

**Bull Run Civil War Round Table (BRCWRT) Preservation Corner**  
**March 25, 2022**



Greetings BRCWRT Members and Friends - This edition of *Preservation Corner* focuses on the PW Digital Gateway Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) in Prince William County (PWC) and its attendant threat to Manassas National Battlefield Park.

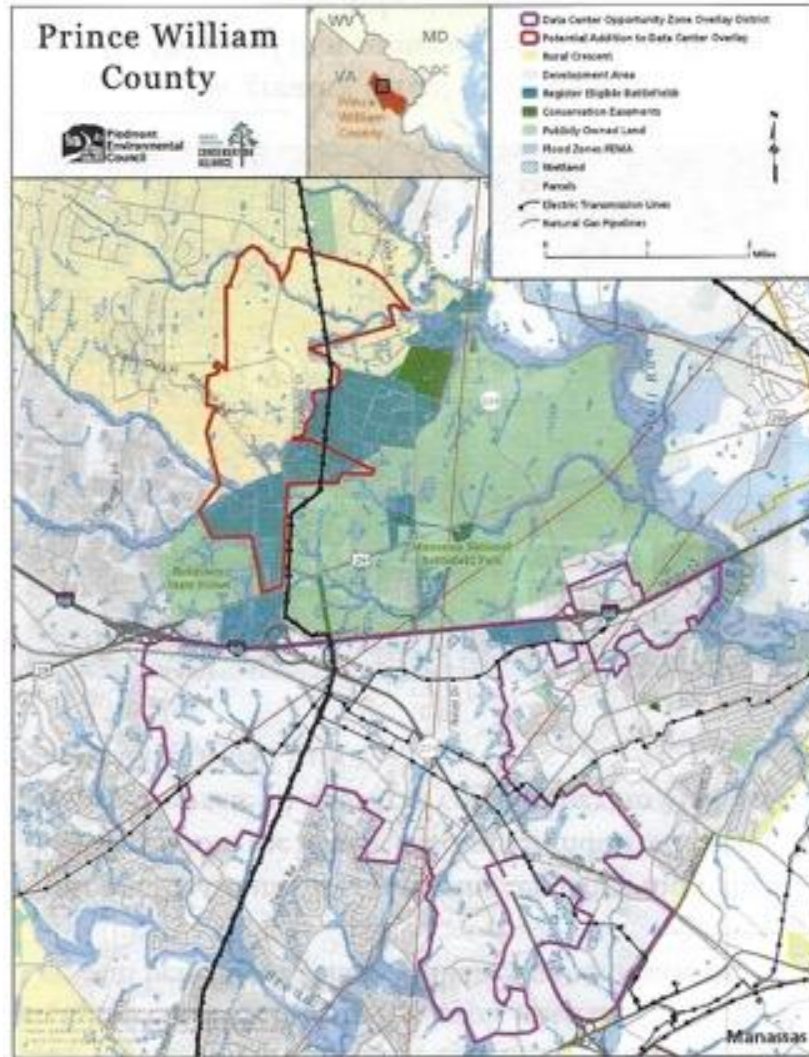
**Prince William (PW) Digital Gateway**

In March 2021 a group of PWC landowners in the "Rural Crescent" revealed plans for an 800-acre data center development along Pageland Lane and adjacent to Manassas National Battlefield Park. - the PW Digital Gateway. The original plan consisted of 27 non-contiguous parcels of agricultural land, located on both the east and west sides of Pageland Lane south of Route 234 and north of Route 29, belonging to 16 property owners and envisioned to be developed by a single data center developer. Based on the proposed location outside PWC's Data Center Overlay District and well within PWC's Rural Crescent, adopting and implementing the plan will require PWC's Board of County Supervisors to approve an Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, approve rezoning requests for industrial use of the land, and approve Special Use Permits for the proposed data centers.

At its July 20, 2021 meeting the BOCS considered a request to initiate Comprehensive Plan Amendment #CPA2021-0004, PW Digital Gateway. The amendment application request included changing the long-range land use designation for approximately 801.59 acres from AE (Agricultural or Estate) and ER (Environmental Resource) to T/F (Technology/Flex) with a T-3 Transect. The application included the proposed PW Digital Gateway, a Pageland Lane Technology Corridor for data center development. While this specific application focused on data centers, a T/F land use designation, would allow for other industrial land uses as well, including warehouses, distribution centers, etc. Following a lengthy discussion among the Board members and with PW Planning Staff representatives, the BOS voted (5-3) to approve the initiation of the CPA.

Subsequently, the BOCS expanded the CPA study area to include the entire Pageland Lane corridor between Rt 29 and Sudley Road (Rt 234) to assess traffic, land use and environmental impacts and implications in a more holistic manner and to assess the impacts on known historical and cultural resources. This expanded scope required additional information and studies from the Applicant; including transportation network analysis, a cultural resources assessment, water/sewer impacts and environmental/open space/sustainability analysis. The CPA is also to be informed by and from the analysis and recommendations in the separate, but related and on-going, Data Center Overlay District Zoning Text Amendment project.

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*Prince William Digital Gateway (CPA #2021-0004) Study Area*

PWC's Comprehensive Plan establishes policies and parameters for land use throughout the county - policies intended to holistically and effectively guide decisions regarding land use within the county with due consideration of the requirements, needs and desires of the region, the county and county residents. Specific development proposals are assessed, negotiated and managed through the county's zoning and permitting processes.

BRCWRT's concerns with the proposed PW Digital Gateway, which continue to be conveyed to the PWC BOCS via letters to the BOCS, discussions with individual supervisors, and in remarks at BOCS and Planning Commission meetings, include the following:

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- The location of the proposed PW Digital Gateway on land directly adjacent to Manassas National Battlefield Park (MNBP) poses a direct threat to the Park's historic sites and to park visitor viewsheds from these historic sites.



*An example of the threat - the view from MNBP to one of the land parcels proposed for data center use. This parcel is part of the 10 acres of land that is within the Congressionally designated MNBP boundary and is adjacent to the site of the Battle of Brawner's Farm and the trail to Deep Cut.*

- Much of the land in the study area, particularly in the southern portion of the study area, is within the Congressionally designated MNBP boundaries or is designated by the American Battlefield Protection Program as Battlefield Core Area - land that should not be used for industrial development
  - 10 acres are within the Congressionally designated MNBP boundary, but currently not within MNBP's legislated boundaries
  - 107 acres are within the American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) designated Manassas Battlefield Core Area, land which is eligible for incorporation into MNBP and where American soldiers camped, fought and died in the August 1862 Battle of 2nd Manassas
- The CPA applicants have stipulated their willingness to mitigate any adverse impacts (visual, noise, lighting, etc.) that result from the proposed data center development; however, typical mitigation measures (setbacks, buffer areas, balloon visibility tests, berms, tree screens, building and lighting restrictions, etc.) have proven in practice to fail to effectively mitigate the adverse impacts of such facilities on adjacent historical resources. Avoiding adverse impacts by not allowing data centers, or any other industrial land use, on or around the historic land is the



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preferred policy. Changing the land use designation of land that is on, or adjacent to, historic land and sites from AE and ER to T/F will lead to the very adverse impacts that are of such great concern.

- Though proximate to the existing Dominion Energy transmission line along and paralleling Pageland Lane, that transmission line is "near or at capacity". Any data centers, or other industrial use facilities, built in the Pageland Lane corridor north of U.S. Route 29 will require new power substations and/or transmission lines to provide the requisite electric power - a situation that will significantly increase the threat of adverse impacts on MNBP and its historic sites and viewsheds.

During the past six months a number of history, preservation and environmental organizations have coalesced around the concept of Smart Growth and retaining the characteristics of PWC's Rural Crescent that provide opportunities for agri-business and tourism and that protect the Occoquan Reservoir watershed. These organizations include the Prince William Conservation Alliance, Piedmont Environmental Council, National Parks Conservation Association, Virginia Native Plant Society, American Battlefield Trust, Manassas Battlefield Trust, Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG), Sierra Club (Great Falls Group), The Coalition to Protect America's National Parks, The Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area, and Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area. See [GrowSmartPW.org](http://GrowSmartPW.org) for information on their Smart Growth initiative and how you can help.

Readers of this column, and particularly those who are Prince William County residents, are strongly encouraged to let your voices and concerns be heard. You may contact the PW Board of County Supervisors and/or your respective PWC District Supervisor, as applicable, and let them know your concerns with the proposed PW Digital Gateway and the negative impacts on historical sites and cultural resources that would result from approving the PW Digital Gateway project as proposed.

PW Board of County Supervisors:

Chair (At Large): Ann B. Wheeler - [chair@pwcgov.org](mailto:chair@pwcgov.org); 703-792-4640

Neabsco District Supervisor: Victor S. Angry - [vsangry@pwcgov.org](mailto:vsangry@pwcgov.org); 703-792-4667

Brentsville District Supervisor: Jeanine M. Lawson - [jlawson@pwcgov.org](mailto:jlawson@pwcgov.org); 703-792-6190

Coles District Supervisor: Yesli Vega - [yvega@pwcgov.org](mailto:yvega@pwcgov.org); 703-792-4620

Gainesville District Supervisor: Pete K. Candland - [gainesville@pwcgov.org](mailto:gainesville@pwcgov.org); 703-792-6195

Occoquan District Supervisor: Kenny A. Boddye - [kboddye@pwcgov.org](mailto:kboddye@pwcgov.org); 703-792-4643

Potomac District Supervisor: Andrea O. Bailey, Vice Chair - [abailey@pwcgov.org](mailto:abailey@pwcgov.org); 703-792-4563

Woodbridge District Supervisor: Margaret Angela Franklin, Chair Pro-Tem - [mfranklin@pwcgov.org](mailto:mfranklin@pwcgov.org); 703-792-4646

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You may also speak, in person or remotely, during the Public Comment segment of PWC Planning Commission and BOCS meetings. Though limited to 2-3 minutes for comments, this is sufficient time to speak to your concerns and recommendations. The schedule and agendas for Planning Commission and BOCS meetings can be found here <https://www.pwcva.gov/>

Thank you for your continued interest in, and support of, BRCWRT's preservation actions and activities. Stay strong, stay safe and stay healthy in 2022!

Blake Myers, BRCWRT Preservation Chair