



Finance & Administration
Office of University Architects

Operating Procedures for Old Athens Cemetery September 29, 2025

Background

Historic research shows that the Old Athens Cemetery was formerly 6 to 7.625 acres, once extending north and south of the 2.25 acre fenced portion seen today. Actual boundaries are unknown. Exhumations at Baldwin Hall from 2015-2017 demonstrated that graves extend south of the currently bounded cemetery. The excavations also showed that the original topography has been greatly altered by over a century of construction and landscape modification. The location and extent of graves is presently unknown and not easily discerned. In some areas there are no graves. In other areas human remains are buried to a depth of as much as ten feet, and in other areas the burial is now quite shallow.

The map attached at the end of this document as Exhibit A depicts the approximate extent of the cemetery in 1852 and the probability levels for the presence of graves therein. This is not to be taken as a definitive demarcation. All land within the approximate 1852 extent of the cemetery shown in Exhibit A and outside of the currently maintained cemetery shall be considered a potential abandoned Cemetery unless and until determined by an archaeologist to be free of graves.

Ground Disturbing Activities Operating Procedures

Ground disturbing activities (any activity that compacts or disturbs the ground within a project area) within the Exhibit A 1852 approximate extents, as well as the 50' additional surrounding area, should be considered carefully and with consultation as required by this Operating Procedure.

Prior Notification Required. The essence of the procedure is “Call before you dig.” For all proposed ground disturbing activities within the approximate 1852 extent, **as well as 50’ beyond the approximate 1852 extent of the cemetery**, it is necessary to contact the Associate Vice President (AVP) at the Office of University Architects for Facility Planning

(OUA), Gwynne Darden, gmdarden@uga.edu, to obtain written approval prior to any disturbance.

I. Routine, Shallow, Landscape Maintenance. The following procedures apply to routine, shallow (less than 6 inches deep) landscape maintenance activities, such as replanting existing flower beds and repair of shallow irrigation lines in existing beds:

- A. The Facilities Management Division (FMD) Grounds Department shall request approval of OUA at least 30 days in advance of proposed landscape maintenance activities or once a year, with at least 30 days advance notice, request approval of proposed routine maintenance activities for the next 12 months, that will occur within the approximate 1852 extent of the cemetery or within the area 50' outside of the 1852 extent of the cemetery.
- B. The Latin American Ethnobotanical Garden (LAEG) shall request approval of OUA at least 30 days in advance of proposed landscape maintenance activities or once a year, with at least 30 days advance notice, request approval of proposed routine maintenance activities for the next 12 months, that will occur within the approximate 1852 extent of the cemetery or within the area 50' outside of the 1852 extent of the cemetery.

II. New Construction, Maintenance, and Interior Renovation which causes ground disturbance. The following procedure applies to new construction, maintenance, and interior renovation which causes ground disturbance, including but not limited to concrete sidewalk and other hard surface repairs, saw cutting and / or excavation of existing concrete slab on grade (including any interior slab on grade or disturbance of crawl space under historic Baldwin Hall), creation of new landscape beds, planting of balled shrubs or trees, the repair or installation of irrigation lines, or any proposed ground disturbing activity in the building crawl space, etc.:

- A. Upon receipt of the request, OUA will consult with the requestor and others as appropriate. If the request is to be pursued further, OUA will contact and retain an independent archeologist to review the proposed activity, potentially including additional ground penetrating radar to provide recommendations. If a Georgia Environmental Policy Act (GEPA) evaluation is required, an independent civil engineer or other qualified professional will prepare the GEPA evaluation for OUA which in turn will submit it to the UGA Environmental Safety Division for approval. If graves are detected or results are indeterminate, it may be necessary to conduct further investigation or to cancel or modify a project. The Director of the Georgia Historic Preservation Division (State Archaeologist) will be consulted as appropriate.

III. Exceptions.

- A. These Operating Procedures do not apply to areas that have been identified by an archaeologist as free of graves.
- B. These Operating Procedures do not apply to ground disturbing activities in planting beds that were formed during the 1998 construction of the LAEG to the extent that such beds were formed by retaining walls and imported soil.

IV. Emergency Work. In the event of a ground disturbing emergency that requires immediate ground disturbance, the following operating procedures should be followed:

- A. Life Safety is the highest priority and the event should be stabilized.
- B. In the event human remains are identified due to the event or by the process of stabilizing the event, campus police shall be immediately notified.
- C. The repair entity (for example, Facilities Management Division or the Office of Emergency Preparedness) shall promptly contact the AVP for OUA (Gwynne Darden, gmdarden@uga.edu, 706-542-3605) so that, if necessary, an independent archaeologist may be brought to the site as soon as possible and any communication of the event can be shared appropriately.
 - a. In the event the Associate Vice President OUA is not immediately available, the entity shall also contact the OUA Director of Renovations and Historic Preservation (Scott Messer, smesser@uga.edu, 706-542-3605)
- D. The repair entity shall also promptly contact their Associate Vice President or Vice President about the event and the Associate Vice President for Marketing and Communications.
- E. Once stabilized and there is not an immediate danger, any repairs requiring ground disturbance should be suspended until authorization is received to proceed from the AVP for OUA.
- F. The AVP for OUA in conjunction with the OUA Director of Renovations and Historic Preservation, on an annual basis, shall have identified a professional archaeology firm to be contacted in case of an emergency.
- G. The AVP for OUA or OUA Director of Renovations and Historic Preservation will contact and coordinate with the Director of the Georgia Historic Preservation Division (State Archaeologist) as appropriate.

V. Distribution of Ground Disturbing Activities Operating Procedure. To insure

awareness, the Ground Disturbing Operating Procedure shall reside and have documented review once a year as follows and the OUA Director of Historic Preservation shall lead each of these meetings:

- A. At the Office of University Architects for Facilities Planning, with documented review with Office of University Architects for Facilities Planning staff as determined by the Associate Vice President for Facilities Planning;
- B. At the Facilities Management Division with documented review with personnel of Grounds Department, Operations and Maintenance Department, Maintenance Project Department, Maintenance Engineering Department, Plumbing Shop, Old Athens Cemetery Primary Caretaker, Office of Sustainability and other applicable departments as determined by the Associate Vice President for Facilities Management Division;
- C. At the Environmental Safety Division, with documented review with staff as determined by the Associate Vice President for Environmental Safety Division;
- D. At the Office of Emergency Preparedness, with documented review by Insurance and Claims Management and other personnel as determined by the Director of Office of Emergency Preparedness;
- E. At the Enterprise Information Technology Services, with documented review with staff as determined by the Director of Operations and Infrastructure;
- F. At the Latin American Ethnobotanical Garden, with documented review with associated staff and volunteers as determined by the Assistant Director of the Latin American Ethnobotanical Garden in conjunction with the Associate Dean for Franklin College of Arts and Sciences that has responsibility for facilities matters.
- G. At Auxiliary Services Division, with documented review with Transportation and Parking Services and other personnel as determined by the Director for Transportation and Parking Services.

Awareness of Activities Procedure in the vicinity of the Old Athens Cemetery

Due to the archaeological sensitive nature of the area within the approximate 1852 extent, **as well as 50' beyond the approximate 1852 extent of the cemetery**, it is important that any non-routine activities which may negatively impact the area are appropriately identified and communicated prior to the activity occurring. Routine activities such as cutting and trimming of grass and shrubs and collection and pickup of recycling do not require notification.

- I. Non-routine activities may include activities which may not cause ground disturbance, but may lead to the perception of a negative impact to the area. These non-routine activities may involve the presence of heavy equipment or vehicles in the area. Some examples of these types of these activities include exterior facility maintenance or grounds (like tree care) and LAEG work (like the delivery of mulch) that will require a vehicle or equipment to be within the vicinity. Even if the equipment may only be on a hard surface and not disturb the ground, communication is still required in advance.
 - A. Any personnel that will be performing non-routine activities should provide notification, through the appropriate reporting chain shall contact their Associate Vice President, Vice President, or Dean who will notify the Associate Vice President for Facilities Planning.
 - B. Vehicle and equipment access in the northeast area of the vicinity where ground penetrating radar has indicated a high probability of graves, should only be allowed if other alternative means of access have been explored and are not considered viable.
- II. Distribution of Awareness of Activities Procedure. As such activities may be proposed by the building occupants, to insure awareness, the Awareness of Activities Procedure shall reside and have documented review once a year as follows and OUA shall lead the meeting:
 - A. All personnel identified under Distribution of Ground Disturbing Activities Operating Procedure section above in conjunction with that annual review.
 - B. The Associate Dean for Franklin College of Arts and Sciences that has responsibility for facilities matters and other personnel as determined by the Associate Dean;
 - C. The Dean of School of Public & International Affairs and other personnel as determined by the Dean;
 - D. The Dean for College of Environment + Design and other personnel as determined by the Dean;
 - E. The Associate Vice President for Marketing and Communication;
 - F. The Assistant to the President as determined by the President's Chief of Staff;
 - G. The Office of Legal Affairs.

EXHIBIT A

OLD ATHENS CEMETERY

