

# Preserving America's Civil War Battlefields: Antietam and Manassas

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Crisp air scented with sweet morning dew lingers on the lush green countryside as the sun rises. Silence has befallen the land. Bloodstained grass quiver as the wind brushes by. Across the once-again peaceful land, lays thousands of dead soldiers. They were all brothers of the same nation. The American Civil War occurred over a century ago, but the stories of the war are very much alive. What better way to remember the gruesome battles than to preserve the land that the soldiers fought on. The battle at Antietam, in Washington County, Maryland on September 17, 1862 is known as the bloodiest day of the Civil War. More than 23,000 solders perished, were wounded, or missing (Rambur 16). Nearby, in Manassas, in Prince William County, Virginia, the site hosted two battles during the Civil War. The first was fought on July 21, 1861 and the second on August 1862, leaving the area in desolation. Both times, the Confederates were victorious (Revitalization Program par. 1). A century later, these sites hosted bloodless battles: the fight for historical land preservation.

Battlefield preservation is important to the nation and local communities. They are mechanisms in providing a sustainable local community. They serve as educational resources for all the children learning about the Civil War. Battlefields are also open spaces that local residents can enjoy, increasing their quality of life. Local communities can also economically benefit from the preserved land:

1. As an income generator, a battlefield attracts direct infusions of wealth from tourism and the park's management expenditures, both of which create jobs in the community. Additional economic benefits flow from sales tax revenue on visitors' purchases.
2. As historic open space, a battlefield adds economic value to adjacent properties and enhances a community's quality of life by protecting its natural resources, environmental qualities, and visual amenities.
3. As a fiscal asset. A battlefield requires few capital expenditures and services by the community unless it is owned and supported by the community. (Kennedy 2)

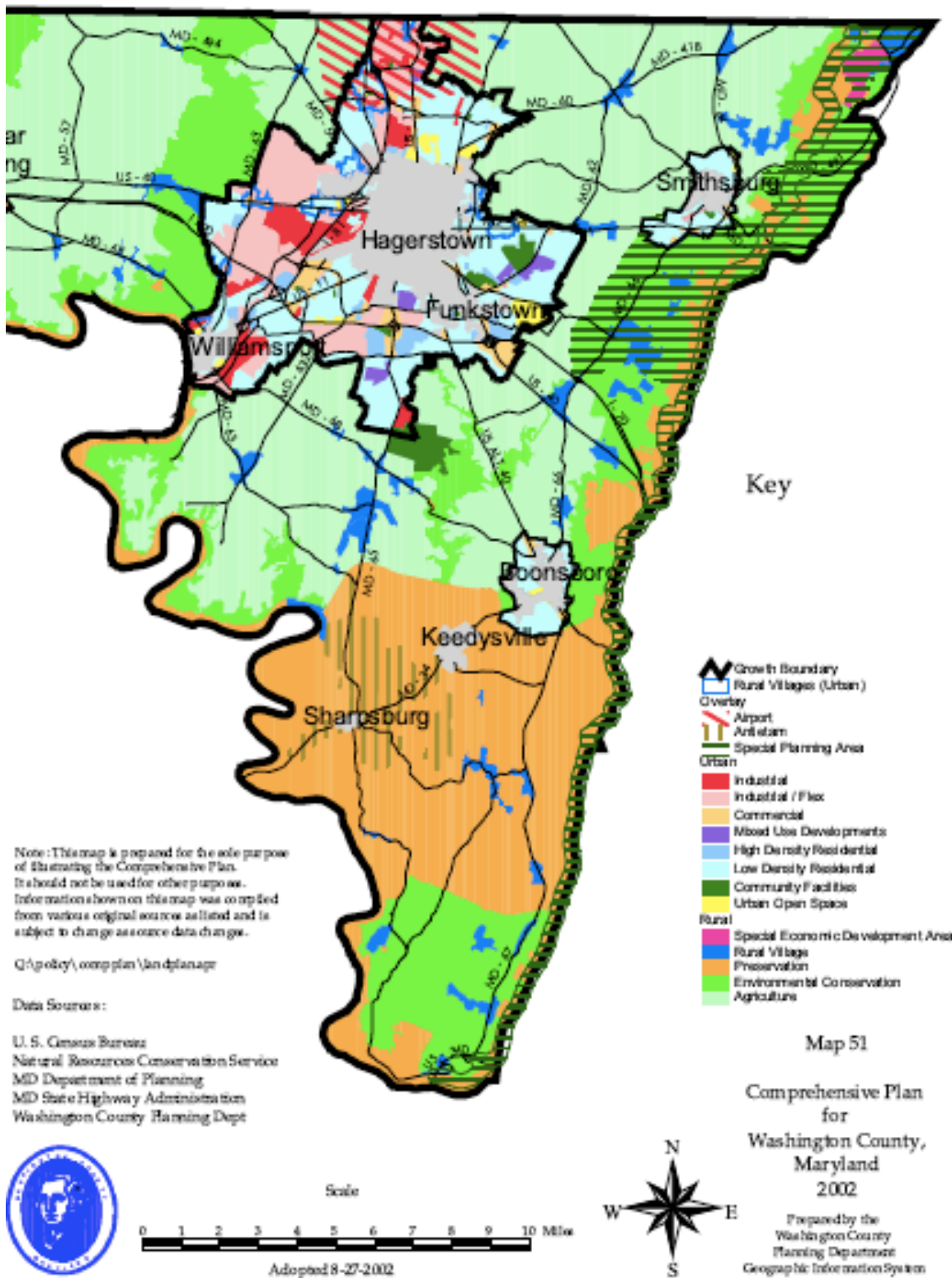
Both Antietam and Manassas have benefited from preserving their battlefields. The City of Manassas has seen more influx of businesses and residents. Abandoned shops and lots in the downtown area have been revitalized, thanks to the increasing public's interest in the area.

The preservation of these sites did not come easily. Preserving these lands are still ongoing. Antietam National Battlefield Park was established in 1890 (Kennedy 22). Only a few acres and some roads were protected. These were used to teach military tactics. The rest of the actual battlefield and surrounding farms were left unprotected. Up until the late twentieth century, one can walk around the Antietam site and see the same vistas that the Confederate and Union soldiers saw. Part of the reason was because the park's boundaries were expanded to include 3250 acres of the 8000-acre battlefield (Benfield 139). The 4000 unprotected acres,

however, were increasingly threatened by urban sprawl from nearby Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Development can be seen in Sharpsburg, which is only a few miles from Antietam National Battlefield Park. In order to contain future developments in towns, local residents, county and state officials collaborated to help save battlefield lands.

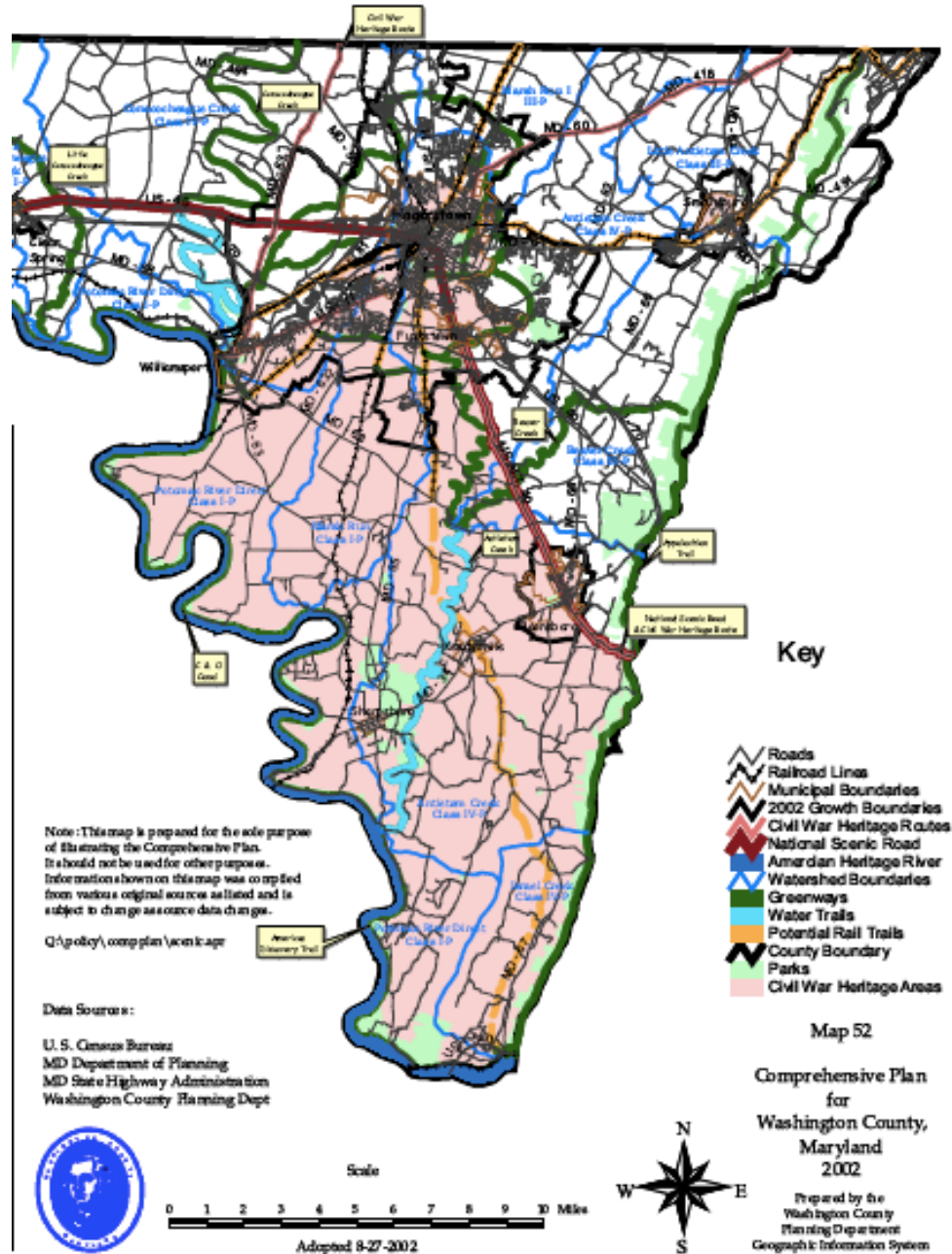
Help to put lands on conservation easements came in different forms. In 1991, Congress established the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), which required part of Maryland's funding to go to historic preservation (Benfield 140). The state also dedicated some funding from Program Open Space. By 1994, the state had put 2500 acres of farmland around the Antietam battlefield under preservation (Kennedy 23). Local organizations also played a key role in preserving the historical land. Save Historic Antietam Foundation was able to preserve the Grove Farm, which housed Union soldiers and where President Abraham Lincoln visited. Clemens, then president of Save Historic Antietam Foundation's board of directors commented, "the purchase of the Grove Farm property in 1991 put us on the preservation map. Putting our necks out without surety of the money to cover it got attention" (Campbell-Shoaf 74). The organization also worked closely with Antietam National Battlefield Park in donating the money they raised for the restoration of some historical buildings in the park. Other key players in the area's land preservation endeavors included The Richard King Mellon Foundation, the Civil War Trust, and the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites. The preservation of Antietam Battlefield showed how successful private-public partnerships could be.

Washington County's comprehensive plan also led to the continual protection of Antietam Battlefield from development. According to the 2002 Comprehensive Plan, the areas surrounding the battlefield are for rural residential use, and are zoned at one unit per thirty acres (270). On the Land Use Plan map of Washington County's Planning Department, released in 2005, one can see that the areas surrounding Antietam is designated as a preservation area, environmental conservation area, agricultural area, and low-density residential area.



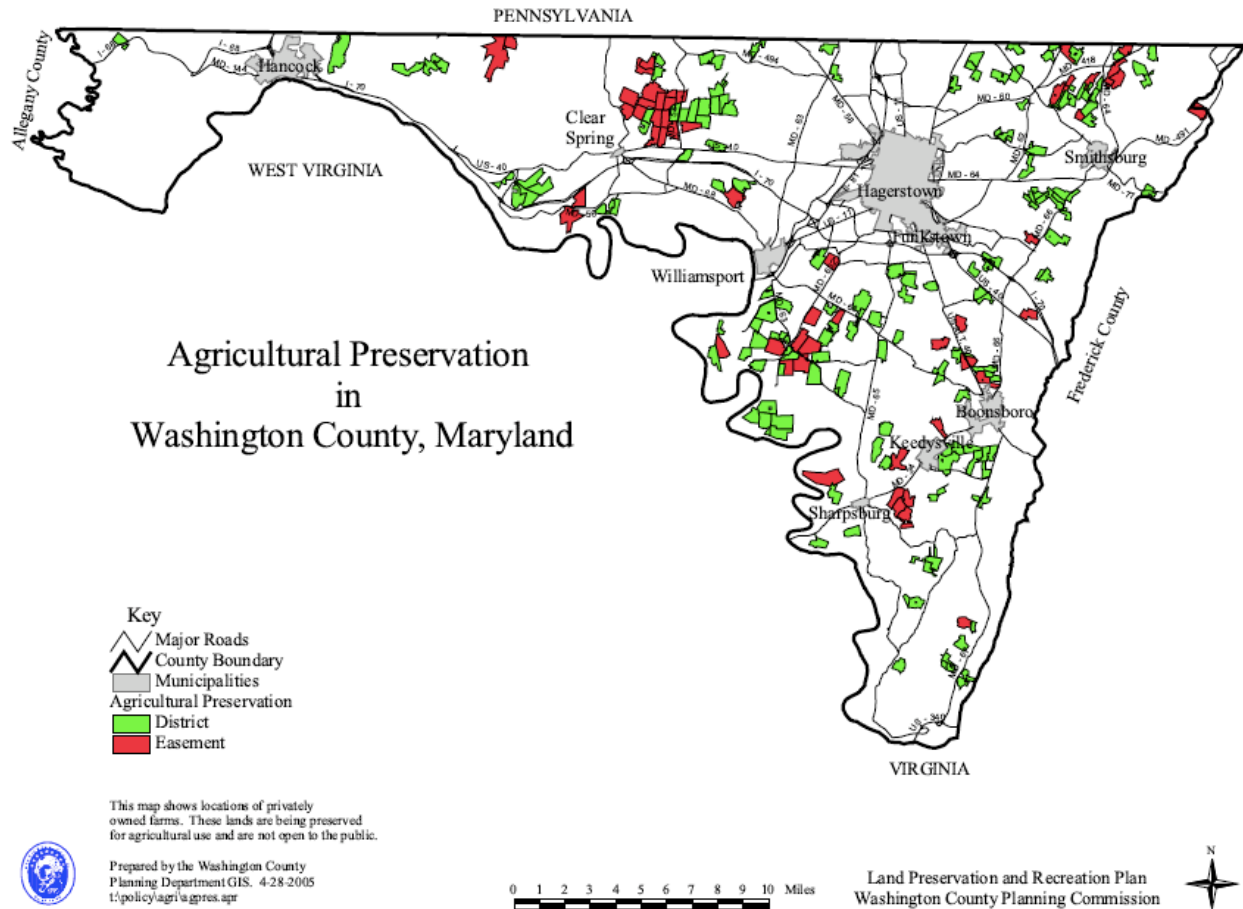
Land Use Plan. Map. Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan: Washington County, MD, 2005.

Washington County also recognized the importance of having a Civil War heritage in its community. The residents and government officials acknowledged that they could profit from local and outside interests in Civil War history. Therefore, the Comprehensive Plan included a Special Programs Area where certain sites and routes were designated as important for the county's tourism industry. It was their aim to have these sites and routes preserved and made accessible to those who live or visit the county.



Special Programs Areas. Map. Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan: Washington County, MD, 2005.

Although the Comprehensive Plan helped in preserving the rural characteristic of the Antietam Battlefield, much work is needed to reinforce the plan. According to the Agricultural Preservation map, land around Antietam National Battlefield Park had been put under conservation easements. However, this may not be enough to preserve the rural vistas of the area. Continual efforts on both the government and local sides are working to put more lands under protection from development.



Agricultural Preservation in Washington County, Maryland. Map. Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan: Washington County, MD, 2005.

While the residents of Antietam were able to benefit from the early establishment of Antietam National Battlefield Park, and foresaw urban sprawl in their area, prompting immediate action in land preservation, it was a different story for Manassas, Virginia. Manassas National Battlefield Park was not established until 1940. The delay in establishing the national park was caused by the lack of campaign by local residents, Civil War veterans, and government officials. Congressional support was weak perhaps because Manassas represented two victories by the

Confederates (Zenzen 1). By late twentieth century, the area came under great development pressure. Local residents were caught by surprise, making land preservation efforts a Herculean task.

In 1988, a 1.2 million-square foot mall with five major department stores, was proposed for a 542-acre site near Manassas National Battlefield Park, which included General Robert E. Lee's headquarters during the Second Battle of Manassas. (Gallagher 10). Government officials felt that this would bring an economic boost to the area. When local residents and the National Park Service caught wind of this, it seemed too late. The area had been rezoned to allow such development and the developer already had construction cranes on site. Thus began the "Third Battle of Manassas." Annie Snyder, co-founder of the Save the Battlefield Committee, rallied up volunteers to shed light on the situation to the whole nation. The organization

put together packets of information about the mall and the battlefield park and sent them to newspapers, concerned citizens, and interested organization nationwide...[Snyder] gathered together volunteers who opposed the mall and put them to work stuffing envelopes and circulating petitions. From the petitions, she gained a larger pool of volunteers, who stuffed more envelopes, wrote letters, and held fundraisers. (Zenzen 137)

Victory came to the residents of Prince William County when Congress bought the land for \$120 million (Gallagher 11). A few years before the controversy, the land had an appraisal value of \$2 million (Moe 27). The 542-acre site was added to Manassas National Battlefield Park. However, it left citizens wondering if the purchase was worth it.

In 1993, Disney announced its plans for Disney's America theme park in Haymarket, Virginia; a few miles from Manassas National Battlefield Park. Disney executives had been working in secrecy in finding the perfect location for this new theme park. When they saw a 2300-acre site in rural western Prince William County, added with its proximity to Washington, D.C. with an annual estimate of 19 million tourists, and Route 66 corridor, which connects to the metropolitan area, Disney deemed Haymarket as a very attractive site (Zenzen 167). Prince William County officials received Disney's proposal with open arms, believing that the theme park would bring the much needed money and growth into the county. When the plans were announced to the public, the "Fourth Battle of Manassas" came into being.

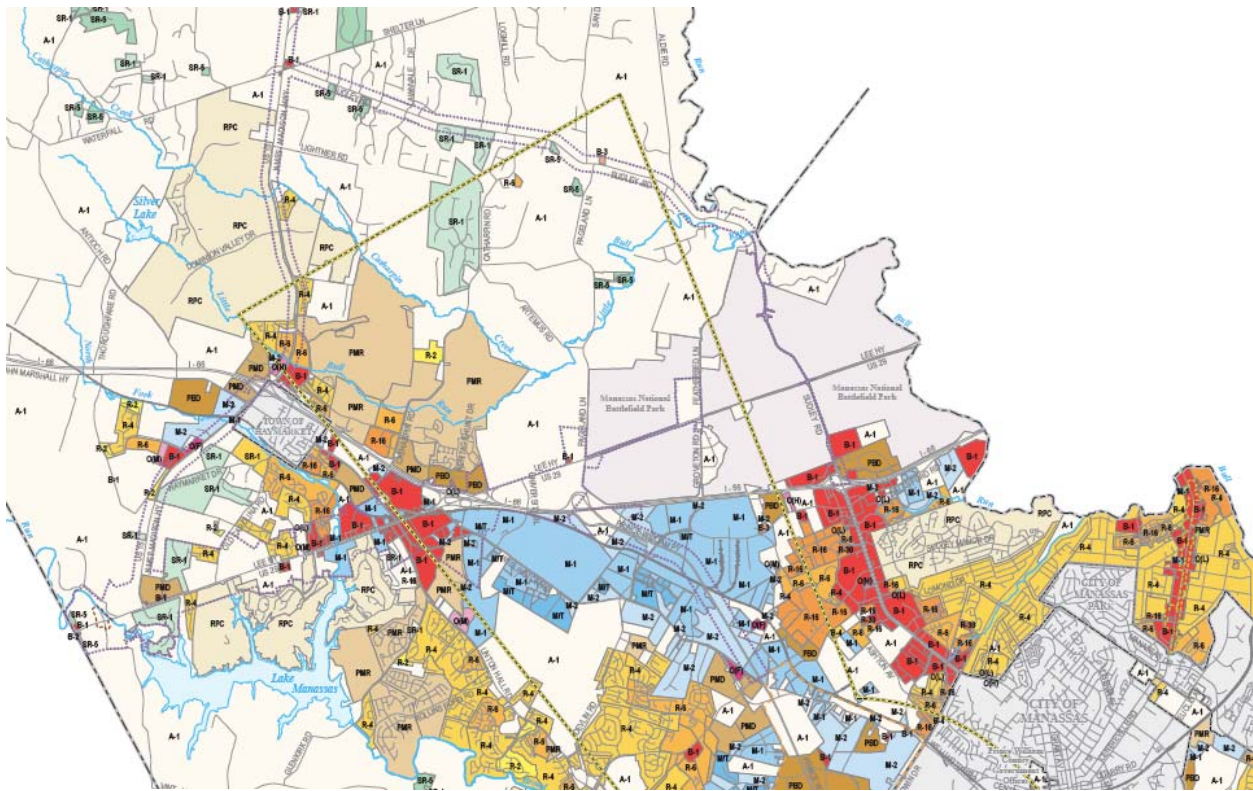
Land preservation activities were present since the "Third Battle of Manassas." However, these efforts were not enough to discourage Disney Company from creating a theme park in rural Virginia. Disney's proposal and the government's approval left grassroots organizations

scrambling for help. Snyder stepped in once again to thwart off the proposal. Preservationists saw that the theme park would only bring destruction to the open land:























Visions of clogged roadways and a snarled interstate appeared in [the public's] minds as they heard Disney predict an estimated 30,000 visitors daily (6.3 million annually) to the theme park. Along with the traffic, opponents believed the region's already polluted air would get worse with the increased tourist traffic. And, once Disney settled into Haymarket, accompanying developments on the surrounding lands seemed a sure bet. (Zenzen 171)

The controversy drew nation-wide attention. In the end, nearly a year later, Disney withdrew the project. They concluded that the controversy had hurt the company's public image and that they have already spent too much money fighting back. This served as an important lesson to Prince William County's government officials. As stated by Mike Hoover, then president of Prince William County/Greater Manassas Chamber of Commerce, "You have to build regional support. When you back people into a corner, they come out fighting" (qtd. in Moe 34).

Unlike Antietam Battlefield, where the state provided continual funding for land preservation around the historical area, Manassas lacked such funding. Prince William County's Comprehensive Plan aimed to protect the surrounding areas of Manassas National Battlefield Park; however, it might be too late. The towns of Haymarket and the City of Manassas have already encroached on some farmlands and the Manassas Battlefield. Development of the City of Manassas has pushed up right against the southern border of Manassas National Battlefield Park. This made it harder for grassroots organizations to put lands on conservation easements. Nevertheless, the county was zoned so that the immediate undeveloped lands around the battlefield remained agricultural. It is disheartening, however, that some areas south of the battlefield have been zoned for industrial use, connecting Haymarket and the City of Manassas together. In the agricultural zones, there are patches for dense residential areas. These patches are close together enough to potentially form a residential corridor. Farmers whose lands are between these residential areas may be tempted to sell to developers. If this happens, then Manassas National Battlefield Park and the few farms immediately surrounding it will be enclosed by development.



**ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS**

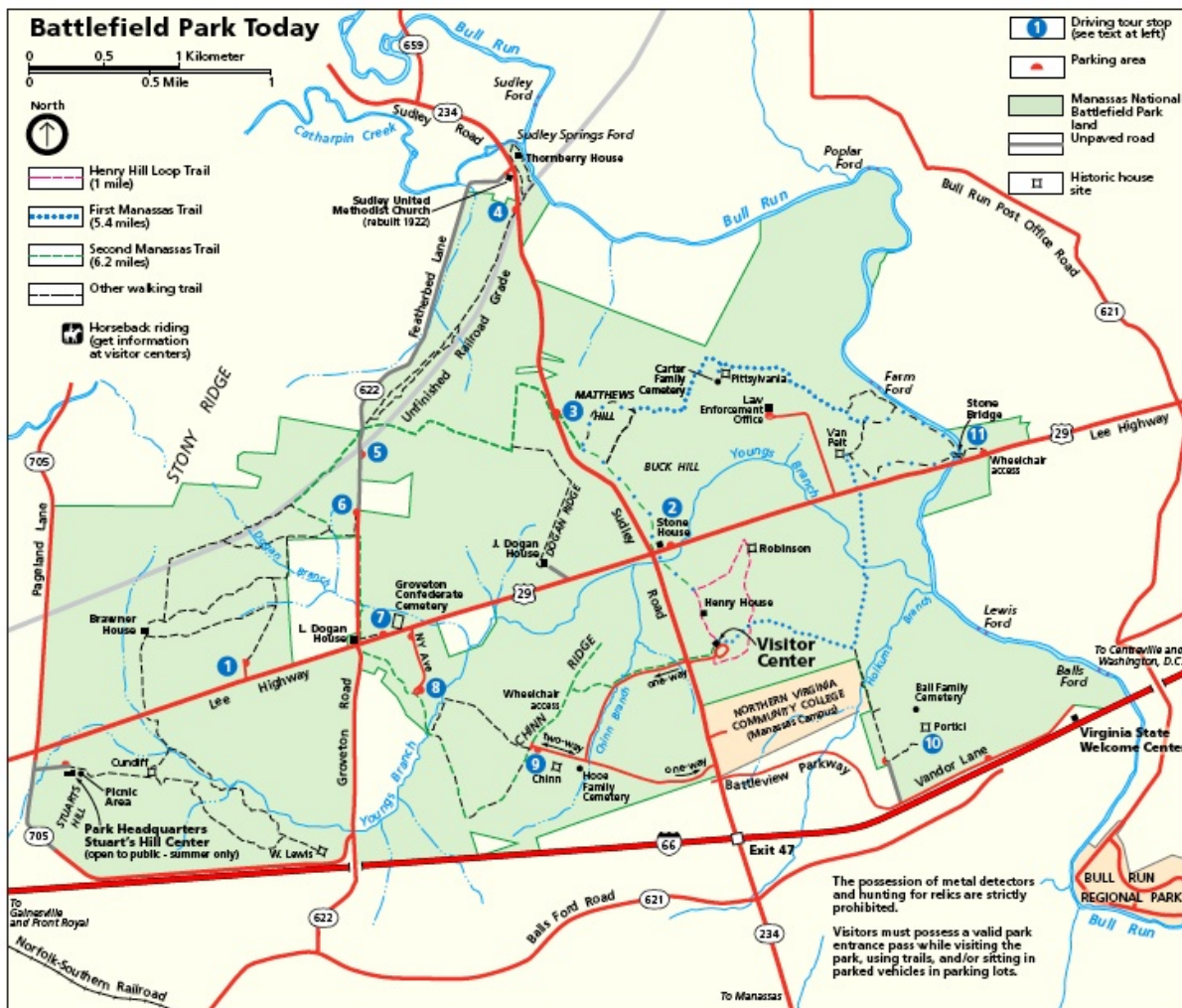
	A-1 Agricultural
	B-1 General Business
	B-2 Neighborhood Business
	B-3 Convenience Business
	M/T Industrial / Transportation
	M-1 Heavy Industrial
	M-2 Light Industrial
	O(F) Office / Flex
	O(H) High-Rise Office
	O(M) Mid-Rise Office
	O(L) Low-Rise Office
	PBD Planned Business District
	PMD Planned Mixed District
	PMR Planned Mixed Residential
	RPC Residential Planned Community
	R-2 Minimum Lot Size - 20,000 sq.ft.
	R-4 Minimum Lot Size - 10,000 sq.ft.
	R-6 6 Dwellings per 1 acre
	R-16 16 Dwellings per 1 acre
	R-30 30 Dwellings per 1 acre
	SR-1 1 Dwelling per 1 acre
	SR-5 1 Dwelling per 5 acres
	Cities and Towns
	Government Tracts

Prince William County Zoning Classification Map. Map. Prince William County Planning Office, 2008.

Another issue that Manassas National Battlefield Park has to contend with that Antietam National Battlefield Park doesn't, is traffic. Perhaps some have already dubbed this issue as the "Fifth Battle of Manassas." Routes 29 and 234 cuts the park into quadrants. At the intersection is the Stone House, the former field hospital during the Civil War (Zenzen 66).

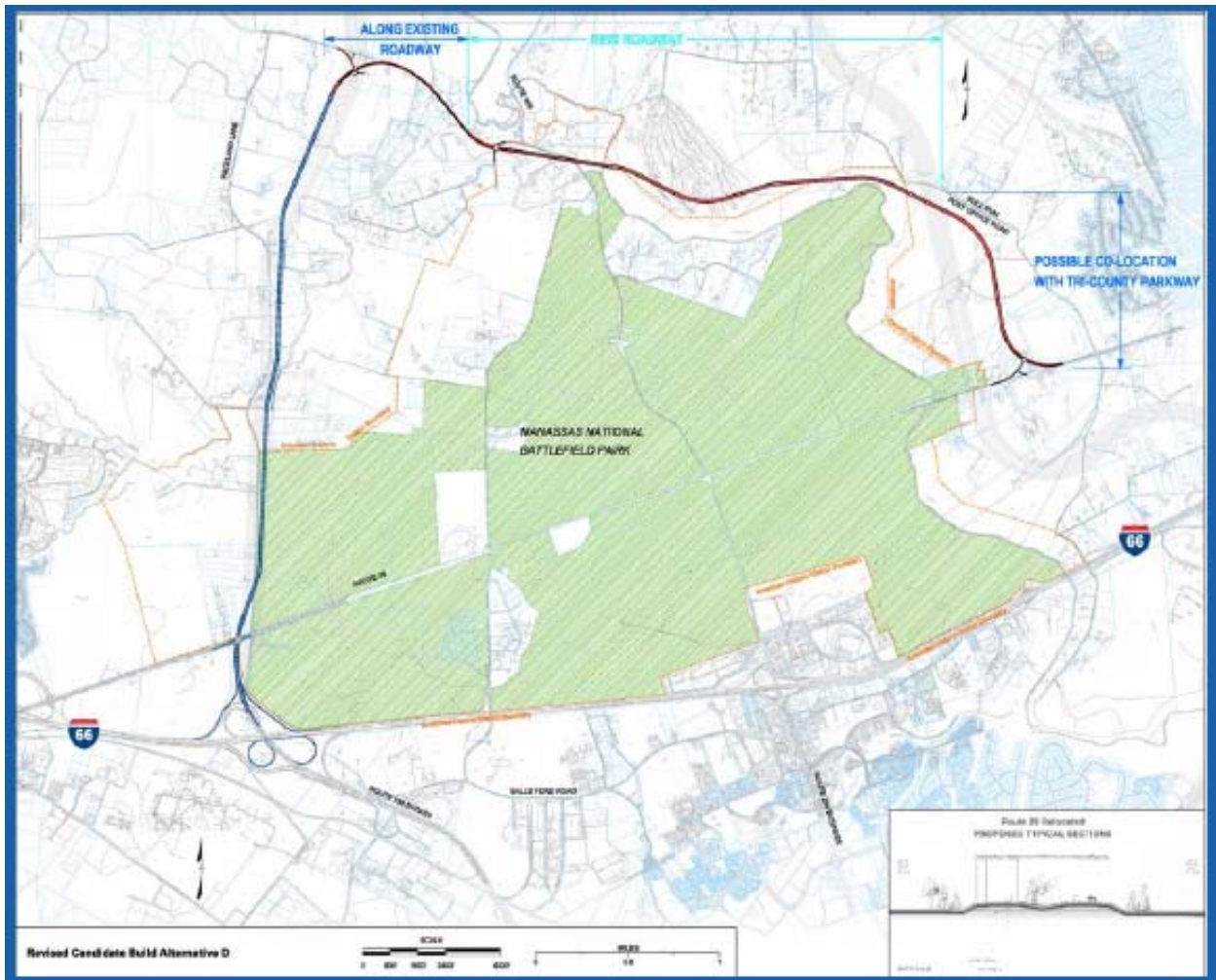


Stone House. Picture. National Park Service, 2008.



Manassas Park Map. Map. National Park Service, 2008.

Many commuters during rush hour get to have a good long look at the historical building because of traffic backed up for miles at the intersection. Talks of widening the two-lane roads angered some preservationists and even the park’s employees. For Superintendent Robert Sutton, he argued that “for decades former superintendents had opposed expanding the historic road crossing. Doing so may result in increased traffic” (Hodge 74). A solution was to create a bypass. A definite plan was supposed to be established by 2004. However, in 2005, the transportation department was still revising their bypass plans. It seems that residents will have to deal with the traffic for a while longer.



Manassas National Battlefield Park Bypass Study. 6 July 2005. Prince William County Transportation Division.

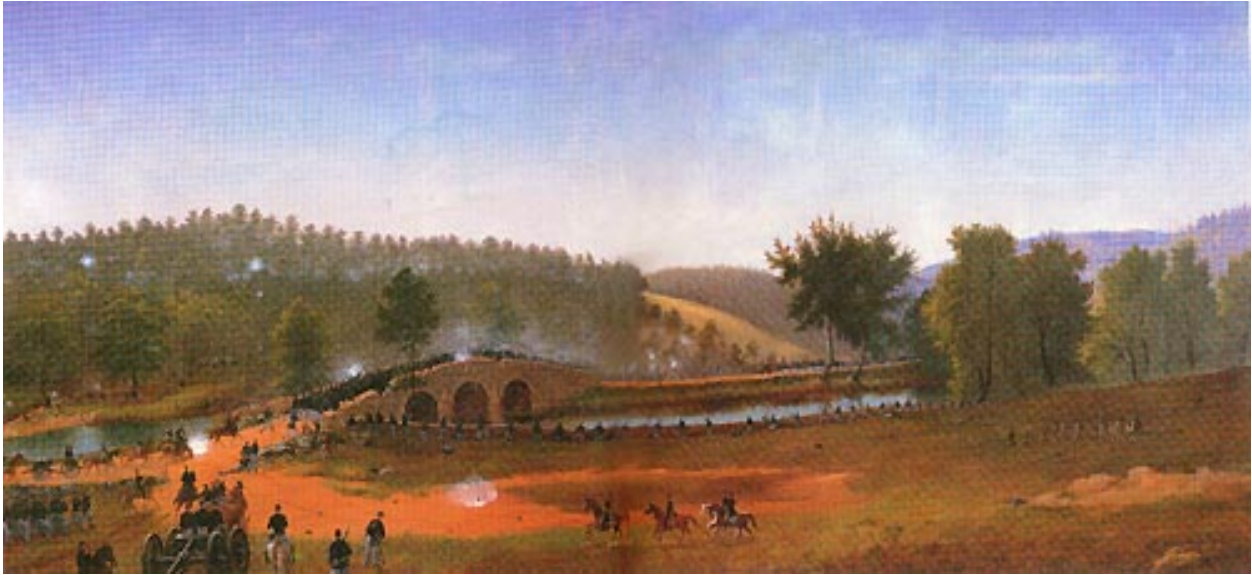
Manassas National Battlefield Park’s goal is to restore the land to the way it was when the battles were fought. In fall 2007, 140 acres of trees were clear-cut in the northwestern part of the park. Park officials stated that the trees had to be removed in order to re-create the historic

battlefield. Nature lovers were enraged by this act. The trees were of “basic oak-hickory forest type, which is limited to a six-county area in Northern Virginia and Maryland, globally uncommon to rare” (Mack B01). In restoring the park, there is a “conflict between managing natural and historic resources”(Mack B01). Residents believe that the field should be preserved, that the Park Service should hold on to its land. However, cutting down trees simply to maintain views are not so important. A battlefield with trees can still tell a story of what happened in the past.

Antietam seems to be more sustainable than Manassas. Antietam has a solid zoning ordinance that supports land preservation. There is still a lot of undeveloped land left and there is a strong push by the state and local organizations to protect them. Local residents can enjoy the vast open space in their county. Money generated from the tourism industry stays within the county, improving nearby towns’ economy. At the same time, unique fauna and flora in the battlefield are protected. Manassas, on the other hand, is mostly surrounded by development. The preservation of Manassas Battlefield was beneficial to the county. However, if the traffic issue is not addressed immediately, it could be detrimental. The area will see an increase in pollution, which can affect the historical structures in the park. More money may then be spent on the maintenance of the structures. Not only that, the traffic may also deter visitors from visiting the park. This may then lead to a lack of funding for the upkeep of the park and continual funding for land preservation surrounding the park. For bird watchers and other nature lovers, they visit the battlefield to spot unique flora and fauna. If disturbances around the area increase, the environmental impact can be great and irreversible. The battlefield may then lose its rural and historical characteristics if the animals and silence vanish and are replaced with automobiles.

Antietam was lucky to have the Antietam National Battlefield Park established soon after the Civil War, instilling patriotism in local residents. This led to stewardship in community planning, and perhaps that was how the residents were able to recognize encroaching urban sprawl and do something about it. As for Manassas battlefield, it is unfortunate that it was not recognized as an important historical site until the middle of the twentieth century. This gave the local communities little time in practicing good community planning policies. To complicate matters, government officials were not being open to the public. The mall and the theme park proposals were not announced until after government officials have already agreed to the deal. With surrounding development come pollution issues, traffic problems, and quality of life issues.

It is best if local politicians and local residents work together to preserve and maintain the remaining battlefield lands. Perhaps a more sustainable Manassas is not out of reach.



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