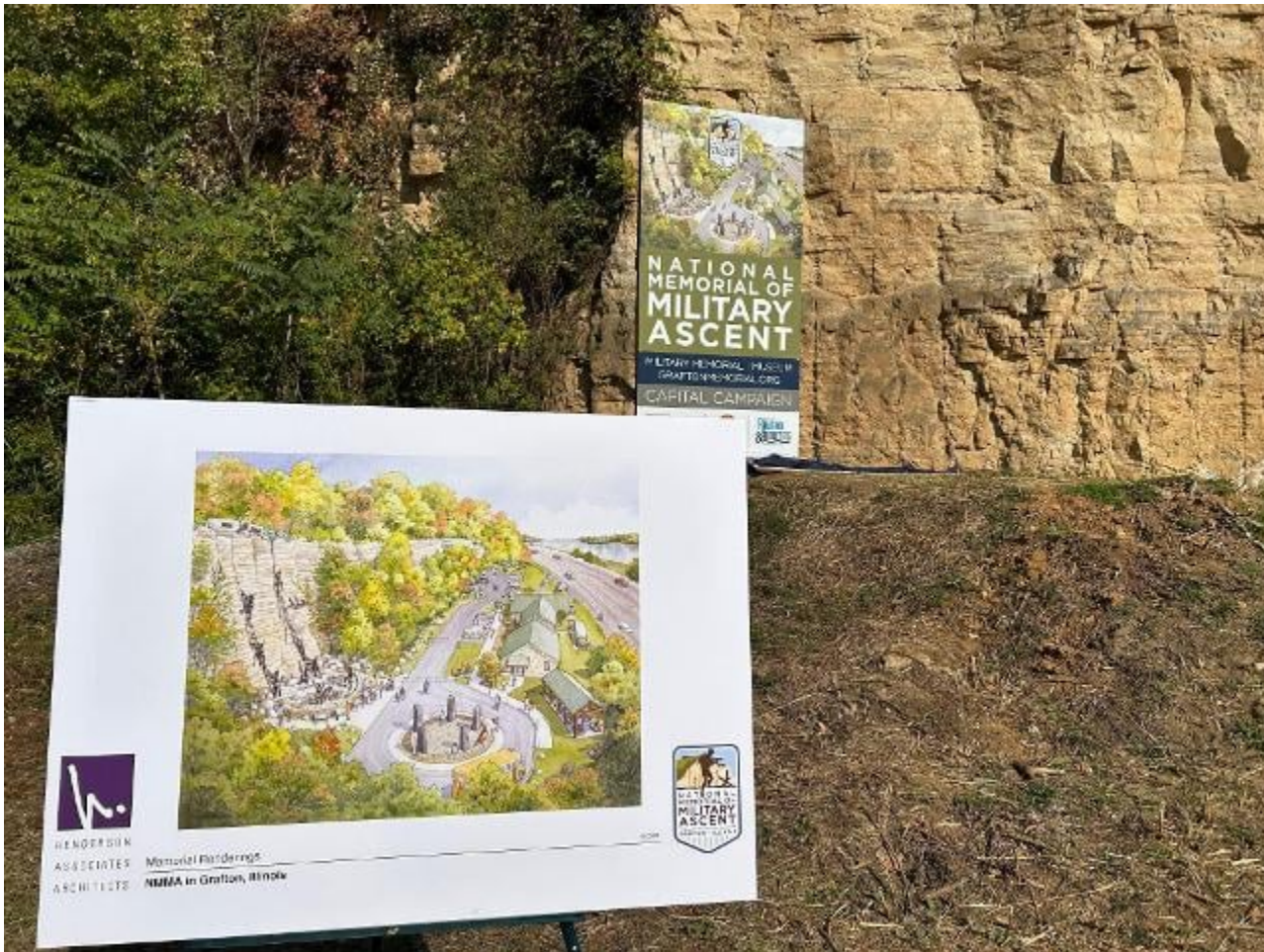


Grafton Shares "Regional and Spectacular" Veterans Memorial and Museum Plans

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
October 11 2023 1:57 PM



GRAFTON - Community members listened on Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2023, as Grafton city officials shared their plans for a veterans memorial and museum.

Grafton Mayor Mike Morrow and [Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau](#) President Cory Jobe spoke about the \$6 million project and how it will affect Grafton, while [architect Jamie Henderson](#) shared information about the memorial and museum design. Local singer Nikki Brooks provided music, and Alton Mayor David Goins led the

invocation. The project aims to honor Grafton's veteran population, which, at 17%, is the highest per capita in Illinois.

"This memorial is designed for everyone," Morrow said. "It will be a place of quiet reflection and a place of education. We are doing this so we never forget what our men and women in the military have done for our nation."

The museum will be located at the current Grafton Visitor Center at 950 E. Main Street. The nearby memorial will depict the U.S. Army Provisional Rangers' climb up Pointe du Hoc, a French cliff that was captured by the Rangers on D-Day in World War II. Fifteen life-size bronze cast statues of soldiers will appear to be climbing the bluff near the Grafton Visitor Center, modeled after the Pointe du Hoc scene.

In the current Visitor Center parking lot, there will be five granite pillars representing the five branches of the U.S. military, set into a plaza with white pavers as a nod to the white headstones made for veterans in national cemeteries. This plaza will also serve as a turnaround point for tourism buses. The Visitor Center itself will be transformed to include information about WWII and Pointe du Hoc.

"We have created a place to commemorate, to educate and reflect," said Henderson, principal of [Henderson Associates Architects, Inc.](#) "We're going to educate the community, the children of the area and all the visitors that come, the veterans, with the war museum that will be tied into the existing facility. We will utilize the existing infrastructure and allow us to create a museum that is going to be both educational and immersive."

Henderson said the museum will include an "immersive room" with audio and projected images that will "highlight both wartime and peacetime for the veterans." The building will also house exhibits and a large window to frame the memorial.

The Pointe du Hoc memorial will have a pillbox at the top of the bluff in addition to the 15 statues climbing up the cliff. Reenactors from the [U.S. 2nd Ranger Infantry Battalion of St. Louis](#) will serve as models for the statues. Henderson noted this process will save money and make the statues more realistic. He added that one of the statues will appear to be falling off the cliff, and he is eager to see how the bronze foundry will complete this aspect of the project.

In December 2022, Grafton's City Council appointed a board of commissioners to develop a memorial in honor of the town's veterans. As the plan grew, the commissioners realized a museum with information about WWII would be a positive addition to provide context and make the memorial a true tourist attraction.

The commissioners then founded the nonprofit National Memorial of Military Ascent (NMMA) to manage the Grafton project and continue supporting local veterans once the memorial is completed. For more information about the development of the memorial and museum project, check out [this article](#) at RiverBender.com.

On Oct. 11, 2023, NMMA officially launched their capital campaign. Their goal is to raise \$6 million, and they have already received sizable donations from American Legion Post #648, [The Loading Dock](#), [Chamberlin Group](#) CEO Don Chamberlin, and Army veteran and philanthropist John Simmons. Project engineer Mike Jones with [Tarlton Corporation](#) has agreed to work pro bono, and [SMS Engineers](#) president Scott Weiner has donated two land surveys to assist with the design. If you would like to donate, you can do so at the [official NMMA website](#).

While the goal of the project is to honor veterans, Morrow and Cory Jobe noted that it also has the potential to garner tourism and growth in Grafton. Morrow, a veteran himself, predicted the museum will be “regional and spectacular,” and Jobe pledged the support of the [Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau](#).

“When the mayor called me about this project, we jumped in with both feet,” Jobe said. “I want to offer up my congratulations to the mayor and the City of Grafton for your leadership and commitment to making this project possible...This project, as we see it from the tourism bureau, is a great way to honor our veterans, those who fought for us and lost their lives, but also the future, the children that will be passing through here. History will be right here in Grafton and right here in Southwest Illinois. I want to thank the mayor for his steadfast leadership and his dedication to this project and our byway region.”

For more information about the National Memorial of Military Ascent, the museum, or how to donate, visit the [official NMMA website at GraftonMemorial.org](#).