

Mall Fight Goes to Builder's Front Door

By RICHARD LEIGH
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About 30 pickets, carrying placards denouncing the William Center mall, marched quietly in a circle in front of the Fair Lakes headquarters of the Hazel-Peterson Cos. for two hours Wednesday.

The marchers sought to call attention to the issue the day before the U.S. Senate considers it at a subcommittee hearing. "It is a national, not a local, issue," said Nick Clark, head of the Maryland Brigade of the anti-mall Save the Battlefield Coalition. About seven or eight of the marchers were from Maryland, Clark said.

They protested plans to build a 1.2 million square foot regional shopping mall, planned as the centerpiece of a 542-acre mixed development bordering the Manassas National Battlefield Park.

The House of Representatives on Aug. 10 overwhelmingly passed a bill that would purchase the entire 542-acre property and add it to the Manassas National Battlefield Park, which it adjoins.

Sen. John Warner, R-Va., has called for a bill that would purchase about a quarter of the land, bar a mall from the remaining land, study area traffic problems caused by closing the two roads through the park, and ensure federal funds will be available for an interchange at Interstate 66 for a proposed Va. 234 by-pass.

"We're on morally high ground," said Clark. "We want to distance ourselves from John 'Til' Hazel, but we want to confront him on his own turf and over his own issue." Hazel is a principal in the development firm.

"We must prevent this catastrophe," said marcher George Collins of Reston. Describing the park as "a holy place," he said, "It's really a crime to see what's happening. I'm sorry it's had to come this far. I hope

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Mall

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we can help clear it up." He is a Civil War buff, he said.

"We're delighted that people like Mr. Collins and all of the others could come out today," said Anne Snyder, coalition chairman. "It's very heartwarming, and evidence of the wonderful support we've been getting since day one."

A nationwide letter-writing campaign to members of the House urging action against the mall has been credited for the overwhelming vote there.

Officials of the Hazel-Peterson Cos. "know we're here," Snyder said. "We hope they'll see our signs — and they'll look, listen, and heed."

Jim Hazel, project coordinator for the William Center and Hazel's son, said while firm officials were aware of the protest, they would have no comment.

Liz Conley, a coalition member from Manassas, said, "I'm here because I think it's disgraceful that it's gone as far as it's gone. It's time to put a stop to it. They're digging up history. They're destroying so much out there every single day. It's very frustrating that we can't seem to make them understand that it's got to stop."

"I grew up in Manassas since I was 10 years old," Conley said. "The park was always a part of my life. I went there as a child with my parents, and I went there on trips from school. I learned more out at that park than I could ever learn from a history book by just going out there and experiencing the feeling that's out there — of actually being a part of history. The park is so much the same as it was at the time of the Civil War."

That feeling at the park would be lost, Conley said, "if you stick malls and shopping centers and

McDonald's and everything else on top of it."

A mall would "cause noise and visual pollution and incredible traffic," Conley said. "It would destroy the park. It wouldn't be the same at all. Think of the air conditioning noise alone coming off the mall."

Ed Wenzel, a coalition director from Vienna, carried a placard reading, "Hood's Texans can't attack through 560 houses."

"There's much more significance to the tract than Stuart's Hill," said Wenzel. Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee had his headquarters on Stuart's Hill during the 1862 Battle of Second Manassas. Warner has said he would include Stuart's Hill in the area to be purchased by the federal government.

Two major field hospitals — one Confederate, the other Union — were located on the property, Wenzel said. "We know burials were all over that property. There's absolutely no documentation any of the burials at the field hospitals were ever removed to cemeteries."

"We've got the positions of Hood's Texas Brigade and Evans' South Carolina troops who launched their attack from this very property," Wenzel said. "The assault path would go through the office park and 560 houses. We feel we're encouraged by Sen. Warner's steps to save Stuart's Hill, but there's much more historic significance to the property."

"The vista from Stuart's Hill to the battlefield is just as important as Stuart's Hill," Wenzel said. "If you have to stand on Stuart's Hill and look out over a sea of rooftops, that's just not going to get it."

Much more of the tract than called for by Warner should be taken, said Wenzel. "We absolutely have to have these positions from Hood's Brigade and Evans' South Carolina troops protected."

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