



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
15 State Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02109-3572

IN REPLY REFER TO:

Agenda Public Scoping Meeting* Coltsville Special Resource Study

*October 20, 2004
CSS-CON Building, 34 Sequassen Street, Hartford, CT.*

- 6:30 Welcome by James O'Connell and John Monroe of the National Park Service
- 6:45 **The Study Process**
Powerpoint presentation on the Special Resource Study process - James O'Connell
Questions & Answers
- 7:00 **Historical Significance of Coltsville**
Background from National Historic Landmark Nomination – Bruce Clouette
- 7:15 **Coltsville: Significance and Key Issues – Comments from Public**
Questions to Consider:
- What are the key issues to consider in the study?
 - What are the important stories to tell about Coltsville?
 - What is the significance of Coltsville locally, regionally and nationally?
 - What role might Coltsville play in the future of Hartford?
 - What positive or negative impacts may there be on the historic buildings and other resources?
 - What other concerns do you have about this study?
- 8:30 Reflections
- 8:45 Adjourn

* Note: "Scoping" is an expression used by planners to define the scope of a study - both the breadth and depth of investigation. By conferring with interested citizens at the beginning, the completed study can more fully address issues and concerns of the community.

COLTSVILLE PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING, OCTOBER 20, 2004
Summary of Comments

Approximately 100 people attended this public meeting. It was telecast on CTV, a local access cable channel that serves communities across Connecticut. The following persons spoke at the public meeting.

Congressman John Larson—Congressman Larson said that he had been responsible for getting the Coltsville study bill passed in the House of Representatives. He said that the history of the Colt Firearms Co. is in the “DNA” of the Hartford community and the entire Connecticut River Valley. Innovations that came out of Colt are still having an influence in the local aerospace industry, particularly at Pratt & Whitney. He mentioned how Mark Twain and Henry Ford visited Coltsville and were influenced by it. He gave credit to the community and the *Hartford Courant* for promoting the Coltsville project. He said that the proposal has the full support of entire local congressional delegation.

Mayor Eddie Perez—The Mayor said that Hartford should create a visitor destination at Coltsville. He considered an NPS designation as “glue” for local heritage attractions. He emphasized the importance of Elizabeth Colt in keeping the company going. He stated there is broad local support for the project. He said that there is educational potential at Coltsville because there are two magnet schools nearby. A project could work well with the new housing being developed at Dutch Point to redevelop the neighborhood.

Joan Jacobs, aide, Senator Joseph Lieberman—Presented a letter co-signed by Senator Dodd saying that: “The designation of Coltsville as a National Park is an issue of great importance to our constituents and to the historic preservation of an important American landmark.”

Mark Stefanidou, aide, Senator Christopher Dodd— Presented a letter co-signed by Senator Lieberman saying that: “The designation of Coltsville as a National Park is an issue of great importance to our constituents and to the historic preservation of an important American landmark.”

Bernadine Silvers, President, CSS/CON Neighborhood Council—She had a least six or seven members from her organization stand up in support of this project. He said her neighborhood organization wants to work closely with Colt Gateway developer Homes for America.

Mary Heslin—She is a former local teacher who is very interested in local history and celebrating it at Coltsville. She recalled the old Polish neighborhood, the Indian and Dutch influences, and seeing boxer Barney Ross visiting the Colt factory during World War II. She expressed a vision for revitalizing a larger area extending to Charter Oak Park, which is now “sorely neglected.”

Janice Grimaldi, teacher, Kinsella School—She said that students at her school, which is situated near Coltsville, are excited by the history of Coltsville area, which she has been researching.

Cynthia Reik, teacher—She said she hopes that historical interpretation will grapple with “big questions.” She said that interpretation should cover difficult working conditions and the use of guns to kill Indians. She said it should follow themes identified by historian Howard Zinn.

Wendy Pawlak, childhood resident of area—She read a letter calling for a National Park designation. She mentioned the history of the area’s buildings, including the worker housing. She said she was interested in history and culture, not guns.

John Callahan, Hartford, Civil War re-enactor—He reminded the public that the Coltsville story is a story about Hartford even before industry, money, and politics.

Elizabeth Titus Putnam, Shaftsbury, VT—She said she came down from Vermont to testify, since she is a descendant of Elizabeth Colt. The Colt family felt great love for Hartford. “What you are doing is wonderful.” “Go for it!” She said she appreciates the NPS because she was involved with the Student Conservation Association for many years.

Jim Griffin, Samuel & Elizabeth Colt Center for American History and Industrial Heritage—He described his non-profit organization, which wants to create its own Colt museum at the factory complex. He said he used to work as a public affairs person for the Colt Firearms Company and that in an average week 30 people would call to visit the “Colt Museum,” which did not exist. This proves that the audience for a Colt museum exists.. He suggested tracing the themes of industrial revolution, technology, and Manifest Destiny in settling the American West. He pointed out how the Gene Autry Museum of Western Heritage, in Anaheim, CA, and the Cody Museum, in Cody, WY, used Colt artifacts to bring in a large attendance. He said that an NPS site could bring new tourists to Hartford and help economic development. The East Armory Building is the key to the concept. It must be the center of tourist development at Coltsville.

John Schemo, Vice President for Economic Development, Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce—He indicated that Hartford’s economy has been stagnant for a decade and that future economic development needs to focus on cultural and historical assets. An NPS designation is the “missing link” in the city’s rebirth.

Holly Reed, East Hartford—She said that the Colt firearms were important American inventions. She wondered what would be missing from American and Hartford history if Samuel and Elizabeth Colt were missing from history. She stressed the themes of firearms, industrial innovation, and philanthropy.

Donald Poland, Neighborhoods of Hartford, Inc.—Every neighborhood will benefit from a Coltsville NPS designation, not just the Charter Oak-Sheldon neighborhood. Therefore, all Hartford neighborhoods support this project.

Matt Blood, President, Hartford Preservation Alliance--New Bedford is an example of integrating national park into a city, as Hartford would like to do. A Coltsville project would help tie all local historical resources together, including the nearby South Green and Frog Hollow neighborhoods. The area should remain as a residential area, not an embalmed historical landmark—people live here. A project at Coltsville could improve signs and way-finding. A story can be told to inspire people and improve city, inspiring innovation and putting Hartford on the world stage

Sue Kies, East Hartford—A family member worked at the Colt factory. Hartford is losing its history. There are good Colt collections at the Wadsworth Atheneum and the State Museum of Connecticut History.

Katherine Kane, Director, Harriet Beecher Stowe Center—She said it important to get grassroots support, which is evident at this public meeting. She stated that museums cost a lot to operate and that there is a need for NPS involvement.

Marc Nicol, Director of Park Planning, Riverfront Recapture—Riverfront Recapture, a 23 year-old organization, is trying to reconnect the city with its riverfront, particularly near Coltsville. His organization supports the proposal and believes that National Park designation is crucial.

Helen Hunt, Principal, Kinsella School—She support the project because her school, which is near Coltsville, could use it as a learning experience.

Eleanor Sherman, local resident—She is an artist who has lived in the Colt factory. She believes that the social history of workers needs to be told. Twenty-five years ago an artist community started up in the Colt factory. The artistic achievements need to be preserved and celebrated. Colt is also story of an artistic renaissance.

Bill Hosley, Director, Antiquarian & Landmarks Society—He has been working on promoting a better appreciation of Coltsville’s history for 18 years. The boldness and vision of the developer Homes for America has made this effort possible. There is a critical need for partnerships to make the Coltsville project happen. The project needs more state support.

Barbara Barnicle, local resident—She said that her mother, who was present, worked in the Colt factory,

Briann Greenfield, History Professor, Central Connecticut State University—She has held classes on Connecticut industrial history and her students have been excited by the Colt story. She said that any project should explore the “darker side” of guns and worker history. She said that the journal *Connecticut History*, which is published out of Central Connecticut, supports the project.

Paul Loether, Director, Connecticut State Historical Commission—He said speaks for 29 commissioners. The commission supports the NHL and NPS designations. He said that the project demonstrates the intersection between culture and tourism.

Bob MacFarlane, CEO of Homes for America—The Colt Gateway redevelopment will cost \$110 million. He emphasized the importance of Elizabeth Colt in rebuilding site after the 1864 fire, since she could have decided to keep the insurance money and not rebuild. He sees the rebuilt site as paying homage to her.

Shirley B. Zachery, Manchester resident—She said that the Colt factory had been a magnet for black migrants from the South during World War II and that more research should be done on that. There also may be connections with Puerto Rican migrants.