

3.0 Existing Landscape Architectural Resources

3.1. *Historic Planning Area*

3.1.1. Development Patterns: Form and Layout

The overall layout within the Historic Planning Area of Spotsylvania Courthouse is informal. The area at the crossroads, extending approximately 2,000 feet each way from the crossroads, is laid out with uniformly sized lots facing Courthouse Road and Brock Road. There is a small grid pattern to the southeast of the crossroads formed by American Legion Drive. There are a number of modest public buildings oriented along or adjacent to this drive with the historic jail situated at the corner of American Legion and Courthouse Road.

Most of the buildings at the crossroads are sited with primary orientation to Courthouse Road and Brock Road. The one exception to this case is the judicial complex on the southeast side of Courthouse, which is oriented to an interior, grassed space. Together, the judicial complex, the brick structures along American Legion Drive, and the historic courthouse and Administration Center on each side of Courthouse Road form a campus at the center of the Historic Planning Area.

The acreage of the tracts surrounding the crossroads area range in size. Many are large parcels, including high and middle school parcels on the southern extension of Courthouse Road, the elementary school parcel north of the crossroads on Brock Road, and several large open agricultural fields north of Courthouse Road between the crossroads and the military park. The Spotsylvania Military Park of approximately 1,500 acres in size is also included in this planning area. This undeveloped landscape preserves the site of an important Civil War battle and provides the Historic Planning Area with a significant open space.

There are no subdivisions in this planning zone to date, but in the future it is anticipated that new development will occur.

3.1.2. Cultural Characteristics

Setbacks

The Historic Planning Area offers a diverse collection of building types in a variety of styles and forms. There are a wide variety of setbacks in the placement of these buildings. Many of the residential structures as well as the churches include grassed front yards, while commercial buildings are typically sited closer to the road. Most commercial uses contain parking adjacent to the road. Many historic residences and church buildings have also utilized former landscaped yards for parking.

The diversity of setbacks is illustrated in this [view](#) of Courthouse Road Commercial buildings in the distance are placed close to the road, while the historic residential buildings are setback with a traditional front yard

This [photo](#) illustrates the angled siting of a newer building in the Historic Planning Area

Public Rights-of-Way and Circulation Systems - Much of the public road right-of-way, particularly along older roads, is contained in a "Prescriptive Easement." The prescriptive easement is typically thirty feet wide, allowing space for the paved roadway and adjacent drainage ditch. The "Prescriptive Easement" does not allow space for pedestrian networks adjacent to roads within

public right-of-way. Sidewalks in the Spotsylvania Courthouse Area, unless situated on public land such as within the government complex and school property, have been constructed on private land.

Overall the pedestrian system at Spotsylvania Courthouse is limited, fragmented and has no connectivity. There is a well-developed pedestrian system on the south side of Courthouse Road adjacent to the historic courthouse and judicial center. This [pathway system](#) is paved in brick. There is also a short section of concrete sidewalk at the middle school, which also extends to the adjacent commercial center.

[Photograph](#) illustrates the evident need for a pedestrian system at Spotsylvania Courthouse. Pictured here is a jogger on one side of the street and two bicyclists on the other side. The convenience store and a variety of government buildings near the town center are major generators for pedestrian traffic.

[Illustration A](#) (Section View: Prescriptive Easement on associated photograph)

[Illustration B](#) (Plan View: Enlargement plan view illustrating area of prescriptive easement versus four lane section of Courthouse Road and other public roads)

Photograph illustrates a pedestrian [sidewalk at a commercial center](#). Approximately four feet wide, concrete sidewalks are situated on private land at commercial center on Courthouse Road, south of the crossroads. Sidewalk continues south on public land at the Middle School. Without the use of adjacent land, pedestrian pathway could not exist within the thirty foot wide prescriptive easement.

Photograph provides a view of the pedestrian system - [Spotsylvania County Judicial Center](#). This curvilinear brick pathway is situated in the open space at Judicial Center.

This [photograph](#) illustrates the absence of a pedestrian system in the front yard space of this residence with front yard parking present.

[Example](#) of the absence of a pedestrian system. In this case the front yard does not contain parking.

This [photograph](#) illustrates the absence of a pedestrian system in the front yard space of this residence with front yard parking present.

3.1.3. Landscape Materials/Planting Arrangements

The Historic Planning Area at Spotsylvania Courthouse contains a mature landscape in most sections. Large native hardwood trees dominate this mature landscape. At the historic courthouse, the mature oaks are arranged in a formal grid pattern. Likewise, the Confederate Cemetery with its grid layout also contains formalized plantings with major trees encircling the central monument. In most locations throughout the district, the mature vegetation is informally placed, many times as specimen trees in the front yards of the residential structures or institutional buildings.

The county at the historic courthouse is currently addressing the aged condition of some of these trees. Here an underplanting program, which replaces the aged trees with plantings of young hardwoods, is already underway to perpetuate this significant landscape element.

This [close-up view](#) of the Spotsylvania courthouse Grounds illustrates the mature trees existing within this significant public landscape and the formal arrangement of these plantings.

This [distant view](#) of the Spotsylvania Courthouse illustrates the underplanting program now underway.

Stately arborvitae trees, hemlock and juniper shrubs surround [Central Monument](#) at Confederate Cemetery in formal arrangements.

There are also examples of natural succession occurring on a few vacant parcels. Golden broomsedge grasses punctuated with young red cedar trees characterize this successional landscape. These successional fields create a picturesque and pastoral landscape setting within the more intensively developed crossroads area.

There are a variety of trees and shrubs found within the Historic Planning Area. Some of the major vegetation noted are as follows. *Native Plants* -Broomsedge (grass) and Yucca (shrub); *Native Trees* - Dogwood, Redbud, Eastern Red Cedar, Virginia Pine, a variety of Oaks and Maples (Red, White, and Scarlet Oak and Red Maple), Tulip Poplar, Sweet Gum, Green and White Ash, and American Holly; *Exotic Plants* - Arborvitae - two forms (tall tree & shrub), Crape Myrtle, and Magnolia.

View to [Confederate Cemetery](#) from Courthouse Road illustrates the character-defining role landscape plays in the district. The foreground features an informal landscape in early stages of succession, while in the distance the more mature vegetation is placed in formal arrangements within the cemetery

View from [Confederate Cemetery](#) toward Judicial Center illustrates picturesque character of red cedar trees within vacant parcel.

3.2. Village Planning Area

3.2.1. Visual Character

The village area has the appearance of a formerly rural area, which is undergoing transformation into a series of subdivisions. This is happening in a patchwork pattern, so that there is not a consistent appearance when passing through the district. In addition there are some individual single family homes, typically on large lots, strung along the main roads. There are areas where the rural character is more intact, including some large undeveloped parcels, though these may soon be overtaken by new development.

[View](#) of the changing landscape character in much of the Village Planning Area

3.2.2. Natural Resources

For the most part, significant natural resources are not visible from the main roads in this area except for forested tracts and the scenic quality of the old fields. There are several stream corridors, which flow to the Ni and Po rivers, but otherwise no significant wetland areas.

3.3. Transitional Planning Area

3.3.1. Visual Character

The transition area is similar to the village area in character, though it is somewhat less densely developed. The subdivisions tend to have larger lot sizes and, in many of them, more of the site's vegetation was retained during construction. This zone, like the village zone, has a significant number of single family homes loosely lining the main roads. As the primary purpose of the transition area is to serve as a [buffer](#) around the Spotsylvania village, it is important to retain the remaining rural character wherever possible.

County road 208 (Courthouse Road) as it enters the study area from the north has rolling topography and dramatic open vistas of farms and open fields. A majority of the community's historic farmsteads are situated along this route. [Map 4: Historic Farmsteads: Route 208](#) illustrates these farmsteads and the large acreage tracts associated with each.

The existing small subdivision off 208 is in a wooded area and well screened from the road. The strip development that has occurred outside of the transition area boundaries at both ends of this section (more to the north than the south) emphasize the importance of conserving the resources along this approach to Spotsylvania Courthouse.

3.3.2. Natural Resources

The transition area has large undeveloped tracts, both field and forest, which contribute to its rural character. There are several streams south of 608 and 613, which are tributary to the P0 River. Streams north of 608 and 613 feed the Ni River, which forms part of the northern boundary of the transition zone. Small wetland areas are associated with many of these streams.

The transition zone is much wider at the southern and western sides of the study area where if developed in accordance with the goals of the Courthouse Area plan it will form an effective [buffer](#). The eastern side of the transition zone is as narrow as 1 200 feet, so that the character of this entry to Spotsylvania Courthouse will depend much on development outside of the study area.

To the north/northwest, the National Military Park functions as the transition area (i.e.: as a buffer around the village zone) until its easternmost boundary. Here the transition area extends as a corridor along 208 to the intersection with 628. This stretch of road is especially attractive as noted above.

3.4. Gateway Corridors

The five main roads to Spotsylvania, which pass through all three areas, serve as the gateways to the community. These will form the first impressions of this district for the visitor or tourist. The view from these roads is of the most concern. [Map 5: Viewsheds Along Gateway Corridors](#) illustrates the viewsheds along each route. The five approaches and their characteristics are described in the following five sections (3.4.1-3.4.5).

3.4.1. Courthouse Road/CR 208 (north)

This approach is described briefly in the [Section 3.3.1](#). It is the most heavily traveled route to Spotsylvania Courthouse and should be given the highest priority in developing a strategy for protection. It is the only four lane divided road in the study area and is also clearly designed for higher speed travel. [Courthouse Road/CR 208](#)

The landscape along this route is characterized by a large number of historic farmsteads. The farmsteads typically contain a cluster of historic buildings, sited on knolls and surrounded by open agricultural fields. Most fields appear to be in use as pastures. Fences, many of wood and lined with informal vegetative hedges, serve as enclosures, creating a series of field patterns.

[Whig Hill](#) is one of the community's historic farmsteads, featuring the house and associated farm buildings in a knoll location surrounded by the open agricultural landscape separated by a series of fenced enclosures.

[Rosemont](#) is another historic farmstead, featuring a series of enclosed agricultural fields and the residential and farm complex sited on the knoll.

A formal landscape feature in this historic agricultural setting is the “allee,” the French word for alley which is defined as a “long walk or drive lined with rows of trees or shrubs.” The allee is a character-defining feature along Courthouse Road. The allee is also found at the historic farmsteads of Kenmore Woods and Snow Hill, situated along Courthouse Road (south), described in [Section 3.4.2](#).

[Cedar Allee](#) adjacent to Courthouse Road

Closer view of [allee](#)

3.4.2. Courthouse Road/CR 208 (south)

This section of road is winding and rolling as it enters the study area. Numerous single-family homes line the road until north of Snow Hill Farm where the viewshed becomes somewhat more attractive. The two historic farmsteads along this route, Snow Hill and Kenmore Woods, share characteristics with the historic farmsteads, described in [Section 3.4.1](#).

South study area boundary at [Courthouse Road](#)

Allee at [Kenmore Woods](#), comprised of cedar trees

Allee at [Snow Hill](#) contains a mixture of vegetation - oaks, red cedars, and boxwoods

3.4.3. Massaponax Church Road (east)

This route has a brief but attractive passage through the transition zone. It is an alternate approach to the Courthouse from Highway 1.

Study area boundary at [Massaponax Church Road](#)

3.4.4. Robert E. Lee Drive/CR 608 (west)

This also includes a short section of Old Courthouse Road (CR 648) south of the intersection with 608. This route has a lot of commuter traffic that passes through Spotsylvania Courthouse. The future bypass will reroute traffic by connecting 608 with 208 north of the Courthouse. Most of this approach is lined with single-family homes and large lot subdivisions. There are mature wooded areas on most of these properties, which reduce the visual impact of the development.

Entry to study area on [Robert E Lee Drive](#)

3.4.5. Brock Road/CR 613

Most of this approach is through the Fredericksburg - Spotsylvania National Military Park making this the least developed section of the transition area. The road passes through both forested and old field portions of the park.

3.5. Civil War Resources

The Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park was authorized by Congress in 1927 to “commemorate the Civil War battles of Fredericksburg,

Spotsylvania Courthouse. Wilderness and Chancellorsville.” The purpose was further clarified in 1933 when the National Park Service was charged with management of the park. Today the “National Park Service seeks to preserve the historic scenes and resources of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania Military Park, to minimize the impact of land use changes adjacent to the battlefields, and to present the park’s [historic sites](#) to visitors in a manner that provides opportunities for understanding the events that shaped America’s heritage.” (*General Management Plan*)

The military park at Spotsylvania Courthouse is part of the larger Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania Military Park. The total park comprises approximately 7,000 acres. The military park at Spotsylvania is currently 1,464 acres (authorized by Congress at 1,572 acres). The park is contained in one large tract situated north of the crossroads. The park’s entrance is from Brock Road northwest of the crossroads, while a portion of the park also fronts on Courthouse Road. The entire park is included as part of the Historic Planning Area.

The military park at Spotsylvania has in place several documents, which currently guide and direct management of the lands within the park as well as including recommendations for significant associated land outside the park. Two of these documents include a *General Management Plan*, dating from 1986, and a more recent 1996 publication, *A Community Guide to Protecting Civil War Battlefield Sites and Features in the Fredericksburg Region of Virginia*. Both of these publications were reviewed as part of this study and development guidelines from the *Community Guide* publication have been included in the [Appendix B](#) of this report.

Members of the National Park Service staff have provided additional information about the specific Civil War resources at Spotsylvania Courthouse. This information has been organized into three types of resources situated outside the boundaries of the park. These include the following: **(1)** Civil War Related Lands; **(2)** Trench Work - Extant & Estimated; and **(3)** Building or Visible Remnants (extant 1864-1996). These Civil War resources are described below and have also been illustrated on [Map 3: Historic and Architectural Resources](#) found in [Section 2.0](#) of this report.

3.5.1. Civil War Related Lands

These zones are areas situated outside the park where significant Civil War-related activities occurred, such as engagements, encampments, military maneuvers, and troop movements.

3.5.2. Trench Work - Extant & Estimated

A major feature of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania Military Park is the thirty-eight miles of existing earthworks (trenches) that were noted in the 1986 *General Management Plan*. Of the thirty-eight miles, twenty-two miles were considered to still maintain a high level of visibility and interpretive value and thus would be a potential for preservation treatment. Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping has been carried out for much of the area by the National Park Service. This mapping has included lands within as well as outside the park boundaries with the permission of private owners.

The length of extant trenchworks included in the Spotsylvania Courthouse area and situated outside the military park numbers over three miles. As a general rule, trenches in wooded situations compared to trenches in open fields are in better condition. The wooded cover provides protection, though trees growing directly on an earthwork can be harmful with “windthrow.” In this situation, a large tree that has died is susceptible to fall, taking the root system and portions of the trench with it. [Map 3: Historic and Architectural Resources](#) in Section 2.0 of this report illustrates

the most recent information on the location of existing earthworks as well as the estimated location of former earthworks. All of the earthworks illustrated on this map are located outside park boundaries. Much of this earthwork system is located on private property.

3.5.3. Building and Building Ruins/Remnants

There are five sites within the Spotsylvania Courthouse Planning Area, which include existing buildings or remnants of former buildings, which were in existence at the time of the battle and remain visible today. These include existing buildings, such as a wartime house at Dabney Farm and the wartime Beverly House at Whig Hill. There are also the remnants of the former icehouse at the southwest edge of the related lands located south of the military park.