

## C--COLVIN RUN MILL HISTORIC OVERLAY DISTRICT DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Colvin Run Historic Overlay District was established in 1972 to protect the mill complex and its environs including the visual character of Colvin Run Road.

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

- o The district is partially within the Difficult Run stream valley; Colvin Mill Run, a branch of Difficult Run, feeds the mill race.
- o The mill is at the lowest point within the district and the land around it rises 75 to 100 feet above it.
- o Colvin Run Mill, owned and maintained by the Fairfax County Park Authority and restored as a working grist mill, is a highly visible landmark on Leesburg Pike (Route 7).
- o While Route 7 is a four-lane highway adjacent to the mill property and is the primary means of viewing the mill, the road to the mill complex entrance, Colvin Run Road, remains a tree-lined, two-lane road with a rural visual character. The transition between the two roads contributes to the rural approach to the mill.
- o Much of the district has dense tree cover, particularly north and east of the mill that frames it and blocks the view of incompatible new construction.
- o The hillside south of Route 7 has already been developed and has no functional and little visual relationship with the mill site.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Colvin Run Mill, constructed in the early 19th century, is similar to other mills designed by Oliver Evans who revolutionized mechanized flour milling. A merchant mill, grain was ground here for easier transport to the markets as well as for local needs. Farmers and merchants reached it by the Alexandria-Leesburg Turnpike (also called the Middle Turnpike), which followed approximately the route of an old ridge road. Built between 1813 and 1838, the turnpike linked the farmers of the Shenandoah and Potomac Valleys beyond Leesburg to the merchants of the Alexandria ports. It was part of a transportation boom in the early-19th century that sought to tie the young nation's western lands to the east coast. The mill operated until the mid-20th century, providing the focus of the small Colvin Run village; across from the mill were services such as a blacksmith's shop, saw mills, and a general store and post office.

In 1941 the old turnpike was realigned to the southwest of the mill, creating State Highway Route 7 and bypassing the bend in the Middle Turnpike now known as Colvin Run Road. In 1968 Route 7 was widened to its current four-lane design. Cut off from its water source by the road changes and in disuse and disrepair, the mill and its accompanying structures were purchased by the

Fairfax County Park Authority in 1965 to preserve them for public benefit. Placed on the National Register in 1977, the large brick mill is a tangible reminder, in the County's suburban present, of the people and technology which played so important a role in its rural past.

#### CONTRIBUTING FEATURES OF THE DISTRICT

- o ARCHITECTURE: The three-story, gable-roofed, rectangular, brick mill is the largest structure within the district; however, its individual parts, such as windows and doors, are at a domestic scale. The waterwheel is on the southwest side, clearly visible from Route 7. The brick miller's house, built ca. 1820, is a two-story, gable-roofed brick structure only one room deep and with a symmetrical facade. A recent frame addition stands on its west end. Also on the mill property are an early 20th-century general store, formerly located across Colvin Run Road and relocated by the Park Authority, and a small frame barn adapted for interpretive program use.

Along Colvin Run Road, near the mill, are several houses from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As one turns off Route 7, the first house on the right is 10010 Colvin Run Road, a two-story, white, frame house with a front porch. The other two houses (10020 and 10101) from the Colvin Run village period, are set further from the road and screened by trees. Both are white frame houses that retain their historical integrity of appearance.

The other structures within the district are all mid-20th century houses. Except for the corner of Robindale and Colvin Run Roads, the houses along Colvin Run Road are small scale. Those beyond Colvin Run Road are not visible from the road or mill. Across Route 7, in the Carper's Farm subdivision, are contemporary single-family houses which overlook the mill site.

- o HISTORIC AND CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES: In the report substantiating the zoning amendment that established the Colvin Run Mill Historic Overlay District, the Colvin Run Mill (10017 Colvin Run Road, parcel number 18-2-001-24), including the miller's house and barn, are specifically listed as historic properties. Contributing properties include the Money House (10010 Colvin Run Road, 18-2-001-23), the Cockerille House (10020 Colvin Run Road, 18-2-001-20), and the Hendricks House (10101 Colvin Run Road, 18-2-001-15).

- o LANDSCAPE AND SITE FEATURES: The topography and landscape are crucial features of the district. The land form and its use are interlocked: the steep slope down to Difficult Run and its branches made this an ideal mill site. As the water source for the mill, Colvin Mill Run is both an important visual and historic feature. Colvin Run Road is also a crucial feature of the district; it is the only remaining portion of the Alexandria-Leesburg Turnpike that retains its nineteenth-century two-lane design.

The trees of the district visually frame the mill and screen modern development from it. The view toward the mill, from both Route 7 and the Carper's Farm subdivision, includes a green backdrop behind the mill. The approach to the mill is along tree-lined Colvin Run Road. From the mill site looking to the north, only trees are visible. On the south side of Route 7, the screening is thinner because of the floodplain, but development is set back from the road, which contributes to the green buffer around the mill.

**ARCHAEOLOGY:** The only recorded site within the district is the mill race (44 FX 958). It is located south of Route 7 in the Colvin Run Stream Valley Park. The mill site and Colvin Run Road are likely sites of subsurface features and artifact scatters associated with 19th-century milling and turnpike activity. The land along Colvin Run Road may have subsurface evidence of structures associated with Colvin Run village.

#### **DISTRICT GOALS**

The goal of the Colvin Run Mill Historic District is to preserve the mill and its associated structures and to ensure that any new development or changes to existing properties within the district preserve and enhance the historic and visual character of the district.

#### **STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

The following section presents 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--Natural topographic characteristics of the district should be preserved and enhanced.**

#### **GUIDELINES**

- 1.1 Retain natural land contours.
- 1.2 Protect Colvin Mill Run and its surrounding floodplain from adverse environmental influences.

**STANDARD 2--Natural landscape features--particularly traditional plant materials and tree cover--should be preserved and enhanced.**

#### **GUIDELINES**

- 2.1 Avoid removal of existing healthy trees. Replace with like material.
- 2.2 Retain informal, natural landscaping along Colvin Run Road and Route 7.
- 2.3 Avoid creating large expanses of manicured lawn and formal landscaping.
- 2.4 The intersection of Colvin Run Road and Route 7 and the roadsides

along Colvin Run Road should remain wooded to preserve the semi-rural appearance of the approach to the mill entrance.

**STANDARD 3--**The alignment and character of Colvin Run Road should be preserved and enhanced.

**GUIDELINES**

- 3.1 Maintain Colvin Run Road as a two-lane, curving road without curb and gutter.
- 3.2 Blend new driveways or other curb cuts with the material, scale, and design of Colvin Run Road.
- 3.3 Avoid introducing new roads opening onto Colvin Run Road.
- 3.4 Keep signage at the Colvin Run Road - Route 7 intersection to the minimum necessary for safety.

**STANDARD 4--**The visual and physical integrity of historic structures should be preserved and enhanced.

**GUIDELINES**

- 4.1 Follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of all historic structures.
- 4.2 Maintain the view of the mill from Route 7 without other visual intrusions.
- 4.3 Consider the potential for archaeological resources early in development and construction plans and mitigate adverse effects.
- 4.4 All design for the reconstruction of historic landscapes should be based on documentary or physical evidence.

**STANDARD 5--**New construction should be unobtrusive and not detract from the mill site.

**GUIDELINES**

- 5.1 New construction should be detached structures set back from and facing the road.
- 5.2 Structures should fit into, rather than dominate, the topography.
- 5.3 Houses should be in scale with their lot and not dominate the road or adjacent houses.
- 5.4 Rear elevations and decks should not be visible from public rights-of-way or the mill property.
- 5.5 Houses should be one or two stories.

- 5.6 Use muted colors.
- 5.7 Use simple roof forms with low to medium roof pitches.
- 5.8 Screen parking areas from view.

**STANDARD 6--**In addition to the above guidelines, new construction and additions to existing structures within the district core should be designed to be compatible with the mill and the surrounding area.

**GUIDELINES**

- 6.1 Building parts should be at a residential and human scale.
- 6.2 Keep massing simple.
- 6.3 Building elements, such as porches and shutters, should be functional.
- 6.4 Avoid using high-style historical revival styles which would detract from the semi-rural character of the area and compete with the authenticity of the 19th century mill structures.

**STANDARD 7--**Subsidiary and service structures should remain as background buildings.

**GUIDELINES**

- 7.1 Garages should not dominate houses. If possible, locate them toward the rear of the site.
- 7.2 Screen sheds, utility structures, and other service structures from public view.

**STANDARD 8--**Fences should be unobtrusive and designed to be compatible with the mill site.

**GUIDELINES**

- 8.1 All fences in public view should be wood, open, horizontal board or rail fences of dark or natural colors.
- 8.2 Tall privacy fences within sight of a public right-of-way or the mill should be discouraged.

**STANDARD 9--**Signage shall be primarily focused on identifying the mill site.

**GUIDELINES**

- 9.1 Along Colvin Run Road, the only major signs shall be those marking the mill site.
- 9.2 Mailboxes and newspaper boxes should be of simple, functional design and be consolidated into groups on the minimum number of poles necessary.

- 9.3 Signs marking subdivisions are allowed only south of Route 7. They must be low to the ground and tied to their site by landscaping.
- 9.4 No internally lighted signs are allowed. Minimize use of any lighting.
- 9.5 Free-standing signs shall not exceed ten feet in height.