

# **Protecting Harpers Ferry**

## One of the Nation's Ten Most Endangered Civil War Battlefields

Presented to Jefferson County Planning Commission by Harpers Ferry National Historical Park - June 2007



## Common Vision for Preservation

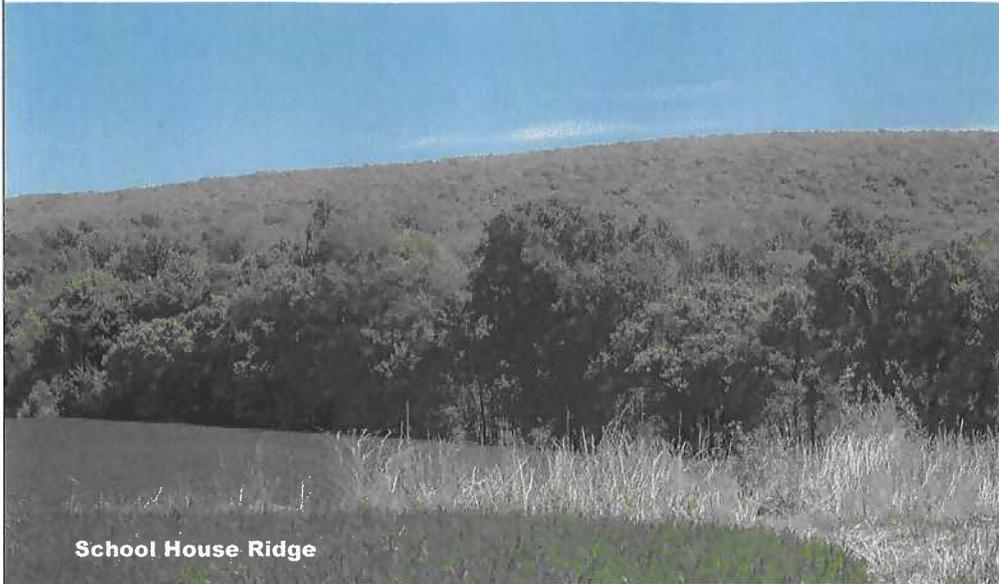


## Common Vision for Preservation

For 70 years, congressional, state, and local leaders, groups, and individuals have shared a common vision for Harpers Ferry—to create a national park in this 19th Century rural setting of Jefferson County that is today one of West Virginia's finest treasures.



## Protecting History and Landscape



## Protecting the Battlefield

In 2002, this vision preserved the pastoral Murphy Farm. And in 2004 The Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Boundary Revision Act preserved the School House Ridge battlefield and additional scenic vistas protecting the park's rural landscape.

### New development raises concerns

# SMOKING

24th Year No. 79 Harpers Ferry, Md. Wed.

## Harpers Fe

■ The site is one of the 10 most threatened battlefields according to a recent study.

By BEN EVANS  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON — Plans for a casino just outside Gettysburg, Pa., were shot down last year, but the site of the Civil War's bloodiest battle still is threatened by rapidly spreading home construction, according to a preservation group's annual inventory of endangered battlefields.

So is a battleground outside Harpers Ferry which was added to the list this year after a developer dug 45-foot-wide trenches for water and sewer lines that would serve thousands of new homes.

A site in Alabama's Mobile Bay is suffering from neglect and a lack of maintenance, and vast tracts of land stretching from Virginia to Pennsylvania are at risk from a planned major power line, the Civil War Preservation Trust said.

"Tens of thousands of valuable young Americans still lie entombed in those fields," Charlie Wilson, a former Texas congressman who backed federal spending on Civil War land preservation, said

## Harpers Ferry on list of most endangered battlefields

HARPERS FERRY, W.VA.

■ The Civil War Preservation Trust blames pressure by developers.

By DAVE McMILLION  
cmiller@harpersferry.com

Civil War battlefields at Harpers Ferry were listed among the most endangered in the country Tuesday and preservation experts pointed to pressure by developers in the announcement.

In a press conference in Washington, D.C., the Civil War Preservation Trust said a group of developers laid about 2,000 feet of water and sewer lines across Harpers Ferry National Historical Park last August and left "nearly two acres of taxpayer-owned landlocked ground seriously compromised."

## List: Harpers

Continued from A1

The National Parks Conservation Association, which issued a list of the 10 most endangered battlefields in the country, said a \$200 million office space and hotel project being proposed on private land near the park would allow lucrative future intensive development in the area and undermine millions of dollars in federal, state and private investments made to preserve the park.

"For decades, leaders from West Virginia and across the country have worked together to protect America's Civil War history at Harpers Ferry. As a result, nearly 3,700 acres of land is protected in a landscape of remarkable beauty," said Jeffrey Oakes, senior regional director of the National Parks Conservation Association.

Harpers Ferry (National Historical Park) is threatened today by an ill-advised proposal to develop approximately 600 acres of private land virtually surrounded by the park," Oakes said.

A Charles Town attorney representing developers who want to build the \$250 million office space and hotel project objected to statements that the proposal is not compatible with the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The park is being set aside for public access to the river and boat ramps. Harpers Ferry was included

The Journal, March 14, 2007

The Morning Herald, March 14, 2007

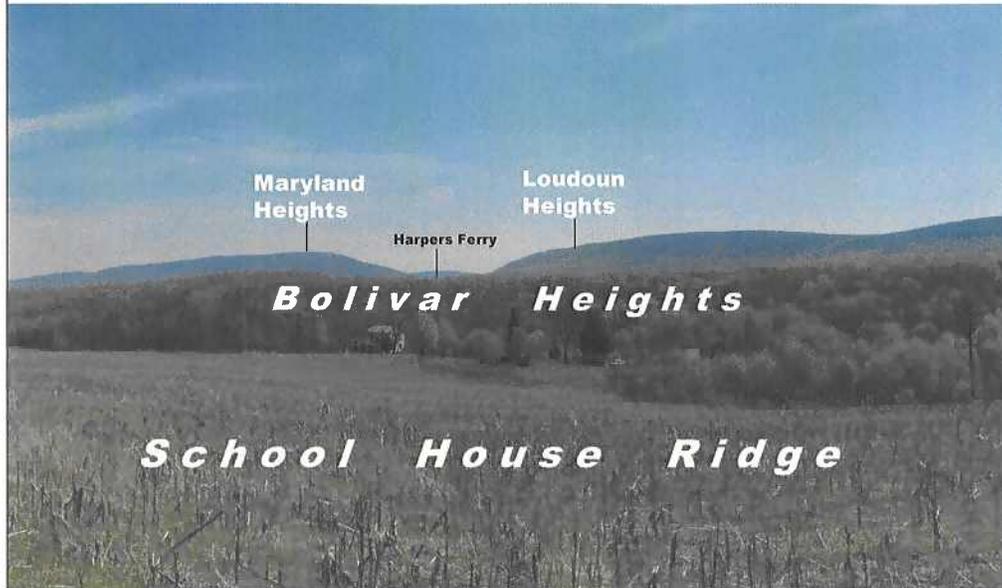
## Old Standard LLC's development raises new concerns

Recently, the Civil War Preservation Trust declared Harpers Ferry to be one of the Nation's ten most endangered battlefields due to the development threat Old Standard poses to the park.

The National Park Conservation Association and the National Trust for Historic Preservation have voiced similar objections.



**The land tells the story**



## **Top Ten Endangered Battlefield**

During the battle of Harpers Ferry in 1862, four ridges dominated the battlefield—Maryland, Loudoun, and Bolivar Heights, and School House Ridge.



## Historic Battlefield

*View of the battlefield from Murphy Farm*

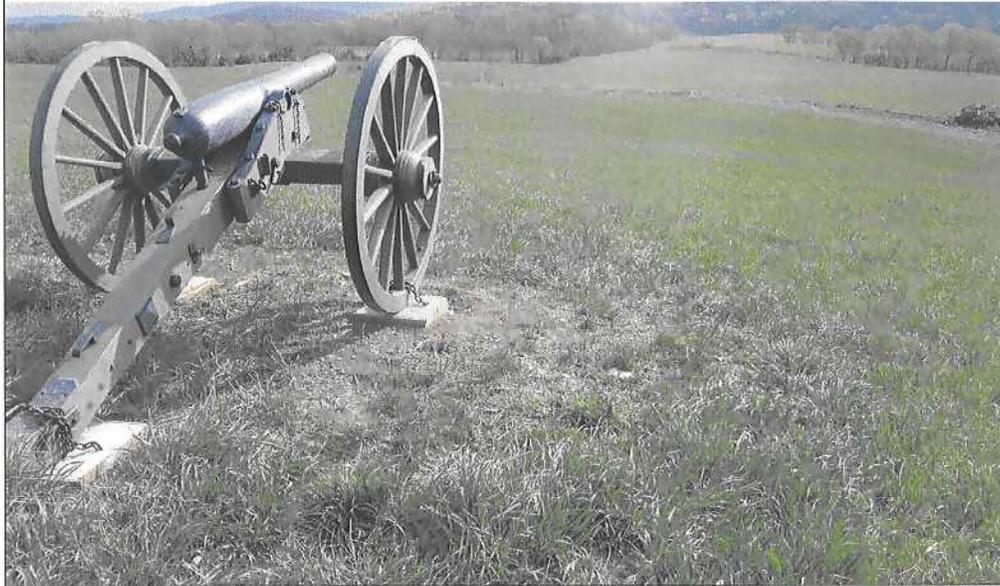


Viewed from the Murphy Farm and School House Ridge, the undeveloped, unspoiled appearance of Bolivar Heights South is an integral part of the 1862 battlefield.

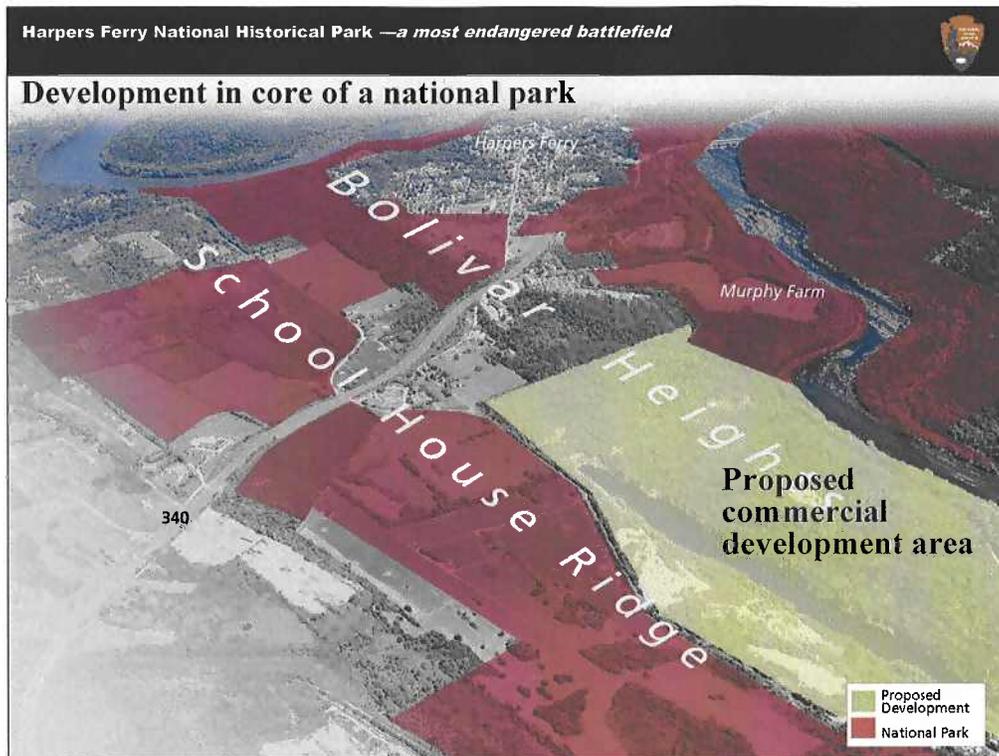


## Historic Battlefield

*View of the battlefield from School House Ridge North*

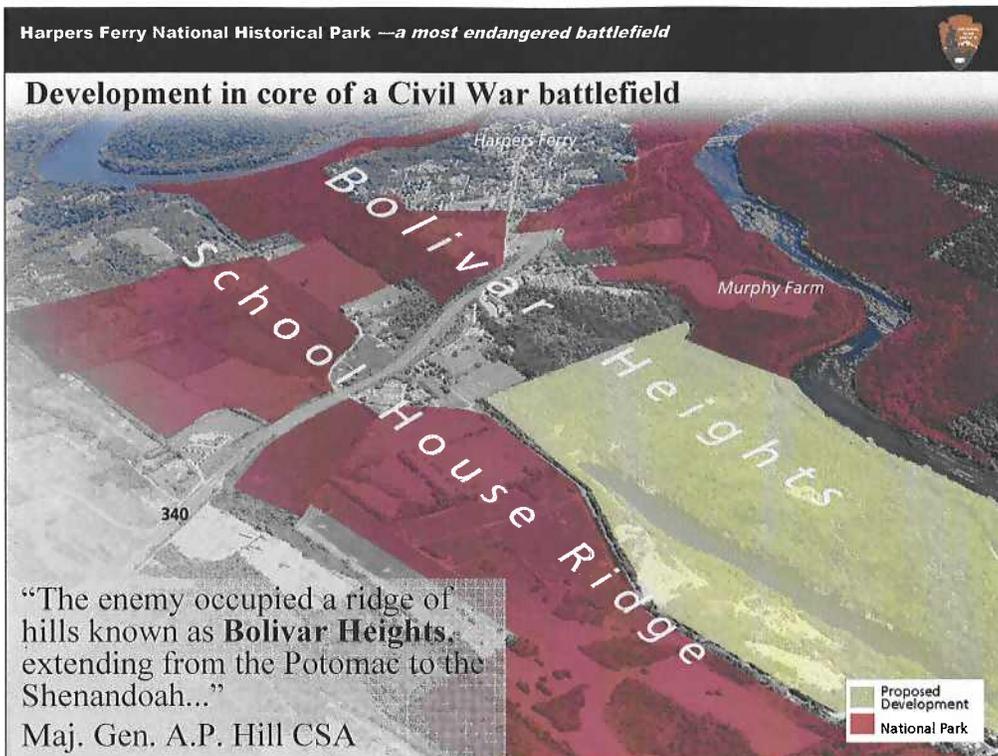


Today, the land still gently slopes to the Shenandoah River and the ridge is fully forested. This prominent feature of the battlefield appears much as General Jackson observed it from his command position on School House Ridge in 1862.



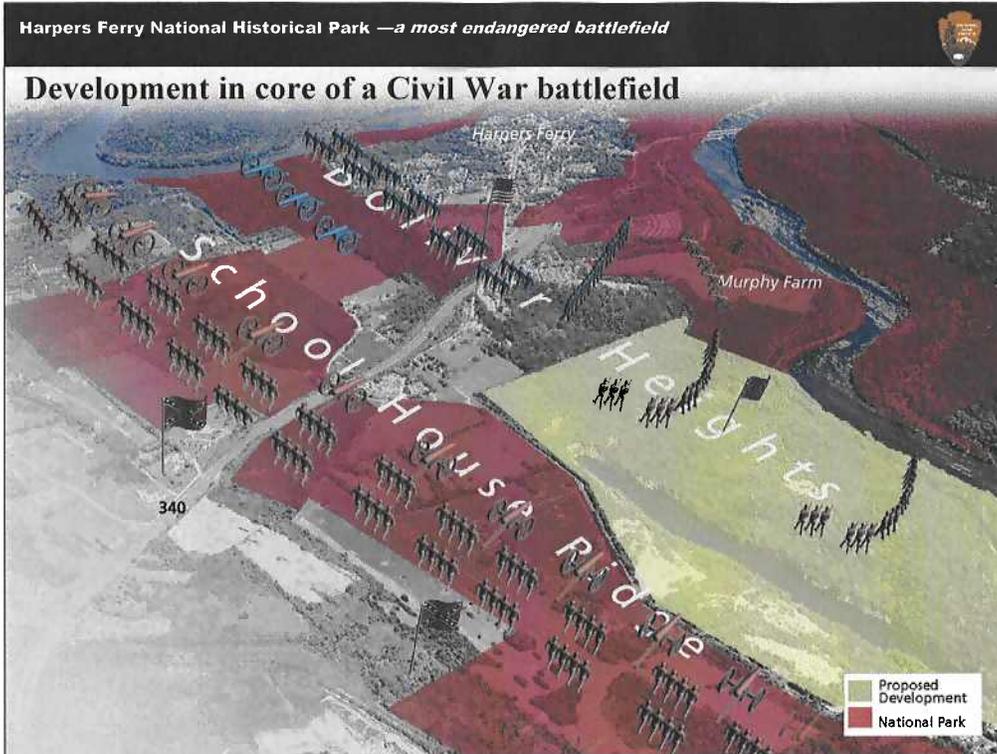
## **Development in core of national park**

Rezoning for commercial development in the core of the national park would be an egregious error conflicting with the legislative purpose of the park. It would desecrate a Civil War battlefield and the views the park strives to protect. The proposed rezoning is incompatible with the rural use of adjoining park lands.



Civil War soldiers fought on this land. In September 1862, 39,000 troops were engaged on the Harpers Ferry Battlefield. Maj. Gen A.P. Hill reported that

*“The enemy occupied a ridge of hills known as Bolivar Heights, extending from the Potomac to the Shenandoah...”*



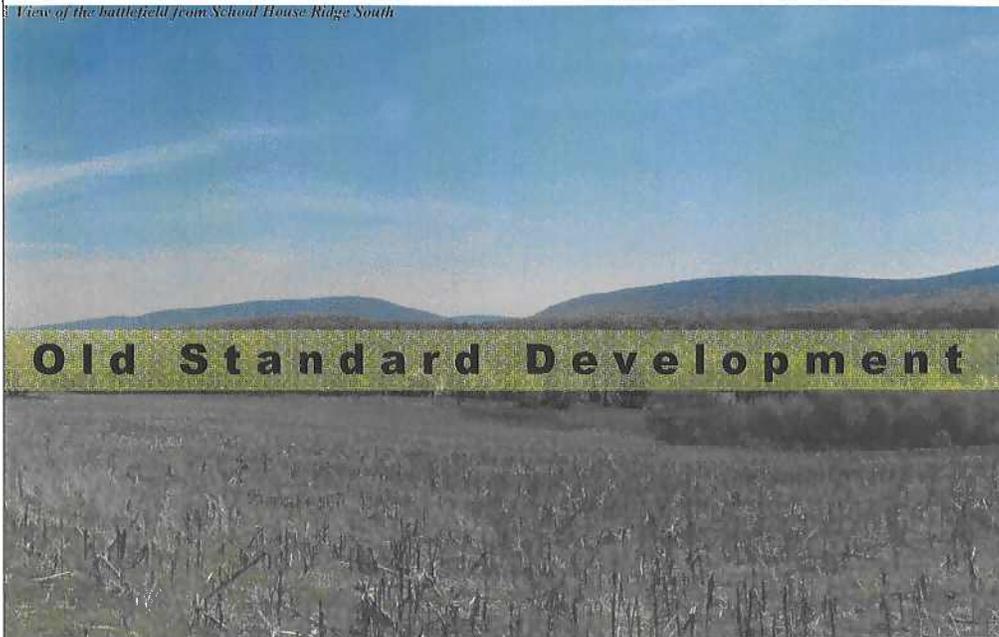
*“Having first shelled the **woods** over which my route lay, I moved obliquely to my right until I struck the Shenandoah.”*

In the final hours, General AP Hill’s flanking maneuver of 5,000 troops swept the southern end of Bolivar Heights, placing 3,000 troops and 20 cannon on the Murphy Farm, affecting the largest surrender of the Union forces during the Civil War.



## Spoiled Landscape

*View of the battlefield from School House Ridge South*



## Spoiled Landscape

*Old Standard's* commercial development cannot be hidden. It will irreversibly impact the park by compromising the rural scene which is essential to the telling and understanding of historic events that occurred at Harpers Ferry.

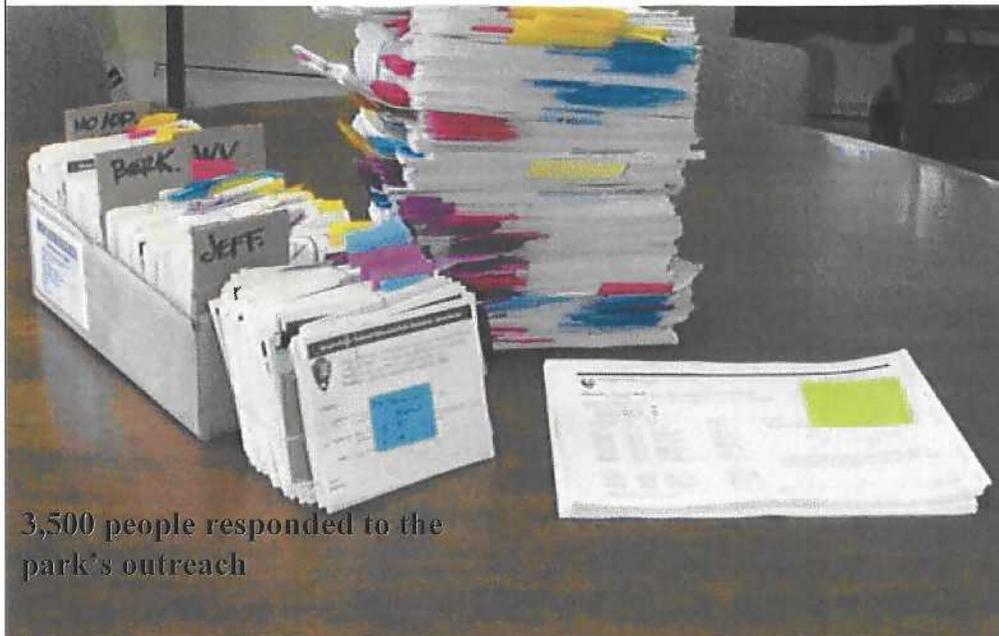


Based on available information this video simulates Old Standard's proposed development.

- What will 7-million sq. ft. of land disturbance look like?
- 27 buildings containing 2.3 million sq. ft. of floor space
- What will the removal of 20-thousand trees look like and how will it impact the forest ecology?
- A four-lane road and asphalt lots for 6000 cars?
- What about traffic congestion?
- What will the noise, glare and reflection from this development do to the serenity of the battlefield?
- How will it impact educational programs?
- What will reduced air quality and visibility do to the enjoyment of the park?



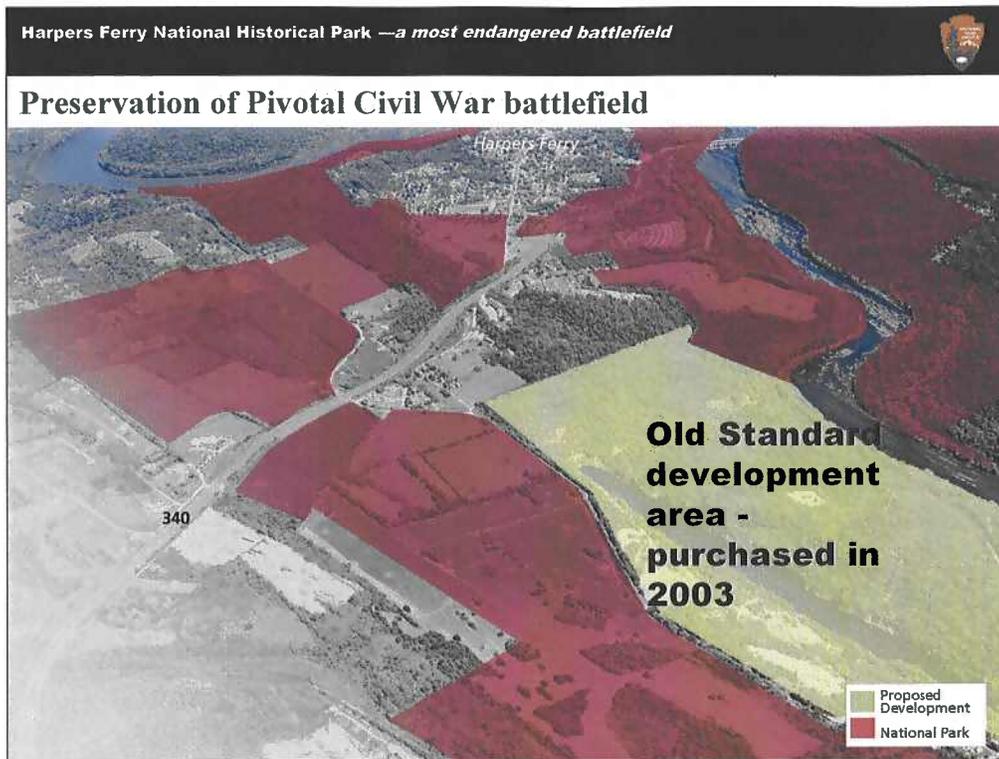
### Extensive Public Outreach



## Preservation of Pivotal Civil War Battlefield

In 2002, the National Park Service conducted a study to expand the park's boundary.

Extensive community outreach was conducted with participation by public officials, land owners and citizens. Four public meetings were held in the county, service clubs and organizations were addressed and twice the NPS met with the county commission about the study.



The green area was initially considered in the 2002 study, but not included in the boundary expansion options because the property was tied-up in bankruptcy and would have delayed this vital park legislation.

The National Park Service completed its study for Congress in 2002. The *Old Standard* property was purchased in 2003 by the current owners.



## Hiking trails, exhibits and education



## Public Use of park lands

The park has developed hiking trails and placed exhibits throughout the battlefield to help visitors explore and understand the complexities of the battle. This outdoor classroom serves 40,000 students each year from Jefferson County schools and school systems throughout the nation.



## Economic benefit of preservation



### **Economic Benefit of Current Zoning**

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park generates more than 32.7 million dollars\* annually to the state and local economy.

The proposed Old Standard development will spoil the natural beauty and historic scene of the park landscape, affecting present and future tourism and thus harming the local and state economy.

Hundreds of millions of dollars already invested to attract visitors and new business to the state will be wasted by ruining this area's premiere attraction.

\*Based on 1996 NPS economic report.



*The Jefferson County, West Virginia, Comprehensive Plan-2004 and the Zoning and Land Development Ordinance* support the preservation of, and oppose the destruction of, the county's nationally significant historic places.

The communities of Harpers Ferry and Bolivar are unanimously against the rezoning. The National Park Service opposes this rezoning and strongly urges it **not** be adopted. Commercial development should have a planned place in Jefferson County, but not on an American Civil War battlefield or in the heart of one of West Virginia's finest treasures.