landscape's surface, however intermixed with this are several perennial ground covers, including buttercup and violet. While often classified as weeds, these hardy perennial plants add texture and color to the landscape and minimize the need for mowing, and because of this, many other species of low-growing ground covers could be introduced to further sustainability in the GLA landscape. In addition to these, several clusters of perennials, including daylilies and daffodils, have been planted alongside headstones. Modest in quantity, these allow for personal expression for living persons wishing to honor and remember those interred at GLA.

Trees consist of both deciduous and evergreen species, with the former dominating. Of the 29 trees standing at GLA, nearly half (14) are Kanzan cherries²² and almost one-third (9) are elms. The others include oak, mulberry, arborvitae, and catalpa. The cherries, while colorful when in bloom, are largely at the end of their lives and show multiple symptoms of decline including dead limbs, decaying trunks, rot, and others. In contrast, the elms, located in a regular allee along Farewell Avenue, appear healthy and perform the function of screening GLA from the busy traffic traversing the western edge of the site. The six other trees sprinkled across GLA's interior help punctuate the landscape and provide some shade from the hot summer sun. To avoid








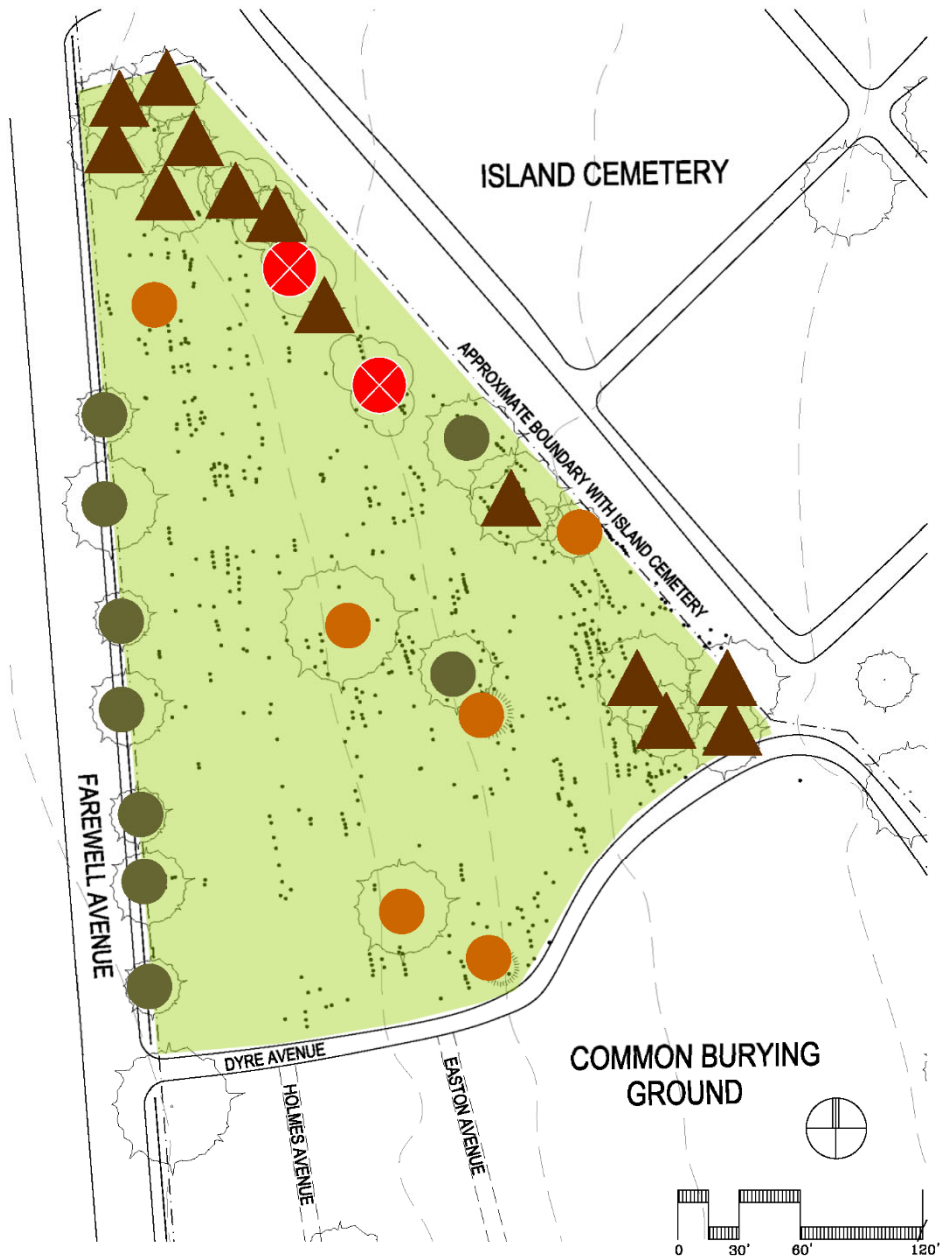
An old weeping mulberry tree, located in the northern part of GLA, is the only one of its kind at GLA. The vast majority of trees are either elm or Kanzan cherry.

²² Kanzan cherries are also referred to as Kwanzan or Japanese flowering cherries, all *Prunus serrata* 'Kanzan.' Several of the trees were removed during the writing of this plan.

God's Little Acre Landscape Master Plan
Newport, Rhode Island

Legend

-  God's Little Acre Section of the Newport Common Burying Ground
-  Kansan Cherry
-  Elm
-  Other Tree Species
-  Invasive Vine Mass Area



TREES
Landscape Assessment

*God's Little Acre Landscape Master Plan
Newport, Rhode Island*

harboring a monoculture at GLA, the City should gradually establish a mix of trees that include no more than ten percent of one genus (e.g. *Ulmus*) and five percent of one species (e.g. *Morus alba*). Several species of invasive plants have crept into GLA, threatening the health of the landscape and in particular the trees. These include wisteria, poison ivy and English ivy, all of which grow over the ground and spiral up the trunks of trees. Efforts to upgrade the landscape should include removal and ongoing control of these plant species.

Fencing

As noted under the discussion about *Edges*, two types of fencing existing at GLA, the five feet height steel picket lining Farewell Avenue and the partially intact chain link standing along the eastern edge. The steel fencing appears to be in good condition with all posts and pickets intact and plumb, and its channels and rails undamaged. The black painted finish, while slightly worn, also appears to be stable. This fence is valuable for the safeguarding function it performs but also enhances the character of both GLA and the Common Burying Ground with its simple, elegant design. In contrast, the short runs of dilapidated chain link fencing remaining along the east edge cast a messy, unkempt shadow over GLA. As noted in the *Brief History*



Sections of rusted chain link fencing still stand along the east edge, separating GLA from Island Cemetery. The poor condition of the fence detracts from the sacred ground. Most of the fence was removed during the writing of this plan.

section of this plan, some type of fence divided GLA from Island Cemetery as early as the mid-20th century, and likely earlier. If such a dividing feature is desired for the future, efforts should be made to provide a structure that complements the character of the Farewell Avenue fence.

Signs

Several signs, made in three different styles, mark GLA from the outside. A white and black metal “Rhode Island Historical Cemetery” marker hangs from the metal picket fence facing Farewell, accompanied by a blue and white metal City of Newport sign marking the Common Burying Ground. An identical City of Newport sign hangs near the Warner Street entrance. None of these State and City signs mentions GLA, however a black metal sign, suspended from a pair of circular posts, stands inside the Dyre Avenue entrance off Farewell, parallel with the street, calling attention to the “Colonial African Burial Ground.” Designed by the Stokes family in 2017, this handsome marker displays an African proverb, “*Life is a shadow and a mist; it passes quickly by, and is no more.*” These signs each provide a different level of information about the property – all of it relevant and important – and should be retained, and perhaps enhanced with the addition of interpretive information about GLA and its broad-reaching historical significance.

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Three styles of signs mark the Common Burying Ground, each providing a different level of information. Only the large black metal sign (shown at right) specifically mentions GLA.

Grave Markers

GLA contains a total of 641 known grave markers dating to the colonial era through to the present day. Each of these stones was assessed by Amanda Trienens (Cultural Heritage Conservation, LLC) and Sari Uricheck (Acanthus, LLC) as part of the 2022 *God's Little Acre Condition Assessment Final Report*. Stone materials included slate, marble, granite, concrete, and sandstone. The team assigned a treatment priority to each, giving "1" to the highest priority and "4" to the lowest. Sixty-nine were determined to be highest priority; 98 were priority 2; 208 were priority 3; and 266 were priority 4. The report included treatment recommendations based on contemporary conservation standards.

Character-Defining Features

The GLA landscape contains several features that both add to and detract from its historic character, most of which are discussed above. In summary, the existing features that support the historic character include:





- Long views across the landscape
- Original, unaltered topography
- Elms and fencing along Farewell Avenue
- Dyre Avenue
- Family plot details
- Grave markers (head and foot) and monuments



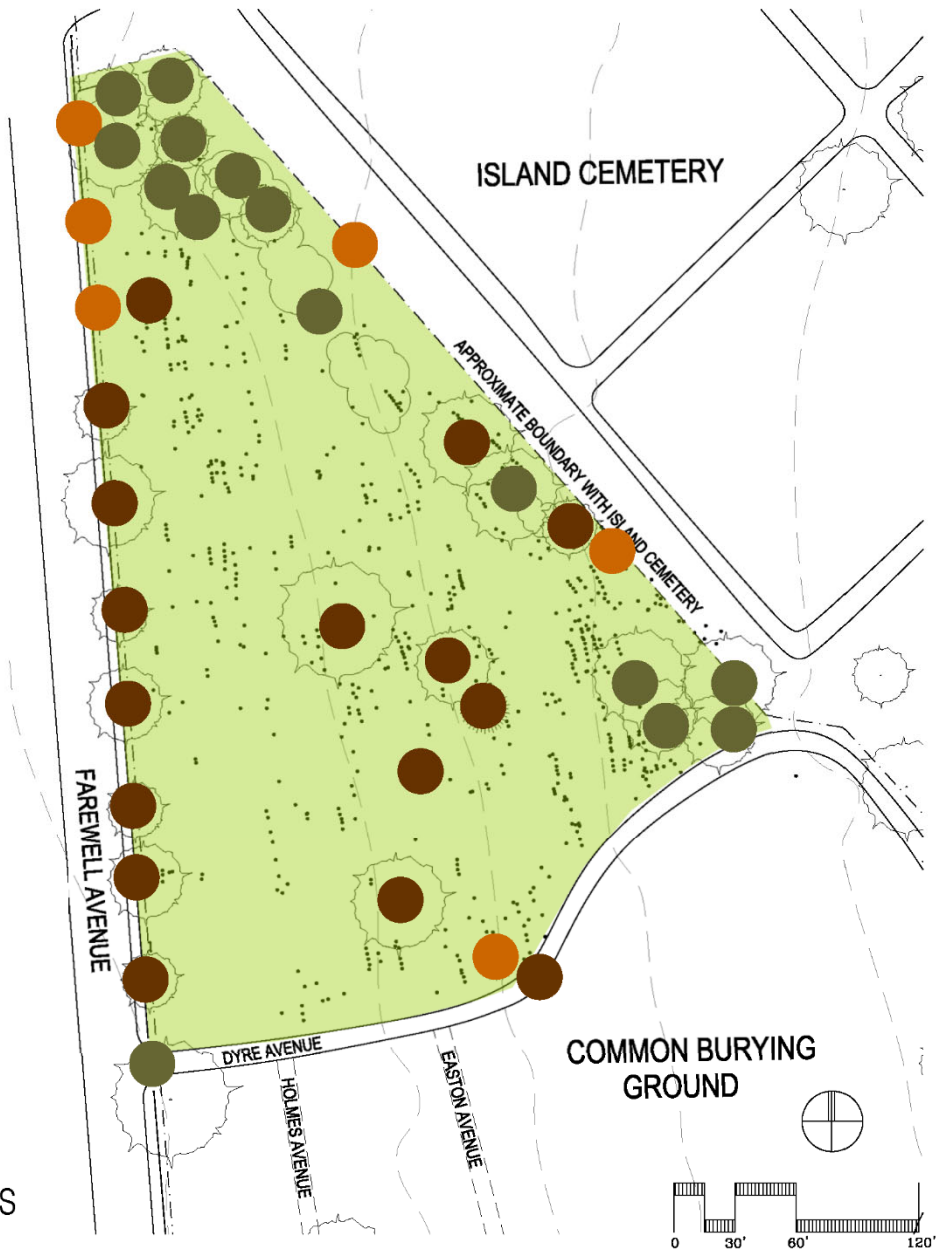
Low granite posts mark the corners of a family plot at GLA. The posts once held iron rails to complete the enclosure.

God's Little Acre Landscape Master Plan
Newport, Rhode Island

Legend

-  God's Little Acre Section of the Newport Common Burying Ground
-  Existing Character-Defining Features:
- Dyre Avenue
 - Family Plot Details
 - Grave Markers
 - Original Topography
 - Elms along Farewell Avenue
 - Long View Across God's Little Acre
-  Character-Conflicting Features:
- Kansan Cherry Trees
 - Makeshift Entrance
 - Makeshift Parking Spots
 - Eroded Gate at Farewell
-  Missing Character-Defining Features:
- Fence Along East Boundary
 - Missing Grave Markers
 - Missing Elms Along Farewell

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES
Landscape Assessment



*God's Little Acre Landscape Master Plan
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Contemporary features that detract from the historic character include:

- Remnants of the chain link fencing along east edge
- Kansan cherry trees
- Makeshift entrances
- Makeshift parking spots
- Invasive vines

Finally, historic features that may have once augmented the cemetery include a more substantial fence along the east boundary, missing grave markers and missing elms from the allee along Farewell Avenue.

Preliminary Recommendations

GLA's status on the National Register of Historic Places requires that efforts to preserve, enhance and improve the landscape adhere to the four treatment methods outlined by the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the *Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* (1996).²³ They include:

- *Preservation*, where existing form, integrity and materials of the landscape will be sustained;
- *Rehabilitation*, where features in the landscape will be repaired or altered to make their use compatible with the landscape's historical value;
- *Restoration*, where landscape features will be returned to their original form; and
- *Reconstruction*, where landscape features no longer extant will be restored.

Based on the preceding assessment, the following preliminary recommendations should be considered for the Landscape Master Plan. Note that the recommendations do not appear in order of importance or priority.

- Replant the elms missing from the regular allee along Farewell Avenue;
- Upgrade the entrances and exits off Farewell Avenue, adding more permanent "aprons" to each where Dyre and Clarke Avenues meet the sidewalk;
- Upgrade the surface of the roadways to eliminate low spots and water collection areas;
- Create a designated parking spot or spots for visitors arriving at GLA by car;
- Consider creating a pathway in the alignment of Easton or Holmes Avenues to provide pedestrians a separate, distinct route to GLA from both Warner Street and Farewell Avenue;
- Remove the Kansan cherries as they decline and die out;
- Develop a plan to replant GLA with a greater diversity of tree species;

²³ Birnbaum, Charles A. and Christine Capella Peters, eds., U. S. Department of the interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships, Heritage Preservation Services, Historic Landscape Initiative, Washington, D.C., 1996

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- Construct a new fence, made of historically sensitive and durable materials, along the eastern edge;
- Retain and maintain the state, city and GLA signs marking entrances to the property; consider providing additional interpretive information about GLA inside the property, closer to the burial sites;
- Conserve the grave markers per the recommendations of the *God's Little Acre Condition Assessment Final Report*, and according to American Institute for Conservation standards.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the plan provides specific recommendations for preserving the God's Little Acre landscape. Organized around a series of six "preservation projects," the recommendations aim to fulfill the plan's goal: to upgrade the property's physical condition so that God's Little Acre appears well-maintained and is recognized, acknowledged, and respected for its historical significance. The recommendations will (1) enhance the overall look of GLA; (2) improve access for visitors and maintenance crews; and (3) clarify circulation. The preservation projects have been developed in accordance with the United States Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, and with the guiding principle of this plan. Note that while the projects have been numbered, they do not appear in priority order, and implementation of each project will depend on financing opportunities and fundraising successes.

Project 1: East Edge Clearing

As discussed in the *Assessment* section, the east edge of GLA, separating the property from the adjacent Island Cemetery, has deteriorated, resulting in a ragged, unkempt appearance. During the writing of this plan, the city made an initial mitigation effort, by removing most of the dilapidated chain link fencing and several of the Kansan cherry trees, and initiating measures to control (and eventually eradicate) invasive colonies of poison and English ivy. Project 1 will build upon these efforts by continuing tree removal and eradication of the ivies.

Project 2: East Edge Fencing

As discussed in the *Brief History* section, some type of structure has marked the 430' boundary between GLA and Island Cemetery since the mid-1800s, including wood and chain link fencing, as well as the Kansan cherry trees. While not essential, the marking has provided a visual backdrop to GLA's gravestones and has helped to distinguish GLA from its neighbor to the east. Project 2 offers three options for reconstructing this edge:

- *Option A: Field Stone Wall.* This option will involve constructing a low (no more than 30" high) stone wall along the east edge, built in the style of the stone walls found throughout Aquidneck Island.²⁴ A planting of native tree species (refer to *Management* section of this plan) will further reinforce the edge.
- *Option B: Granite Bollards.* This option will involve installing six-inch-square, 42-inch-high granite bollards, spaced six to eight feet apart, along the length of the edge. The edge will require approximately 54 bollards if spaced 8' apart. A planting of native tree species (refer to *Management* section of this plan) will further reinforce the edge.
- *Option C: Steel Picket Fence.* This option will involve constructing a five-feet high (nominal) steel picket fence in the style of the existing fence lining Farewell Avenue. As with options A and

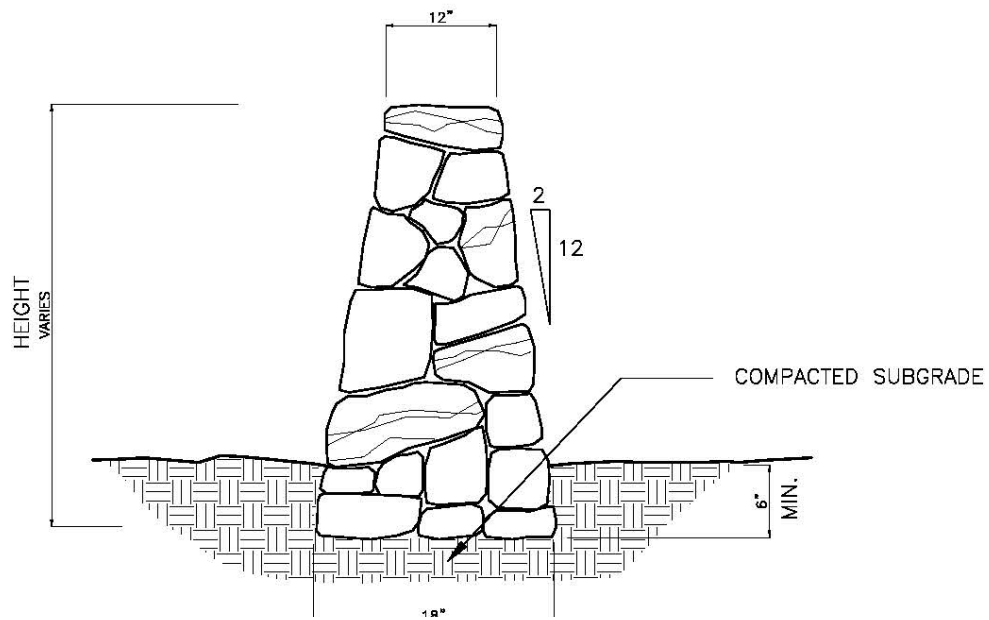
²⁴ For more information about the history of stone walls on Aquidneck Island, refer to "Barns and Stone Walls Initiative Historic Resource Report," 2018 (citation in bibliography)

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B, a planting of native tree species (refer to Management section of this plan) will further reinforce the edge.



Stone wall at the Simmons Farm, Middletown, RI. Photo courtesy of the Aquidneck Stone Wall Initiative.

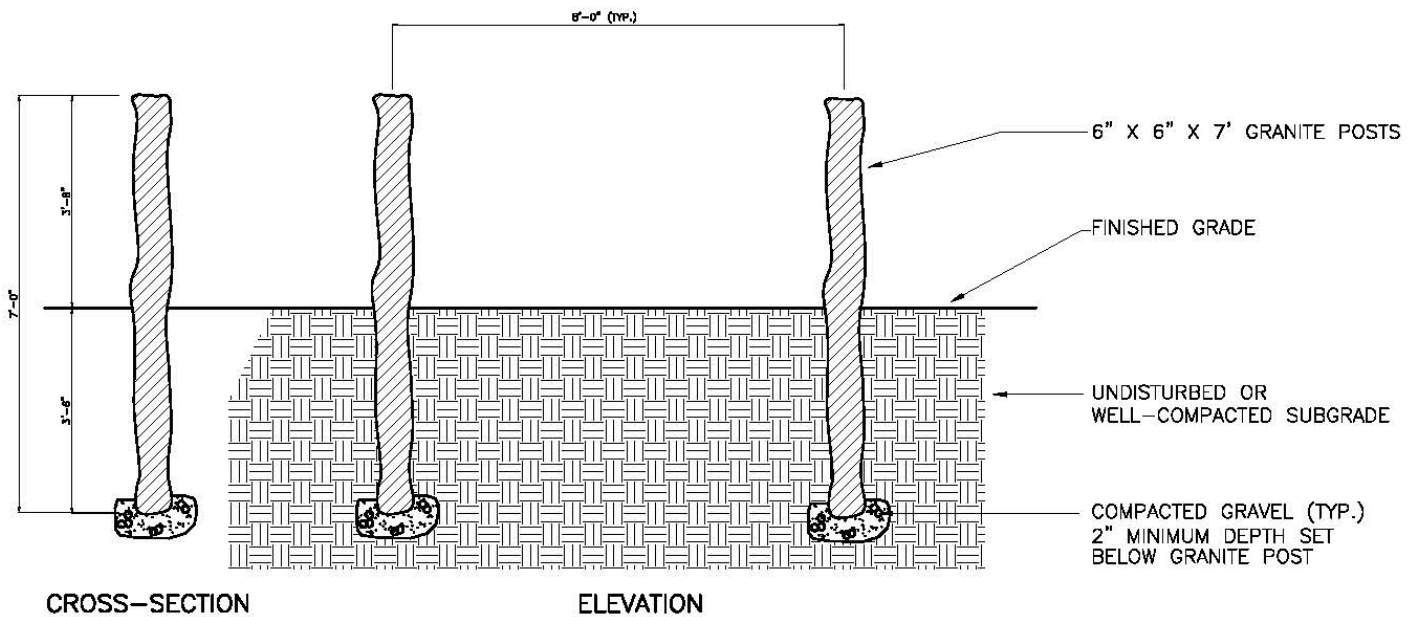


Typical dry laid stone wall detail. Source: Martha Lyon Landscape Architecture, LLC.

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Reclaimed granite posts can be cut to dimensions needed. Photo courtesy of Stone of New England, Charlton, MA



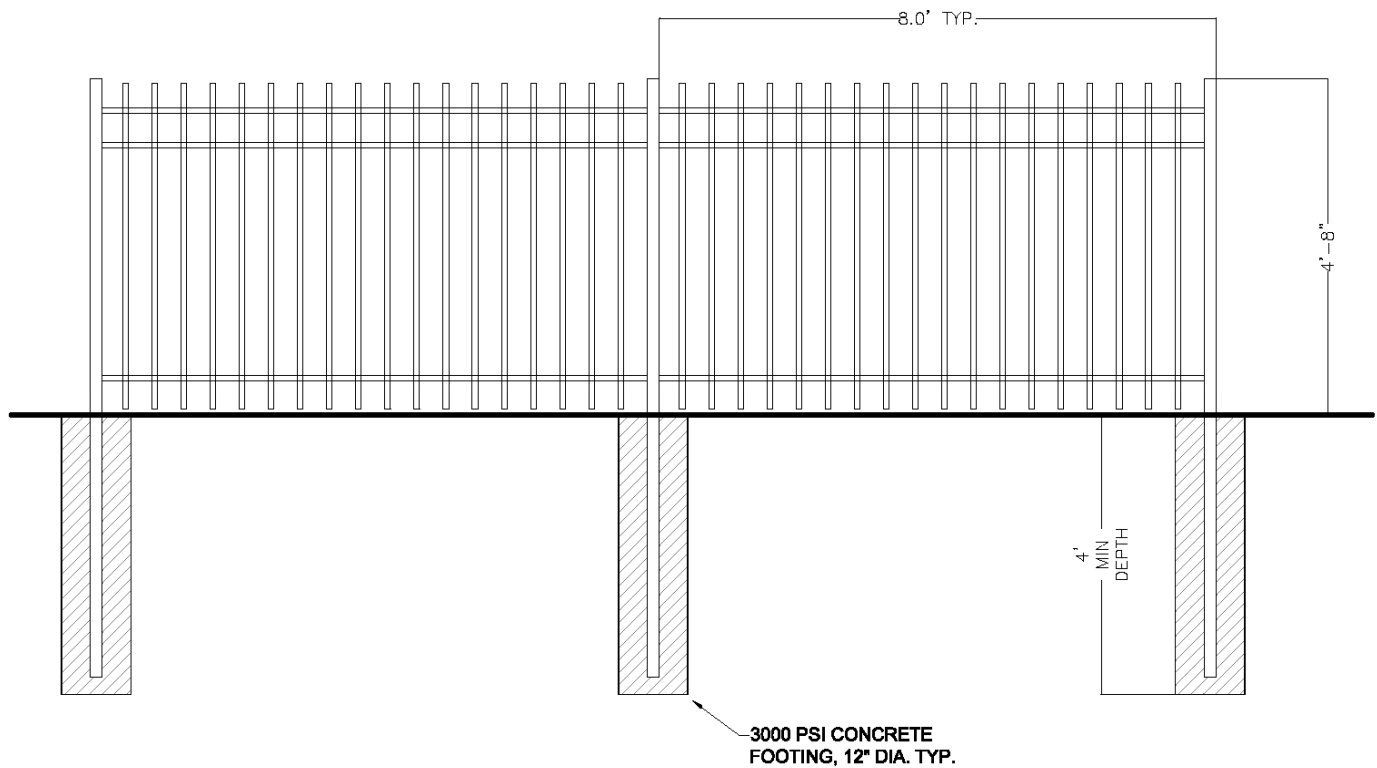
NOT-TO-SCALE

Typical granite post fence installation. Source: Martha Lyon Landscape Architecture, LLC

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A steel picket fence installed around an historic cemetery. The spacing of the pickets allows passersby to view the cemetery. At the same time, the fence serves as a barrier.



Typical steel picket fence installation. Drawing not to scale. Source: Martha Lyon Landscape Architecture, LLC

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Project 3: Tree Replanting

The *Assessment* section noted that two species – Kansan cherry and elm – dominate the mix of species at GLA, representing nearly 80% of the tree population. The elms form an allee along Farewell Avenue and should be retained, however removal of the cherries as they decline should continue. Project 3 will involve development of a tree re-planting plan that will (1) help further delineate GLA's edges, (2) provide additional shade in GLA's interior, and (3) diversify the mix of tree species. Refer to the *Management* section of this plan for suggested tree species.

Project 4: Grave Marker Conservation Treatment

As discussed briefly in the *Assessment* section, 641 grave markers were identified with GLA by Amanda Trienens (Cultural Heritage Conservation, LLC) and Sari Uricheck (Acanthus, LLC) as part of the 2022 *God's Little Acre Condition Assessment Final Report*. The team assigned a treatment priority to each, giving one to the highest priority and four to the lowest, as follows:

- Priority 1: 69 markers
- Priority 2: 98 markers
- Priority 3: 208 markers
- Priority 4: 266 markers

Project 4 involves conservation treatment of the 641 markers, based on the recommendations made in this report. Due to the cost of conservation treatment, and the number of stones, Project 4 should be undertaken in phases, beginning with the 69 Priority 1 stones, and proceeding by priority from there. Treatment of Priority 3 and 4 stones, totaling 474, could be undertaken in sub-phases.

Project 5: Landscape Interpretive Plan

Project 5 involves expanding on current efforts to share with the public, information about GLA's significance. These efforts include development of a website dedicated to God's Little Acre;²⁵ creation of a video tour;²⁶ placement of a welcome sign; the writing and printing of a tri-fold brochure; and inclusion of GLA in many works of history. A landscape interpretive plan will include all of these and make recommendations for further efforts and activities, such as:

- development and installation of additional interpretive sign(s) outlining GLA's history and discussing the prominent individuals interred within;
- development of additional educational tours that focus on specific features within the cemetery, such as the grave markers and carvers;
- development of map that can be accessed via the internet, with the grave markers shown and a function that allows users to click on markers and learn about the interred.²⁷ Such a map can include information about the markers that is lost or unreadable, such as epitaphs and inscriptions.

²⁵ <https://www.colonialcemetery.com/>

²⁶ See Boston Globe, February 28, 2022, "In God's Little Acre, a final resting place full of history," Amanda Milkovits, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/video/2022/02/28/metro/new-england/rhode-island/things-to-do/in-gods-little-acre-a-final-resting-place-full-of-history/?event=event25>

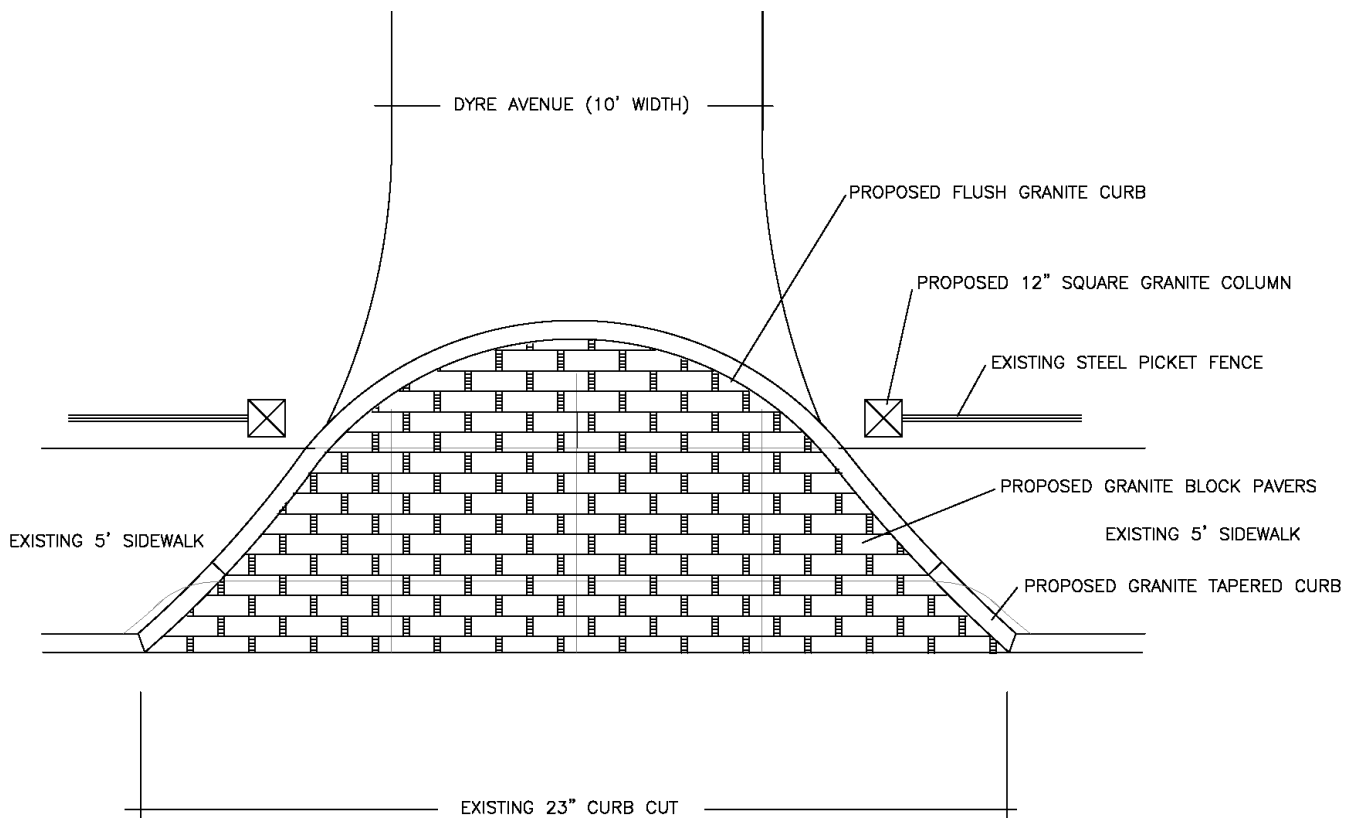
²⁷ For an example of such an interactive map, see: <https://maps.smalltown360.com/831/62/evergreen/>

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Project 6: GLA Access

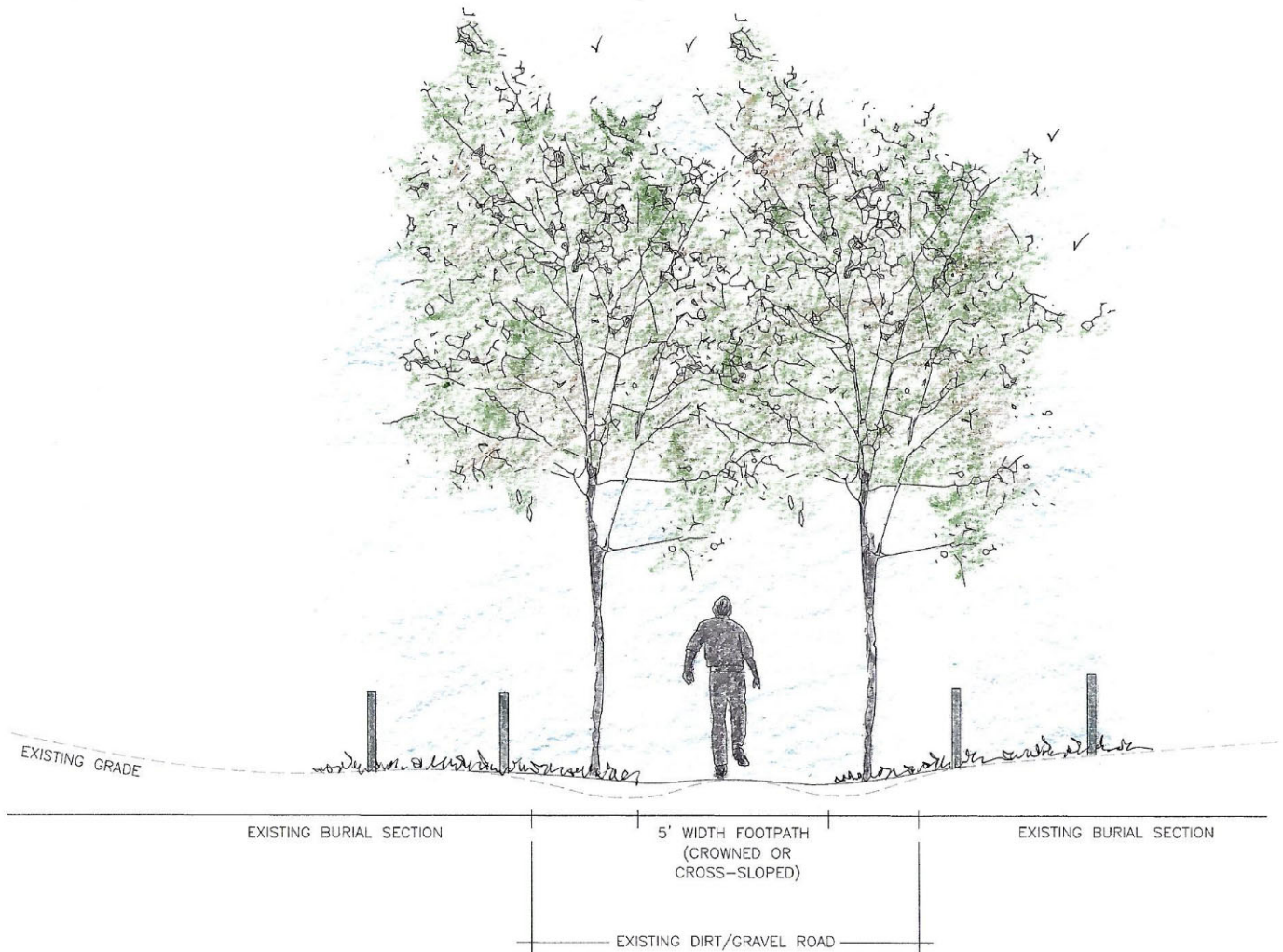
Critical to improving access to GLA for both visitors and maintenance crews, will be improvements to the current entrances and circulation system, all of which lie within the Common Burying Ground and outside the edges of GLA. Improvements to entrances, roads and paths will allow visitors to locate, enter and travel to GLA. Project 6 will involve one of two options for modifying the current flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic through the Common Burying Ground. Both options direct vehicles to enter via the Dyre Avenue gate and exit via Clarke Avenue gate, and add granite cobble "aprons" to the gate areas (see sketch, below). The options are as follows:

- **Option A: Dyre to Easton to Clarke.** Visitors by vehicle will enter the Common Burying Ground at Dyre Avenue (off Farewell), proceed eastward on Dyre to Easton, turn right and travel southward to Clarke, and turn right onto Clarke to exit. Holmes is closed to vehicles, and instead is converted to a walking path, lined with shade trees.
- **Option B: Dyre to Holmes to Clarke.** Visitors by vehicle will enter the Common Burying Ground at Dyre Avenue (off Farewell), proceed eastward on Dyre to Holmes, turn right and travel Southward to Clarke, and turn right onto Clarke to exit. Easton will be converted to a tree-lined pedestrian path.



Improvements to the gates at Farewell Avenue will include replacing the existing concrete aprons with granite cobble pavers, secured by flush granite curbing. The addition of twelve-inch-square granite posts, placed at each end of the existing fence, will further enhance the entrances. Sketch not to scale.

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Non-vehicular ways will be converted to five-foot-wide walking paths, shaded with trees. Drawing not to scale.

The remainder of the pedestrian portions of Clarke and Dyre Avenues will be converted to walking paths (see cross-section above), to maintain the historic (mid 1800s) circulation pattern and to provide pedestrian access to GLA from the Warner Street gate. In both options, visitors to GLA and the Common Burying Ground by car will be directed to park along Warner Street or adjacent side streets, where public parking is allowed until 6:00 p.m., and enter the property on foot via the Warner Street gate. Maintenance vehicles and equipment will be parked and staged across Farewell Avenue at the Braman Cemetery.

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Legend

-  God's Little Acre Section
-  Newport Common Burying Ground
-  Vehicular Way
-  Pedestrian Way
-  Parking



CIRCULATION OPTION A
Recommendations

In circulation option A, visitors arriving by vehicle will enter the Common Burying Ground at Dyre Avenue (off Farewell), proceed eastward on Dyre to Easton, turn right and travel southward to Clarke, and turn right onto Clarke to exit. Holmes is closed to vehicles, and instead is converted to a walking path, lined with shade trees.

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Legend

-  God's Little Acre Section
-  Newport Common Burying Ground
-  Vehicular Way
-  Pedestrian Way
-  Parking



CIRCULATION OPTION B
Recommendations

In circulation option B, visitors arriving by vehicle will enter the Common Burying Ground at Dyre Avenue (off Farewell), proceed eastward on Dyre to Holmes, turn right and travel southward to Clarke, and turn right onto Clarke to exit. Easton will be converted to a tree-lined pedestrian path.

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Preservation Budgets

The following are preliminary budget projections for preservation of the God's Little Acre landscape, intended to be used for fundraising purposes only. The projections have been prepared at the planning level using 2022 construction industry estimates and do not include fees for archaeology, design and/or engineering. Actual costs of treatment and/or construction will change during design and/or engineering, construction detailing, and possibly during construction itself. Prior to commencing with any of the six projects, GLAPP and the City of Newport should prepare more exact estimates that incorporate precise costs of materials to be used and current labor rates. Some of the tasks may be undertaken by city crews.

Project 1: East Edge Clearing

Costs for Project 1 include labor and materials for removing all existing remnants of the chain link fence, and continued control invasive growth of poison and English ivy growth. This work will be undertaken by city crews and financed, as required, on a yearly basis.

Project 2: East Edge Fence

Costs for Project 2 will vary, depending on the option chosen to demarcate the 430' length of the east edge. Prior to selecting the best material, and the city should (1) commission a boundary survey of GLA to establish precise location of the edge, and (2) negotiate with Island Cemetery in to determine the most suitable edge material for both properties. Costs of constructing the options include survey, and labor and materials to construct the 430' fence.

- *Option A: 30" Field Stone Wall: \$135,000 - \$140,000²⁸*
- *Option B: 42" Granite Post Fence: \$34,000 - \$36,000*
- *Option C: 5' Steel Picket Fence: \$65,000 - \$70,000*

Project 3: Tree Re-planting Plan: \$5,000 - \$6,000

Costs for Project 3 include engaging the services of a landscape architect to develop a plan to add new trees to GLA, including east and west edge plantings, as well as introduction of trees to the interior.

Project 4: Grave Marker Conservation Treatment: \$1,500/stone minimum

Costs for Project 4 include labor and materials required to treat the 641 grave markers identified as requiring conservation. Tasks will include cleaning, unearthing fragments, fabricating bases, resetting, and possibly repairing fractures, and costs will vary, depending on the degree of difficulty in treating the stones. The work should only be undertaken by a trained stone conservator, qualified to treat slate, marble, granite, brownstone, and concrete stones. The work may be undertaken in phases, based on urgency as identified in the 2022 condition assessment.

²⁸ Figure based on average 30" height wall with stone purchased for the project. Donated stone would significantly reduce the cost.

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Project 5: Landscape Interpretive Plan: \$8,000 - \$10,000

Costs for Project 5 include hiring an historian/interpretation planner to develop a plan that includes, at a minimum, recommendations for signage, web-based mapping, lost epitaph/inscription recording, and interpretive tours.

Project 6: GLA Access

Costs for Project 6 include labor and materials to upgrade the two Farewell Avenue entrances, resurface an established vehicular route with compacted aggregate, and build 5' width stabilized aggregate footpaths in the alignment of the remaining roads (to be converted to pedestrian ways).²⁹ Note that much of this project lies outside the boundary of GLA and costs do not include planting of additional trees within the Common Burying Ground.

- *Circulation Option A:*
 - 2 Aprons: \$60,000 - \$70,000
 - Vehicular Way (732 LF): \$8,500 - \$10,000
 - Pedestrian Paths (1765 LF): \$81,600 - \$85,000
- *Circulation Option B:*
 - 2 Aprons: \$60,000 - \$70,000
 - Vehicular Way (595 LF): \$7,000 - \$8,000
 - Pedestrian Paths (1712 LF): \$79,200 - \$80,000

²⁹ Cost of aggregate based on 2002 pricing for Organic-Lock stabilized decomposed granite: <https://www.organic-lock.com/>

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MANAGEMENT

This final section of the plan provides a guide to managing the GLA landscape over time. It includes strategies for care of plants (lawns, trees and ground cover), fencing, and grave markers, and provides a maintenance schedule. By following this guide, the city's crews, Historic Cemetery Advisory Commission, and volunteers will help safeguard GLA's health and make the property more accessible and understandable to Newport residents and visitors. For detailed information about best practices for landscape management in historic cemeteries and burying grounds, refer to the National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services *Brief 48: Preserving Grave Markers in Historic Cemeteries*.³⁰

Management Log

Before the city begins caring for the landscape, the cemetery's caretaker – Newport's Parks, Grounds, and Forestry department (division of the Public Services Department) – should maintain a "management log," or ongoing written record of inspections, repairs, and instructions of new features, listed by date. The log should include methods and materials employed, as well as names and contact information for any specialists engaged in the cemetery's care. The log should be stored, in both electronic and manual format, in a secure location at the Parks, Grounds and Forestry office.

Existing Plants

Trees. The city's arborist should continue to regularly inspect GLA's trees for signs of infestations and/or decay and implement any needed remedy. In general, the following measures will help stabilize the existing trees:

- Test the GLA soil for quality in relationship to the mature tree population. The test will detect any soil deficiencies and determine a remedy for correcting them.
- Provide and install cables as required. These will help stabilize any weakly-joined tree limbs.
- Prune trees, removing all dead wood greater than ½" in diameter.
- Where possible, create rings of mulch around the base of trees, as wide as possible and up to the diameter of the tree crown, taking care not to obscure gravestones.
- Where soil has built up at the base of trees, remove enough to expose the root collar.
- Continue to remove any dead trees or tree limbs.

Lawns. The following fertilizing and mowing guidelines will help maintain the lawn areas, promoting a lush, green appearance and healthier, longer living plants.

³⁰ <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/48-preserving-grave-markers.htm>

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1. Fertilize sparingly, as too much fertilizer can cause grass to grow too rapidly, requiring more mowing and making the plants more susceptible to disease. Not enough fertilizer can result in weaker plants that are more susceptible to disease or stress brought on by drought.
2. Apply fertilizer three times per year – around Memorial Day and Labor Day, and finally, around Halloween.
3. Do NOT fertilize in mid-summer. At this time of year, roots have become dormant. Fertilizer will cause the leaves to grow, making the plants less tolerant of drought, heat and disease.
4. Follow these fertilizing instructions:
 - Memorial Day – apply 1 pound of Nitrogen per 1,000 sf (with 50% of Nitrogen slow-release). Use an N:P:K Ratio of 14-14-14.
 - Labor Day - apply 2 pounds of Nitrogen per 1,000 sf (with 50% of Nitrogen slow-release). Use an N:P:K Ratio of 14-14-14.
 - Halloween - apply 1 pound of Nitrogen per 1,000 sf (with 75% of Nitrogen slow-release). Use an N:P:K Ratio of 28-3-9.
5. Do not mow with large, heavy, stand-up riding mowers. When mowing, remove no more than one-third of the height of the turf at one time, always leaving twice as much leaf height as is cut.
6. The best level for mown grass is 2 ½ inches, with 2 to 3 ½ inches the range.
7. It is best to mow lawns on an as-needed basis, not on a regular schedule, such as once per week.
8. When mowing around monuments and markers, crews should avoid contact between the equipment and stones, and keep mowers 6" to 12" away from the stones. *Slashes near the base of stones are one of the most common causes of breakage.* Hand-held string-trimmers are recommended when cutting within the 6" – 12" of stones.

New Plants

Planting Methods. When introducing new plants to the cemetery, the city should follow industry standards for planting of trees and ground covers. At a minimum, the city should adhere to the recommendations included in the planting details included in this section.

Trees. The plan calls for the removal of several declining trees and replacement with new trees, once a replanting plan is developed. When introducing new trees, the city should select species from a palette of plants that are well-suited to Newport's climate, and where possible, encourage the growth of native plant species.³¹ The following is a list of suggested tree species:

³¹ "Native" species are those believed to have been present in the state prior to European settlement that began in the 15th century. (Vascular Flora of Rhode Island. Kingston: Rhode Island Natural History Survey, 1998.) For a list of Rhode Island native tree species, see: <https://web.uri.edu/rinativeplants/>

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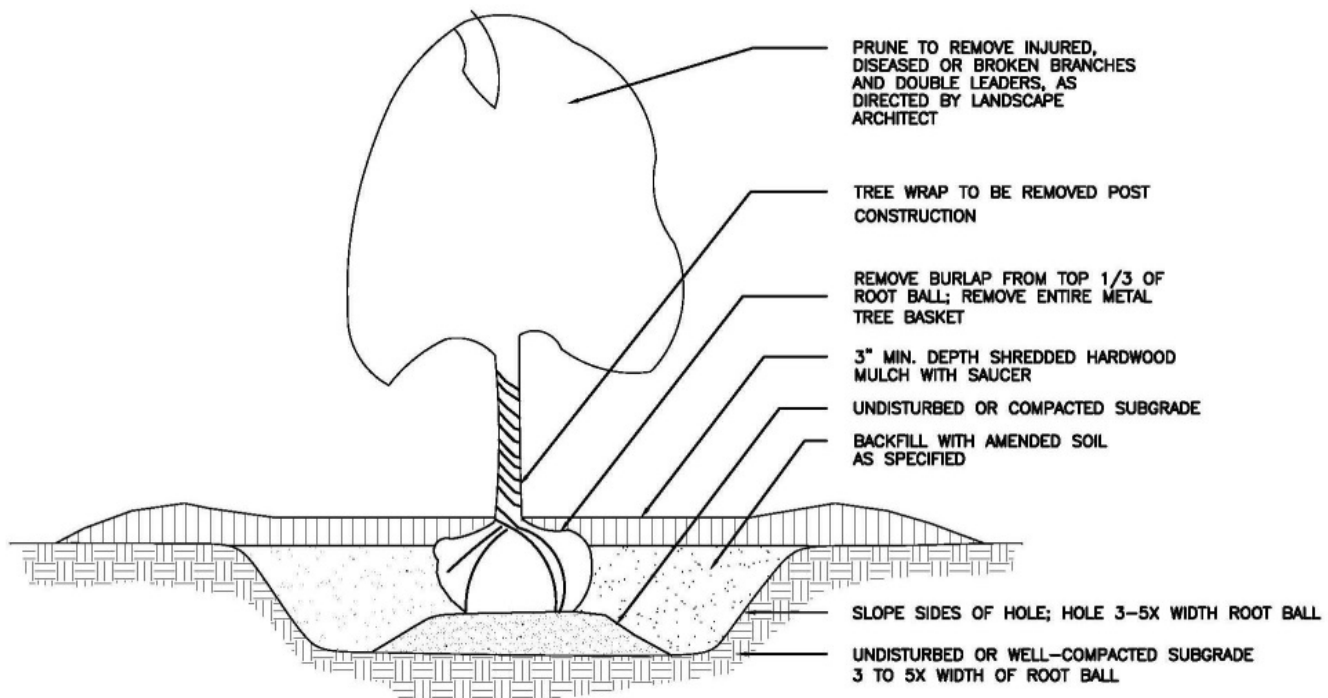
Evergreen Trees

<i>Abies balsamica</i>	Balsam Fir
<i>Juniperus virginiana</i> **	Eastern Red Cedar
<i>Larix laricina</i>	Larch, Tamarack

Shade & Flowering Trees

<i>Acer rubrum</i> **	Red Maple
<i>Cercidiphyllum japonicum</i>	Katsuratree
<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>	Sweetgum
<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i> **	Tulip Tree
<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i> **	Northern Black Tupelo
<i>Swida alternifolia</i> **	Pagoda Dogwood
<i>Styphnolobium japonicum</i>	Japanese Scholartree

**Species native to Rhode Island

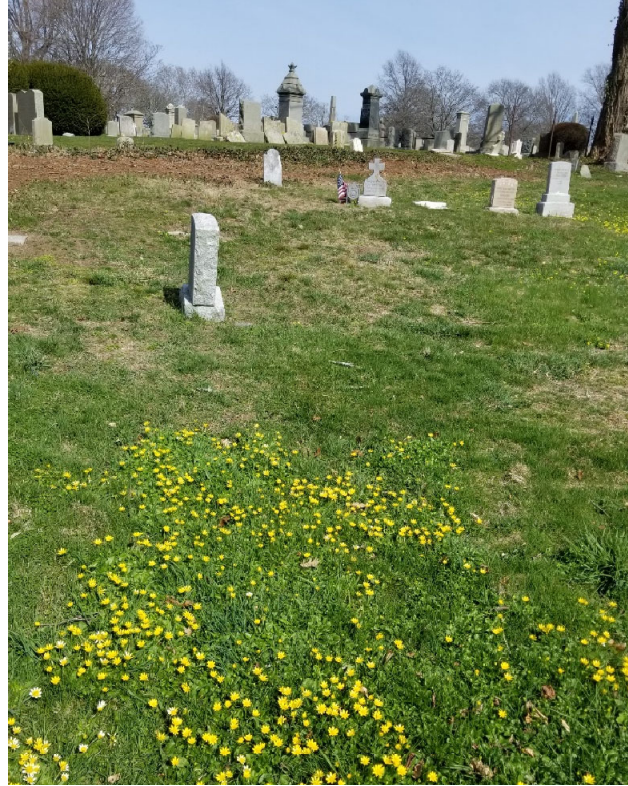


Tree planting detail. Note that the same general planting guidelines may be used for evergreen trees. New trees with a caliper greater than 3" to 3.5" are not recommended, as they require many years to acclimate to new settings, and often do not survive. Source: Martha Lyon Landscape Architecture, LLC

Ground Cover. The master plan recommends planting perennial ground cover, rather than turf, where the cemetery grade has been disturbed. This will include areas where trees and brush have been cleared, fencing has been removed and replaced, and gravestones have been unearthed and/or set in new bases. Ground covers minimize the need for mowing, particularly around gravestones and fence posts and in so doing, help preserve the longevity of these features. They also add beauty in the form of

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texture, color and scent, to the GLA landscape. Pollinator ground cover species help support biodiversity, and should be used as often as possible, as should native species.



Existing ground cover at GLA, blooming in spring. These low-growing plants help stabilize slopes, reduce the need for mowing, and provide color and texture.

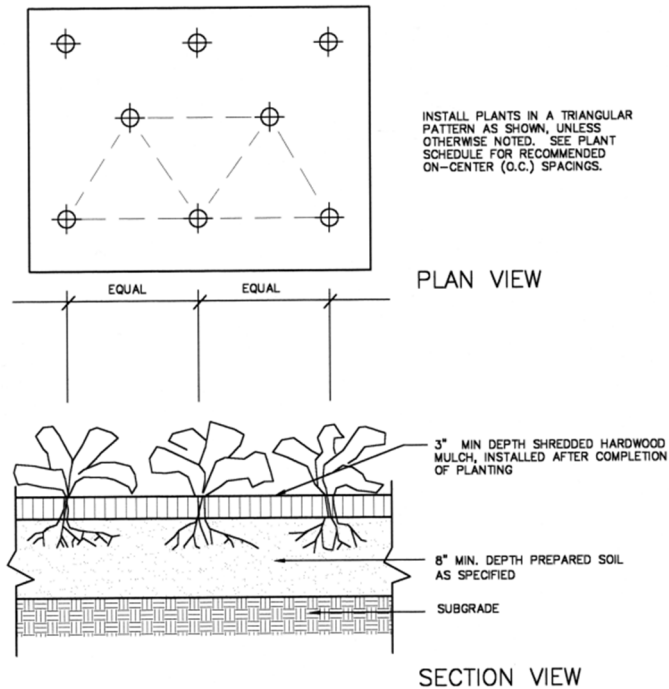
The following is a list of ground covers appropriate for the GLA landscape:

<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> 🌿**	Bear Berry
<i>Ajuga reptans</i> 🌿	Bugleweed
<i>Asarum canadense</i> **	Wild Ginger
<i>Cornus canadensis</i> **	Bunchberry
<i>Erythronium albidum</i> **	White Trout Lily
<i>Galium odoratum</i>	Sweet Woodruff
<i>Geranium maculatum</i> 🌿	Wild Geranium
<i>Housatonia caerulea</i>	Bluets
<i>Pachysandra procumbens</i> 🌿**	Alleghany Spurge
<i>Phlox stolonifera</i> 🌿**	Creeping Phlox
<i>Phlox subulata</i> 🌿	Moss Pink
<i>Potentilla tridentata</i> **	Wineleaf Cinquefoil
<i>Sedum</i> 🌿	Stonecrops
<i>sp. reflexum, sp. cauticola</i>	
<i>sp. anglicum, sp. brevifolium</i>	
<i>Thymus serpyllum</i> 🌿	Creeping Thyme
<i>Viola Canadensis</i> **	Canadian Violet
<i>Waldsteinia fragarioides</i> 🌿**	Barren Strawberry

🌿 Pollinator Species

**Native ground cover species

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Ground cover planting detail. These low-growing species are recommended for GLA to be used in lieu of turf, for ease in maintenance and for the color and texture they provide in the landscape. Source: Martha Lyon Landscape Architecture, LLC.

Fence

The durable, long-lasting materials for the new fence (a dry-laid stone wall, granite bollards, or steel picket), if installed properly, should sustain itself without much care. Regardless, the city should implement the following management methods for delaying and/or inhibiting any premature deterioration:

- Clear volunteer tree, shrub, and vine growth away from the wall or bollards, and remove buildup of dead leaves. Collection of these in and around the wall or bollards not only contributes to decay, it results in an overall unkempt appearance, leaving an impression of neglect and/or abandonment.
- Inspect the fence yearly for deterioration, such as leaning or dislodging of stones. If deterioration is detected, make repairs as soon as possible, as deferred maintenance will add significantly to the long-term cost of upkeep.

Grave Markers

The *Recommendations* section of this plan includes conservation of gravestones in need of treatment, as identified in the 2022 *God's Little Acre Condition Assessment Final Report*. This work must be carried out by trained professionals only. Under no circumstances should untrained individuals attempt to repair stones, as improper treatment of stones can lead to further deterioration. Conservation professionals will employ methods and materials that help stabilize the stones for many years, however because the stones lie exposed to weather, further deterioration is always possible. Should further damage occur, the city should consult a stone conservation specialist, before undertaking any type of repair.

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Maintenance Schedule

January - March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inspect the grounds for evidence of theft and/or vandalism and report to Newport Police Department; pick up any litter.
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inspect the gravestones for damage that may have occurred over the winter. Consult a conservation specialist about repairing any major damage. ▪ Remove leaves from around the wall or bollards
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inspect trees for damage that may have occurred over the winter and note any needs for pruning and removals. ▪ Plant new trees and groundcovers as required.
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conduct pruning and removals of trees. ▪ Continue to plant new trees and groundcovers, as required. ▪ Begin mowing turf on an as-needed basis to a height no less than 2-1/2 inches. Suspend mowing during hot, dry periods.
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue mowing turf on an as-needed basis to a height no less than 2-1/2 inches. Suspend mowing during hot, dry periods.
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue mowing turf on an as-needed basis to a height no less than 2-1/2 inches. Suspend mowing during hot, dry periods.
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue mowing turf on an as-needed basis to a height no less than 2-1/2 inches. ▪ Resume planting of new trees and groundcovers, as required. ▪ Inspect gravestones for damage that may have occurred over the summer. Consult a conservation specialist about repairing any major damage.
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete final leaf removal.
November - December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inspect the grounds for evidence of theft and/or vandalism and report to Newport Police Department; pick up any litter.

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HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

- Before 1640. Prior to the first contact by Europeans in early 1500s, the land that would become Newport was occupied by Native people, the Narragansetts, the largest tribe of the Algonquin family. Giovanni da Verranzano came into contact with Native people in Narragansett Bay in 1524, as did Dutch traders in 1614. Englishman Roger Williams arrived in 1636, followed by John Clarke (a physician) and William Coddington (a “man of wealth and position”) in 1638, all exiles from the Massachusetts Colony because of their sympathy with the Antinomian movement. Williams convinced Clarke and Coddington and several others to settle a large land grant, including Aquidneck Island. In 1639 after a dispute over power, Coddington left the main settlement (north end of the island) and migrated south with several followers and started Newport. (RIHPS, 1979)
1640. Land for the Common Burying-Ground was given to the city by the Reverend John Clarke, a medical doctor and one of the founders of Aquidneck Island. (NR Nomination) A mid-19th century newspaper article alleged that the land had once been the burial place of the Indians, from time immemorial, and then used by the first settlers of the Island. (The Daily News)
1665. The Common Burying-Ground was laid out. The oldest known burial took place the following year. (Knoblock)
1696. Governor Cranston of Rhode Island reported to the Committee for Trade and Foreign Plantations that forty-seven “Negroes” were brought into Newport on a Massachusetts vessel and sold. (Greene, 32)
1705. One and one-half acres at the northern end of the Common Burying-Ground began accepting burials of the town’s Black population. (Stokes) Many of the graves were marked by professionally-carved stones (not the norm for the black population) – approximately 250 stones created before 1800 (Knoblock).
1708. Rhode Island census shows almost ten percent of Newport’s total population of 2,203 was made up of Black “servants.” (For Africans and their descendants at the time, indentured servitude was almost always perpetual and hereditary.)
1720. The first known interment took place at God’s Little Acre, that of Hector Butcher, “servant to Mrs. Ann Butcher of Barbados.” Many other interments followed in the mid-18th century, peaking for the first of what would be two periods between 1750 and 1780. (Eyre compilation)

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1755. Approximately one-fifth of Newport's population consisted of enslaved individuals, many of whom were engaged in skilled trades. (Note: Keith Stokes stated this number to be one-third, but this may include all indentured persons, regardless of race.) The Rhode Island census of 1755 lists Newport's population as having 1,234 Blacks out of a total of 6,753 residents, or 18%. (Greene, 87)
1774. The Rhode Island Census documented 1,246 Blacks and 7,917 Whites in Newport, the highest percentage of Blacks in the colony. Most of the blacks were slaves or former slaves. (Sterling)
- 1770s. During the years of the Revolution War and British occupation, the population of Newport declined substantially, from over 9,000 in 1774 (RI Census) to 6,716 in 1790. The Black population also declined, from 1,246 in 1774 to approximately 640 in 1790 (the Census recorded only "Whites," "all free persons," and "slaves.," and excluded Indians not subject to taxation; all "other free persons" and "slaves" were likely almost entirely Black.)
1780. The (Free) African Union Society, a mutual aid society and one of the first in the nation, was founded in Newport. Many of its members and their families are interred at God's Little Acre. Harris, 608-620)
1784. Slavery was officially abolished in Rhode Island by the legislature through the Emancipation Act of 1784. (NHS website; Knoblock) This allowed for gradual emancipation only for those enslaved individuals born after March 1, 1784; girls would become free at the age of 18, while boys would have to serve their masters until the age of 21. As a result, many slave became free, however those born before 1784 would remain enslaved. Slavery thus endured into the 1840s. (Knoblock)
1787. Rev. Samuel Hopkins of the First Congregational Church at Newport wrote "Essay on the African Slave Trade" in which he stated, "Inhabitants of Rhode-Island, especially those of Newport, have had by far the greatest share in this [slave] traffic of all these United States. This trade in the human species has been the first wheel of commerce in Newport, on which every other movement in business had chiefly depended: that town has been built up and flourished, in times past, at the expen[s]e of the blood, the liberty and happiness, of the poor Africans; and the inhabitants have lived on this, and by it have gotten most of their wealth and riches."
1836. By the early 1800s, land for plots in the Common Burying-Ground had become scarce, and in response, the town purchased a tract of land abutting the east side for a new cemetery. Laid out by Henry Bull and William W. Freeborn, this new interment site remained in the possession of the town for just 12 years. (Island Cemetery website)

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1840. The town voted to spend \$500 of the new cemetery's profits on care of the Common Burying-Ground. Undertakers were first appointed to be responsibility for graves in the Common Burying-Ground.
1847. The town voted to transfer the "new cemetery" to the proprietors, and to recommend that the General Assembly for an act of incorporation. (Historical Sketch of Island Cemetery) *(Note: the Historical Sketch reported that "the Old Burying-Ground was begun without a plan; citizens deposited the dead wherever they found vacant space, the graves being subject to desecration on occurrence of each burial")*
1848. Island Cemetery was formed through an Act of Incorporation from the Legislature. The land was previously owned by the Town and had been improved and made into a cemetery. At the time of the incorporation, the new Company purchased another lot adjoining, and laid it out in the same manner. (Island Cemetery website)

The Daily News reported on the establishment of Island Cemetery: "[s]ome few years ago, the Town purchased a lot east of the Burying Ground, in this place, and appropriated it for the last solemn resting plan of the dead. Several gentlemen were much interested in this matter, and have expended their time and services in arranging and beautifying the ground, and making it what it ought to be, a pleasant resort rather than a dreaded place, to be visited only when necessity demanded. – The lot was regularly laid out, with numerous paths running through it, and ornamental trees and shrubbery, arranged therein; the small lots or sections were all taken, and many families removed their friends from the old Yard. At this time, there are several hundred buried there, above whom neat tablets or monuments have been erected, and the yards are surrounded by firm iron fences and substantial granite posts, presenting a scene of uniformity to the eye." (1/18/1848)

A committee had been appointed by the town to examine the old burial-place, with a view to its improvements. A resolution was passed forbidding all trespasses on the graves of the old ground. In October of this year, the committee reported that they had pursued the work of renovation with much success, and had exceeded the sum annually appropriated by one hundred and twenty dollars. They asked for an additional appropriation (\$500). The Street Commissioner was ordered in his leisure time to cart and furnish gravel for the avenues which the committee had caused to be made in the old burial-ground. (Historical Sketch, 8-9)

1865. Sailors stationed at the Newport Naval Station who died during the Civil War were interred at GLA, as were other Marine and Navy veterans. (Knoblock)

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1874. Efforts were made for the first time to document and catalogue the Common Burying Ground.
1895. Further efforts were made to document the Common Burying Ground, but in the process, God's Little Acre was ignored (Knoblock).
- Late 1800s-Early 1900s. A second peak in interments took place at GLA between 1890 and 1920. This may correspond to the increase in Newport's total population during this thirty-year period: 19,457 in 1890 to 30,255 in 1920. (U.S. Decennial Census)
1903. William H. Lawton created a map of the "Old City Burial Ground" which included a detailed depiction of the God's Little Acre along the northern edge, separated from the former by Dyre Avenue. An "office" building stood along Dyre Avenue inside the GLA area. Approximately 450 burials were documented on this map, and many were likely missing from the map. Approximately 58% of the stones (head and foot) were made of slate and 32% were marble.¹ (Eyre analysis) *(Note that after 1903 as many as 155 additional burials took place)*
1923. The Island Cemetery superintendent described the Old Cemetery grounds, "many lots, in fact the greater part of these grounds, are overgrown with grass, briars, and weeds covering tumbled down tombs and gravestones of ancient design."
1929. All city cemeteries were placed under the care of a Cemetery Commission. The following year, this commission asked the superintendent of Island Cemetery to take on caring for the city cemeteries.
1931. A new gate leading into Island Cemetery from Farewell Street was constructed, abutting the northernmost end of God's Little Acre.
1932. A iron fence leading along Island Cemetery's Farewell Street edge was begun, and completed in 1935.
1962. Prior to this date, a wooden fence has been erected between the Old Burying Ground and Island Cemetery, with the city owning half of the fence. In 1962, it was reported to be in poor condition. At some point (likely soon afterwards) it was replaced with chain link.
1974. The Common Burying Ground and Island Cemetery earned a place on the National Register of Historic Places.

¹ This distribution was confirmed by the 2022 God's Little Acre Condition Assessment Final Report.

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- 1990s. Work began on reviving GLA by removing reforested growth and instituting regular mowing. Multiple efforts were undertaken to document the grave markers.
2000. By the end of the 20th century, new interments had all but ceased. Just seven burials took place between 1969 and 1999.
2009. The Rhode Island Genealogical Society wrote about God's Little Acre in its Special Publication No. 10, noting that the need for preservation of stones in the burying-ground was urgent, "[t]he stones in this section are in noticeably worse condition than in the other parts of this burying ground...among the many broken, fallen, and scarred gravestones, ten are so damaged that the name cannot be read...nineteen footstones found without headstones indicate that the larger and more detailed headstones are lost."
2011. The sign marking God's Little Acre sign at Farewell Street came down in a storm (Knoblock).
- 2017 – 2020 The Stokes Family designed a replacement sign for GLA. Financed through fundraising efforts of the HCAC, the sign was fabricated and installed by city crews. Repair of headstones at GLA began through a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The effort was led by Newport's Historic Cemetery Advisory Commission.
- 2022 A conditions assessment of the 641 grave markers at GLA was completed by Cultural Heritage Conservation, LLC with Acanthus, LLC.

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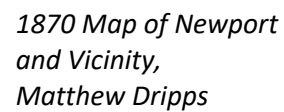
HISTORICAL IMAGES



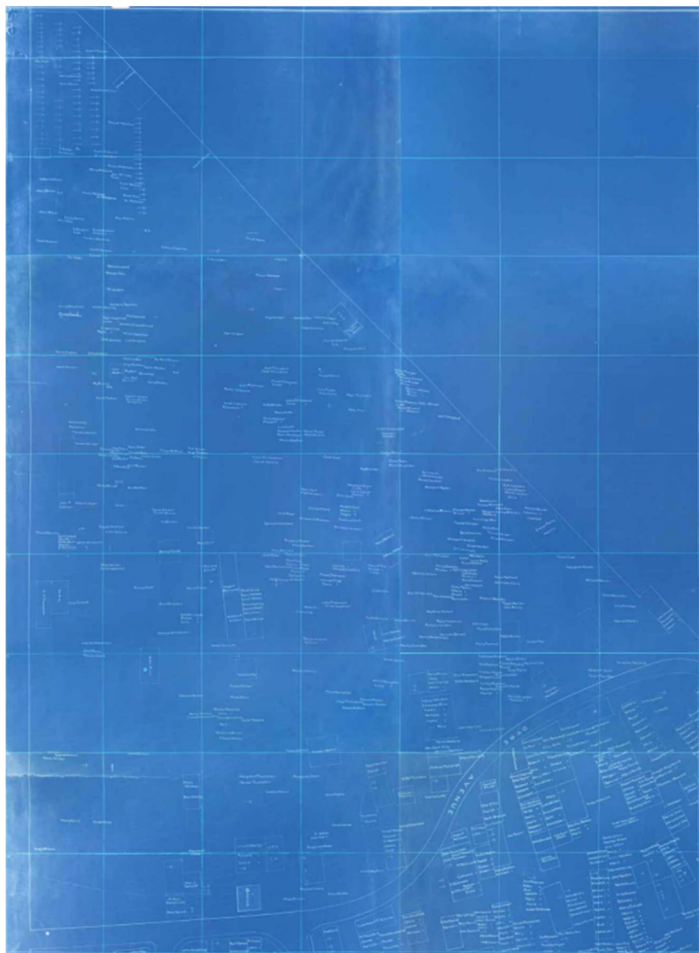
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*1903. Map of the Old City Burial Ground,
William H. Lawton (Collection of the
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*1965. God's Little Acre with Island Cemetery
in background*

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