

Pete Centennial Challenge Implementation Strategy

VISION

Petersburg National Battlefield is an integral part of the local community, a tourist destination for the Region and a touchstone of America's past. Our centennial vision is to teach students and adults about the often painful lessons of America's past and to illuminate to new and diverse audiences the powerful story of the struggle this nation endured in the name of unity, justice and freedom for all. Our vision builds on our mission and expands our efforts to preserve the nationally significant resources associated with the campaign, siege and defense of Petersburg during the Civil War. In addition it provides a greater and more relevant understanding of the events, their impacts and legacy on individuals, the community and the nation.

We will achieve our goal by broadening our themes, expanding our delivery channels, and using technology, innovation and creativity to enlighten and engage historically underrepresented audiences. Through the centennial challenge we will introduce new film media, renovate an old Civilian Conservation Corps building to a state of the art education outreach center, and partner with the city of Petersburg to restore a historic 1856 train depot into a Visitor Center. Our goal is to preserve these sacred lands and structures while imparting the deepest understanding of the events that occurred here. We will continue to teach current and future visitors about our nation's past and to help them appreciate and enjoy the public lands, structures and resources set aside for them.

STEWARDSHIP

- Rehabilitate high priority historic buildings: The Park's recently completed GMP identified the need to broaden our themes and expand our delivery channels. Time and again scoping meetings revealed public recommendations for the Park and City to establish a Visitor Center in Old Towne Petersburg. One of the most emblematic Civil War icons in Old Towne is the South Side Railroad Station. It is the oldest existing railroad station in the state and was key in the Confederate war effort. The building is a focal point in the City's historic district and an ideal location to tell the stories of the impact of the war on women, free people of color and slaves as well as the role of 19th century transportation. The station is currently abandoned but has been designated park and community's choice as a Visitor Center because of its significance during the Civil War, its location and its critical need for restoration. Further as Fort Lee Army base more than doubles under BRAC, development pressures on surrounding communities will increase dramatically. As such, property values in Old Towne are likely to increase while available property decreases. The City of Petersburg will partner with the park to make this initiative a success.

- Improve High Priority Assets: The Operations Building is a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) era historic structure located in the Park's main unit. It currently serves as a meeting space for park staff and the education department's summer camp. However, it is in poor condition (FCI rating is 0.383) and the space within is underutilized because it lacks structural modification and amenities conducive to an educational resource. The project will improve the condition of this priority historic structure (API rating 64) while also significantly aiding park interpretative and education staff in connecting people to the stories and resources of the park. Our Centennial Vision will turn this building into a state of the art educational center, with indoor and outdoor meeting areas, field labs, classrooms and multimedia capability. Educational programs offered will engage students of all ages and cultures in Civil War history as well as science-based conservation, ecology and resource preservation. In addition to providing an education center for local students, the upgraded building will provide park staff, invited educators and local teachers the resources available to develop and execute curriculum based programs.
- Standard of Excellence in Urban Park Landscape Design and Maintenance: Petersburg National Battlefield intendeds to utilize the best practices and employ the highest standards of excellence in historic preservation. Historical architects from the Petersburg Office of the Commonwealth Architects will develop schematics for the adaptive reuse of the South Side Station and the Denver Service Center will assist with project management for restoration work for both the South Side Station and Operations Building – Education Center. State of the art preservation and restoration techniques will be employed and assistance from the Northeast Region's Conservation Resource Center in Lowell, MA is expected.
- Assure that no Compelling Chapter in the American Heritage Experience Remains Untold: This project will use 5 videos to expand our interpretive themes to attract more diverse audiences. This educational and interpretative goal was identified in our recently completed General Management Plan. The films will help to convey a broader range of stories, activities, events and experiences related to military, social, political and economic issues surrounding the Petersburg Campaign in the context of the Civil War. The films will help to stimulate visitor interest and provide a fuller understanding of the previously untold stories of the experiences and roles of women and African Americans in the Civil War, as well as the story of citizens living in a city under siege.

RECREATION

- Expand Partnerships with Schools and Boys and Girls Associations: Our vision to rehab and develop an Education Center in the park's main unit will enable us to expand and further build our annual summer camp program *Earthworks*. In PETE of the future, hundreds of local children ages 6-12 years will get outside. Campers will mirror the demographics of the local area with the vast majority, nearly 80%, African Americans. The kids will begin by role playing as Civil War Soldier "Recruits," they'll sign enlistment papers and experience soldier life 140 years ago. As soldiers, they'll go through a recruitment station, dress in wool uniforms, take an oath to the US Army and drill as infantryman. They'll learn communication techniques of the 19th century including communicating with signal flags and coding messages. They'll set up camp, drill as cannoneers and paint regimental flags. As scientists, they'll go on nature scavenger hunts and identify medicinal plants used by soldiers. They'll use a map and compass to find their way, and catch insects and salamanders in the stream for a biological water test. *Earthworks* will allow them to examine how soldiers used the land to survive. They'll learn and experience history first hand and outside.

EDUCATION

- Cooperate with Educators to Provide Curriculum Materials, High Quality Programs and Park-Based and On-Line Learning: Our centennial vision will expand park education programs to meet growing demands for quality programs, curriculum materials and on-line and other media educational and interpretative opportunities. Through the assistance of Student Conservation Associates, the park will expand education programs and components of the summer camp, "Earthworks". We will develop annual Educator's Guides that meet Virginia State Standards of Learning as well as Junior Ranger booklets and CD ROM interactive educational programs that can be used both on and off site.