



Request for Qualifications & Proposal

Landscape Master Plan for Historic Crown Hill Cemetery & Arboretum

Qualifications Submissions Due: October 15, 2025, 5.00 pm EST

All communication, submissions, and questions should be
addressed to:

David Rieck, *President*
Crown Hill Cemetery
Crown Hill Foundation
drieck@crownhill.org

I. Project Summary/Overview

Crown Hill Cemetery and Arboretum is both a National Register-listed historic landscape and an ArbNet-accredited Level II Arboretum. The Cemetery is also an active interment site, providing burial, cremation, and funeral home services through a management agreement with Service Corporation International, Inc. (SCI, Inc).

Crown Hill is soliciting qualifications and proposals from qualified landscape architecture, planning and/or design firms for services to develop a landscape master plan for this historic cemetery. The master plan will provide a sustainable vision for the future that preserves, respects, and improves the cemetery's historic character and arboretum functions while also providing for its ongoing use as an active and up-to-date interment site well into the future.

Crown Hill intends to work with the selected firm over 9-12 months to document the cemetery landscape's historic character; assess its existing conditions, use, and management; and consider current trends in funeral practice as a basis for creating a visionary and achievable master and land use plan. In providing principles and guidelines for preservation, management, and future development, the master plan will consider both the historic and arboreal character that makes the cemetery a special place and the physical, spatial, and economic requirements for interment practices that make the provision of burial services financially viable. The plan will therefore not only address the preservation and enhancement of existing and historic structures, plots, roads, trees, plantings and other features, but also land use changes, section burial layout, and elements for current and future interment needs.

II. Background

Crown Hill Cemetery, listed on the National Register in 1973, was established in 1863, as an early expression of the Rural Cemetery Movement in Indiana. The grounds were laid out in the Landscape Lawn style, an evolution of the style first established at Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Boston. The site was selected in 1863 by landscape gardener John Chislett, who designed Pittsburgh's Allegheny Cemetery in 1844. By the end of 1863, Chislett's son Frederick was installed as the Cemetery's first superintendent, a position he held until his death in 1899. Following the Civil War, in 1866, the U.S. Government purchased 1.4 acres for a National Cemetery and interred over 2,000 soldiers there; this cemetery was separately listed on the National Register in 1999. The cemetery spans 555 acres and contains approximately 25 miles of roads and 230,000 burials, making it is the third largest non-governmental cemetery in the United States. Its grounds are graced with numerous monuments and sculptures that commemorate people from all walks of life.

Also known as "the single best place in the city for tree lovers," the cemetery boasts over 11,000 inventoried trees made up of 137 unique tree species and serves as an important open space and green infrastructure for Indianapolis. The large collection of trees encouraged Crown Hill to seek designation for the cemetery as a Level II Arboretum through Arb net in 2022.

In 1984, the Crown Hill Foundation, a 501(c)3, was created and charged with the mission to "preserve and celebrate the architectural, cultural and natural heritage of the city's oldest urban

greenspace, Crown Hill Cemetery.” The foundation is responsible for all historic preservation activities, education and engagement programming (public tours, private tours, speaker events, school field trips, etc.), and oversees the Crown Hill Arboretum. The foundation is a separate, autonomous organization that is governed by a Board of Directors and has ownership of its financial assets.

Crown Hill Cemetery is a separate 501(c)13 organization, which is a non-profit cemetery designation. The cemetery is governed by its Board of Corporators which oversees the business activities of the cemetery. Crown Hill Cemetery owns the physical land and all the structures that sit on the property (Gothic Chapel, Gothic Gates, Waiting Station, etc.) The cemetery is in contract with and oversees the management agreement with SCI.

Service Corporation International (SCI) manages and operates Crown Hill Funeral Home and Cemetery, according to the Exclusive Sales and Management Agreement. They provide funeral and burial services to families, and are responsible for sales, maintenance of the grounds, maintenance of the buildings, and other activities associated with operations. All staff working for the funeral home and cemetery (funeral directors, GM of the cemetery, office staff, sales staff, maintenance staff, etc.) are employees of SCI and report up through the SCI org chart. All revenues earned from the operations of the funeral home and cemetery are SCI’s revenue.

In recent years, the Foundation and Cemetery identified a need to better align their mission with the management of the cemetery. A Strategic Plan for the Foundation and Cemetery was completed in 2017 and included a Preservation Needs analysis, primarily addressing historic structures. The Preservation Needs analysis was updated in 2023. A Tree Management Plan for the arboretum was also completed in 2024. The creation of the Landscape Master Plan is the next step in this process and is intended to marry the goals and objectives of the previous plans to chart a holistic plan for the physical development of the larger cemetery landscape. The masterplan will be a guide for protecting and enhancing the historic landscape in conjunction with maintaining interment activities and planning for the location of future burial sections and the design of any future major capital development(s).

The Unified partnership on this project will be identified as “Crown Hill” or “the cemetery” for the remaining purpose of this document.

III. Project Scope and Goals

To provide a road map for the Crown Hill’s sustainable future, the landscape architecture firm will need to accomplish the following goals with the master plan:

- Document and characterize the history of the cemetery’s landscape and landscape features and
- Provide strategies for the preservation and enhancement of the landscape and its overall character and individual features.
- Propose development and/or use strategies for land and interments
- Based on existing tree inventories, provide strategies for the protection and replacement of historic trees and canopy and for maintaining and enhancing the arboretum mission as of the historic cemetery and in the context of plans for future interment.

- Propose material, scale, and spatial guidelines for any required new features, structures, utilities, circulation, plantings, and etcetera so new elements are compatible and distinguishable from historic features.
- Suggest landscape, hardscape, building or other improvements that would facilitate achievement of the mission and vision of Crown Hill.
- Balance the community use, education, and preservation goals of the non-profit entities (Crown Hill Foundation and Crown Hill Cemetery) with the financial goals of the for-profit management corporation.
- Provide economical, practical, sustainable and long-term maintenance solutions.

To produce a plan addressing these goals, Crown Hill expects that the firm will research, review, and evaluate information from sources both internal and external to Crown Hill. Sources will include existing management and planning documents and historical studies as well as external sources documenting the history of the cemetery or case studies that might provide useful innovations to be applied at Crown Hill. The firm will also meet with key internal stakeholders such as volunteers, staff, directors and board members of Crown Hill to review, document, and evaluate existing conditions and management procedures and determine needs and priorities for inclusion in the plan. Engagement with the larger community/public is not part of the project scope.

Successful completion of the master plan may lead to future design work carrying out recommendations in the master plan, though such work is not guaranteed.

IV. Firm Qualifications

To meet the varied expertise required to complete this project (including knowledge of historic landscapes, cemeteries, planning, etc.) the landscape architecture/design firm may team or partner with other firms and/or subconsultants. However, one company must be identified as the team lead/primary contact in the submission and, if selected, continue to be the lead/primary contact with Crown Hill for the duration of the project.

V. Process and Timeline

A. Two Stage Process

The Crown Hill Landscape Master Plan Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and Proposal (RFP) process will occur in two stages. Firms interested in the project will first submit a qualifications package, based on the information requested in this document. Submitted qualification packages will be reviewed, and a short list of firms will be selected to move to stage 2. The short-listed firms will receive the RFP and submit a full proposal with a scope of work and an itemized budget. Following the submission and review of full proposals, firms will be invited for interviews to further discuss their proposals.

B. Proposed Selection Timeline

The proposed schedule for selecting the firm via the two stages will be as follows. Crown Hill reserves the right to modify the schedule if needed:

1. Post Request for Qualifications (RFQ)	September 1, 2025
2. Qualifications Submissions Due	October 15, 2025
3. Shortlist Selection	November 1, 2025
4. Notification of Shortlist	December 1, 2025
5. Issue Request for Proposals (RFP) to short list	December 15, 2025
6. Questions regarding RFP due	January 12, 2026
7. Answer to RFP Questions sent to all parties	January 19, 2026
8. Full Project Proposals due	February 13, 2026
9. Review of proposals/Interviews?	February 16-20, 2026
10. Notification of Selection of Firm/Team	February 24, 2026
11. Project Start	March 2026
12. Plan Completion	March 2027

VI. RFQ Submittal Requirements

A. *Elements of the RFQ submission*

For equitable comparison and evaluation, qualifications submissions should meet the following requirements and page limits. Pages should be 8.5x 11 inches, single-sided, with a minimum font size of 11 points. RFQ packages should be no more than 20 pages. If relevant, proposals should include a statement disclosing any conflicts of interest whether to Crown Hill Cemetery, Crown Hill Foundation, or SCI, Inc. in the Statement of Project Approach.

1. **Cover Page (1 page)**
 - a) Title
 - b) Company: Name and Address
 - c) Contact Person: Name, Title, Phone Number, and Email Address
2. **Cover Letter/ Statement of Project Approach**
 - a) Describe the firm/team's previous experience in and approach to historic landscapes and cemeteries
 - b) Provide a brief overview of the methods/approach the landscape architect/team would use to provide the services detailed above.
3. **Key Team Members**
 - a) Provide the names and titles of key personnel, both in-house and consultants/subcontractors who will conduct the project work and describe their qualifications. Include any indicators that the proposed firms/team members can work together cohesively.
4. **Examples of relevant previous work**
 - a) Projects can include both cemetery and non-cemetery work.

B. *RFQ Submission Method and Deadline*

Submit packages as (electronic) PDFs via email to drieck@crownhill.org. Qualifications packages received late (after 5.00 pm EST on October 1, 2025) will not be considered. Notification of your submission can be expected within two business days. If a notification of receipt is not received within that time frame, please call (317) 452-7810.

VII. Submission Evaluation and Selection

A. Qualifications Evaluation

A review team assembled by Crown Hill will evaluate each firm's qualification submission and select firms that best demonstrate the ability to perform the proposed work with integrity and expertise.

Each submission will be examined initially to ensure it follows the proposal format and instructions in this RFQ. Crown Hill reserves the right to reject some or all the submissions, to request additional information or clarifications, to allow corrections of errors or omissions, or to modify the proposal schedule.

B. Evaluation Criteria

Submissions of qualifications packages will be evaluated on the criteria listed below.

- Experience and qualifications of the firm and key personnel
- Demonstrated technical expertise and understanding of the project scope and goals
- Prior experience working with historic landscapes, historic cemeteries, active cemeteries, arboreta, and/or equivalent
- Demonstrated ability to build consensus around a proposed vision
- Demonstrated ability to produce high-quality landscape designs and master plans
- Quality of the proposal/package

Respondents should note that additional evaluation criteria will be provided and utilized to evaluate full proposals in stage two of the selection process.

VIII. Short List Selection

Firms submitting qualifications packages will receive emailed notification regarding their status as a short-listed firm. Emails will be sent to the contact person provided in the submission. Selected firms will subsequently receive, via email, a request for a more detailed proposal for the project work. Full proposals will require outlining a scope of work and cost estimate and other elements as determined by Crown Hill.

IX. Questions, Communication, and Additional Resources

All questions and communication during submission, evaluation, and selection shall be through the designated Crown Hill contact only. Proposers shall not contact other Crown Hill staff, board members, or SCI employees.

Additional information for understanding the cemetery and interment services may be accessed at the Foundation's Website at <https://crownhillhf.org/> and at Dignity Memorial/SCI's website at <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/funeral-homes/indiana/indianapolis/crown-hill-funeral-home-mgmt-co/8366>. Please note that a more complete list of planning studies, management policies, and archival holdings will be provided during the proposal stage of this process.