

Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area



Application for Certification as a Maryland Heritage Area
by Washington, Frederick, and Carroll Counties

October 1, 2005



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Executive Summary

The American Civil War is an event that remains fixed as a turning point in history. People are drawn to see Civil War sites and to understand the roots and events of this great conflict. Leaders in tourism, historic preservation, Civil War history, and economic development in three Maryland counties – Washington, Frederick and Carroll – have been collaborating on a regional effort to enhance the visitor experience, encourage more active conservation of scenic landscapes, and preserve more of the region’s historic buildings and sites. Planning for the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War is beginning and preparations will soon escalate. Becoming a designated “certified heritage area” through the Maryland Heritage Areas Program is an opportunity to give the collaboration more structure and attract financial and institutional resources that could significantly benefit the effort. This *Management Plan* serves as a guiding document and an application for certification as a Maryland Heritage Area to be known as the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (HCWHA).

The Heritage Area

A heritage area is both a place and a concept. Physically, heritage areas are regions with concentrations of important historic, cultural, natural, and recreational resources. These are places known for their unique culture and identity and are good places to live and visit. As a concept, a heritage area combines resource conservation and education with economic development, typically in the form of heritage tourism. A number of states have heritage area programs to assist local and regional efforts. In Maryland, ten heritage areas have attained formal certification by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, which administers the state’s program. The HCWHA will soon become the eleventh.

This *Management Plan* conveys the potential for making the region’s powerful Civil War story more accessible to residents and visitors and in so doing, deepening public support for conservation and preservation while adding economic vitality through heritage tourism. It proposes that those portions of three counties that have strong associations with the events of 1861- 1865 be certified as the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area under the state’s heritage areas program. Such designation does not convey additional layers of regulation; rather, it brings eligibility for matching grants and incentives for building rehabilitation and participation in tourism marketing programs. It also brings added recognition of the region’s unique historical significance.

Since 1890, dedicated conservationists, historians, and leaders in central Maryland have been working to raise the profile of the region’s extraordinary Civil War heritage and to care for the battlefields and settings where the events that shaped the future of the Union took place. As a result, this region along the border between North and South possesses a degree of landscape integrity that is exceptional among Civil War sites around the country. The visitor who wants to understand what it was like when the armies faced each other can do so here in a setting that remains largely rural and relatively intact, unlike many other Civil War battlefields where modern development patterns have obscured the experience. Moreover, many of the region’s small towns possess a high degree of historical integrity, giving residents and visitors a distinct sense of time and place.

Among the heritage area’s top assets are three major battlefields: Antietam, Monocacy, and South Mountain. The region also benefits from its proximity to other premiere Civil War sites. This central location coupled with the presence of prime battlefields means that visitors can easily make this region

their base camp, venturing out to Gettysburg, Harpers Ferry, and Manassas, as well as to the attractions of Washington (D.C.) and Baltimore.

Benefits of Participation

Participation in the Maryland Heritage Areas Program brings important benefits to building owners in historic towns, to museums and educational organizations, and to efforts to market the region to visitors or businesses.

The state program encourages concentrating effort to leverage investment. With this in mind, using criteria developed by the Steering Committee and planning team, sections of nine towns are recommended as Target Investment Zones under the state's program. Three of them – Downtown Hagerstown, Middletown, and Taneytown – are recommended for immediate “activation,” with the others – Boonsboro, Emmitsburg, Frederick, Sykesville, Westminster, and Williamsport – to be activated when local leaders decide their readiness. In Target Investment Zones, property owners are eligible for matching grants and loans and historic tax credits for rehabilitation of historic and certain non-historic buildings whose uses support heritage tourism.

Making the story come alive is a major goal of the HCWHA. Museums, historic sites, and educational organizations that are participating in the HCWHA's interpretive effort are eligible for matching grants to plan and produce exhibits, publications, special events, and other activities. The Maryland Office of Tourism Development is giving special attention to the Civil War in its marketing and advertising program. The region's three “destination marketing organizations” – tourism offices in Washington, Frederick, and Carroll Counties – are active partners in the heritage area initiative.

To date, elected officials of all three counties have been financial partners in the creation of the HCWHA. Members of the Steering Committee and activists in conservation and tourism have invested untold hours to develop the heritage area. It is anticipated that each of the three counties will continue participating in the partnership as the work gets underway to turn the *Management Plan* into on-the-ground results.

A Broader Story

Many visitors are already coming here from across the country and abroad as well to experience the military aspects of the Civil War, which make up the primary available story to date. The National Park Service provides excellent interpretive experiences at Antietam and Monocacy National Battlefields, as well as at the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Two well-marked Maryland Civil War Trails guide visitors around the military sites. The HCWHA's organizers intend that this region will become an essential destination for travelers interested in history. The intent is to make this the best place in the country to understand the decade that was a turning point socially, economically, and politically in the nation's history.

Why will new visitors come here? As dramatic as the battles were, the story that will be told through the heritage area is much larger and more complex. During the 1860s, the impact of the Civil War was total. It was not fought in a far away country. It took place where people lived, farmed, worked, and shared community life – as their descendants do today. Young men left their families to fight for deeply held beliefs. Families coped with the devastation of living in a war zone. Political tensions ran high, and the president's wartime suspension of civil liberties was unique in American history.

Especially in this border region, there was not the black and white clarity of “Blue” and “Gray.” Scholarship by contemporary historians is bringing new understanding of how the war was experienced by average people and of how, in the years following the end of conflict, people struggled to rebuild divided communities and recover. A major focus of the heritage area organization will be to expand understanding beyond the military history and give voice to these human stories of how the residents of the region experienced and recovered from the Civil War.

The interpretive focus will make emotional connections between our lives today and the lives of those who experienced this immense conflict. This focus will significantly expand the appeal of the heritage area beyond a core Civil War audience. The purpose of the HCWHA initiative is to both extend the stay of existing visitors and to reach out to others interested in history by broadening the available experience here.

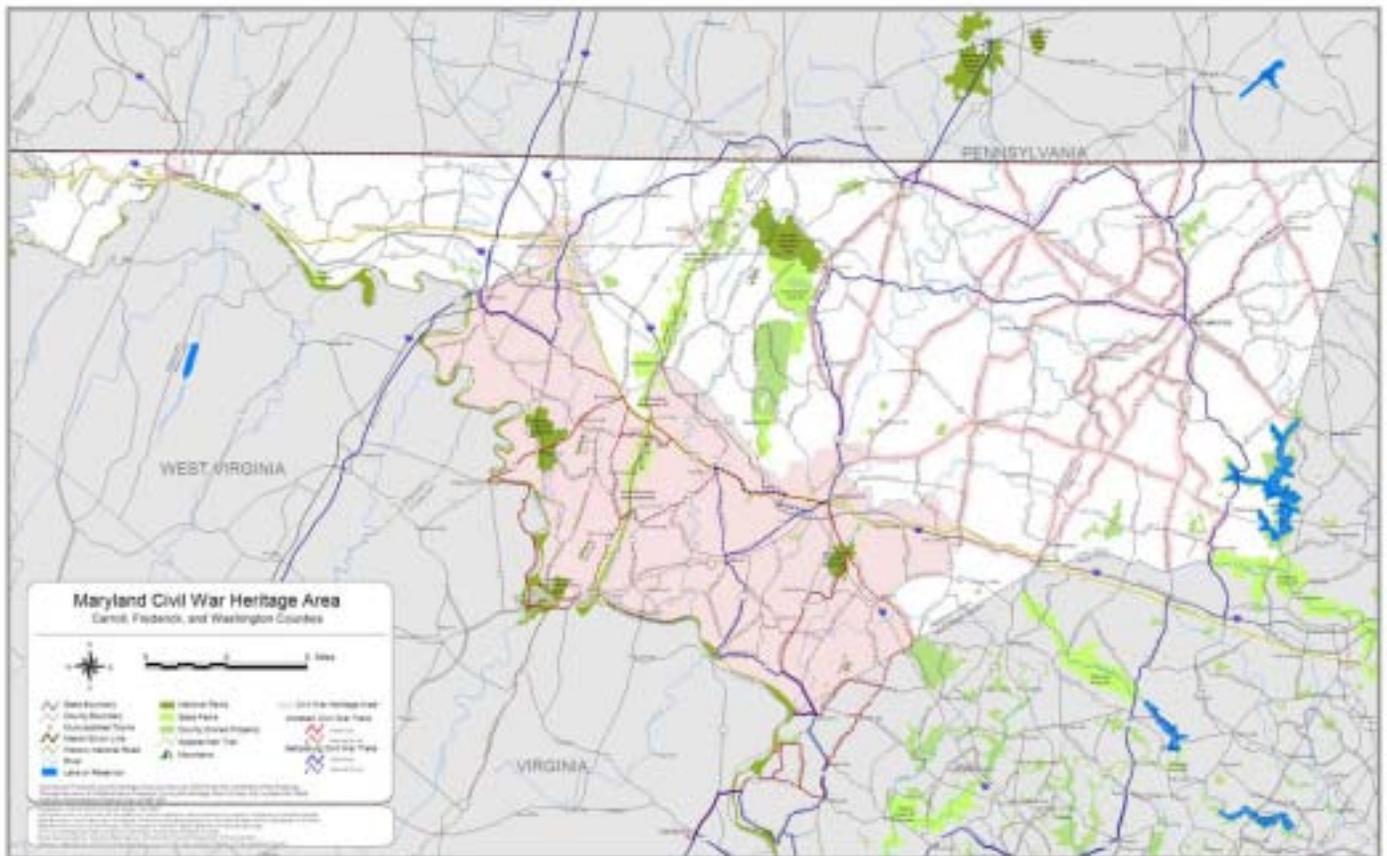
The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area

Orchestrating coordinated interpretation and development of themed itineraries and packages of experiences across this large geography will take conscious and constant attention by a staffed regional organization—the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (“the HCWHA”). The HCWHA will lead implementation of the *Management Plan* and must be dedicated to implementing the strategies contained in the *Management Plan* over the decade ahead. It will also carry the responsibility of coordinating and serving as an information clearinghouse for the various initiatives in the region related to heritage tourism and the Civil War.

The broadening of the region’s Civil War story will be accomplished through integrated initiatives undertaken by cooperating museums, historic sites, heritage organizations, and educators throughout the three counties. The HCWHA will coordinate creation of an interpretive plan to provide overarching story themes and guidance about development of engaging and popular exhibits, displays, films, walking tours, performances, and special events. Beyond the value for visitors, interpretive efforts will provide the residents of Washington, Frederick, and Carroll Counties much greater access to the events that shaped their communities and cultures.

The HCWHA will also actively promote greater appreciation of sacred historic places, scenic landscapes, and historic town centers, encouraging landowners and elected officials to take steps to retain the region’s distinct character. This character is an underlying asset in an era in which quality of life decisions increasingly influence business location decisions. Another goal of the HCWHA is to encourage stewardship of historic sites and buildings and efforts to retain the historical character of the towns and countryside as the region prospers. The National Trust for Historic Preservation recently named the “Journey through Hallowed Ground” corridor, which crosses the Frederick County segment of the HCWHA, to the 2005 list of America’s Most Endangered Places. This designation acknowledges the corridor as an important but fragile piece of American heritage that is in danger due to growth pressure in the entire Washington region. HCWHA stewardship emphasis will advance appreciation for the area’s distinctive historic character of place as a fundamental heritage resource for the region’s future – not just as backdrop for heritage tourism, but also as a significant element in quality of life for those who call this place home.

The HCWHA will be a regional Three-county Advisory Board that will tackle major initiatives, such as marketing, the interpretive plan, and other overarching programs. The HCWHA will assist participating heritage organizations with grant applications to enhance their programs and public offerings.



Vision & Goals

The following description is a picture of the heritage area as it will be in ten years.

Vision

The region encompassed by the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area has achieved a national reputation as an essential destination for travelers interested in history. Recognizing the importance of this asset—comprised of location, historic sites, and strong scenic character—leaders in this three-county region have expanded the central military campaign story of Civil War events, providing visitors and residents with the best place in the country to experience the decade that was a turning point socially, economically, and politically in the nation’s history. Many visitors are choosing to make this region their “base camp” for stays of several days, driving the popular Maryland Civil War Trails and visiting Antietam, Gettysburg, Monocacy, South Mountain, Harpers Ferry, and Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Their longer stays are having a positive effect on the region’s economy as they fill hotels and bed and breakfast inns and visit sites and attractions, eat, and shop. There is a heightened awareness among residents that the historic character of towns, the unspoiled beauty of countryside, the preservation of important historic sites, and the high quality of life gives this region a competitive advantage as a business location, too. As a result, growing public support has emerged to protect the battlefields, to retain farmland, and to discourage sprawling homogenization.

The visitor experience has been enhanced by the work of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area HCWHA (management entity), which has succeeded in:

- *Increasing collaboration and coordination among governmental, for-profit, and nonprofit organizations.*
- *Increasing the regional economic impact of travelers to the heritage area.*
- *Meeting the hospitality needs and heritage and recreation interests of an unprecedented number of visitors drawn to participate in experiences related to the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War.*
- *Increasing awareness of the importance of Civil War heritage sites and resources, thus promoting their protection.*
- *Building upon existing interpretive themes and initiatives by expanding the core military story, tapping Maryland’s border state status to explore the effect of the war on life for all Marylanders and, ultimately, all Americans.*

Goals

Economic Benefit

Thematically link and market the area's heritage resources, thereby creating synergy among varied historic sites, recreational resources, and cultural assets.

Support the creation of economic gains for new and current visitor-serving businesses within the heritage area by generating greater visitation; in so doing, deemphasize county borders and focus effort on the heritage area at large.

Guide visitors to places of unique character, such as Main Street communities and small town centers that provide visitor services.

Stewardship

Help stewardship and preservation organizations become more effective through networking and coordination of effort.

Foster stronger appreciation for sacred historic places, pristine landscapes, crisp town edges, and one-of-a-kind historic, recreational, and cultural resources in the heritage area among residents—newcomers as well as long-time landowners—and their elected officials.

Help the region and its communities plan for the future of historic resources, including managing development pressures on historic sites and their surrounding grounds. Connect those seeking conservation of sites, such as battlefields, with relevant organizations and programs.

Storytelling & Interpretation

Expand on Maryland's status as a border state, in both geographical and ideological terms, to explore issues related to the Civil War period.

Expand interpretive activities to the human-interest dimension of the conflict: differing views on secession, divided loyalties within families, how civilian life was impacted by the war, and the difficulties people faced afterward in returning to normal life.

Continue to promote accuracy in information about Civil War military action and troop movement. Frame military actions within a national context, relating their importance to the outcome of major battles and of the war.

Coordination

Foster a regional perspective that allows progress on heritage area goals regardless of jurisdiction.

Serve as an umbrella organization for connecting and protecting the diverse, valuable heritage resources in the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area and making its stories more accessible to visitors and residents.

Support collaboration among the three counties' destination marketing organizations and other tourism marketing vehicles to facilitate regional marketing activities.

Significance

Considering that Civil War events occurred across Maryland, at points north of Maryland, and in states as far south as Texas, one might ask, “Why tell the Civil War story *here*?” The HCWHA heritage area tells an intriguing story in a unique, authentic setting. Several factors set this heritage area apart from other initiatives seeking to tell the Civil War story:

- **Border Setting:** The heritage area is located at the border of Pennsylvania and Maryland (the Mason-Dixon Line), which is viewed as the dividing line between North and South. This location offers opportunities to discuss both sides of the conflict and to examine the unique experience of border states and communities that were divided in loyalty.
- **Preeminent Civil War Sites:** The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area encompasses the sites of three battles that had an impact on the outcome of a campaign or the war itself: Antietam, Monocacy, and South Mountain. In addition, the heritage area makes a geographic connection between Gettysburg and Harpers Ferry, two major Civil War sites with high national significance.
- **Resource Diversity:** In addition to the three significant battlefields mentioned above, the heritage area includes sites of other battles of significance; skirmish, encampment, and other military sites; museum/heritage facilities focused on non-military Civil War era stories; intact structures from the Civil War era; scenic landscapes; document and artifact collections; and much more. This diversity of resources provides the material needed to tell a range of stories to visitors.
- **Authenticity:** Scenic landscapes, battlefields, and historic towns/structures populate the heritage area, and many have been preserved through careful planning and protection, luck, or benign neglect. Thus, the area offers an authentic experience of the Civil War and its era that might not be available in a place where historic resources are more eroded.
- **Support for Civil War History Initiatives:** The residents and public officials in the heritage area are aware of and excited by its Civil War history. There is support for preservation of Civil War resources and for telling the Civil War story in the heritage area.

It is the intent of this plan to provide a document that meets the requirements of Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) for designation as a Certified Heritage Area. Hence, care was paid to specific information required by MHAA, and MHAA staff was consulted when questions arose. However, the plan must also serve as a roadmap for supporters, partners, and managers of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area during implementation. Thus, the focus is on the facets of the heritage area that will be the priority concern of the management entity. Many of the strategies in the plan place emphasis on interpretation, the development or

enhancement of heritage-oriented visitor experiences, and marketing, supported by attention to resource conservation and recreation.

Plan Development

Approach

The plan's development was guided by a twenty-five-member steering committee appointed by the three Boards of County Commissioners and made up of representatives from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Members included local government planners, mayors, history and heritage organization professionals, tourism business interests, and others, many of whom have had a long commitment to creating the heritage area. In five Steering Committee meetings, members provided guidance for each section of the plan as it was researched and developed. A list of Steering Committee members can be found in the section entitled "Credits."

At the beginning of the project, the planning team toured the area with knowledgeable county staff, steering committee members, and Civil War experts, enabling the group to gain a shared understanding of the entire area. In the months that followed, team members conducted additional fieldwork, taking photos and walking the towns and sites that lend the region its distinct character. In addition, ongoing research and review of written and online materials has informed the team's work to date. Research has included reviews of county planning, zoning, and programmatic documents; websites for tourism and heritage organizations; county tourism packets and publications; and more.

Public Engagement

The public engagement process invited wider input at different stages:

- During the preparation of the Application for Recognized Heritage Area status, Steering Committee members presented the heritage area concept at **public meetings** in every municipality within the heritage area (in some cases, providing information to a town representative).
- Steering Committee members also presented at **County Commission meetings** to request the required letter of support from the Boards of County Commissioners.
- **Press releases** were distributed when the RHA application was completed and approved.
- **Fact sheets** on the heritage area were distributed throughout the process.



The planning team toured the heritage area with those knowledgeable about its history and its tourism and preservation activities to gain understanding of the region.

- **Steering Committee meetings**, held at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine in downtown Frederick, were open to the public.
- Early in the process, the planning team held six **focus groups** to identify major issues and opportunities. Participants included operators of bed-and-breakfasts, National Park Service representatives (including battlefield rangers), business leaders, restaurateurs, historical society directors, museum operators, educators, recreation enthusiasts, and many more.
- As important issues and opportunities were identified through the planning process, **interviews** were conducted to expand ideas or clarify information. Knowledgeable individuals consulted include John Howard of Antietam National Battlefield and Doug Bast of the Boonsborough Museum of History, among others.
- Once strategies began to form, municipal and county officials were briefed through local council of governments/**Maryland Municipal League meetings**. These programs included an overview of the heritage area planning process and its outcomes and a discussion.
- To create a framework for interpretation, historians, curators, librarians, and other interpreters from the heritage area were participants in an **interpreters' workshop**. This lively workshop was well attended, with representation from all three counties, and generated a high level of enthusiasm among participants regarding the potential of expanding the Civil War story in Maryland.
- **Target Investment Zone (TIZ) workshops** were held to brief the municipalities chosen for the program. Nine towns were invited to one of three workshops to view an overview presentation of the heritage area and TIZ designation. A lively question and answer session followed each presentation.

Public Engagement Activities

- Public municipal meetings
- County Commission meetings
- Press releases
- Fact sheet
- Steering Committee meetings (open)
- Focus groups
- Interviews
- Maryland Municipal League meetings
- Interpreters' workshop
- Target Investment Zone workshops

Boundaries

The heritage area includes portions of Washington, Frederick, and Carroll Counties. Boundaries for the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area were shaped around interpretation of the Civil War era. Thus, boundaries include the places where significant Civil War activities took place or where Civil War era stories can most advantageously be told. In Washington and Frederick Counties, Civil War actions included major battles, skirmishes, and rather constant movement of troops to/from these battle sites or others at Gettysburg and in the Shenandoah Valley. In Carroll County, there were no major battles and few skirmishes, but troop movement along the county's roads was significant, especially around the events at Gettysburg. Thus, boundaries contain linear areas in Carroll County and the northeastern part of Frederick County and broaden into the remainder of Frederick and Washington Counties to encompass a large expanse of land.

For the social, economic, and political aspects of the Civil War era, towns and villages were the places where interchange took place – where newspapers were published, people gathered and talked politics, trade occurred, and families interacted. These settled areas also contain most of the restaurants, stores, and accommodations for visitors. Twenty-seven municipalities are included within the boundaries.

See the map on the next page for a graphical illustration of the boundaries.

