

L--SULLY HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Sully Historic Overlay District was established in 1971 to protect the Sully plantation complex and its setting. Sully was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

- o Sully retains its rural atmosphere due to the tremendous amount of open space which surrounds it.
- o The Sully complex of house and farm buildings is a highly visible landmark on Route 28 (Sully Road).
- o The topography is gently rolling. Sully sits on a knoll, giving it a wide panoramic view from its second floor.
- o No other buildings are visible from the grounds of Sully, contributing to its rural character. However, the six lanes of Route 28 are adjacent to the Sully property on the west.
- o Most of the new development within the district is near Centreville Road, an older road soon to be widened to four lanes, east of Sully with no visual relationship to the historic property.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Richard Bland Lee began building Sully in 1793 on land his grandfather first patented in 1725 as the Salisbury Plain tract. Richard Bland Lee, the first Lee to live on the property, was a member of the Virginia legislature and a member of the first Congress of the United States. Lee played a key role in devising the compromise selecting the site on the Potomac for the nation's new capital. He and his Philadelphia bride, Elizabeth Collins, moved into the new house in 1794. The house and several outbuildings all survive with little change from the Richard Bland Lee era. He sold it to a family member in 1811; in 1838 it passed from Lee family ownership.

The Haight family, Quakers from New York, purchased Sully in 1842 and were known for their progressive and productive farming techniques. In the early 20th century, dairy farming became the leading form of agriculture as Fairfax County became a dairy center for Washington. By the mid-20th century, the appeal of Sully had shifted from agriculture to a country estate house.

In 1958, the Federal Aviation Administration condemned half of the property for the construction of Dulles Airport. The effort to save Sully culminated in an Act of Congress stipulating that the house be saved and used for historic purposes and, today, the Fairfax County Park Authority operates the property as a historic house museum. Significant primarily as an intact Lee plantation, with a simpler house than many of the other surviving 18th century plantations, Sully is a microcosm of local history--Virginia plantations, an influx of Northern immigrants, dairy farming, country estates, and finally threatened destruction from rapid transportation development.

CONTRIBUTING FEATURES OF THE DISTRICT

- o ARCHITECTURE: The Sully house dominates its immediate surroundings. It is a simple, frame, two-and-a-half story, gable-roofed, three-bay house marked by large brick chimneys on the gable ends and a piazza across the south facade. Lee added a one-and-a-half story wing to the east end of the square house in 1799. Except for a later kitchen wing (removed during restoration), the house received few exterior or interior changes. While neither grand nor imposing, Sully is an elegantly crafted provincial plantation house.

Several of Sully's original dependencies survive, including a siding-covered log kitchen-laundry, frame smokehouse, large stone dairy, and frame office. A covered walkway connects the kitchen with the house. The Park Authority moved a small log structure to the property in 1962.

- o HISTORIC AND CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES: In the report substantiating the zoning amendment that established the Sully Historic Overlay District, only the Sully property itself (3601 Sully Road, parcel number 34-2-001-13)--including the house, dependencies, and grounds--is listed as historic. No contributing properties are listed.

- o LANDSCAPE: The open landscape provides a crucial context for Sully which preserves its character as an 18th and early 19th century plantation. Located on a knoll north of Cain's Branch, open fields and woods surround Sully for a depth of one fourth to one half mile. Access to Sully is currently from Route 28, making the landscape in that section of the district the most crucial to maintaining an attractive approach to the historic site. However, if the site access moves to the east, the areas along Centreville and Barnsfield Road will be the access corridors. The historic access to the house was probably from the south or east.

In the immediate vicinity of the house, are designed landscapes. Kitchen yards and formal gardens occupy the grounds around the house, which also has several tall trees and shrubs. A recessed and landscaped parking lot greets the visitors to the site.

ARCHAEOLOGY: Extensive archaeological excavations have been undertaken on various sections of the Sully property. The Park Authority has investigated remains of a tenant house, various farm structures, cistern, well, drain system, trash pits, and walkways. The archaeological resources are crucial to accurate interpretation of the site. The property has a high potential for other intact below-ground resources connected to its agricultural operation.

DISTRICT GOAL

The goal of the historic district is to ensure the preservation of the historic structures and to protect their surrounding visual environment.

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The following section lists standards which should be maintained and promoted in order to achieve the goals of the district. Specific guidelines suggest ways to maintain those standards.

STANDARD 1--Preserve natural features.

GUIDELINES

- 1.1 Retain natural land contours.
- 1.2 Retain Cain's Branch in its natural state.

STANDARD 2--Protect the historic integrity of the the historic structures and their site.

GUIDELINES

- 1.1 Follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for all preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of Sully and its outbuildings.
- 1.2 Consider the potential for archaeological resources early in development and construction plans and mitigate adverse effects.
- 1.3 Preserve the historic landscape as much as possible. Recreations of the historic landscape should be based on material or documentary evidence.
- 1.4 New structures necessary for site interpretation should be located away from the concentration of historic structures.
- 1.5 New structures necessary for site interpretation should be of compatible but not imitative design.

STANDARD 2--Preserve the rural atmosphere around the Sully site.

GUIDELINES

- 2.1 Maintain and enhance tree cover.
- 2.2 Development on parcels adjacent to the Sully property must be at least 200 feet from the common property line.
- 2.3 All development on parcels adjacent to Sully must include a planted buffer 200 feet in depth which should not include parking areas.
- 2.4 Structures not related to the agricultural landscape should not be visible from Sully.
- 2.5 While preserving a view of the north facade of Sully from Route 28, Route 28 should be partially screened from the grounds of Sully.

STANDARD 3--New development should not detract from either the view from the grounds of Sully or the approach to Sully.

GUIDELINES

SITE DESIGN

- 3.1 Consolidate site access into shared, well-defined entries.
- 3.2 Define the edges between the road and the property with landscaping or low fences.
- 3.3 Avoid large expanses of parking lots by breaking them into smaller units and including landscaping.
- 3.4 Screen loading areas.

ARCHITECTURAL MASS AND SCALE

- 3.5 Lot coverage should not exceed 50% except where greater restrictions are include in the zoning ordinance.
- 3.6 Buildings of low scale, rather than monumental scale, are preferred.

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND STYLE

- 3.7 The height limit is 35 feet.
- 3.8 Use simple, horizontal roof designs.
- 3.9 Do not use design themes or motifs unrelated to th local context.
- 3.10 Every elevation visible from a public roadway should receive as much attention as the primary facade.
- 3.11 Do not turn the rear elevation to face any road that may serve as an approach to Sully.
- 3.12 All building elements should be integral parts of the design and not appear pasted on to the structure.

COLOR

- 3.13 Keep color schemes simple and use muted, low-intensity colors.

LIGHTING

- 3.14 Any type of indoor or outdoor area lighting should not impinge upon the Sully grounds.
- 3.15 Limit height of lighting standards to 15 feet.
- 3.16 Avoid garishly lighted signs.

STANDARD 4--Signage should not overwhelm the approaches to the historic site or the site itself.

GUIDELINES

- 4.1 Limit signage on the Sully property to that necessary for identification and interpretation. The signs should be of simple and unified design.
- 4.2 Freestanding signs are discouraged; use them only when essential.
- 4.3 Signs should not exceed 10 feet in height.
- 4.4 Commercial signs should be part of the total building design.
- 4.5 Avoid internally-lighted signs.