

**SKETCH DESIGN COMPETITION
PRESERVATION OF VALUES AND SITE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE MEMORIAL “GREAT CEMETERY”**

DESIGNING PROGRAMME

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*The former entrance gate of the Great Cemetery
From the collection of E. Slavietis, photo from the 1970s*

INTRODUCTION

The Memorial “Great Cemetery” comprises **the architectural monument of national importance Great Cemetery Ensemble of Gardens and Parks with Memorial Buildings**, which is included in the list of state-protected cultural monuments (state protection No. 6636), and the Jacob’s sector, which is located in the territory of the urban planning monument of state importance “Historical Centre of the City of Riga” (state protection No. 7442) and the protection zone of the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage Site the Historical Centre of Riga (protection No. 852) UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site No. 852 “Historical Centre of Riga”, hereinafter referred to as the Great Cemetery.

Historically, **the Great Cemetery was formed at the end of the 18th century**. Over time, the territory of the cemetery was expanded several times and at the beginning of the 20th century, it reached the total maximum area of 36.60 ha. In the first half of the 20th century, the large cemetery was under the management of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia and it continued to fulfil its functions. According to the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1953, the cemetery was handed over to the city of Riga and partially closed for burials. In 1967, this territory acquired the status of a protected architectural monument of state importance and was named Great Cemetery Ensemble of Gardens and Parks with Memorial Buildings. In 1969, the cemetery was completely closed for burials.

There are 26 cemeteries in the city of Riga with a total area of 491.6 ha, which occupies 1.6% of the city’s territory. 20 cemeteries with a total area of 452.35 ha are under the management of city cemetery administration, while the other 6 cemeteries until 2016 were owned by private owners – religious organizations. According to the purchase and sale agreement concluded in 2016 between the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (hereinafter – LELB) and the Riga City Council, **the architectural monument of national importance Great Cemetery Ensemble of Gardens and Parks with Memorial Buildings is the property of Riga Municipality**. Since 2017, the management of the territory of the Great Cemetery and Jacob’s sector has been entrusted to the Riga State City Municipal Agency “Rīgas pieminekļu aģentūra” (Riga Monument Agency) and Ltd. “Rīgas Meži” (“Riga Forests”). Although currently legally separated, the Jacob’s and Pokrov’s cemeteries, as well as the territories owned by the congregations, historically belong to the Great Cemetery.

According to the position of UNESCO and the National Cultural Heritage Board, public involvement and participation are crucial to the protection and vitality of a cultural monument. Its importance has especially visibly proven itself in recent years, significantly contributing to the preservation of the values of the Great Cemetery for future generations, improving its territory, and exploring its history, as well as fostering educational work.

Today, the Great Cemetery combines two different land use models – a former cemetery and a city park. Each of these models has different visitors. These are the townspeople who look after the still-existing graves (the graves in the territory of the Great Cemetery are maintained by the Riga Monument Agency, relatives, friends of the Great Cemetery, and representatives of various organizations), as well as residents of the nearest neighbourhoods’, employees and schools that use this area for recreation and sports purposes.

ABBREVIATIONS

UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
RVC	Rīgas vēsturiskais centrs / Riga Historical Centre
RVC AZ	Rīgas vēsturiskais centrs un tā aizsardzības zona / Riga Historical Centre and its protection zone
JC	Jaukta centra apbūves teritorija / Mixed centre development area
RVC AZ TIAN	Rīgas vēsturiskā centra un tā aizsardzības zonas teritorijas izmantošanas un apbūves noteikumi / Regulations for the use and development of the territory of the Riga Historical Centre and its protection zone
LELB	Latvijas Evanģēliski luteriskā baznīca / Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia
NKMP	Nacionālā kultūras mantojuma pārvalde / National Cultural Heritage Administration
RPA	Rīgas Pieminekļu aģentūra (tekstā – Aģentūra) / Riga Monument Agency




PURPOSE AND TASKS OF THE SKETCH COMPETITION

The purpose of the Sketch Design Competition is to get creative ideas and proposals on how to respectfully preserve the burials of the Great Cemetery, its cultural–historical and natural values for future generations, how to ensure the sustainable development of the territory and to use the potential of the existing green infrastructure as a biologically diverse and unique landscape on the European scale, to improve the quality of the urban environment and the availability of the Great Cemetery for residents and guests of the city of Riga.

Tasks of the Sketch Design Competition:

- to create an emotionally strong, respectful memorial and the place of contemplation with a unique identity, preserving the authenticity and original substance as much as possible;
- to develop a vision for the arrangement and further development of the material and non-material cultural and historical environment;
- to reorganize the pathway network, respecting burial areas and offering the type/material of covering;
- develop an architecturally spatial landscape plan for the Great Cemetery;
- to develop a plan for a range of benches, lighting fixtures, and waste bins in the competition area, paying special attention to the design quality of new additions, which visually harmonize with the historical stylistics of the objects of the Great Cemetery, preserving “Genius loci”,
- to propose a solution/s for the justified placement of dismantled elements (tomb slabs, bases of crosses, elements of metal fences, poles, etc.) in the territory of the Great Cemetery;
- to develop a programme for improving and revitalisation of the green area, including trees, bushes and herbaceous plants, including low plantings near the objects, determining seasonal mowing rules, respecting and valuing the special flora and fauna found in the Great Cemetery;
- to provide the Great Cemetery’s territory with convenient infrastructure and management including water points for watering and drinking, electricity connection/s, and public toilets;
- to create a unified design of the information and signage system.



*The former avenue
of trees in the Great
Cemetery*



*Chapel in Jēkaba cemetery
June 2023*

OBJECT OF THE SKETCH DESIGN COMPETITION

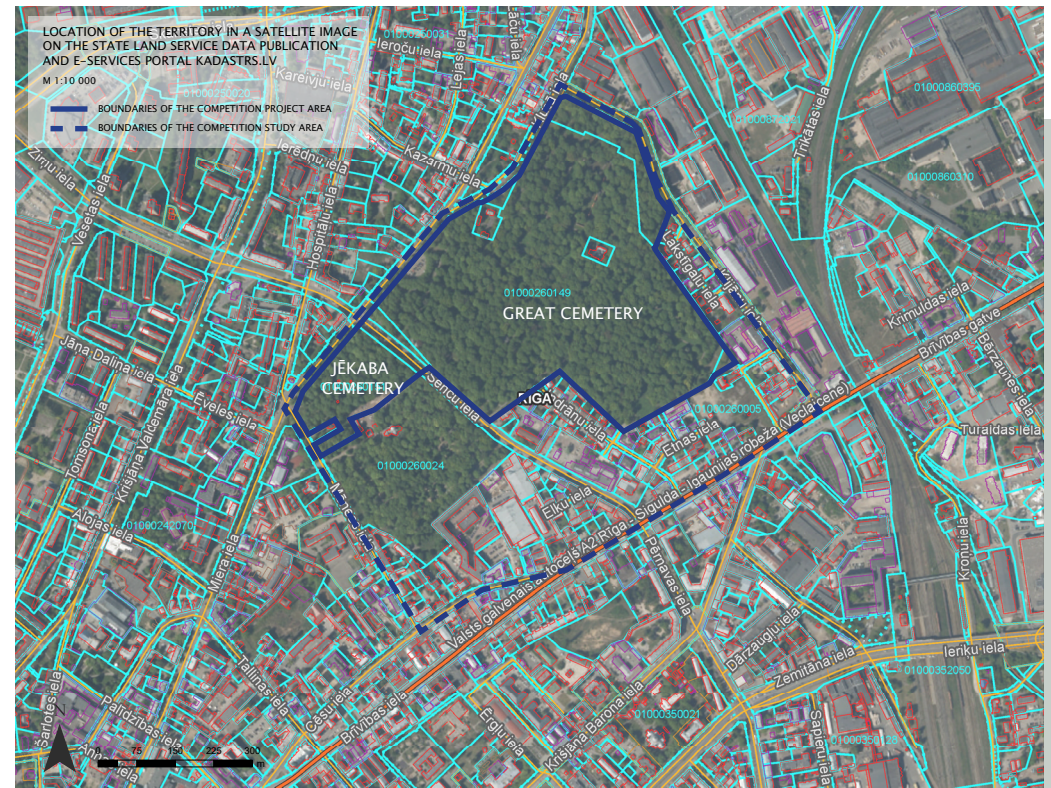
The object of the Sketch Design Competition “The Great Cemetery”, including the Jacob’s Cemetery sector, is located in Riga, between Mēness Street, Miera Street, Klusā Sreet, and Klijanu Street. Senču Street separates the territory of the Great Cemetery from Jacob’s Cemetery. Today the Great Cemetery, part of which is the Jacob’s sector (hereinafter – the Great Cemetery), has an area of 27.38 hectares (cadastre No. 01000260151, 01000260149, 01000260116, 0100 026 0051, 0100 026 2006 and 01000260016) is a unique space in the urban environment with its peculiar development history.

The boundary of the competition object and the study area

In 2017, two parish buildings and a garage were separated from the territory of the Great Cemetery in one land unit (cadastre no. 01000260146) with an area of 2705 m², and the building of the new chapel was separated in the second land unit with an area of 2000 m² (cadastre no. 01000260148). **These two land units do not need to be evaluated in the sketch design offer.**

Participants of the Sketch Design Competition can propose solutions for the Great Cemetery study area, which has had a historical connection with the Great Cemetery.

Land units separated from the territory of the Great Cemetery



BRIEF HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE GREAT CEMETERY

Historically, the Great Cemetery was formed at the end of the 18th century, when the Riga Council (Rīgas Rāte) in the Sand Hills, 800 meters (300 axes) behind the Rauna gate, provided a plot of land for the new city cemetery. Initially, the burials were located in different places in the cemetery area without a specific order. The territory belonged to Riga Dome Cathedral and St. Peter's Church, next to which was the cemetery of the Reformed Church. Next were St. John's, St. Gertrude's and St. Jesus Church parish Cemeteries located in the suburbs of Riga.

Separate burial places near the current Mēness Street were given to St. Jacob's congregation and the Orthodox community (Pokrov's Cemetery is an autonomous territory). The new City Cemetery was opened on May 7, 1773. Such a wide burial place had never been seen in Riga, so it was nicknamed "The Great Cemetery".



Riga plan, 1858, Page 1.,
(VRVM 165227)
1. Pokrova cemetery
2. Jekaba cemetery
3. Lutherans Cemetery



The Great Cemetery Plan (1822), the plan of the German Cemetery of Petersburg suburb before cemetery expansion by City surveyor Georgs Rinks (LVVA, 6810 f., 1.apr., 37.l. - 2.lp)

Initially, the cemetery was not well organized – the graves were located in different places without a specific order. In the 18th century, Johann Christoph Brotze (German artist and ethnographer) depicted them as a sand field in his drawings. **The first news about the construction of fences around the graves dates from 1802**, when the architect Christoph Haberland and the builder J.D. Gottfried along the oldest part of the graves instead of wooden fence created fences made of red bricks with wooden slats in between, completing these upgrading works in 1807.

In 1823, Lübeck gardener Johann Heinrich Cigra developed a plan for the City Cemetery, intending to turn it into a beautiful garden with lawns and flower beds, trees, and decorative shrubs. The straight, wide pathways and narrow cross paths were supposed to divide the cemetery area into regular squares and long right-angled quadrilaterals. The squares between the crossroads were intended for burials without gravestones, but the territory along the fence of the cemetery and on both sides of the main avenues was allocated for burials with headstones or monuments. According to J. H. Cigra's concept, it was planned to leave four feet zone from the grave site to the path. Park-like plantations were planned in some places. Since initially there was no road built to the City Cemetery, in 1824, at the suggestion of J. H. Cigra, the construction of Miera Street was started along the cemetery, with linden plantations along the sides of the street. The new central entrance with a semi-circular square was created at Miera Street, which was planted with aspens according to the project of J. H. Cigra

Changes in the conduct of the funeral ceremony determined the need for buildings (chapels) in the cemetery area. **The first chapel in the territory of Jacob's cemetery was built in 1793** (rebuilt in 1886), until then the funeral ceremony was held in one of Riga's churches. Between 1773 and 1923, 38 objects of sacred architecture were built in the territory of the Great Cemetery, including above-ground tombs of wealthy families.



The Great Cemetery plan by R. Stegmann (1876) with designated areas for different parishes, St. Peter's Church parish area marked in pink (LVVA_F1429_US1_GV219_6 0003)

The territory of the cemetery was expanded several times:

- The Lutheran part was expanded in 1825, 1858, 1869, 1876, 1887;
- Jekaba cemetery “section” – in 1846, 1867 and 1891;
- Pokrova cemetery – in 1862 and 1892

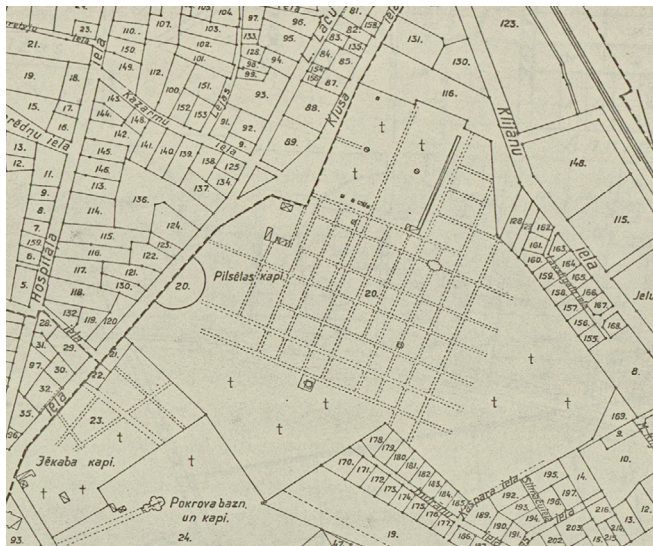


1883 Cemetery plan with alleys

St. Jacob's Cemetery plan, 1896 (updated until 1915), VRVM 105956

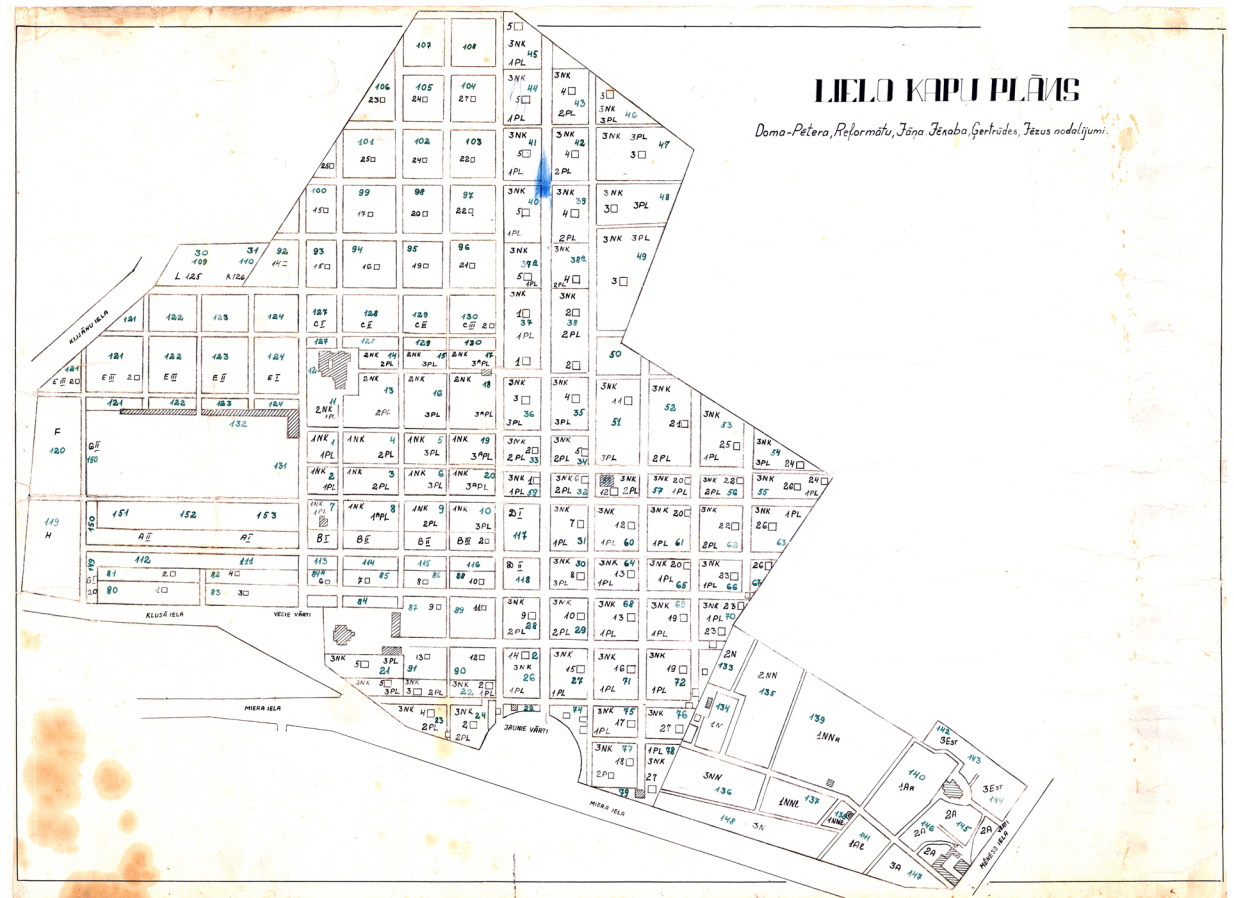
At the end of the 19th century, the territories of the Pokrov's, Jacob's, and Lutheran cemeteries had merged and formed a single cemetery area of 36.60 ha – this area was called the City Cemetery or the Great Cemetery. All cemetery expansion projects did not have a unified site plan.

The significant impact on the Great Cemetery was the emigration of the Baltic Germans in 1939, as well as the flight of wealthy Latvians, Russians, etc., and their family members from Riga in 1944.



Fragment of the Great Cemetery plan, 1935

The Great Cemetery plan, 1938, (VRVM 104780)



In the 1950s, the City of Riga decided to create a park in the territory of the Great Cemetery.

According to the decision of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), in 1953 the cemetery was handed over to the City of Riga and partially closed. The implementation of the project began in 1967 when the Scientific Restoration and Design Office of the Ministry of Culture of the Latvian SSR developed the perspective planning project of the Memorial Park under the leadership of architect Edgars Slaviētis (1905–1986). It envisaged a 35-hectare park gradually laid out by 1985. Initially, well-kept grave sites were preserved, and overgrowth of bushes and unkept, abandoned grave sites were eliminated. The works were not finished and the joint creation of the planned park even didn't start.

In 1968, as part of the traffic circle of Pērnavas Street, Senču Street was built through the territory of the cemetery, artificially dividing the cemetery into two parts.

In 1969, the Great Cemetery was closed completely (since the beginning of the 20th century, no new graves were established in the Great Cemetery, burials continued only in the existing family graves). The research on the monuments was carried out in 1974 by R. Šīrants (1910–1985), the historian of the Bureau of Scientific Restoration Design and Constructors.



Great Cemetery Improvement project, approved in 1968



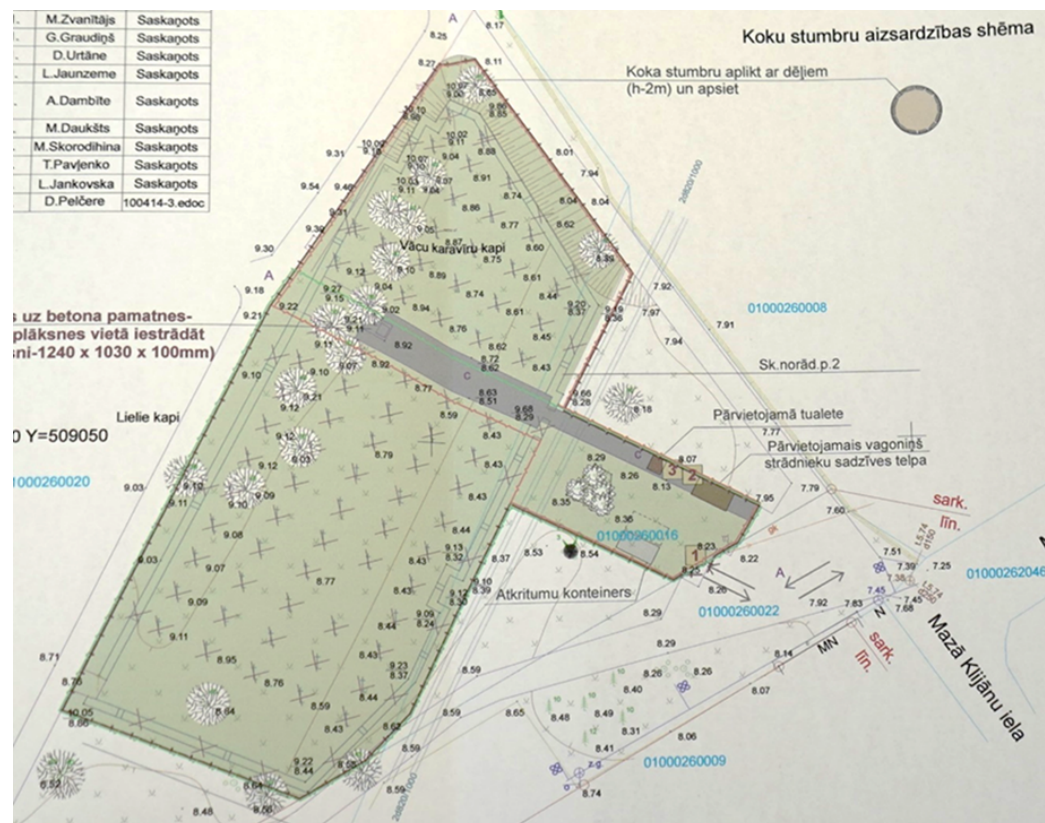
In 1980, the Department of Museums, Fine Arts and Art and Monuments Protection of the Ministry of Culture of the Latvian SSR rejected the second project for the improvement of the Great Cemetery, developed by the architect Karīna Daujāte (1926–1995).

Plan of the Great Cemetery by K. Daujate, 1980

In 1982, in connection with the further development of the Great Cemetery area and changes in city planning, **a new conceptual planning was created**. The new plans were developed based on the 1979 detailed territory plan, the 1977 memorial park scheme, and the Riga city transport development scheme created in 1979. The task required also the perspective placement of public transport stops and the creation of an exhibition of contemporary sculpture. However, these plans were not realized either.

In the 90s of the 20th century, during the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Latvia, the restitution of property took place, as a result of which **in 2000 the cemetery was taken over by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia**. The outdoor space for public use ended up in private ownership, which did not ensure its quality maintenance. Representatives of the society organized the cleaning of the Great Cemetery and the monuments there based on their initiative.

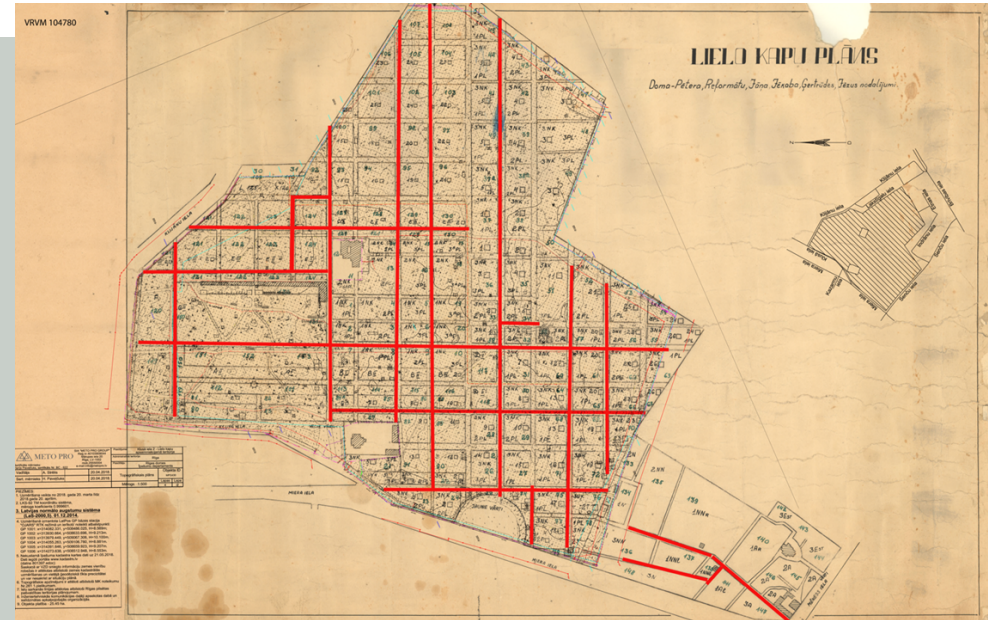
In 2012 upon the order of the People's Association for the Care of German War Graves (Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V.), architect office "Vecumnieks and Bērziņi" **developed a project for the exhumation of graves of German prisoners in the territory of the Great Cemetery** near Mazā Klijānu Street and their reburial in the German soldiers' cemetery in Beberbeki. Despite the reburial of soldiers and the liquidation of the cemetery between late 2012 and mid-2013, the site retains a memorial to over 460 fallen soldiers.



Exhumation project of German war prisoners' graves, 2012, architect Dainis Bērziņš

Over the past fifty years, the memorial has undergone significant changes, mostly of a degrading nature. Several tens of thousands of Riga residents (~100,000, it is no longer possible to determine the exact number of them, as the Register of Great Cemetery and the burial books of church congregations have unfortunately not been completely preserved) are buried in the Great Cemetery, among which there are many important persons in the history of Latvia and the city.

The combined plan of the pathways of the Great Cemetery – the situation of 2023 on the map of 1938, author Guna Vainovska (the pathways corresponding to the situation of 1938 indicated in red).



Damage to the Great Cemetery in the 1970s and 1980s

The part of the Memorial of the Great Cemetery – Great Cemetery Ensemble of Gardens and Parks with Memorial Buildings – **is an architectural monument of national importance with State Protection No. 6636**, where there are monuments of high artistic value. In the Great Cemetery, **13 places of historical events of national importance – burials, as well as 15 art objects of national importance and 8 art objects of regional importance – tombstones – are separately protected.**

In the Great Cemetery, high-quality artistic **monuments** are installed, which reflect the characteristic art styles of their time – almost all types of tombstones are represented in the cemetery, starting from the second half of the 18th century.

The oldest burial places are bricked shafts for placing coffins, which are covered with decorated stone slabs.

The grave sites of the middle and second half of the 19th century are fenced off with metal (cast iron or forged) fences or granite posts connected with metal chains in the classicist style. Metal canopies were magnificent (one is preserved, which is being restored), which hung over the graves like gazebos (of which only fragments have remained).



Grave of Baroness Anna von Fittinghoff in Ķekaba cemetery

Grave of Doctor O. Hūns



Tombstone of Professor C. Lōwis



The canopy of Ķ. K. Werman's tombstone. From the collection of E. Slavietis, 1965



The former metal pavilion. Photo by T. Cīparsons, June 1965

From the end of the 18th century, **above-ground tombs or chapels** have been preserved – small buildings where the coffin was placed on supports in bricked basements, while the above-ground part was decorated with artistically designed portals – J. H. Holander's (1777), Riga's Blue Guards (1777), goldsmiths' „brotherhood” (1779), etc.

The row of the oldest tombs (28 buildings) and 3 tombs along Miera Street reflect the construction styles of the late 18th and early 19th centuries: baroque in the portal decoration characterizes the older construction period, and classicism elements – the newer.

Separately placed chapels also belong to the oldest period.

The latest tombs were built separately, in different places according to the plan of the Cemetery Park, and their portals are mostly dominated by eclecticism. Between 1773 and 1923, the following 38 sacred or memorial architectural objects were built on the territory of the Cemetery.



Baroque chapel of Michael Weizenbreuer, dated 1776



Mausoleum of the Von Hollander family, 1777. (Image from 1926)



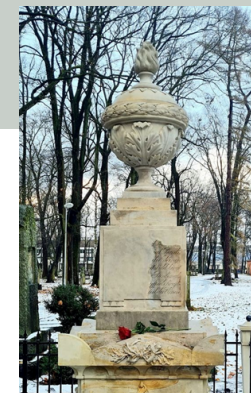
Burials of the Vermanis family in the 2021, photo: G. Nāgels

The restored burials of the Vermanis family on November 25, 2023



The main alley of the Great Cemetery, on the right side – the graves of the Vermanis family (Riga und seine Bauten, 1903)

Burials of the Vermanis family in the 1970s



In the 30s of the 19th century, the first **grave crosses** began to appear, high, stone-hewn obelisks and pyramids, prisms, and stelae are also characteristic of this period, but the first artistically valuable monuments date back to the time shortly before WWI.

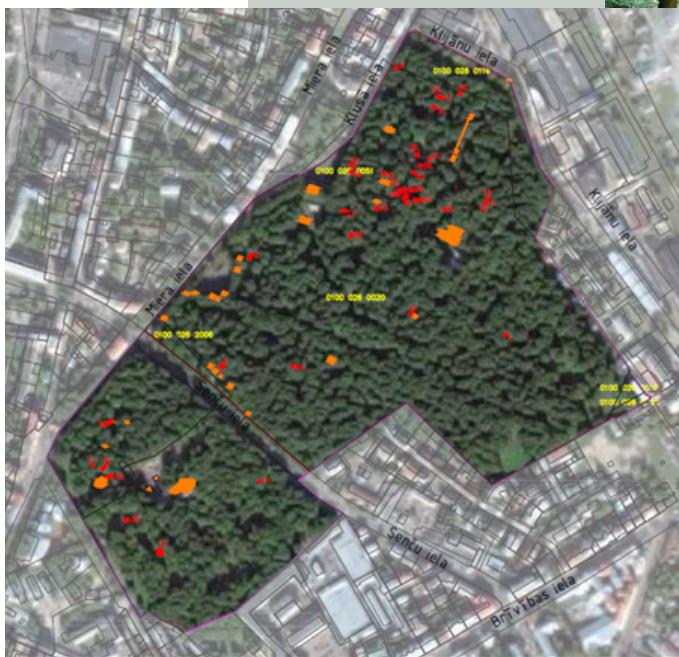
Tombstone of businessman Kristaps Bergs, 1913, author G. Šķilters



Tombstone of family of architect J.D. Felsko, author A. Foltz



Locations of cultural monuments of national importance



Red square: Cultural monuments of national importance
Orange square: Building of cultural and historical value

URBAN LANDSCAPE ENVIRONMENT OF THE COMPETITION TERRITORY, TREE ASSESSMENT

The competition territory has a **unique urban planning and landscape character** in the context of the protection zone of the urban planning monument of national importance “The Historical Centre of the City of Riga” and the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage Site “Historic Centre of Riga”. The Great Cemetery is an architectural monument of national importance with 25 architectural objects of grave culture – classicist, romantic, and baroque mausoleums, many of which have underground crypts, and more than 400 above-ground objects. **There is no such similar object in the Baltics and Nordic countries, it is also a biologically diverse unique landscape on a European scale.**

Today, the owner of the 27.38-hectare part of the Great Cemetery is the Riga State City Municipality, and it is managed by the Riga State City Municipal Institution Ltd. “Rīgas Meži” (“Riga Forests”) and the Riga State City Municipal Agency “Riga Monument Agency”.

The Great Cemetery is the largest green area in the historical centre of Riga, it is a very intensively visited place for relaxation, meditation and therapy, exercise, and individual sports training, it is also an active transit area for pedestrians and cyclists. Currently, recreation, tourism, cultural events, as well as historical research, educational, and various activities encouraged by the residents of the area are also taking place in the territory. Here, parents take their children for a walk from infancy. This place is popular with seniors. The facility has a unique natural world with groves of Siberian or wood squills, (*lat. Scilla siberica*) and wild tulips (*lat. Tulipa sylvestris*), local noble trees, and introduced varieties.

The Church of the Resurrection, or the New Chapel designed by Johann Daniel Felsko, a Baltic German architect, and managed by the congregation, is located in the territory of the Great Cemetery as well. Exciting Church Night and Museum Night events take place there. The creative movement of the neighbourhood of Brasa, Rada Brasa, included the Great Cemetery in its neighbourhood open-air show “Brasa-Pumpurs-Spēks”. The Great Cemetery was chosen as the setting for the Homo Novus Theatre Festival event “Witness Stand”. The cemetery is home to educational videos and TV shows.

Great Cemetery and wild tulips, april 2023



The Great Cemetery is located at the intersection of five Riga neighbourhoods (Centrs, Brasa, Teika, Grīziņkalns, and Čiekurkalns), where regular clean-ups, commemorations, and educational events take place. Along with cemetery activists as well student groups and corporations take care of the burial places of several personalities. **In the minds of the neighbourhoods, this place has a great sense of belonging and identity.**

From August 1, 2023 to August 22, 2023, the company Ltd. “LABIE KOKI eksperti” performed a visual assessment of the trees in the Great Cemetery.

A total of 2,526 trees were assessed, including 112 groups of trees and 156 groups of shrubs. The trees were numbered with plastic numbers according to a uniform system and reflected in the assessment plan and table, additionally indicating the groups of shrubs. All trees and shrubs were photo-fixed. The condition of trees and shrubs was assessed by determining vitality, and physical condition, assigning a certain value colour and recommended care.

A total of 47 tree species were assessed in the surveyed area and **7 large trees of national importance, 31 large trees of local importance in Riga, 12 potentially large trees of national importance, as well as several dendrological valuable tree species and scenically valuable trees were found.** In addition, according to the Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers no. 396, ecologically valuable and protected insect species were also observed, such as the jet ant (*lat. Lasius fuliginosus*), the hermit beetle (*lat. Osmoderma eremita*). Cavities created in several trees, in which cavity-nesting birds live, promoting the development of biological diversity, small wild animals can be found.



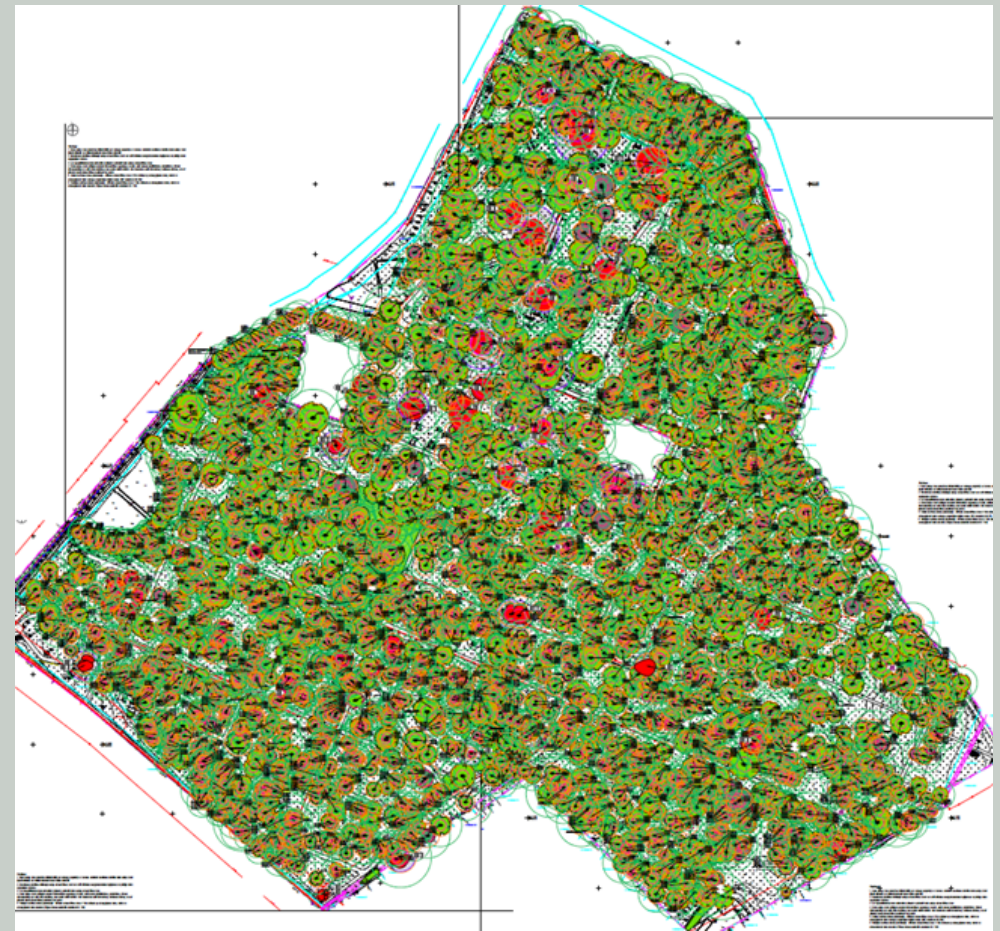
The Great Cemetery, april 2023

In general, the majority of the territory is occupied by valuable trees and shrubs, however, there are also low-value and worthless trees that are dead or growing in the shade of nearby trees, making it difficult and/or reducing their full-fledged further development. The area's herbaceous layer is both rich in expressive and valuable plants and taken over by plants characteristic of the weed habitat. In the spring, blue wood squills bloom magnificently in the Great Cemetery, then the yellow forest/wild tulips begin to bloom.

Although the surveyed object is the territory of the Great Cemetery Ensemble of Gardens and Parks with Memorial Buildings, it is often visited by friends of the Cemetery, city residents, and visitors, enjoying daily walks, playing sports, or as a transit route to get to their desired destination. Therefore, **attention should be paid to the safety of people and, in particular, great attention should be paid to trees located near traffic routes.** See the visual assessment of trees in folder 4_1_tree_assessment.



Alley of trees and tram tracks along the Great Cemetery



Visual assessment of trees in the area of the Great Cemetery (see folder 4_1_tree_assesment)

According to the study of pedestrian flow carried out by “Group 93” in 2014, **on weekdays the territory of the Great Cemetery mostly serves as a transit territory.** The flow of people in the Great Cemetery is generated by the residential area of Miera Street and the number of public transport stops around the Great Cemetery. Besides the transit group, the second largest group of users are **active recreation seekers who use the Great Cemetery for running** (young people aged 18–35). The third group of users that can be observed on weekdays are cyclists. In the middle of the day, pensioners and new mothers with prams stay in the Great Cemetery. On weekends, the groups of users of the Great Cemetery area are similar, only the intensity and the peak hours differ. In addition, a separate group – dog owners – can be distinguished.

In the 2014 study, 25 benches, secondary sitting surfaces, masonry elevations where you can sit down, as well as paved paths on an area of 2700 m², 2 parking spaces, lawn and greenery on an area of 207,160 m² were counted in the territory of the Great Cemetery. The study notes that **the infrastructure of the Great Cemetery is worn out.** According to the results of the 2014 survey, there is a lack of public toilets (68% of respondents), waste bins (53% of respondents) and lighting (43% of respondents). The surveyed visitors to the Great Cemetery indicate that improvements are also needed in terms of benches, canopies, bike racks, stairs and ramps, high-quality road surfaces, revitalization of greenery and signposts.

Taking into account the fact that there are many sacred buildings in the Great Cemetery and many high-quality artistic monuments have been installed, which reflect the most characteristic art styles of the late 18th – mid-20th centuries, **it is necessary to develop a plan for the preservation, management, and further development of the territory,** as well as to carry out cultural and historical research work, recognizing the important in Latvia’s history persons buried in the Great Cemetery, as well the revitalization of vegetation should be carried out, safety should be guaranteed and the most optimal solution for the territory management should be found.



Group 93 2014 study of flows in the Great Cemetery

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE GREAT CEMETERY TERRITORY

The territory of the Great Cemetery was pragmatic in the course of its construction, as well as its expansion, and maintenance. The scenic urban environment was not designed purposefully, it has developed more spontaneously according to the insight of the carer of each grave. As a result, **the landscape is fragmented or does not exist at all and does not form a unified aesthetic area**. Today, the territory is freely accessible to the public and can be defined as a public outdoor space. When creating a further strategy for the development of the territory of the Great Cemetery, the significant scenic environment and cultural-historical heritage should be taken into account.

STRENGTHS OF THE GREAT CEMETERY

- Cultural and historical heritage – burials of several tens of thousands of persons, tombstones/ plaques, chapels
- The richness of the scenic environment/ biodiversity
- A wide green area in the historical centre of the Riga city
- Historical significance in the cultural space of Riga and Latvia, an important object for history enthusiasts and tourists
- Great Cemetery – the territory of the municipality
- Active urban neighbourhoods and Friends of the Great Cemetery

WEAKNESSES OF THE GREAT CEMETERY

- Lack of public awareness of the preservation/ maintenance of cultural and historical heritage – vandalized chapels, burials
- Dead trees, low value/worthless trees – danger to monuments and people
- Morally obsolete infrastructure
- Pathways in the burial area
- Artificial interruption of the cemetery territory – Senču Street with red lines interfering with the territory of the cultural monument
- The lack of lighting creates a feeling of insecurity in the dark hours of the day



INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SKETCH DESIGN COMPETITION TERRITORY

The mission of the Great Cemetery sketch design competition, by the “Riga Sustainable Development Strategy for 2030”, *is to create a cultural memory space in the city of Riga, that is open to everyone and oriented towards the widest range of social groups, thus fostering a tolerant and inclusive society. To create a harmonious, comfortable, and safe environment ... for recreation, helping people to get educated and integrated into society... offering Riga residents various opportunities to fulfil their wishes and realize themselves.*

The 2017 Landscape thematic planning of the City Development Department of Riga City Council marks the Great Cemetery as a “**culturally and historically valuable landscape**” and as an “**ecologically valuable landscape**”, for which specific binding regulations of Riga City Council must be developed.

On May 26, 2022, at the meeting of the Riga Cultural and Historical Heritage Commission and on July 4, 2022, at the meeting of the Riga City Development Committee, the “Development Concept” of the Great Cemetery was approved, which includes guidelines for the detailed development of the Great Cemetery project and the implementation of the project in stages (see folder 5_planning material).

The main task of the “**Development Concept**” of the Great Cemetery is to contribute to the increase of awareness of the unique material and immaterial cultural-historical value and significance of the Great Cemetery – a cemetery-park-museum and a memorial – while preserving the ‘Genius loci’ (spirit of the place), as well as distinguishing the following:

- use of the Great Cemetery;
- improvement of the territory;
- chapels, monuments, gravesites;
- informative material;
- tasks to be done before or in parallel with the sketch design project.



Photo from the collection of E. Slavietis from the 1970s



Photo from the collection of E. Slavietis from the 1970s

In the “Development concept” created by the Riga State City Municipal Agency, the territory of the Great Cemetery is divided into three zones, where:

Zone A:

- new gravestones are allowed where the approximate burial place can be proved;
- dog walking in zone A is not recommended,

Periphery of zones A and B:

- memorial sites for significant individuals or groups of individuals buried anywhere in the Great Cemetery are permitted.

Zones B and C:

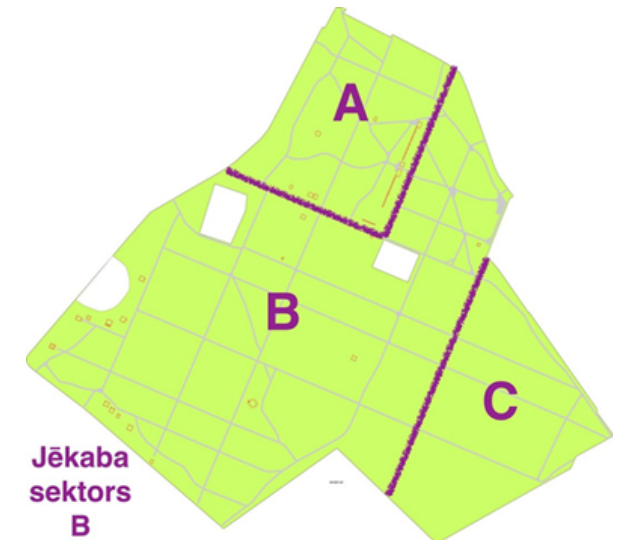
- new gravestones are allowed only where the approximate burial place can be proven.

The zoning of the Great Cemetery also provides an opportunity for different functional uses and visual styles within the framework of the “Development Concept”.

The “Development Concept” of the Great Cemetery is the basis for the sketch design competition (the type of competition is determined by Riga City Council’s 07.02.2006 binding regulations No. 38 “Regulations for the use and development of the territory of the Historical Centre of Riga and its protection zone”, clauses 537.6 and 546.24), as well as Riga Development Programme 2021–2027, where one of the priorities is “Urban environment promoting the quality of life” (Po2). To develop and improve the area of the Great Cemetery as a memorial, respectfully preserving burials and renovating/restoring monuments and chapels, preserving the cultural–historical landscape and sustainably managing the green infrastructure in Riga, creating a safe and multifunctional public outdoor space, Rigas State City Municipal Agency plans to implement a long-term investment project by the mentioned priority and the concept of the Great Cemetery.

The Great Cemetery concept was created in close connection with the “Riga Sustainable Development Strategy until 2030”, which outlines the future vision of the city of Riga, and indicates the development priorities, goals, and methods selected for their achievement. The goals of the project implemented by Riga State City Municipal Agency until 2027 are:

- 1. to preserve the ensemble of the Great Cemetery;**
- 2. to maintain, conserve, and restore the existing monuments, chapels, etc. elements;**
- 3. to create and develop a high-quality and place-appropriate recreation environment for the townspeople and its guests;**
- 4. to popularize and preserve cultural heritage and promote cultural education in society.**



Division of the Great Cemetery into zones (from the Great Cemetery Development Concept), boundaries may be specified



Existing pathways that match the historical ones

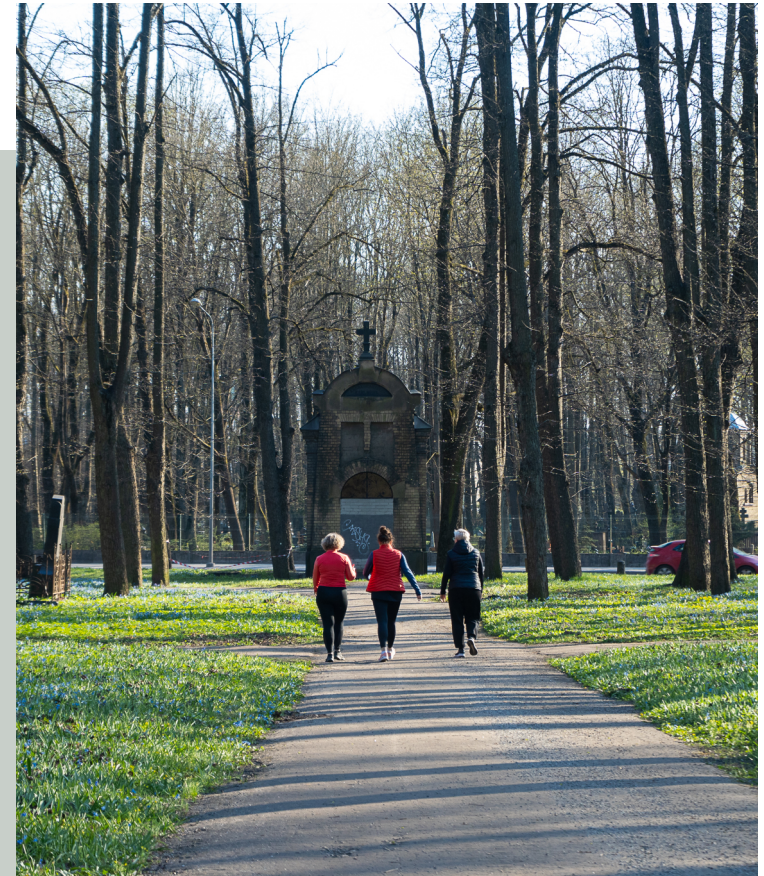
SKETCH DESIGN COMPETITION'S DESIGN TASK

The following should be taken into account **when developing a sketch design offer**:

- the “Development Concept” of the Great Cemetery developed by the Riga Monument Agency on May 26, 2022;
- Law on Preservation and Protection of the Historic Centre of Riga;
- Regulations of Minister Cabinet No. 127 “Regulations Regarding the Preservation and Protection of the Historic Centre of Riga”;
- binding regulations no. 38 Riga City Council (07.02.2006) “Requirements for the use and development of the Historical Centre of Riga and its protection zone”.

The following concept must be developed in the Great Cemetery **sketch design competition**:

- how to respectfully preserve the burials of the Great Cemetery, its material and immaterial cultural and historical values, authenticity, and original substance;
- how to implement sustainable development of the territory;
- how to use the potential of the existing green infrastructure to improve the quality of the urban environment and the accessibility of the Great Cemetery to the residents and visitors of the city of Riga;
- how to create an emotionally powerful place of remembrance with a historical identity – a memorial park, by integrating existing objects (late 18th–mid-20th-century chapels, tombstones, grave slabs).



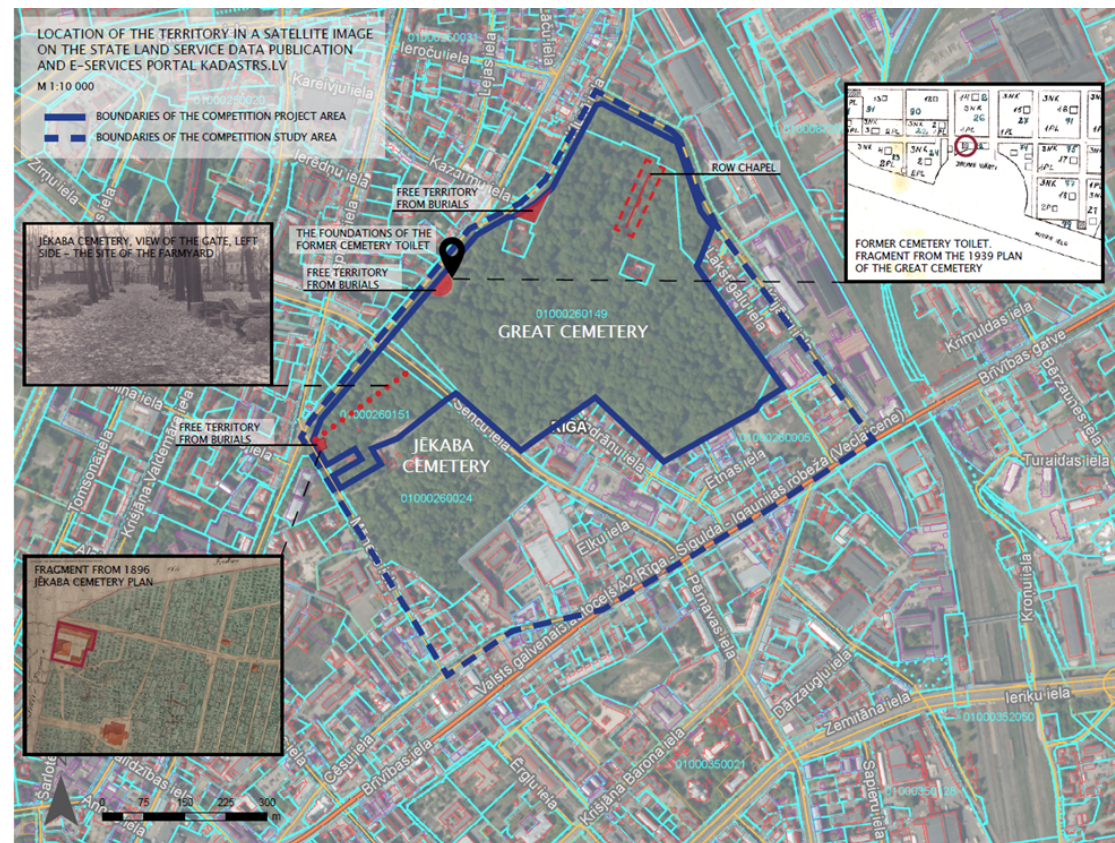
The Great Cemetery, april 2023

ORGANIZATION OF THE FLOWS AND FUNCTIONS OF THE LARGE CEMETERY

By the requirements of Article 5, Part 6 of the Law on the Preservation of the Historical Centre of Riga – within the historical centre of Riga and its protection zone are not allowed transformations of transportation routes, engineering communications, and infrastructure as a result of which the cultural and historical values of historical gardens, parks, and cemeteries are irreversibly lost or the territory of these areas are reduced, as well as the use of these territories or their parts are changed, which does not correspond to the purpose of preserving cultural and historical values.

A vision for **the future spatial development of the preservation and improvement of the cultural and historical environment**, should be created for the entire territory of the Great Cemetery, providing :

- organization of flows (pedestrians, cyclists, transport) and environmental accessibility;
- reorganization of the pathway network (respecting burial areas), offering the type of covering/material for footpaths, separating technical transport flow,
- the arrangement of benches and the lighting concept of the territory;
- preservation, creation, and maintenance of greenery;
- creation of parking spaces (including buses) in the adjacent territory;
- bike and electric scooter stands;
- correct the red lines of the streets so that they do not affect the territory of the cultural monument (not allowing the extension of Senču Street within the zone of the red lines).



The territory of the Great Cemetery with “free” development areas

The pathway network should be created based on historical research materials and taking into account the historical path plan (for example, the 1938 plan), reviewing today's pathway use and authentic burial sites and areas. The sealing of the road surface should be suitable for the needs of both pedestrians and technical transport used in the territory of the Great Cemetery. In the sketch design competition a technical transport scheme, separated from the pedestrian paths as much as possible, and a road surface suitable for the loads applied to small-sized technical vehicles should be proposed, so as not to affect the scenic environment of the Great Cemetery. Equipment (tactile elements) for people with visual and mobility impairments must be provided on walkways and parking lots.

The parking lots adjacent to the territory of the Great Cemetery should be arranged, providing a parking space marked with special permits for three cars of the Agency, Riga Forests, and Riga State City Municipality. In the parking of the Great Cemetery, including the historic semicircle driveway, a pavement that corresponds to the cultural and historical environment should be preserved.

In the area of the Great Cemetery, it is necessary to plan the placement of **benches** appropriate to the context and stylistics of the existing urban environment (indicating their location, total number, and visual outlook in the general plan of the Great Cemetery) and to create a **lighting concept for the twilight and dark hours of the day** (indicating the possible locations and visual outlook of light fixtures in the general plan of the Great Cemetery).



Driveway circle, 1970, E. Slavietis collection



Examples of authentic benches of the Great Cemetery

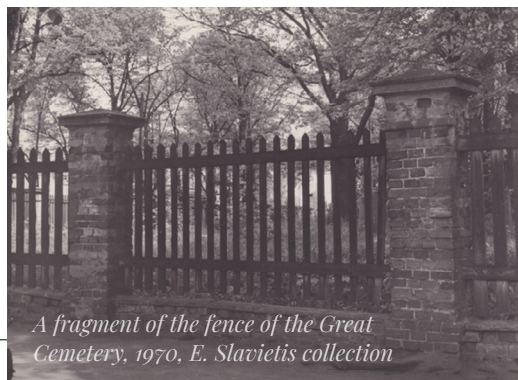
PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL-HISTORICAL VALUES

As part of the sketch design competition, **the restoration of the central gates (main and second entrance gates) of the Great Cemetery or their pillars**, should be provided to mark the change of territory from the city to the territory of the Great Cemetery, as well as offered visual security solutions for the demarcation of small areas in places with landslide risk. The necessary transformations should be made based on historical research materials. In parallel with the reorganization of the pathway network and scenic urban environment in the territory of the Great Cemetery Memorial, the restoration of cultural and historical monuments and chapels will gradually continue.

As part of the sketch design competition, the applicant may **evaluate the possibility to reconstruct the fence of the Great Cemetery**.



The old gate of the Great Cemetery, inside and outside view, 1970, E. Slaviētis collection



A fragment of the fence of the Great Cemetery, 1970, E. Slaviētis collection



The corner gate of Jacob's cemetery, 1970, E. Slaviētis collection

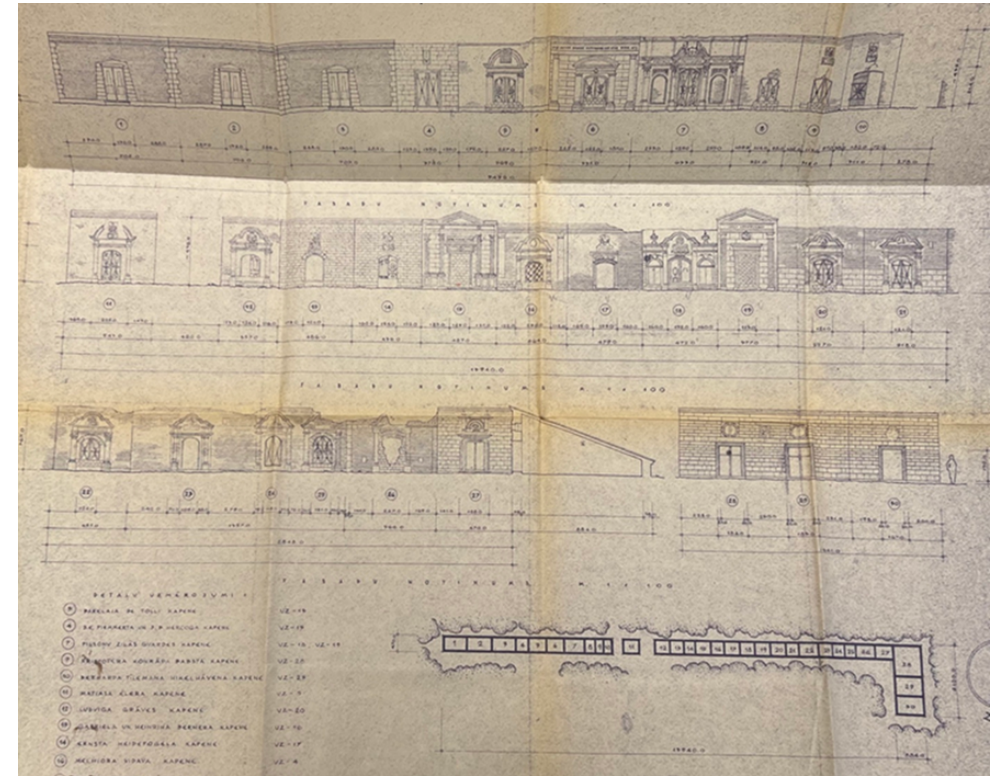


The new gate of the Great Cemetery, inside and outside view

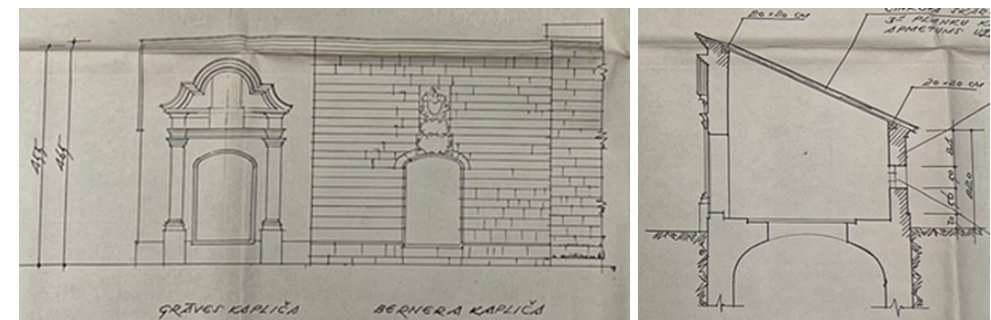
In the area of the Great Cemetery, **a memorial object concept should be proposed – a memorial place/wall**, possibly displaying the names of the known buried and providing the possibility to supplement this information. Such an environmental object will serve as a common memorial domain, where the relatives of those buried in the Great Cemetery can reminisce if the original grave site or tomb has not been preserved. When creating a memorial object – a memorial place/wall, special attention should be paid to the quality and sustainability of the design.

Starting from 1773, along the eastern border “row chapels” were built in the territory of the Great Cemetery – 30 in total (the oldest row chapel dates back to 1776, the construction was completed beginning of the 19th century). Unrepaired chapels were in a state of emergency in 1965, as a result of which a decision was made – since the chapels are very similar in their architectural layout, to restore and preserve them in a fragmentary manner. In the 1967 project, it was planned to restore the facades of the chapels and to use their backside for the masonry of fragments, parts, and grave slabs of various monuments. The spaces between the facades of the chapels were filled with enclosures of precious forging. In 1969, started the dismantling of the back walls of the collapsed chapels and the embedding of slabs and fragments of monuments found in the territory of the Cemetery into the facade of the “row chapels”.

As part of the sketch design competition, the applicants are invited to **evaluate the feasibility and applicability of the reconstruction of the row chapels** for the creation of memorial places for buried families or a kind of Museum of Great Cemetery, taking into account the fact that the foundations of the row chapels have been preserved in nature, but the measurements and photo-fixation of the row chapels can be found in the archive of the National Cultural Heritage Administration. Before implementing the idea of reconstructing row chapels, it will be necessary to conduct an appropriate study, finding out whether burials are still to be found in the places of row chapels.



Measurement, plan, and facade of row chapels, archive materials of the National Cultural Heritage Administration

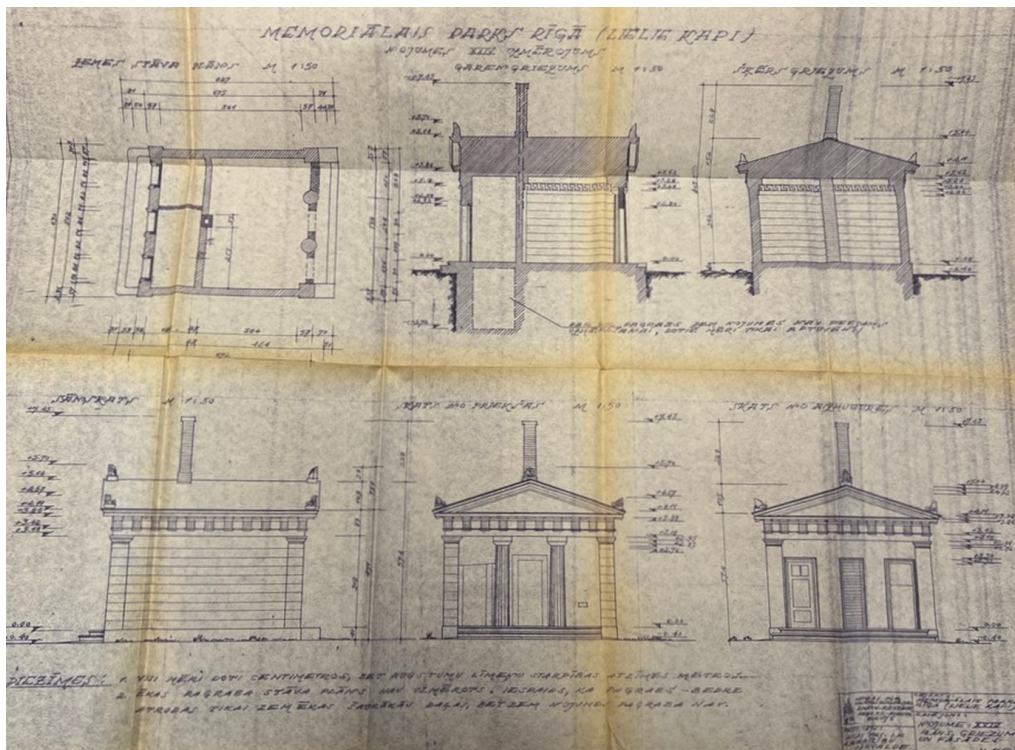


Measurements of particular row chapels, archive materials of the National Cultural Heritage Administration

TECHNICAL FACILITIES OF THE GREAT CEMETERY

As part of the sketch design competition, a **proposal for principles of management planning and recommendations for future management of the territory** (including the maintenance of grave sites and areas adjacent to monuments) must be developed, as well as solutions:

- of water intake for watering and drinking;
- for electrical connections and lighting scheme;
- for the management/service area of the Great Cemetery with a technical yard and an employee building, as well as a storage place for cleaning equipment and large waste containers;
- for public toilets, using existing/former infrastructure facilities;
- for temporary use buildings and/or technical facilities for the needs corresponding to the territory of the Great Cemetery.



Surveys of the former public toilet of the Great Tombs, NKMP archive materials

It is possible to use as the management/service area of the Great Cemetery the land unit of the former keeper's house of Jacob's sector (on the corner of Miera and Mēness Streets), where there was a building still in 1970 (the house of the keeper of the Jacob's Cemetery was built in 1853, but in 1902 a masonry greenhouse wall was built on the plot of land, where ornamental plant seedlings and flowers were grown). Offering a solution for the management/service area of the Great Cemetery, it is necessary to take into account the visual image of the new object fitting into the particular environment, locating in such a way that the main perspective views are not obscured.



Jacob's Cemetery – house of the guard, E. Slavietis collection, 1970



1931, photo: R. Johansons

VISUAL INSTRUCTIONS, INFORMATION STANDS

In the sketch design competition, **a unified design of the information and signage system must be developed**, placing the largest stands near the main roads so that the visitor is aware of the location, while the smaller stands displayed near the chapels, the most important monuments and graves, visually/stylistically matching the cultural and historical urban environment of the Great Cemetery.

In the sketch design competition, the following must be offered:

- inconspicuous, but visible direction signs corresponding to the territory and style of the Great Cemetery (for example, Senču Street, Klijānu Street, Brīvības Street, etc.);
- a way to inform the public about permitted and prohibited activities in the territory of the Great Cemetery (for example, warning signs – lead dogs, etc.) by the binding regulations for the use of the territory of the Great Cemetery;
- display methods and design solutions for informative material on the burial places of noble personalities, and authors of tombstones/chapels.
- modern digital technology solutions and possibilities of use (for example, use of QR codes), as well as 'augmented reality' (augmented reality to provide more visual information about monuments and their shape before/after restoration) must be offered in the sketch design as well.

SECURITY SOLUTIONS

In the sketch design competition, the following must be offered:

- visual and safety solutions for the demarcation of small areas in places with landslides,
- security solutions throughout the area (e.g., placement of surveillance cameras) to reduce vandalism.



*The large graves, the alley with the broken cross.
Photo by A. Ieviņš, 1973*