

# *Heritage Resources*

## HERITAGE RESOURCES

### INTRODUCTION

Fairfax County is blessed with a variety of historical riches including Native American hunting camps and long-term settlements, the tidewater plantations of George Washington and George Mason, Civil and Spanish-American War campsites and training grounds, as well as the 20th century planned town of Reston and its 19th century counterpart Dunn Loring. Human beings have lived, worked, and played here for nearly twelve thousand years and evidence of their rich and varied lives exists in the many historic buildings and archaeological sites found throughout the County.

Recording, preserving, and studying this evidence enriches the quality of life in Fairfax County by putting residents in touch with their heritage, providing residents and property owners with a sense of temporal stability and continuity, and instilling in both young and old a loyalty and commitment to place and community.

There are over 2,500 recorded heritage resources located in Fairfax County. These are properties that have been listed on either the County's Inventory of Historic Sites or the Virginia Inventory of Archaeological Sites. These include historic buildings or other structures as well as historic period (post-1600s) and prehistoric (Native American, pre-1600s) archaeological sites. While over 200 known heritage resources have been lost, more than 90% of the recorded archaeological sites remain undisturbed, or have been excavated or studied, while over 98% of the historic structures that have been listed are still standing. Most of these remain in private ownership and use while only a handful are on park lands or open to the public as museums. Additionally, 13 Historic Overlay Districts have been designated by the Board of Supervisors and are protected by special provisions of the County's Zoning Ordinance.

Heritage resources are vulnerable to damage and destruction from a variety of sources. For that reason, these resources are protected by federal, state, and local law. However, protecting heritage resources from damage or destruction and preserving them for continued use, enjoyment, and study by their owners or the public is a complex issue. Unprotected heritage resources--resources whose significance has not yet been evaluated and unrecorded resources on unsurveyed lands--are particularly vulnerable to loss due to a variety of factors. The most prevalent of these include inadequate survey or assessment of heritage resources during the earliest stages of project planning (especially for "by-right" development), construction on unsurveyed lands, increased land values that make it unprofitable to retain historic buildings, and vandalism, relic hunting, and neglect. The ability to protect and preserve the County's significant heritage resources successfully over the long term depends upon a comprehensive, systematic approach. Such an approach is embodied in the County's *Heritage Resources Management Plan (HRMP)* that was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 1988.

In recognition of its comprehensive programs and activities supporting heritage resource preservation since the 1960s, Fairfax County has been recognized by the National Park Service and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources as a Certified Local Government. Local governments that qualify for this special designation are entitled to participate as full partners in the national heritage resource preservation programs.

#### Strategies

One of the basic axioms of preservation as outlined in the *HRMP* is that heritage resources cannot be preserved or studied if they are unknown, unrecorded, and unevaluated. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter of the Policy Plan is to provide guidance to decision makers and members of the community in achieving a balance between the often conflicting goals of planning for necessary

physical and economic growth while accepting responsibility for the stewardship of the county's fragile heritage resources. Plan objectives and policies for achieving this balance focus on these three strategies:

- **Identifying the Resource Base**--Background information about the County's heritage resources--its history, historic structures, and archaeological sites--is presented in the *HRMP* which also provides county-wide goals, guidelines, and recommendations for heritage resource preservation and stewardship. Current listings and research files on the Fairfax County Inventory of Historic Sites are maintained by the Office of Comprehensive Planning (OCP) and historic property (not archaeological site) locations are shown on the 1996 *Comprehensive Plan Map* and on the 1994 map titled *Heritage Resources of Fairfax County*. In 1996, the data files for properties listed on the Inventory of Historic Sites will be available electronically on the Internet through the County's public information services. Current listings of recorded archaeological sites are maintained by the Fairfax County Park Authority and by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.
- **Protecting and Preserving Significant Resources**--Preservation programs should have a sound basis in field survey, provide economic and technical assistance, be coordinated with other community policies and ordinances, and operate with sound and explicit standards, criteria, and administrative procedures. One of the underlying aims in developing objectives and policies for heritage resources is to ensure that these issues are addressed as part of the preservation program for the County. Nearly all of the preservation activities that the County is authorized to carry out by enabling authority in the Virginia State Code have been included in the 1995 comprehensive revision of the Historic Overlay District section of the County's Zoning Ordinance.
- **Promoting Community Awareness and Involvement**--Heritage resource preservation occurs, or doesn't occur, within the context of local community issues and concerns. It is important, therefore, that the local community is made aware of its heritage and becomes actively involved in the preservation of the heritage resources it values. A high level of active community involvement in preserving its own heritage has been shown to foster increased pride in the community, or "pride of place." County citizens are also interested in learning more about the history and prehistory of the County and of their communities as a way of linking past and future generations. A citizenry that is knowledgeable about the County's past increases the potential for the preservation of their valued heritage resources. This potential is recognized by those individuals and organizations who have already invested in homes and businesses in the County as well as those considering investment in the future.

### Implementation

Fairfax County has numerous ordinances, regulations, policies, and procedures that have the potential for affecting the preservation of the County's significant heritage resources, either positively or negatively. The implementation of the objectives and policies outlined above may call for revisions to some of these regulatory and policy mechanisms, and the development of new standards and guidelines, in order to protect and preserve the County's heritage resources more effectively. These objectives and policies, plus associated regulatory revisions and standards, represent an integrated system of new initiatives. This creates a comprehensive countywide policy framework for heritage resource preservation, where none previously existed. Additionally, there are many County, state, and federal agencies and private organizations that deal with or affect heritage resources and their preservation in some way. Successful, legally defensible, and conflict-free implementation of the objectives and policies for heritage resource preservation depends heavily upon careful integration of these objectives and policies with other County objectives, policies, and regulatory mechanisms, as well as close coordination among public agencies, private organizations, and citizens.

## **BOARD OF SUPERVISORS GOAL**

**Culture and Recreation** - Fairfax County should also support and encourage the identification and preservation of its heritage resources for the aesthetic, social, and educational benefits of present and future citizens.

Fairfax County's goal for heritage resource preservation is contained in the broader goal entitled "Culture and Recreation". This goal recognizes that preservation of the County's heritage resources--its historic structures, landscapes, cemeteries, and its historic and Native American archaeological sites--serves a public purpose by (1) enhancing the quality of life through aesthetic diversity in the landscape, and (2) providing a sense of continuity with the County's historic and prehistoric past. This goal also recognizes that heritage resource preservation requires a commitment both from the public and private sectors and from the community.

## **COUNTYWIDE OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES**

**Objective 1: Identify heritage resources representing all time periods and in all areas of the County.**

Policy a. Identify heritage resources well in advance of potential damage or destruction.

Policy b. Conduct systematic County-wide field surveys to locate and document unrecorded heritage resources and to update information on resources identified in past surveys.

Policy c. Maintain an up-to-date data base of the County's heritage resources.

**Objective 2: Maintain a County Register of Historic Sites and a County Register of Archaeological Sites to recognize the value of significant heritage resources for preservation.**

Policy a. Evaluate heritage resources for listing on the County Registers of Historic or Archaeological Sites according to established state and national criteria. The quality of significance in national, state, and local history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
2. be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
3. embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

4. have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Policy b. Evaluate heritage resources for listing on the County Registers of Historic or Archaeological Sites according to established public significance criteria. A heritage resource is significant to the public if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. it possess information on or represents any aspect of heritage considered important by a discrete population, ethnic group, or community; or
2. it has the potential to serve, or already serves, as a focus of community density and pride; or
3. it retains characteristics that are potentially useful in educating the public about the past and how it is studied; or
4. it enables the exhibit and display of objects, ruins, or stabilized restored structures for public education and enjoyment.

**Objective 3: Protect significant heritage resources from degradation, or damage and destruction by public or private action.**

Policy a. Avoid adverse impacts on or destruction of significant heritage resources unless there is no prudent and feasible alternative, in which case, plan and carry out appropriate mitigation activities to minimize the adverse effect.

Policy b. Plan and undertake appropriate actions to retain and enhance significant heritage resources to be affected by public or private land use or development.

Policy c. Establish additional Historic Overlay Districts as appropriate to protect and preserve significant heritage resources.

Policy d. Assure that the County's regulatory mechanisms are compatible with the protection, retention, and enhancement of significant heritage resources.

Policy e. Coordinate activities affecting heritage resources among County agencies and with other public agencies and private organizations.

Policy f. Acquire significant heritage resources, when feasible, to incorporate them into the County's park system for purposes of resource protection and public education and enjoyment.

**Objective 4: Promote and encourage the protection and preservation of significant heritage resources.**

Policy a. Provide a variety of incentives and assistance to encourage heritage resource protection and preservation.

Policy b. Recognize quality preservation projects and activities in County awards program.

**Objective 5: Increase the levels of public awareness of and involvement in heritage resource preservation.**

Policy a. Provide information on the County's heritage resources and heritage resource preservation activities for public education and enjoyment, through interpretive facilities, displays, publications, public presentations, the electronic media, and State and County historical site marker programs.

Policy b. Promote active public participation in heritage resource preservation activities.

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