

CHAPTER 6 – PRESERVING HISTORIC CHARACTER

Conservation in Hunterdon County is not a matter of protecting isolated historic buildings or specific natural features. It is a matter of protecting the overall fabric of the rural and natural or suburban landscape of which the buildings and features are a part. A reasonable amount of growth and development can occur in this landscape without destroying its character provided that the development is sympathetically integrated into the landscape. Such integration is accomplished by identifying the elements that give the landscape its character and quality, and by preserving and reinforcing those elements. A wide range of planning and preservation tools are available to accomplish this goal. Individuals interested in historic preservation must work closely with individuals interested in other diverse but related areas, such as tourism, agricultural and natural resource preservation, and water quality.

The core of any conservation plan is the protection of its historic resources as well as its environmentally sensitive natural resources. Historic preservation is closely tied to the preservation of sensitive natural resources because many historic resources were located because of their proximity to some desirable natural resource, often water or fertile lowland soil. In an agricultural landscape, the natural resources comprise the framework which gives the landscape its structure. In many cases, historical development occurred in borough and village settings in the locations due to access to natural transportation features such as waterways or due to geographic constraints.

Historic Resources

Historic resources consist of properties of all types, including bridges, roadways, rail corridors, and canals. Hunterdon County's transportation network includes historic resources in all of these categories.

Bridges

Hunterdon County owns and maintains a wealth of historic bridges. The County owns over 100 stone arch bridges, the largest concentration of stone arch bridges in the country, according to Thomas Boothby, a Pennsylvania State University professor and bridge preservation consultant. Many of these stone arch bridges have been deemed either eligible or potentially eligible for inclusion on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The sole remaining historic covered bridge in New Jersey can be found crossing the Wickecheoke Creek between Sergeantsville and Rosemont. Additionally, several

dozen metal truss bridges dating mostly from the 19th century have been deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places by the New Jersey Historic Preservation Office.

Roads

Hunterdon County roads are also valuable historic resources. For example, the Delaware River Scenic Byway, located along Route 29 between Trenton and Frenchtown, is New Jersey's first Scenic Byway. It was designated under this state program in recognition of the transportation corridor's unique scenic, historic, recreational, and cultural qualities. Following the wild and scenic Delaware River and the historic Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park, the byway provides access to the many recreation and historic destinations that line the Delaware River Valley. There are opportunities for other Hunterdon County Roads to be included in the Scenic Byway.

The following resources are available to help with road and bridge improvements on scenic and historic roads:

- **“A Guide for Achieving Flexibility in Highway Design,”** 2004 by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, Washington, D.C.
- **“Flexible Design of New Jersey’s Main Streets,”** by the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center, Rutgers University for the NJ Department of Transportation
- **“NJDOT Design Exception Manual,”** 2004
- **“17.10 Pipeline III ‘Footprint’ Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program.”**

Canals and Railroads

In addition to roads and bridges, historic canals and railroads are part of Hunterdon County's transportation, economic, and industrial history. Railroad stations and rights of way associated with the Central Railroad of New Jersey corridor and features associated with the Delaware & Raritan Canal are listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. In addition, resources associated with the Lehigh Valley Railroad right-of-way have received a determination of eligibility for the National and State Registers.