



AMERICAN  
BATTLEFIELD  
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PRESERVE. EDUCATE. INSPIRE.

**Data centers on sacred battlefield land?  
Backroom deals for developers and tech billionaires?  
**NOT HERE. NOT EVER.**  
***We have not yet begun to fight!*****

Dear Friend and Fellow Preservationist,

Those words, “*We have not yet begun to fight,*” were spoken by Revolutionary War naval hero John Paul Jones when he brought the battle to the coast of England. At the time, Jones was in a desperate situation — ultimately, his flagship sank, but he still won the battle!

His sentiments also reflect the fierce and tireless commitment of countless Civil War heroes who summoned additional strength and courage on the battlefield when they needed it most.

... And they express how I’m feeling right now.

You may recall back in December 2023, in an unprecedented lame-duck marathon session, the Prince William County Board of Supervisors in Northern Virginia rezoned more than 1,750 acres. The controversial decision approved construction of what would become the world’s largest data center campus, shoehorned into a narrow corridor on the edge of the Manassas National Battlefield Park.

As you know, that very same Manassas Battlefield was the launching point for one of the most devastating, decisive, and historic assaults of the Civil War. This sacred ground could soon be blanketed by as many as thirty-seven massive data centers — with a total footprint three times the size of Disneyland!

We sued and asked the Circuit Court for Prince William County to overturn the rezoning. We were joined by local residents and a half-dozen conservation organizations. In October (on Halloween, fittingly), the Circuit Court rejected our argument and ruled in the defendant’s favor.

But my friend, this is not over yet. We were prepared for this result and intend to carry on the struggle. Like Jones, who was repeatedly pressed to surrender, with his flagship taking on water: We have not yet begun to fight.

We’re not about to walk away and allow this catastrophic destruction of one of our nation’s most sacred places to go on! And I sincerely hope you’re with me.

The American Battlefield Trust is escalating the fight. We’ve filed an appeal with the Virginia Court of Appeals, asking the state to order the Prince William County Board of Supervisors to vacate their shortsighted, underhanded, and alarming decision.



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January 12, 2024, press conference at Manassas Battlefield National Park to announce a lawsuit asking the Circuit Court for Prince William County to overturn the trio of rezonings granted.

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I'm urging you to please take two actions *immediately*:

- **Sign the petition** I've enclosed to the Virginia General Assembly leadership urging them to protect historic battlefields in the state by instructing the Prince William County Board of Supervisors to stop the destruction of history before it's too late.
- **Send your best possible gift to American Battlefield Trust** to arm us for battle — *in court, and in the court of public opinion* — with the resources for this critical fight. Thank you!

We're going to keep on battling!

The Prince William County Board of Supervisors in Northern Virginia voted 4-3 to rezone more than 1,750 acres and allow construction of as many as 37 data centers — eight-story concrete and steel behemoths — that would tower over Manassas National Battlefield Park.

They voted in favor of the rezoning despite overwhelming local opposition, over objections from the National Park Service, and against the recommendation of both County staff and the County's Planning Commission!

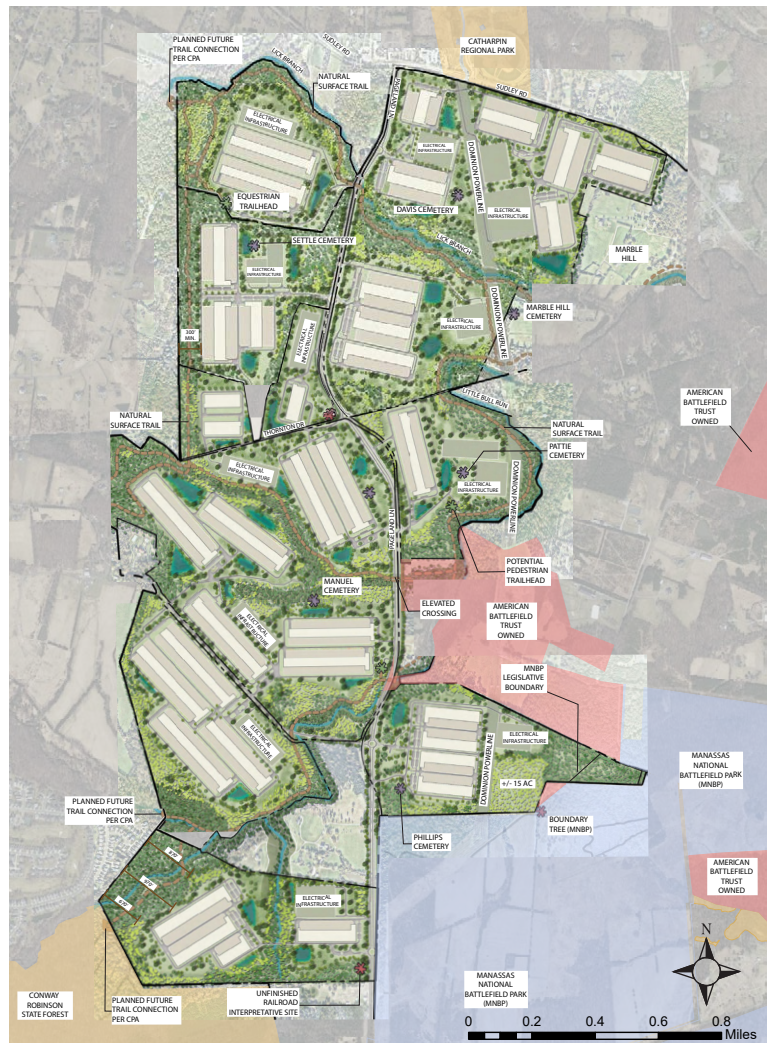
If I'm honest, we always knew that such a decision from a local court was possible, as many of our arguments relate to broader, statewide issues. So we're taking it to the Virginia Court of Appeals.

Our attorney, Chap Peterson, himself a former Virginia State Senator, was blunt in his assessment. *"There is no question that the Prince William County Board of Supervisors violated state law and its own code in approving these rezonings."*

The American Battlefield Trust was made for a challenge like this. As I told members of the media immediately after the ruling: ***We've experienced setbacks before, and still prevailed.*** Once again, we can channel John Paul Jones, who lost his ship — *but still won the battle.*

The Manassas Battlefield is simply too important to allow it to be overwhelmed by the world's largest data center campus. This enormous complex would literally overshadow the famed Brawner Farm where, at the Second Battle of Manassas back in August 1862, Union and Confederate forces faced off against one another in horrific combat.

So fierce was the fighting that a historian would later refer to one section of the battle as a *"whirlpool of death,"* noting that the 21st Georgia alone would lose 184 of 242 men that evening, a staggering 76 percent casualty rate.



*One company of the regiment went into the attack with 45 men ... but only **five** returned unscathed.*

It is reckless in the extreme to dishonor their lives and memories *and all of our legacy* just to make room for a soulless industrial development that could easily be built elsewhere in the state, or nearly anywhere in the country. Let me be clear: We're not opposed to data centers. I know they are necessary in these times. But we also can't change where history happened. We only get one chance to save America's historic landscapes. Let's not rip them up just because a tech billionaire has decided it's prime real estate.

**Please help so we can battle on multiple fronts:**

- **In court.** The tech companies backing this billion-dollar eyesore and blight on the Manassas Battlefield landscape have all the money they need to pay for their high-priced lawyers. We're a nonprofit organization. We have lawyers, too, but it's going to take significant resources to maintain what's sure to be a long and complex legal battle all the way to the end. We need you with us!
- **In the court of public opinion.** Back when we started this campaign, almost no one knew about it. There was a real lack of transparency, and the whole process leading to the controversial approval was flawed. Some folks were even told to sign non-disclosure agreements so they couldn't talk. But now, thanks to our work, and that of our partners, awareness is growing, and the true dimensions of the threat are better understood. We have more and more allies on our side ...
- **Up the ladder just as far as it goes.** This should never have been a local county decision made in the wee hours of the morning. Not when America's history is at stake. We're ready to take this all the way to Richmond and beyond if we have to.

Truth be told, even though we have a very good case and a growing coalition on our side, the odds are against us. We're fighting tech billionaire companies who will not give up easily.

**But we're going to give it everything we've got. I'm hopeful that we can win, but only if we can count on you to join us in the fight!**

I wish this was the only legal battle we were fighting right now where I needed your help, but unfortunately it is not. ***The fact is, we have another legal battle at the Wilderness Battlefield that we're facing right now which is just as critical.***

We're in a fight to stop the development of a 2,600-acre mixed-use project slated for the Wilderness Battlefield. About an hour southwest of Manassas, *The Wilderness* was a pivotal battle in May 1864, and a major turning point in the Civil War.

The developers are calling it the "*Wilderness Crossing.*" But far from honoring the brave men who lost their lives here, this project would be a national disgrace.

Picture more than 5,000 residential units, 200,000 square feet of mixed-use commercial development, and 732 acres of data centers and distribution warehouses all built in a quiet, rural area that's barely a cannon-shot from some of this country's most hallowed ground.



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On May 1, 2024, the Wilderness Battlefield was named one of *America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places* by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

You heard me right. *More data centers.* All located where they would dramatically impact adjacent core battlefield land and loom over the Congressionally authorized boundary of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania Battlefields National Military Park.

A new report issued in December by Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, which advises the General Assembly, predicts a 183% increase in energy use over 15 years just to keep all those data centers humming. Although studying the impact on historic resources, like battlefields, was one of the explicit topics meant to be included in the report, just a paltry three of its 156 pages touched on the subject. It had a single anemic policy recommendation that it admitted few communities could afford to pursue.

So, once again, it's up to us to keep extolling the massive impacts to historic battlefields from more data centers, more roads, more transmission lines, more distribution centers, and more solar farms. We need to remind lawmakers and legislators what's at stake if we destroy our history.

That's why we can't give up. We've been battling to stop these developments for years now — opposing them at every turn, from the first discussion with the local planning commission up through the Virginia Court of Appeals — and truthfully, it's been exhausting, demoralizing, and frustrating. *But we will not give up!*

We got a big boost last year when our friends at the National Trust for Historic Preservation identified The Wilderness as one of the ***11 Most Endangered Historic Places*** in the country.

*So we're getting national attention, and that can only help our cause. But we can't let up our pressure!*

It is clearer to me than ever how necessary it is for the American Battlefield Trust to stand and fight. Data centers are a foe unlike any we have ever faced — frankly, they make me long for the straightforward subdivisions we faced off against 15 years ago!

Our steady advocacy is essential to ensure that historic battlefields, *which simply cannot be moved*, remain part of the conversation when data center impacts are discussed.

I honestly wish it hadn't gotten to this point. I always prefer to negotiate with willing sellers to buy the land and preserve it before it ends up in the wrong hands. *But sometimes it's too late for that. Sometimes legal action and advocacy are our only chance, **our last chance**, to save battlefields before they are gone forever.*

This is one of those times. **And so, I ask for your voice, and I ask for your help.** Please sign the petition that I'm enclosing for you today and send it back along with your best gift. Thank you!



Urgently,

*David N. Duncan*

David N. Duncan  
President

P.S. When tech magnates and corporations go up against nonprofits like us in court, they're hoping they can wear us out. The longer the case drags on, and the higher up the ladder it gets, the more they're hoping we'll run out of resources and they'll win a battle of attrition. ***But we cannot and will not let that happen.*** I hope you will donate today by mailing your gift in the enclosed envelope or by visiting [battlefields.org/advocate](http://battlefields.org/advocate) to show that we won't back down. Thank you!



# The Prince William Digital Gateway project will overwhelm the Manassas Battlefield **IF WE DON'T STOP IT.**

The scale of the 37 data center buildings poised for construction at the edge of Manassas National Battlefield Park, known as the Prince William Digital Gateway project, is unprecedented. Right now, it's approved to be 3x the size of Disneyland and 4x the size of the Pentagon.

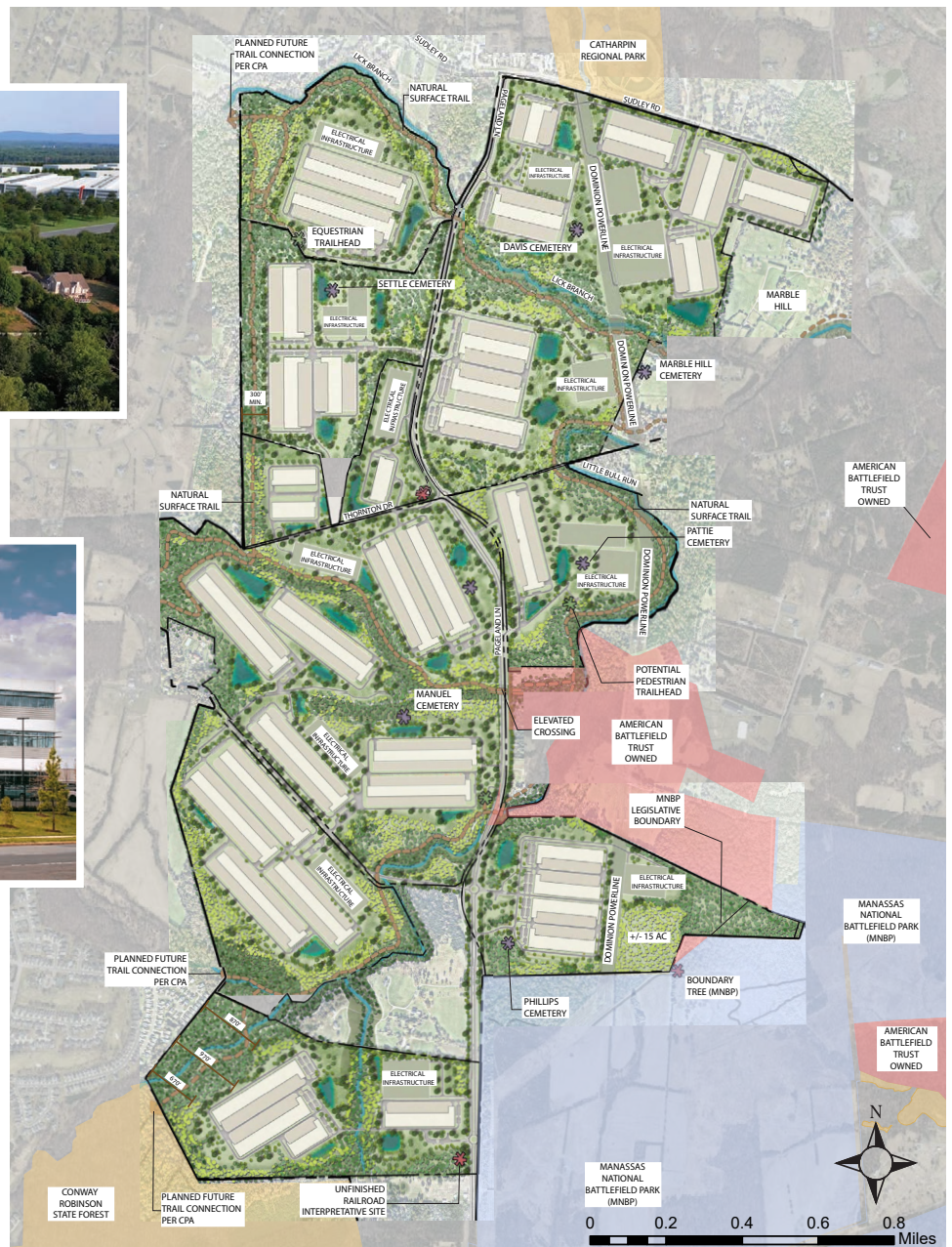
The map shows a rendering of what would be the largest data center campus in the world surrounded by hallowed ground preserved by the American Battlefield Trust and Manassas National Battlefield Park (shaded in red and blue).

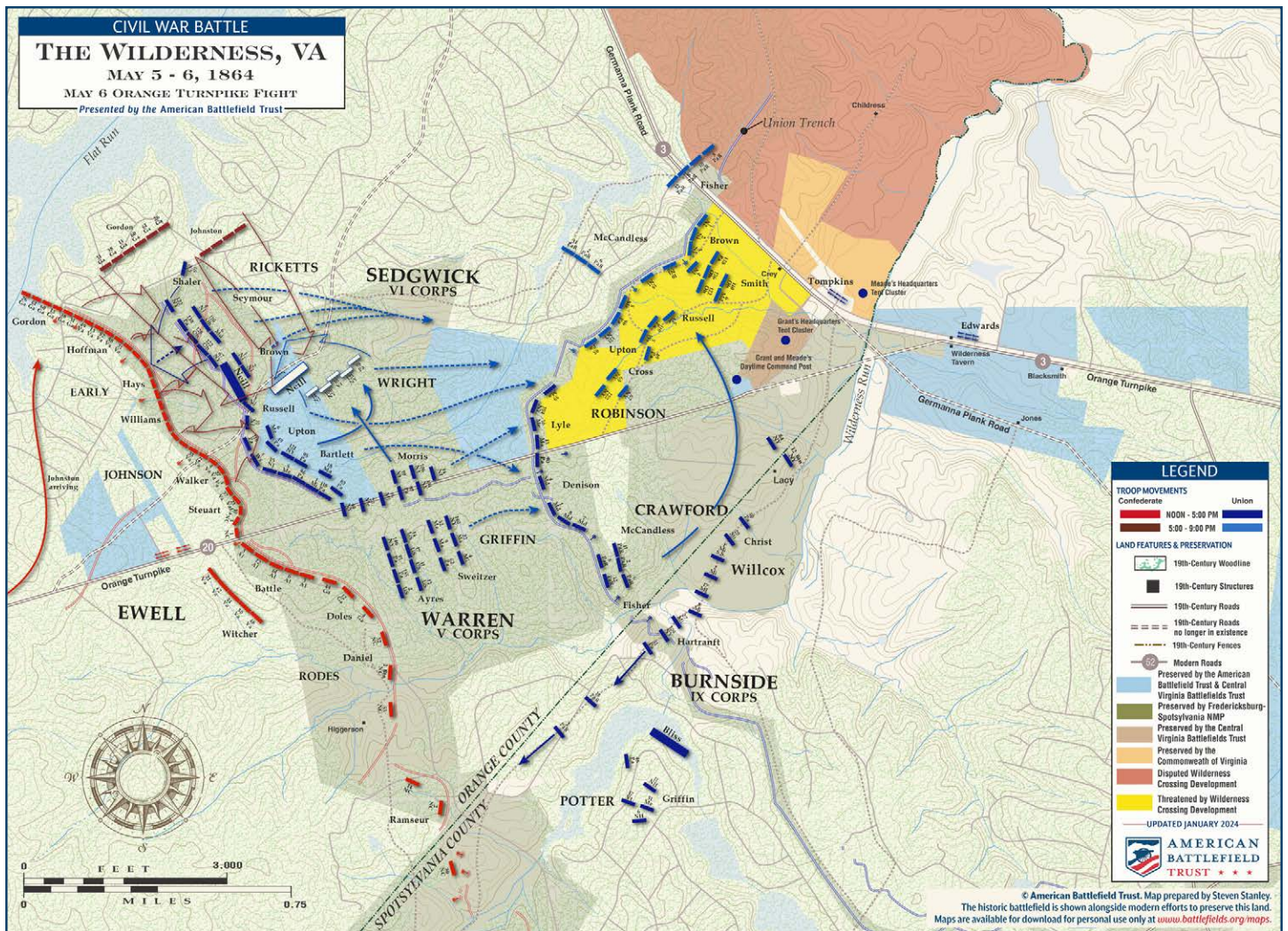


Rendering of a possible data center at Manassas.  
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Rendering of a possible data center at Manassas.  
© Robert James, American Battlefield Trust





The enormous complex would be located at the western border, along historic Pageland Lane, which includes the restored Brawner Farm. The rezoning directly impacts 170 acres that were once part of Rock Hill Farm, an area that served as a field hospital during Second Manassas and likely the final resting place of many who did not survive the battle.



The proposed site of another data center.  
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