

Oakland County Neighborhood & Housing Development  
Inadvertent Discovery Plan for Human Remains or Cultural Items

This document sets forth the protocol to be followed in the event that human remains, and funerary objects are encountered during ground-disturbing work on a HUD-funded project. As a statement of general procedure, any human remains encountered will be treated with care and respect.

With any ground-disturbing activities, there is the possibility that human remains or artifacts will be encountered. If human remains, suspected human remains, or cultural items are found, all parties must follow the current guidance from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for the discovery of human remains, copied below (v. 7/19/21): The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) recommends that the following steps be implemented in the event of the discovery of human remains during a Section 106 project. It largely follows the steps set forward in Michigan Attorney General Opinion No. 6585 of 1989, Cemeteries and Dead Bodies.

This sequence of steps assumes that it will not be possible to preserve and maintain a given accidentally discovered burial place.

1. Upon the discovery of human remains, excavation in the immediate vicinity is halted. Cover and secure the area and do not handle finds. All project personnel shall treat any discovery as confidential. Personal photographs of finds may not be taken. The local police authority is immediately notified so that they may evaluate the site.

2. Inform SHPO Staff Archaeologist Amy Krull (phone 517-285-4211, email [krulla@michigan.gov](mailto:krulla@michigan.gov)).

3. If the police determine that the remains do not represent evidence of a crime or missing person, a qualified archaeologist experienced in human remains recovery shall recover the remains and any artifacts that may be present. Archaeological expertise is important in documenting the discovery context and evaluating whether the remains are isolated or if additional remains may be immediately present. Archaeological recovery may be done under the auspices of law enforcement. If law enforcement chooses not to be involved, a permit for disinterment must be obtained from the local Department of Public Health, or through a court order. Human remains and artifacts must be recovered in a respectful manner.

4. As soon as possible, the remains shall be examined by a physical anthropologist using standard non-invasive methods and procedures to create a basic biological profile and estimate ethnicity.

5. When the recovery and examination of the remains are complete, results shall be conveyed to the SHPO's archaeology staff, and in cases involving Native American Ancestors, to the appropriate Tribal entity. Final written archaeological reports, physical anthropological reports, and associated law enforcement case documentation must be submitted to the SHPO and appropriate Tribes. Note that Tribes may have special needs regarding the taking and retention of photographs of Ancestral remains.

6. The final disposition of Native American Ancestors and associated grave goods will be determined in discussions between the property owner and the appropriate Tribal authority at the conclusion of the recovery, examination, and reporting.

In addition to the notifications in SHPO's policy, it is mandatory that the following Oakland County Neighborhood & Housing Development staff be immediately notified:

Katie Tierney, Senior Specialist Environmental Officer (248) 858-5309  
tierneyk@oakgov.com

Or

Peter Essenmacher, Contracts Compliance Supervisor (248) 858-0196  
essenmacherp@oakgov.com

If forensics analysis indicates that the human remains are not Native American, disposition and reinterment of the remains will follow guidelines in AG Opinion 6585 (appended). OC