

## **Project Description/Narrative**

### **Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Administration Building & Sanctuary – Interior Architecture & Design Category**

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:** The Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery is located on one of the most significant military sites in New York State's Finger Lakes Region. On the eastern shore of Seneca Lake, it was initially developed as a World War II Naval Training Station, and later rededicated as a Korean War Era Air Force Basic Training Center. The Cemetery site is located on 162 acres in the southern part of the property. In 2011, Seneca County secured just enough funding to stabilize and renovate the building shell of the base's original firehouse so that it could serve as the future Cemetery Administration Building and Sanctuary. The interior of the building was mothballed until additional funding could be obtained.

**EXTERIOR RENOVATION:** With available funding from the County and the State, our firm was commissioned to renovate the exterior shell of the original firehouse. It was completed in 2012. This project enabled the stabilization of the structure. After 8 years, in 2020, the County was able to secure enough funding to complete the project, renovate the interior, and put the building into use to serve the cemetery.

**INTERIOR RENOVATION:** The building program was established by adhering to the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Facilities Guidelines. The original firetruck bays were redesigned as a multi-functional space to serve as a formal entry foyer and an assembly space for interment ceremonies. Also located on the first floor, a reception area, honor guard prep room, restrooms, storage and mechanical spaces were arranged. The building's hose tower was repurposed as a shaft for a new elevator and carillon system, and the remaining stairwell was restored. The second floor houses the operations center, offices, record storage, and meeting spaces for the cemetery staff.

**DESIGN:** A natural palette of interior materials was selected to complement the building's exterior, while providing durable surfaces for ease of maintenance and longevity of design. A primary design theme was the use of transparent window walls to strategically separate space, while allowing natural light to fill the interior. The transparency also provides views for the staff out to the surrounding cemetery grounds.

The design team worked closely with a local stained-glass studio to develop colorful windows that integrate the US Armed Forces emblems with abstract landscape shapes evocative of the Finger Lakes Region. The custom designs were developed by close collaboration with the artist and the Owner. Specific glass pieces were selected based upon their unique color-profile and depth. The stained-glass windows were integrated with interior storms, and installed in the west-facing openings. This orientation promotes a dramatic permeation of color throughout the ceremonial space in the afternoon.

***“The hope is that the adaptive reuse of this artifact structure will provide a peaceful, warm, and restorative space for future generations to remember their loved ones, while experiencing the physical memory of the site's rich history.”***

## **AIA's Framework for Design Excellence**

(The ten measures in the Framework for Design Excellence)

1. Design for Integration: What is the big idea behind this project and how did sustainability inform the design concept?

***The 'big idea' regarding sustainability is the adaptive reuse of a remaining firehouse structure, a remnant of the historic military base, to serve as a place to remember and honor veterans.***

5. Design for Economy: How does the project efficiently meet the program and design challenges and provide "more with less"?

***With strictly prescribed program elements, as outlined in the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) Facilities Guidelines, the challenge was to layout the specific functions within the finite footprint of the former firehouse. By employing a logic of placing more public-oriented spaces on the first floor, and staff spaces on the second floor, the parti was generated. Some of the unique existing features were capitalized upon, like the large firetruck bay openings for glazed window wall entrances, and the hose tower repurposed as an elevator shaft.***

7. Design for Wellness: How does the design promote the health of the occupants?

***The health promoting elements of the project, include:***

***the calming and picturesque lakeside setting;***

***the reuse and restoration of the simple, yet beautiful, existing building shell;***

***the introduction of biophilic-inspired interior materials;***

***the use of transparency to promote natural light throughout the building;***

***and the stained-glass windows that transmit diffused colors across the primary gathering space.***

***The result is a place of somber reflection and healing.***

## **AIA Rochester Community Impact Award**

### **SAMPSON VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY – ADMINISTRATION BUILDING & SANCTUARY**

#### **COMMUNITY IMPACT:**

After years of Seneca County carefully transforming the 162-acre former military training base into a cemetery for veterans, New York State has selected Sampson to be its first official state cemetery. The State has taken ownership, as of this past fall, and plans to continue the restoration and adaptive-reuse process.

As one of the final improvements performed by Seneca County, the interior renovation of the former base's firehouse was completed last year. Along with its pastoral setting on the eastern shore of Seneca Lake, this artifact structure has been transformed into a space for future generations to remember their loved ones, while experiencing the physical memory of the site's rich history.

Please refer to the provided Project Narrative and Photographs for additional information about this important project.





## HISTORY

The Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery is located on one of the most significant military sites in New York State's Finger Lakes Region.

(top left)  
Sampson Air Force Base postcard

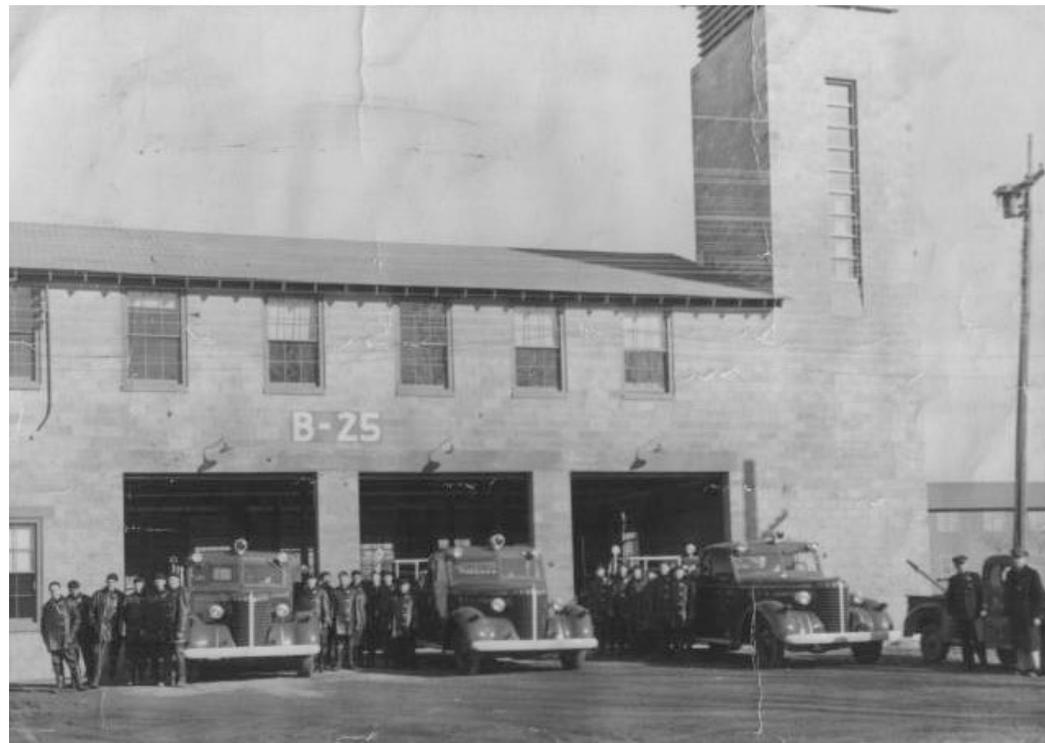


(top right)  
Sampson Navy Base postcard



(bottom left)  
Aerial view of the Air Force Base circa 1950-1951

(bottom right)  
Photo of the original firehouse building, now the Cemetery's Administration Building





## PRIOR CONDITIONS OF FORMER FIREHOUSE

The building served as the firehouse for the Sampson U.S. Military Base.

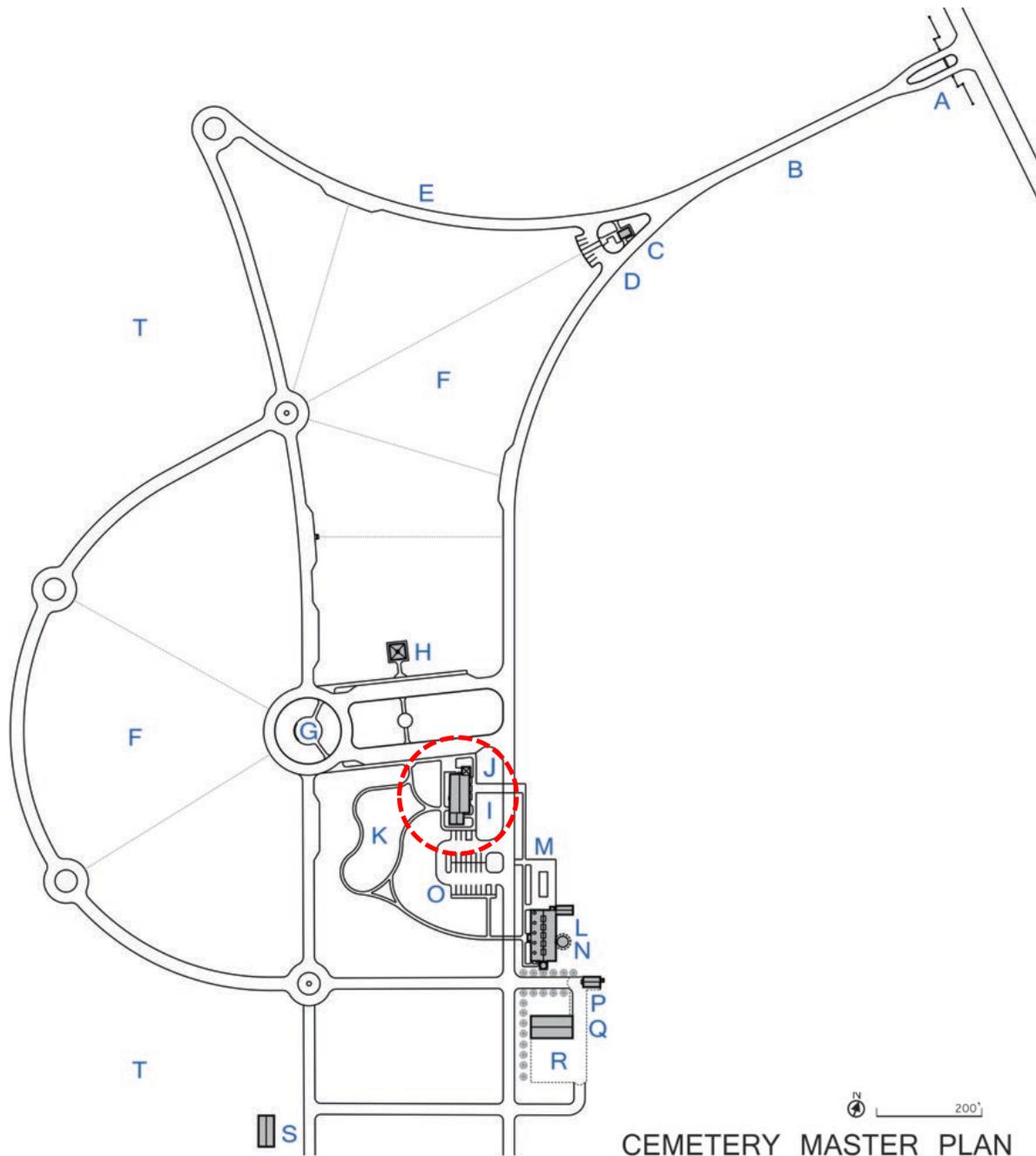
(top left)  
View from the northwest, fire hose tower is now an elevator shaft.

(top right)  
Second Floor interior, now accommodates the cemetery staff office suite.

(bottom left)  
View from the southeast, the fire truck bays now serve as the primary entrance.



(bottom right)  
First Floor interior, the former fire truck bays are now the multi-purpose ceremonial space.



CEMETERY MASTER PLAN

### MASTER SITE PLAN & KEY

- A. Entry Gate
- B. Avenue of Flags
- C. Public Information Center (former Guard House)
- D. Gravesite Locator Kiosk
- E. Cortege Drive
- F. Burial Areas
- G. Flag/Assembly Area
- H. Committal Service Shelter
- I. Administration Building (former Firehouse)
- J. Carillon Tower
- K. Memorial Walk
- L. Future Columbarium (former Power Plant Building)
- M. Future Reflecting Pool
- N. Future Observation Tower
- O. Future Parking
- P. Maintenance Office
- Q. Future Maintenance Building
- R. Future Maintenance Yard
- S. Original Brig Building
- T. Future Cemetery Development

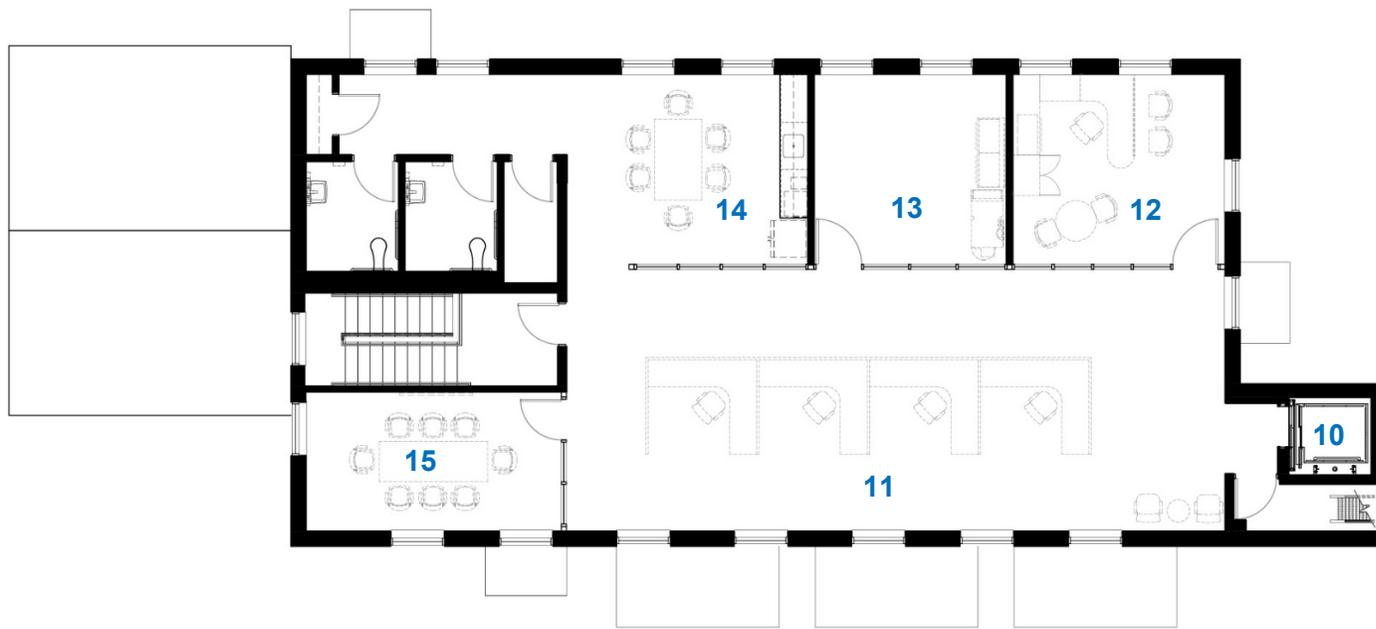


## SAMPSON VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

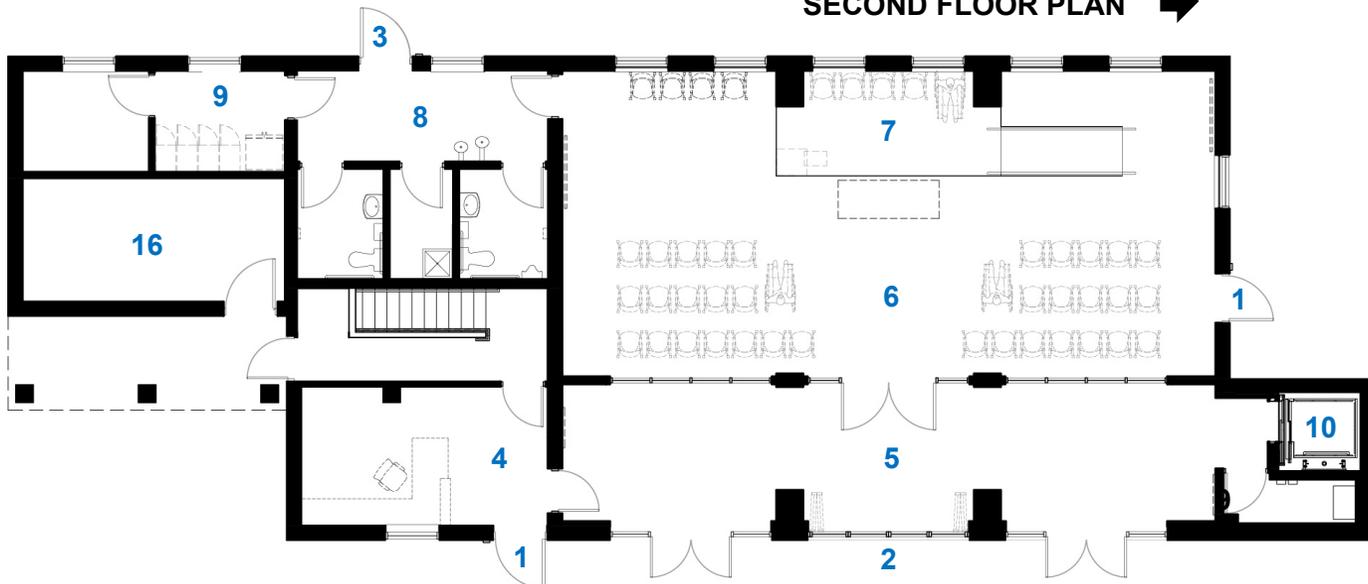
*“The former firehouse garage openings  
have been converted to canopied entrances  
for interment ceremonies.”*

*“The restored fire hose tower now serves as an  
elevator shaft and houses the cemetery’s  
carillon system.”*





**SECOND FLOOR PLAN** ➔



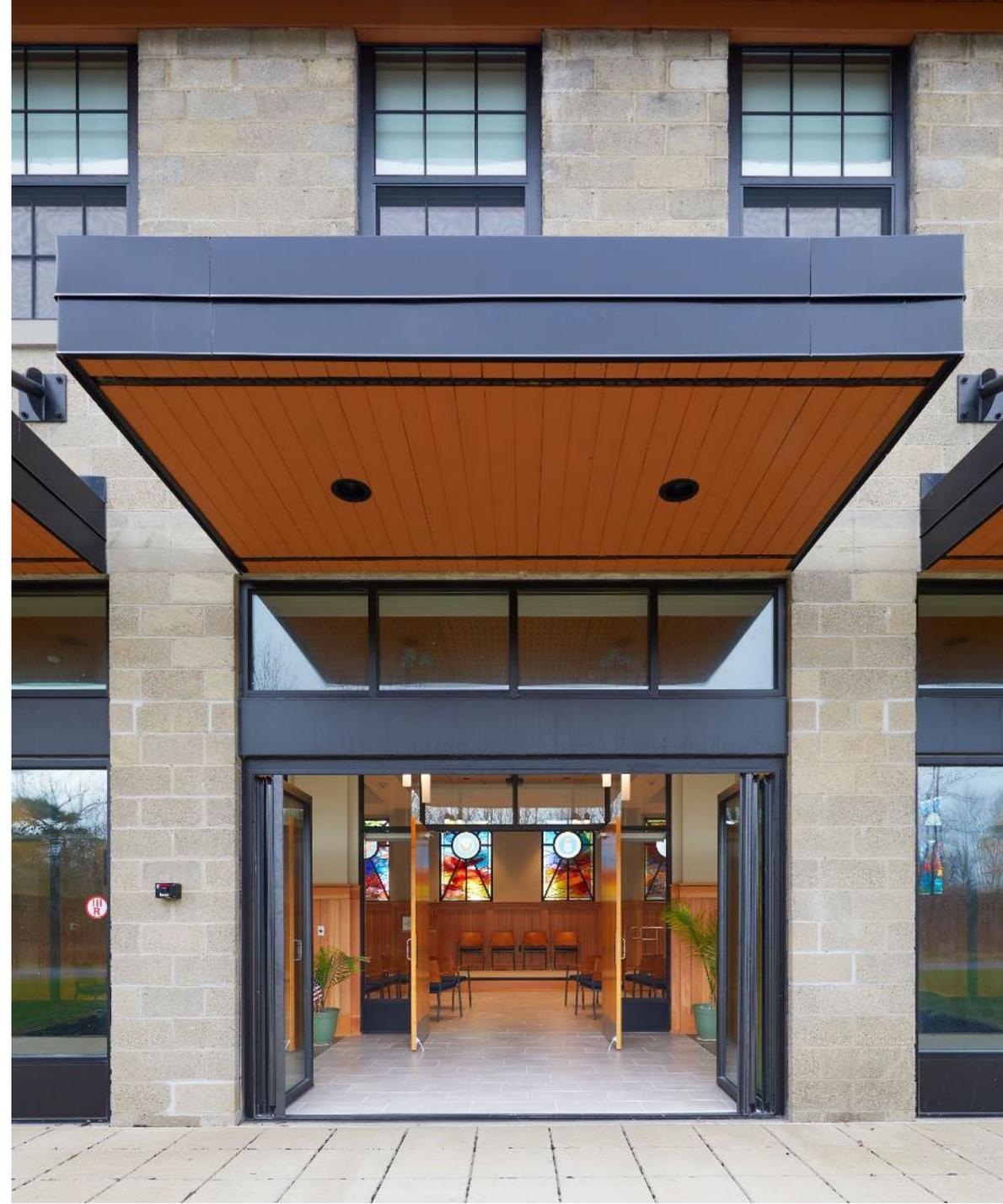
**FIRST FLOOR PLAN** ➔

**FLOOR PLAN KEY**

- 1. Visitor Entrance
- 2. Bi-Fold Cortège Entrance
- 3. Memorial Walk Entrance
- 4. Reception / Information
- 5. Main Foyer
- 6. Ceremonial / Multi-Purpose
- 7. Speaker's Platform
- 8. Vestibule
- 9. Honor Guard Prep
- 10. Elevator
- 11. Operations Offices
- 12. Director's Office
- 13. Records and Files
- 14. Staff Room
- 15. Conference Room
- 16. Mechanical



*“The central entrance opens into the foyer, and proceeds to the ceremonial space.”*







*“A natural palette of interior materials was selected to complement the building’s exterior, while providing durable surfaces for ease of maintenance and longevity of design.”*

*“Transparent window walls strategically separate space, while allowing natural light to fill the interior.”*

*“The transparency also provides views for the staff out to the surrounding cemetery grounds.”*



*“Custom stained-glass windows  
Integrate Armed Forces emblems  
with abstract Finger Lakes  
natural landscapes.”*



***“The hope is that the adaptive reuse of this artifact structure will provide a peaceful, warm, and restorative place for future generations to remember their loved ones, while experiencing the physical memory of the site's rich history.”***