



Bentonville Battlefield STATE HISTORIC SITE

Strategic Plan
2019 - 2025

Scene of the
Last Major
Confederate
Offensive of
The Civil War



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STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

Overview

The Friends of Bentonville Battlefield, in partnership with the North Carolina Division of State Historic Sites and Properties (N.C. Historic Sites), requested that a local community-based Strategic Planning Steering Committee conduct a strategic planning process and make recommendations for improvements at Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site. The Friends of Bentonville Battlefield, a nonprofit membership organization, engaged Cool Spring Center, Inc. to facilitate this strategic planning process in January 2018. The primary focus of this planning is the expansion of the current visitor center.



NCDCCR Strategic Plan

The NC Division of Cultural Resources has, as guidance, a statewide Strategic Plan (2013 – 2017). The Bentonville Battlefield strategic planning process is consistent and aligned with the vision, mission, and values of the state plan.

Our vision is to be the leader in using the state’s cultural resources to build the social, cultural, and economic future of North Carolina.

Our mission is to improve quality of life in our state by creating opportunities that promote economic development, stimulate learning, preserve the state’s history, and spark creativity to experience excellence in the arts, history, and libraries in North Carolina.

The Department of Cultural Resources Strategic Goals:

- Education - Promote Opportunities for Online, Outreach, and Onsite educational experiences that are Innovative, Interactive, and Inspirational (but still authentic and memorable) to improve quality of services and to stimulate learning.
- Economic Development - Create Opportunities for engaging participants through innovative programming, thematic scheduling, and earned income activities for national distinction to promote economic development
- Efficiency - Preserve and Protect North Carolina’s Cultural Resources in a more efficient and effective manner

Developing the Strategic Plan

The external phase of the strategic planning process began in January with a community survey and public forum. A broad community-based Strategic Planning Steering Committee was convened which included representatives from schools, the local community, local government, civic groups, Friends of Bentonville Battlefield, the Division of State Historic Sites and Properties, and site staff members. After an initial orientation, the Committee reviewed

Over 1000 participants shared their visions and provided invaluable input during this process.

and made recommendations during their meetings related to site planning and development, programs, preservation, marketing/public relations, finances, and Bentonville Battlefield volunteer development. **Between January 2018 and December 2018, the Committee met monthly, devoting almost 300 hours to research, deliberation, reporting, and drafting.**

This plan encompasses a multi-year period, beginning January 2019. ***The plan should be reviewed, updated, and revised by Bentonville Battlefield site and N.C. Historic Sites staff and representatives from the Friends of Bentonville Battlefield every three years.***

[Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site](#)

Bentonville Battlefield is owned by the state of North Carolina and is administered through the Department of Cultural Resources' Division of State Historic Sites and Properties (N.C. Historic Sites.) The state of North Carolina provides funds for operations, including full-time site staff.

The Battle of Bentonville, fought March 19-21, 1865, was the last full-scale action of the Civil War in which a Confederate army was able to mount a tactical offensive. This major battle, the largest ever fought in North Carolina, was the only significant attempt to defeat the large Union army of Gen. William T. Sherman during its march through the Carolinas in the spring of 1865. This battle involved nearly 80,000 soldiers and produced approximately 4,200 casualties.

Bentonville is coming into its own as a nationally significant historic site. In 1993, the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, appointed by Congress to evaluate the preservation needs of the nation's Civil War sites, visited Bentonville and was favorably impressed with the battlefield and its miles of extant earthworks. The commission's *Report on the Nation's Civil War Battlefields (1993)* classified Bentonville as sixth on the list of Priority One, Class A battlefields.

The battlefield's designation as a National Historic Landmark was approved in June 1996 by the United States Department of the Interior. Landmark status is reserved for places that have exceptional value in communicating the heritage of the United States

In 1957, the state of North Carolina acquired 51 acres of the battlefield and began developing the site for the public. In 1965, on the battle's 100th anniversary, the visitor center opened. The 150th anniversary commemoration in 2015 attracted more than 60,000 visitors.

Over time, the Civil War Trust, in conjunction with the state, has acquired land critical to the interpretation of the battle. Other organizations that have helped preserve the battlefield include the Bentonville Battlefield Historical Association, Inc., the Conservation Fund's Civil War Battlefield Campaign, the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund, the NC Natural Heritage Trust Fund, and the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program.

Of the 6,000 original battlefield acres, over 2,000 acres are now protected.

Jim Lighthizer, president of the American Battlefield Trust says: *"Preservation of the Bentonville battlefield is one of the Civil War Trust's greatest success stories. Since 1990, we have come back to Bentonville time and time again, year after year, to protect this hallowed battleground. We're delighted that the State of North Carolina has been such a close partner in this effort."*

The site has implemented a sophisticated GPS (Global Positioning Satellite) project to map resources within the battle area. These include several miles of remaining earthworks (in various states of preservation), locations of principal wartime dwellings, monuments and highway markers, cemeteries, and certain late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century structures.

One unique aspect of this historic site is that it remains essentially pristine with unimpeded views much like 1865.

The visitor center, wayside exhibits, the Harper House, audio visual presentation, and exhibits within the visitor center enhance the visitor educational experience.

The Friends of Bentonville Battlefield has been instrumental in supporting the mission of Bentonville Battlefield. They have raised money to fund site improvements, educational programming, and part-time employee salaries.



See Appendix A for Overview

LONG RANGE GOALS: PRINCIPAL AREAS OF OPERATION

The key components of the strategic plan are divided into five areas of operation:

1. **Site Development**
2. **Programming**
3. **Preservation**
4. **Operations**
5. **Marketing and Outreach**

Each of these components has long-range goals to be completed in the next six years.

The long-range goals articulated for each area of operation are coordinated to support this overarching project to expand the facility and its capacity.



I. Site Development

Goals:

- To bring a fuller visitor understanding of the scale and scope of the battlefield;
- To update and improve current visitor center and historic site assets;
- To continue partnerships and involvement in the process with surrounding land owners, as well as community, civic, historic, and educational organizations.

Action Steps	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome
1. Gain ownership and set expectations for a sustained capital campaign.	Friends, Staff	January 2019	Clarity of Friends' role and responsibility; establish clear board development goals for the Friends.
2. Complete initial steps toward a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)	NC Division of Cultural Resources	May 1, 2019- April 30, 2020	Begin development of an overall CIP master plan.
3. Leverage 2020 Reenactment for public awareness/cultivation of support for a capital campaign. Conceptual drawings should be completed by mid-year 2019.	Friends, Staff	January 1, 2019 – January 1, 2021	Build Friends' membership, build mailing list, identify leadership and donor prospects. Engage larger community in support for the site.

4. Design and implement Capital Funding Plan for Bentonville Battlefield.	Friends, Staff, and NCDRCR	Design phase funding completed December 30, 2021	Public awareness, economic impact, and community relationships enhanced. Funding acquired.
5. Engage the services of a professional firm to provide master planning and design for site development, interpretive and interactive exhibitions for Bentonville Battlefield.	Friends, Staff, and NCDRCR	January 2022-December 2023	Complete CIP for Bentonville Battlefield. Establishes a clear visualization of Bentonville Battlefield. Develops momentum for expansion/enhancement.
6. Complete and implement an overall economic impact, business, and funding plan.	Staff, Friends, NCDRCR, Johnston Co. Visitors Bureau, and consultants	July 2024	Establishes realistic goals that stakeholders can support to achieve the vision. Identifies potential site contribution to local economic development.
7. Develop a capital campaign funding plan to support the CIP for Bentonville Battlefield. Current cost estimates are in excess of \$11 million	Friends, Staff, and NCDRCR	CIP Funding -- on-going to completion	Public awareness, economic impact, and community relationships enhanced. Funding acquired.
8. Approval and begin construction plan for Bentonville Battlefield.	Capital Projects Officer, NCDRCR	Dates driven by CIP: 2024-2025	Establishes Bentonville Battlefield's intention to become a significant national historic destination.
9. Analyze property and develop an archeological plan before designations are made for non-historic features.	Office of State Archeology directs the archeological plan.	Dates driven by CIP: 2024-2025	Excavation of affected area(s) should be completed before any new construction.

II. Programming

Goals

- To complete a comprehensive interpretive plan to guide the progress of site development, interpretive exhibitions, on-site and outreach programs, and public information materials;
- To provide visitors a fuller understanding of the battlefield's scale and scope;
- To offer programming which meets the needs and diverse interests of current and potential visitors and other specifically targeted audiences;
- To conduct regular program assessments and evaluations to determine effectiveness and popularity of programs.

Action Steps	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome
1. Continue school relations and integration of N.C. curriculum within Bentonville Battlefield programming.	Staff, consultation with NCDPI and DNCR Education Outreach	January 2019 and on-going	Increased school group visitation and higher quality, curriculum-appropriate programming with the completion of a new, larger visitor center.
2. Complete an interpretive plan in anticipation of the space improvements in a new visitor center.	NC Division of Cultural Resources	January 2021- January 2022	Interpretive plan established to guide programming goals which will drive the development of an overall CIP master plan.
3. Begin implementation of interpretive plan.	Staff, NCDCCR	In conjunction with completion of the new visitor center	Improved program quality, mission-appropriate curricula, and historically accurate programs.
4. Accentuate programming that reaches a larger and more diverse audience to include women, minorities, and young people.	Staff, NCDCCR	On-going	Increased awareness of history of the area, increased diversity and inclusion for visitor engagement, and increased return visitation.

5. Develop and implement comprehensive evaluation for all educational and interpretation programming.	Staff, Friends	July 2019 and on-going	Creation of new programs, greater understanding of audience and community needs, and improved budgeting and planning.
6. Develop and implement a new orientation program based on interpretive and CIP guidance.	Staff, NCDCCR, and Friends	July 2022	Updated film presentation integrated with overall interpretive plan. Updated three-day battlefield map.
7. Develop and implement an exhibition plan that integrates with the interpretive plan and CIP.	Staff, in conjunction with Interpretive and Training Services	Beginning July 2022	Enhanced visitor experience and preservation of historic artifacts. Improved on-site and traveling exhibits.

III. Preservation

Goals

- To protect, preserve, and maintain the Bentonville Battlefield for visitor education, appreciation, and memorial purposes;
- To protect and maintain the physical resources of the Bentonville Battlefield properties;
- To protect and maintain natural, archaeological, and ethnographic resources.



Action Steps	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome
1. Continue implementation of the 1998 Bentonville Battleground Preservation Plan (see Appendix E)	Staff, NCDCCR	On-going	Specific guidance and clarity for the preservation and enjoyment of Bentonville Battlefield's historic resources, artifacts, and the site's natural assets.
2. Implement a Resource Management Plan in conjunction with overall CIP.	Staff, NCDCCR	Beginning July 2021	Attractive, well-maintained and managed site will protect the public investment and attract visitors.

IV. Operations

Goals

- To recruit and retain highly qualified staff and volunteers;
- To increase the number of full-time and part-time site staff to support expanded site, increased programs, and additional facilities;
- To support staff in maximizing operational efficiencies through availability of necessary technology, staff training, and related resources;
- To strengthen and increase the base of financial support.

Action Steps	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome
1. Conduct current staffing analysis and recommendations to include full-time, seasonal, and part-time employees.	Staff, NCDCCR	July 2019; on-going	Quality professional presentation and management of historic site.
2. Develop a plan for cultivation, recruitment, training, evaluation, and recognition of volunteers.	Friends, Staff	July 2019; on-going	Increased number and retention of volunteers. Provides for volunteer development and career path.
3. Develop and implement a plan to strengthen private financial support for Bentonville Battlefield, including exploring options for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an annual fundraising appeal • contributed/grant income • an endowment • growth of Friends of Bentonville Battlefield • increased earned income 	Friends, Staff	July 2019; on-going	Sustainable private funding to augment state funding for current and future Bentonville Battlefield operations. Leverage of the 2020 reenactment event.

4. Develop and implement a security plan.	Staff, NCDCR	July 2019; on-going	Enhanced protection of site assets and increased safety for visitors.
5. Complete a staffing analysis and staff expansion plan (full-time, seasonal, and part-time employees) in conjunction with the execution of the overall CIP.	Staff, NCDCR	July 2023	On-going quality professional presentation and management of historic site.
6. Institute a technology annual planning cycle.	Staff, NCDCR	January 2020; on-going	Increased efficiency and staff capacity. Built into annual budget planning.

V. Marketing and Outreach

Goals

- To develop a comprehensive marketing plan;
- To develop a national reputation as a leader in the field of Civil War history and interpretation;
- To increase the awareness of the importance of Bentonville Battlefield's and North Carolina's roles in the Civil War;
- To build relationships and provide opportunities for community support and growth in attendance;
- To expand and enhance institutional partnerships.

Action Steps	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcome
1. Improve and update the newsletter, website, on-line store, and appropriate links; utilize social media and networking opportunities.	Staff, DNCR Marketing and Communications and Historic Sites Social Media team, Friends	Start by January 2019; on-going	Increased appeal, expanded outreach, and visibility. Increased visitation and revenues.
2. Increase email and direct mail contacts, develop membership data base.	Friends, Staff, DNCR Marketing & Communications	Start by January 2019; on-going	Increased awareness of Bentonville Battlefield and its programs, increased visitation, and maximized use of technology.

3. Expand and enhance institutional partnerships locally, regionally, and nationally.	NCDCCR, DNCR Education Outreach, Staff, Friends	Start by July 2019; on-going	Increased institutional support base.
4. NC has a focus on stimulating economies and education in rural communities. Prepare metrics that demonstrate visitation, agri-business partners, and the economic impact of the site.	Friends, Staff, DNCR staff	January 2019; on-going	Cultivation of legislative interest and attention to Bentonville Battlefield in preparation for 2020 Reenactment and the 2021 Long Session.
5. Develop and implement a marketing plan with emphasis on maximized visitation, membership expansion, education, partnerships, and fundraising.	Staff, NCDCCR, DNCR Marketing & Communication, Friends	July 2019; on-going	Increased awareness, visitation, public profile, personal community connections, and increased funding.

Thank You

The staff at Cool Spring Center and Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site wish to thank everyone who participated in the strategic planning meetings, supportive research, and the development of this plan. The members of the Bentonville Battlefield Strategic Planning Steering Committee dedicated valuable time and attention to this work. We acknowledge the support and assistance of the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources' Division of State Historic Sites and Properties.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site Strategic Planning Committee

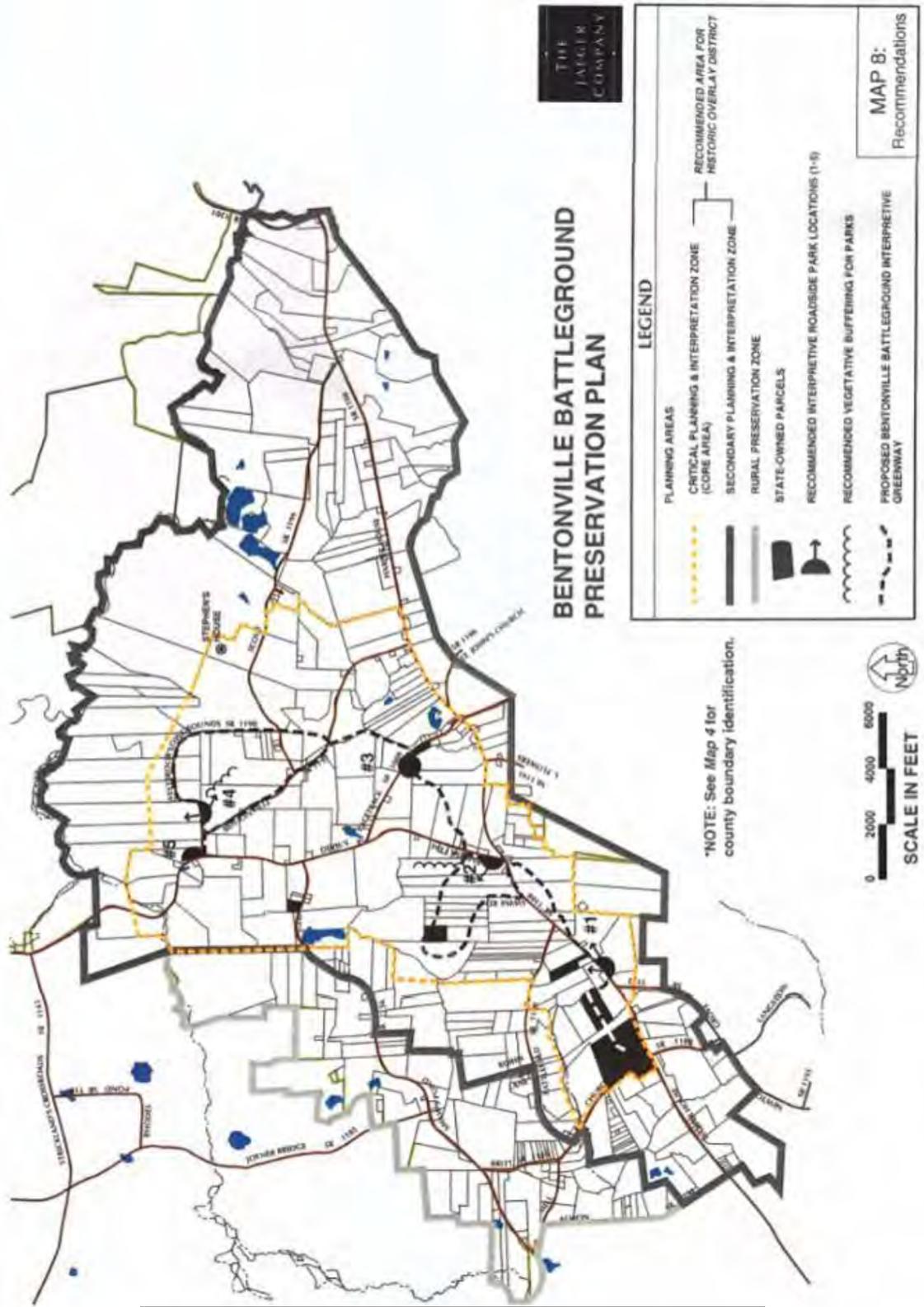
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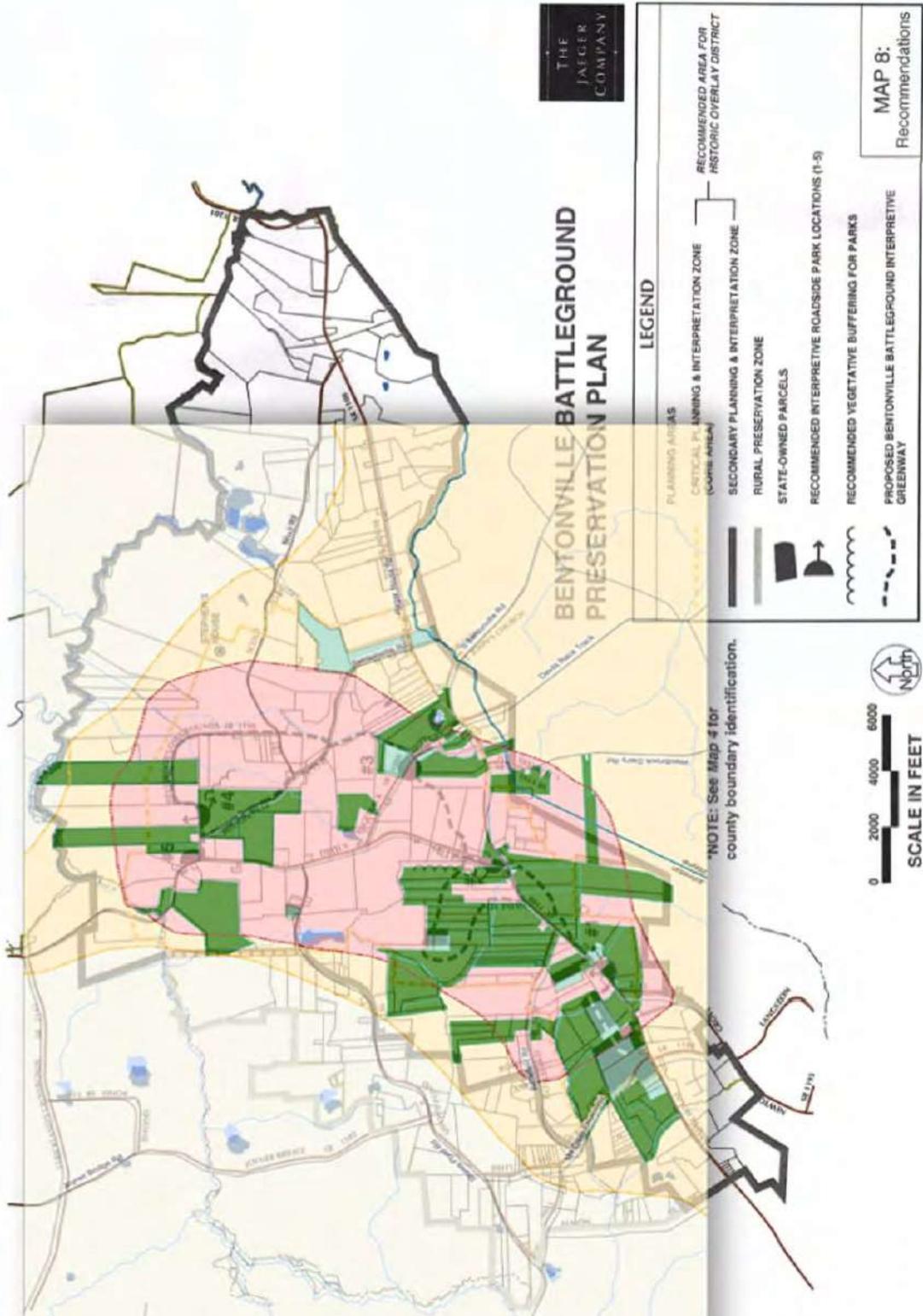
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Facilitated and prepared by: Cool Spring Center; www.coolspring.com

APPENDIX A – PRESERVATION PLAN WITH OVERLAY



Original illustration from 1998 Jaeger Preservation Plan



Current overlay illustration of core battlefield (pink) with 2,000 preserved acres shown in green.

APPENDIX B – LIST OF PLANS IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Goal. Action Step.	Responsibility	Timeline	Outcomes
I.4. Leverage 2020 Reenactment for public awareness/cultivation of support for a capital campaign. Conceptual drawings should be completed by mid-year 2019.	Friends, Staff	January 1, 2019 – January 1, 2021	Build Friends' membership, build mailing list, identify leadership and donor prospects. Engage larger community in support for the site.
I.2. Complete initial steps toward a Capital Improvement Plan	NC Division of Cultural Resources	May 1, 2019- April 30, 2020	Begin development of an overall CIP master plan.
IV.1. Conduct current staffing analysis and recommendations to include full-time, seasonal, and part-time employees.	Staff, NCDCCR	July 2019; on-going	Quality professional presentation and management of historic site.
IV.2. Develop a plan for cultivation, recruitment, training, evaluation, and recognition of volunteers.	Friends, Staff	July 2019; on-going	Increased number and retention of volunteers. Provides for volunteer development and career path.
IV.3. Develop and implement a plan to strengthen private financial support for Bentonville Battlefield, including exploring options for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an annual fundraising appeal • contributed/grant income • an endowment • growth of Friends of Bentonville Battlefield • increased earned income 	Friends, Staff	July 2019; on-going	Sustainable private funding to augment state funding for current and future Bentonville Battlefield operations. Leverage of the 2020 reenactment event.

IV.4. Develop and implement a Security Plan .	Staff, NCDCCR	July 2019; on-going	Enhanced protection of site assets and increased safety for visitors.
V.5. Develop and implement a Marketing Plan with emphasis on maximized visitation, membership expansion, education, partnerships, and fundraising.	Staff, NCDCCR, DNCR Marketing & Communication, Friends	July 2019; on-going	Increased awareness, visitation, public profile, personal community connections, and increased funding.
IV.6. Institute a Technology Annual Planning cycle.	Staff, NCDCCR	January 2020; on-going	Increased efficiency and staff capacity. Built into annual budget planning.
III.2. Implement a Resource Management Plan in conjunction with overall CIP.	Staff, NCDCCR	Beginning July 2021	Attractive, well-maintained and managed site will protect the public investment and attract visitors.
II.2. Complete an Interpretive Plan in anticipation of the space improvements in a new visitor center.	NC Division of Cultural Resources	January 2021- January 2022	Interpretive Plan established to guide programming goals which will drive the development of an overall CIP master plan.
II.7. Develop and implement an Exhibition Plan that integrates with the interpretive plan and CIP.	Staff, in conjunction with Interpretive and Training Services	Beginning July 2022	Enhanced visitor experience and preservation of historic artifacts. Improved on-site and traveling exhibits.
IV.5. Complete a Staffing Analysis and Staff Expansion Plan (full-time, seasonal, and part-time employees) in conjunction with the execution of the overall CIP.	Staff, NCDCCR	July 2023	On-going quality professional presentation and management of historic site.

<p>I.6. Complete and implement an overall Economic Impact, Business, and Funding Plan.</p>	<p>Staff, Friends, NCDRC, Johnston Co. Visitors Bureau, and consultants</p>	<p>July 2024</p>	<p>Establishes realistic goals that stakeholders can support to achieve the vision. Identifies potential site contribution to local economic development.</p>
<p>I.8. Approval and begin Construction Plan for Bentonville Battlefield.</p>	<p>Capital Projects Officer, NCDRC</p>	<p>Dates driven by CIP: 2024-2025</p>	<p>Establishes Bentonville Battlefield's intention to become a significant national historic destination.</p>
<p>I.9. Analyze property and develop an Archeological Plan before designations are made for non-historic features.</p>	<p>Office of State Archeology directs the archeological plan.</p>	<p>Dates driven by CIP: 2024-2025</p>	<p>Excavation of affected area(s) should be completed before any new construction.</p>

APPENDIX C – TIMELINE: BENTONVILLE BATTLEFIELD VISITOR CENTER

- 1964 - Visitor Center construction began January 1964.
- Official dedication was held on 3/21/65



- 1998 - 2001 Visitor Center Remodel
 - ✓ Offices created using a partition wall, as well as former sales desk being converted into an office
 - ✓ Gift shop space created
 - ✓ Fiber optic map installed replacing old diorama
 - ✓ New exhibits installed featuring coordinating panels and artifact cases
 - ✓ Front desk created
 - ✓ Picnic shelter and bathroom building constructed
 - ✓ Former men's room converted to storage and office space

- 2010 - Large display case installed in exhibit area for displaying larger items such as flags



- This 1960's facility is inadequate for staff, visitors, and education. A new Visitors Center is needed.

APPENDIX D – SITE PICTURES COURTESY OF
CIVIL WAR PRESERVATION TRUST



Cole's Plantation

Steve Stanley

On March 19, 1865 Confederate Gen. Wade Hampton selected the plantation of Willis Cole as the ideal location to halt the Union advance. An initial attack by Federals under Brig. Gen William P. Carlin revealed the strength of the Hampton's position and Carlin's men were ultimately driven from the field in the direction of the Morris Farm.



Federal Earthworks

Douglas Ullman, Jr.

Following the fighting on March 19, 1865, Union troops entrenched in preparation for the next day's attack. Remnants of these works can still be seen today.



Remains of Union Earthworks

Douglas Ullman, Jr.

The remains of Union entrenchments on the Bentonville Battlefield



High Tide at Morris Farm

Steve Stanley

It was at this site that Union forces at the Morris Farm were able to slow and then halt the Confederate assault on the 19th of March, 1865. The exhausted Confederate troops, who had launched their final attack at sundown, were forced to retreat back to their lines from this position.



The Last Grand Charge

Steve Stanley

The Last Grand Charge of the Army of Tennessee was made across these fields on March 19, 1865.



The Harper House

Steve Stanley

The house of John and Amy Harper was used as a hospital for Union and Confederate troops. The original house, seen here, is next to a Confederate cemetery and the remnants of Federal fortifications.



Goldsboro Pike

Chris Heisey

Confederates of Gen. Robert F. Hoke's division held this position, blocking the Goldsboro Pike before participating in the fight at the "Bull Pen."



The "Bull Pen"

Union forces under Brigadier General James Morgan were assaulted and temporarily surrounded by Hoke's Division of Confederate troops. The fighting in the "Bull Pen" was some of the most severe of the 3 day battle.



Tour Stop 2 - Morgan's Stand

Steve Stanley

Union forces under Brigadier General James Morgan were assaulted and temporarily surrounded by Hoke's Division of Confederate troops. The fighting in the "Bull Pen" was some of the most severe of the 3 day battle.



Hardee's Counterattack

Steve Stanley

On the third day of the battle at Bentonville, troops under Lt. General William Hardee rushed to counterattack Union forces threatening to overrun the right wing of the Confederate position. Hardee's troops, fighting through pelting rain, were able to stop Maj. General Joe Mower's Union forces, but not before they quickly overran General Johnston's headquarters.

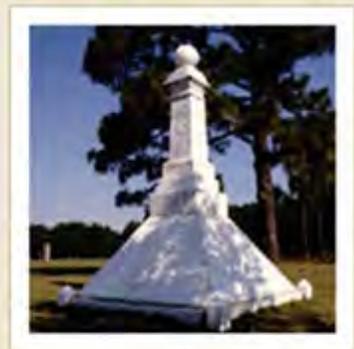


Tour Stop 3- N.C. Junior Reserves

Steve Stanley

Late in the Civil War, the depleted Confederate forces increasingly relied upon younger troops to fill their ranks. During the Battle of Bentonville many 17 and 18 year old North Carolinians fought and died during the 3-day battle at Bentonville.

The monument at right was erected by the Goldsboro Rifles in 1893, and marks a mass grave containing the remains of some 360 Confederates who died at Bentonville. Several of the soldiers buried here died after receiving treatment in the Harper House. Most of the remains were disinterred from various parts of the battlefield in the late nineteenth century and reinterred at this location. The marker was dedicated on March 20, 1895 to mark the 30th anniversary of the Battle of Bentonville. On hand for the occasion were Rev. John Harper Jr.--who offered a prayer for the ceremony--and Wade Hampton, who had commanded Confederate cavalry during the battle. A monument to Texas soldiers who fought at Bentonville can be seen in the left background.



APPENDIX E – BENTONVILLE BATTLEGROUND PRESERVATION PLAN -
1998 – (FOLLOWS)

Original copy available at Bentonville Battlefield Visitors Center