

Chapter 5

HISTORIC RESOURCES PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Spotsylvania County has a proud tradition of Historic Preservation. This element continues that proud tradition while ensuring that the property rights of Spotsylvania County landowners are not violated by the goals, objectives or implementation strategies of this element. The County aspires to achieve these goals and objectives, however, it is important to emphasize that they are voluntary in nature.

HISTORY

The same accidents of geography that brought war, destruction, and eternal fame to Spotsylvania County between 1861 and 1865 are now combining to alter the County's landscape in a much more permanent way than the Civil War ever could. Those changes are coming at such a rapid pace that immediate action is critical.

Early Virginia historic transportation corridors in Spotsylvania County tended to follow water courses east and west providing routes for the products of agriculture and industry to find their way to market. With the establishment of cities and towns along the Fall Line, north-south travel along roads and later rails gained greater importance. These factors, combined with Spotsylvania County's position midway between Washington, D.C. and Richmond, destined the County to be the prime battleground of the Civil War, as peacetime avenues of commerce became avenues of invasion.

Today, proximity to Washington, D.C. and Richmond and 20th century innovations in both highway and rail travel along the traditional north-south corridor have transformed much of Spotsylvania County into a sprawling bedroom community favoring the homogenized corporate and residential architecture of suburban America. In the last 20 years, much of that change has been so dramatic that former residents can scarcely recognize the landscape of their youth. In short, Spotsylvania County is in danger of losing its historic character.

The purpose of this Preservation Plan is to grapple with the difficult issue of how to accommodate growth and still preserve the character-defining nature of the County that makes it such a desirable place to live and which draws visitors from across the country, if not from around the world. Key to the plan is to identify those resources and characteristics that make the County unique; but, more than that, the plan suggests actions that should be taken by government, the business community, and individuals to preserve a special heritage and sense of place before they are lost forever.

The Plan contains policies and strategies that aim to preserve the County's many resources and its successful implementation ultimately rests in the hands of the community. Historic and Cultural Preservation should be undertaken on behalf of the citizens of the County. The stakeholders in this endeavor – property owners, land developers, local government, preservation groups, and interested citizens – must have viable and creative tools to be good stewards of their historic and cultural resources. The adoption and implementation of this Plan provides the tools and focuses efforts to ensure the future of our historic and cultural resources.

THE CODE OF VIRGINIA - ENABLING LEGISLATION

The Virginia Constitution and the Code of Virginia grant authority to Virginia jurisdictions to protect their historic resources. Section 15.2-2224 of the Code of Virginia requires that certain surveys and studies be made in preparation of the Comprehensive Plan. Related to historic resources, the County can either survey and study historic areas or list historic areas identified and surveyed by the Department of Historic Resources in the Comprehensive Plan. Spotsylvania County has surveyed and studied historic resources and the documentation of that study is found in Appendix C.

Enabling legislation exists in the Code of Virginia to allow jurisdictions such as Spotsylvania to adopt a historic overlay district, which the county has in Chapter 23, Zoning, Code of the County of Spotsylvania. Spotsylvania County's Historic Overlay District Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan are the foundation for the County's historic preservation program. In partnership with the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, Spotsylvania County should promote and protect the four Civil War battlefield parks in the County. Voluntary measures, including protection and advocacy efforts by private and non-profit groups, are an essential part of the County's preservation program. Additionally, the County should set an example for the community in its stewardship of its historic buildings.

HISTORIC RESOURCES POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

GOAL: Spotsylvania County is known for the beauty of its agricultural and rural environment and for its wealth of historic and cultural resources. Spotsylvania recognizes that these assets are essential components of its identity, with an economic value worthy of protection. Spotsylvania County seeks to preserve and promote these resources through the following policies and strategies.

Policy 1: Encourage and promote the voluntary protection and preservation of scenic, historic, cultural, architectural, and archaeological resources.

Strategies:

1. Support the voluntary designation of National and State, historic register sites.
2. Support the preservation of resources with local, state, or national significance.
3. Promote the continuance and expansion of the Agricultural/ Forestal District program to promote agricultural land preservation and protection of the rural farm/ forest character of the county.
4. Promote and protect agriculture as the primary use of land in rural areas to promote the scenic character and economy of this area of the county.

Policy 2: The County should support projects that consider and mitigate the impact of development projects on historic and cultural resources during the rezoning, special use, and capital project planning processes.

Strategies:

1. Development applications and staff reports should identify historic and cultural resources in proximity to proposed rezoning, special use, or capital project, and evaluate the impacts of the project on the resources in question.
2. Consider appropriate architectural treatment, transitions, and/or buffering between development projects and National or State historic register sites to prevent or minimize degradation of the historic property.
3. The County should support the preservation of scenic and historic lands as a component of the rezoning actions through placing these resources in easements or dedicated open space.
4. The County should support the preservation of historic structures by incorporating them into the design of new development projects.

Policy 3: Integrate historic and cultural preservation goals with economic development, tourism, capital facility, and public safety goals.

Strategies:

1. Develop procedures involving maintenance and care for county owned cultural and historic resources.
2. Work with the National Park Service to solve critical road and public safety issues facing the community within or in close proximity to battlefield parks to ensure that necessary improvements can occur while minimizing impact to the battlefield park.
3. Foster a strong and complementary relationship between tourism promotion and historic preservation efforts, including the promotion and awareness of the County's historic resources through the economic development efforts associated with the tourism industry.

Policy 4: Enhance public understanding and appreciation of the unique nature of Spotsylvania County's history, culture and character.

Strategies:

1. Maintain a GIS-based inventory of historic, archaeological, and cemetery resources.
2. Identify roads eligible for and pursue scenic byway listing
3. Work with the National Park Service to enhance the Civil War visitor experience to both the battlefield parks and County in general.
4. Develop additional heritage tourism trails to promote new historic tourism ventures that capitalize on Spotsylvania history, including such topics as mill sites, gold mines, churches, etc.
5. Collaboration with the University of Mary Washington that will enable students to put their knowledge to use while acquiring hands-on experience and, at the same time, helping the County implement strategies of the Historic Preservation Plan.
6. Collaborate with local non-profit preservation organizations to hold historic preservation workshops and other historic awareness activities.
7. Continue to support local history related events including but not limited to Civil War reenactments.