



HISTORY AND CULTURE
Draft Text (June 15, 2023)

Goal

Hanover County is a community that preserves the physical links to its past and shares the stories of its people, enhancing understanding of its multi-faceted history.

Why It Matters

The people and places of Hanover County have a unique story to tell. The events that have happened here have influenced the state and the nation, and residents and visitors can learn from experiencing historic places and hearing stories about the County's residents. Preserving historic places creates opportunities for economic development, while maintaining the character of the County that residents and visitors so highly value.

This section of the Comprehensive Plan provides guidance for the identification and protection of historic and cultural resources. It also identifies policies to help ensure that development decisions are made in a manner that will preserve these resources whenever possible.

Measuring Our Progress

- Number of special events highlighting the history, people, and places of Hanover County's past
- Limited demolitions within all historic districts
- Continued engagement with Historical Commission on development proposals impacting historic properties

Quick Facts

- More than 2,400 historic sites and 475 archaeological sites have been surveyed in Hanover County, including 3 National Historic Landmarks, 45 sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and 49 sites listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register.
- There are 37 Century Farms in Hanover County.
- The Historical Commission provides guidance and recommendations regarding the promotion and preservation of historic sites. The Commission reviews zoning requests that may impact surveyed historic resources, especially Category 1 and Category 2 sites (see descriptions below).
- 13 Historic Preservation Overlay Districts (local zoning tool) help preserve the character of historic areas. The Architectural Review Board reviews proposed development (including exterior changes to existing buildings) within locally-designated Historic Preservation Overlay Districts.
- Hanover County has been a Certified Local Government (CLG) since 1994. The CLG program was created by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended in 1980). The CLG designation recognizes localities that have established an architectural review board and adopted key ordinances and policies aimed at preserving historic resources.

Local Categorization of Historic Sites
<p>All historic sites that have been surveyed help tell the story of Hanover County’s history and culture, but certain sites warrant additional focus due to their significance, integrity, and context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Significance</i> means that the site is associated with a person or event that considerably influenced local, state, and/or national history. <i>Significance</i> also refers to sites that include distinctive physical characteristics. • <i>Integrity</i> means that the site retains physical characteristics that existed in its era of historic significance, which help convey a story regarding people associated with the site. • <i>Context</i> refers to how the site relates to the surrounding community, and if its setting (including surrounding landscapes and viewsheds) is similar to the site’s period of historic significance. <p>Categorizing sites helps direct limited resources to places that are of critical importance. Category 1 sites warrant more focus than Category 2 and 3 sites. Hanover County began using a framework for categorizing sites with adoption of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan.</p> <p>The Historical Commission reviews zoning cases that have the potential to impact Category 1 and Category 2 sites.</p>
<p><i>Category 1</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Historic Landmarks: Hanover Courthouse, Scotchtown, and Marlbourne (Edmund Ruffin Plantation) • Exceptional Resources: Hanover Tavern, Polegreen Church (Hanover Meeting House), Garthwright-Kelley House, Gaines Mill Battlefield, Cold Harbor Battlefield, and Rural Plains
<p><i>Category 2</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places • Sites determined eligible or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places • Century Farms • Battlefield sites which are not included in Category 1 but determined by the National Park Service to have a significant degree of integrity • Documented historic cemeteries
<p><i>Category 3</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remaining surveyed sites

Historic Districts

Portions of the County are located within national, state, and/or local historic districts:

- *State and National Districts:* Several historic districts are recognized on the Virginia Landmarks Register and/or National Register of Historic Places. These are voluntary districts that recognize historically-significant places, but they do not restrict the use of property, require conformance with design guidelines (unless the property is rehabilitated using specific preservation incentives), or prohibit demolition. The largest and newest district is the Brown Grove Rural Historic District, and others include the Hanover County Courthouse Historic District and Montpelier Historic District. These districts are described in greater detail at the end of this section.
- *Local Districts:* There are 13 Historic Preservation Overlay Districts, which are locally-designated districts voluntarily established by property owners to create special zoning requirements intended to preserve the character of these areas. These districts include:
 - Old Courthouse Historic Overlay District
 - Courthouse Transition Historic Overlay District

- Laurel Meadow
- Doswell-Darnell's Store (Village of Doswell)
- Montpelier-Dr. Stanley's Office
- Sharps
- Flanningan Mill
- Scotchtown
- Church View
- Norway and Isabell's Store
- Doswell School
- Beaverdam Motor Company and Tri-County Bank
- Polegreen Church

The Architectural Review Board reviews proposed development (including exterior changes to existing buildings) within locally-designated Historic Preservation Overlay Districts. The Historical Commission reviews proposed zoning changes within and near historic districts, advising the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors on potential impacts proposed development may have on the character of the area.

Design Guidance for All Historic Districts

While each of these districts has unique characteristics and features that should be considered as development proposals are evaluated, the following should be considered within all historic districts:

Public Investment

- **Streetscapes:** Hanover County should consider investing in decorative street lighting, gateway signage, street signs, and/or street trees that reflect the character of the historic districts (where appropriate), based upon guidance from the surrounding community. These features should be consistent throughout the district.
- **Public Buildings:** Design public buildings with the appropriate scale, massing, materials, setbacks, and other design features that reflect the character of the historic district.

Site Design

- **Preserve and Reuse Historic Buildings:** Preserve and reuse buildings that contribute to the character of the historic district. Demolition is discouraged.
- **Siting New Buildings:** Site new buildings to preserve views from adjacent roadways and historic properties, with similar setbacks as historic structures within the district.
- **Grading:** Minimize grading by working with the existing contours of the landscape.
- **Tree Preservation:** Preserve healthy mature trees.
- **Exterior Lighting:** Use light fixtures that are dark-sky compliant and compatible with the character of historic buildings and the surrounding area. Minimize the height of freestanding lighting.
- **Parking:** Minimize the size and visibility of parking areas from adjacent roadways and historic properties. Screen parking areas with buildings, landscaping, and/or decorative fencing and use landscaping to divide parking areas into smaller bays. The use of gravel, decorative pavers, or other alternative surfaces may be appropriate to help parking areas blend with the historic areas.
- **Signage:** Use small-scale freestanding signage. Use external illumination only on freestanding and building-mounted signage.

Building Design

- **Scale and Massing:** Design new buildings (and additions to existing buildings) to reflect the massing and scale of historic buildings within the district. Design new buildings to have a similar height and footprint as existing buildings, or design larger buildings to appear as a collection of smaller buildings.
- **Materials and Colors:** Buildings should feature materials and colors historically found within the district.
- **Facade Articulation:** Avoid long, monotonous facades. Windows, wall offsets, awnings, changes in color or material, changes in roofline, and other architectural features commonly found within the historic district should be used to add visual interest and break long facades.
- **Avoid Street-Facing Garages and Loading Bays:** Orient garages and loading bays to the side or rear of the building, so that they do not directly face the street.

Specific Guidance Regarding Historic Districts on the National Register of Historic Places	
The chart below provides guidance regarding the three historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places: Brown Grove Rural Historic District, Hanover County Courthouse Historic District, and Montpelier Historic District.	
Brown Grove Rural Historic District	
Overview	The Brown Grove Rural Historic District is a historically African American community located south of the Town of Ashland. The district's boundaries encompass two noncontiguous areas, which are separated by Interstate 95. This community was established during the Reconstruction Era by families that included formerly enslaved individuals. The community that emerged at the turn of the twentieth century featured a landscape of small subsistence farms, which were connected by a network of paths to each other and community hubs, including general stores and the centrally-located Baptist church and schoolhouse. It is an excellent example of a rural landscape of Black heritage that grew from an antebellum plantation economy to a self-sufficient agricultural community, and transitioned in the 20 th century into a middle-class residential neighborhood. Slash Church is individually listed on the VLR and NHRP.
Listing Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) Listing Date: April 27, 2023 • National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Listing Date: June 16, 2022
Character and Design Recommendations	In addition to the general design guidance for historic districts listed in this chapter, the following implementation strategies are recommended for the Brown Grove Rural Historic District: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt an Overlay District with development standards that address the scale, materials, and overall design of commercial and industrial buildings and sites, including both new development and the expansion/redevelopment of existing uses. The Architectural Review Board (ARB) would review all new development within the Overlay District (except for single-family residential development). • Consider identification signage or other features noting the location of the Brown Grove community.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider environmental impacts as zoning requests, private investments, and public investments are reviewed, including potential impacts to air quality and water quality. • Ensure that historically-significant structures and gravesites are preserved and integrated into new development in a thoughtful and sensitive manner. • Encourage new residential development to incorporate design features that reflect the rural character of the community. Examples include preserving wooded buffers along Ashcake Road and other thoroughfares, incorporating community gardens and agricultural uses into new development, and incorporating architectural features traditionally found in the community into new buildings. • Encourage new residential development to incorporate different housing options (including affordable housing and ADA-compliant units) into their design. • Provide sidewalks, trails, and/or other pedestrian amenities along at least one side of major thoroughfares and other streets as part of new development, public infrastructure improvements, and through other public and private efforts.
Hanover County Courthouse Historic District	
Overview	<p>The Hanover County Courthouse Historic District includes buildings that date to the 1700s, most notably the Hanover County Courthouse. While the village has evolved over the past two centuries, it retains many of the structures typically found in a rural Virginia county seat. The focal point is the arcaded courthouse (ca. 1737 - 1742), a major monument of Virginia’s colonial public architecture. On the surrounding courthouse green, there is the stone jail (1835) and a brick clerk’s office of the same period. Across the road is Hanover Tavern, a rambling hostelry from the late 18th century, one of the largest and best preserved of Virginia’s early courthouse taverns. During the Civil War, there was significant activity in the area.</p> <p>Hanover County Courthouse is individually listed on the VLR and NHRP, and it is also recognized as a National Historic Landmark.</p> <p>The Old Courthouse Historic Overlay District and the Courthouse Transition Historic Overlay District apply additional zoning standards in this area.</p>
Listing Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) Listing Date: July 6, 1971 • National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Listing Date: Sept. 22, 1971
Character and Design Recommendations	<p>In addition to the general design guidance for historic districts listed in this chapter, new construction and redevelopment should consider the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate guidance described in the description for the <i>Rural Village</i> land use designation (Chapter 3: Land Use). • Consider guidance provided in the <i>Hanover County Old Courthouse Historic District Design Guidelines</i> (1999).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain U.S. Route 301 (Hanover Courthouse Road) as a two-lane roadway. • Protect approaches to the designated <i>Rural Village</i> along U.S. Route 301 and State Route 54, since these approaches retain their rural setting, with highways bordered by open fields and wooded areas.
Montpelier Historic District	
Overview	<p>Montpelier Historic District is a linear settlement along Old Mountain Road (now U.S. Route 33: Mountain Road) in western Hanover County. The settlement grew from a colonial-era stagecoach stop at Sycamore Tavern, the oldest building surviving in the district (dating to 1732). By the early 1900s, Montpelier had become a thriving commercial village serving the surrounding agricultural areas. Buildings within the district reflect three centuries of history and include houses, farm structures, stores, and civic uses. The district is linear along U.S. Route 33 and surrounded by farms and rural landscapes.</p> <p>Sycamore Tavern is individually listed on the VLR and NHRP.</p> <p>Three locally-designated Historic Preservation Overlay Districts are located within the Montpelier Historic District (Montpelier-Dr. Stanley's Office, Church View, and Norway and Isabell's Store).</p>
Listing Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) Listing Date: March 14, 2001 • National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Listing Date: May 16, 2002
Character and Design Recommendations	<p>In addition to the general design guidance for historic districts listed in this chapter, new construction and redevelopment should consider the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate guidance described in the description for the <i>Rural Village</i> land use designation (see Chapter 3: Land Use). • Strive to maintain the surrounding farmland and rural landscape to protect the historic qualities of the district. • Buildings should be oriented towards U.S. Route 33 (Mountain Road). • Encourage new uses that are compatible with the existing character of the historic district and serve the surrounding community.

Objectives and Strategies

Objective HC.1: Raise awareness of the people and places of Hanover County's past.

- Strategy HC.1a: Promote special events highlighting the people and places of Hanover County's past (at least one event annually).
- Strategy HC.1b: Promote National Historic Preservation month (May), Virginia Archaeology Month (October), and other major events that highlight the history of Hanover County.
- Strategy HC.1c: Continue to support the Hanover Museum of History and Culture.
- Strategy HC.1d: Work collaboratively with public agencies, non-profit organizations, and businesses to install signage (including identification signs, information plaques, interpretative signage, and wayfinding signage) that highlights important historic sites, cultural sites, and people throughout the County.

- Strategy HC.1e: Evaluate and plan for a shared-use path that connects battlefield sites in the Cold Harbor/Mechanicsville area to support tourism.

Objective HC.2: Identify culturally-, historically-, and architecturally-significant sites in Hanover County.

- Strategy HC.2a: Maintain a GIS database of surveyed historic sites, providing ready access to staff, residents, developers, and others as development decisions are made.
- Strategy HC.2b: Partner with public agencies, non-profit organizations, and other entities to continue historic survey documentation, recording the age, architecture, and cultural importance of sites countywide.
- Strategy HC.2c: Identify segments of historic road corridors that approach National Historic Landmarks (NHL) and investigate the adoption of development standards that could preserve the character of those road segments, enhancing the experience of residents and visitors.

Objective HC.3: Protect culturally-, historically-, and architecturally-significant sites as development occurs.

- Strategy HC.3a: Continue the application of Overlay Historic Preservation (HP) districts, with each district having context-appropriate standards that protect important structures from irreversible exterior alteration or demolition.
- Strategy HC.3b: Work with applicants during the rezoning process to preserve historic sites as development occurs (see below for different strategies that can be used).
- Strategy HC.3c: Impose conditions regarding the preservation of historic sites in connection with the issuance of Conditional Use Permits (CUPs) and Special Exceptions (SEs).
- Strategy HC.3d: Practice good stewardship of historic and cultural resources under County control by using recognized practices for the preservation of these resources.

Objective HC.4: Provide the owners and stewards of historic and cultural sites with resources to help them preserve and maintain these sites.

- Strategy HC.4a: Provide opportunities for owners of historic properties to learn about different financial and technical resources that are available to help them preserve their properties.
- Strategy HC.4b: Provide financial support to owners of historic properties, such as grant programs for rehabilitation/restoration projects and/or local tax abatements.
- Strategy HC.4c: Review zoning regulations for provisions that inhibit the adaptive re-use of historic properties to support tourism or other uses compatible with their character, allowing owners to generate income to support the preservation and maintenance of their properties.

Development Review: Historic Resources On-Site or Nearby

As rezoning requests and other development proposals are reviewed, the following design techniques and approaches should be considered where there are historic resources on-site and/or in the surrounding area.

Techniques for Preserving Historic Structures, Sites, and Archaeological Features at Development Sites
<p>Historic and cultural resources may be located on sites where development is planned. Through the zoning review process, the following strategy should be used:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Preserve historic structures, sites, and archaeological features in their original location.2. If preservation of a historic structure in its original location is not feasible, relocate the structure to a nearby site.3. If preserving or moving the structure is not feasible, document the structure prior to demolition and allow architectural features to be salvaged. For historic sites and/or archaeological features, conduct a cultural resource or archaeological study as appropriate. <p>Design techniques can be used to integrate historic structures, archaeological sites, and other resources into development projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design the proposed development so that historic structures, sites, and archaeological features are prominently situated within the development:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Design streets so that historic structures serve as a “terminating vista” at a street intersection.○ Include single-loaded streets that allow historic structures, sites, and archaeological features, and landscapes to be prominently visible from public roadways (and not hidden behind buildings).• Locate historic structures and archaeological sites within open space.• Protect viewsheds from historic structures and archaeological sites:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Establish buffers that enhance the historic landscape and utilize compatible screening material (existing vegetation, context-sensitive walls or fences, new native trees and shrubs in a naturalistic, informal pattern, etc.).○ Locate nearby parking areas in locations that are out of view and screened by landscaping, topography, and/or buildings.• Reuse historic structures as community amenities.• Encourage the placement of interpretative signage commemorating people and places that have influenced local history and are associated with the site.

Techniques for Preserving Historic Cemeteries at Development Sites

Historic cemeteries in Hanover County include both family cemeteries and larger community and church cemeteries. Some cemeteries are significant as memorials or cultural narratives, while others take on additional significance for unique funerary art or artistic landscape features. Although cemeteries are important cultural resources, they are often endangered due to lack of identification, lack of proper boundary demarcation, misuse, and neglect. The Code of Virginia includes regulations that protect human burials, burial markers, and other above-ground cemetery features from destruction. State law also requires that subdivision plats and site plans show the location of cemeteries; unfortunately, cemeteries marked on plats may not take into account unmarked burials or those marked with unfamiliar markers, like field stones, cedar trees, or ornamental plants.

Several cemeteries in the County are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including:

- Civil War-Era National Cemeteries
- Cold Harbor National Cemetery
- Hickory Hill Slave and African American Cemetery

Where possible, cemeteries should remain in their original location. As development occurs, the following techniques should be considered to protect and highlight these features:

- Consider incorporating conditions into zoning cases regarding the long-term protection and maintenance of on-site cemeteries.
- Design the proposed development so cemeteries are prominently situated and located within protected open space that is easily accessible to descendants.
- Ensure that descendants have long-term access to the cemetery.
- Preserve mature and healthy vegetation in and around the cemetery.
- Avoid grading within 25 feet of a cemetery, except to the extent necessary to provide access.
- Avoid constructing new buildings within 30 feet of a cemetery.

If it is not feasible to keep the cemetery in its original location, the graves may be moved in accordance with state and Federal regulations. Owners and developers should document the original location of the cemetery, the names of all interred within the cemetery, and the location of the new cemetery, and provide this information to the Historical Commission. Conduct a cultural resource or archaeological study as appropriate. The placement of interpretative signage commemorating those that were buried there should be placed on or near the site of the cemetery upon removal of the graves.

Techniques for Preserving Battlefield Features at Development Sites

Hanover County's location made it the scene of several battles and skirmishes during the Civil War, and American Revolutionary War activity. Although some of these resources have been documented, many have yet to be identified. Some battlefields have been protected or remain relatively undisturbed, but the integrity of others has been compromised. Preserving battlefield features helps current and future generations better understand the connection between military conflicts and important social and political changes that have occurred in American history.

- Consider conducting cultural resource studies and/or archaeological studies as appropriate within battlefield areas (shown on Map XXX) to identify critical battlefield features on proposed development sites seeking a rezoning, conditional use permit, or other zoning action.
- Preserve earthworks, historic road traces, and similar features within open space and/or with protective easements.
- Where possible, preserve contiguous blocks of open space that protect critical battlefield features, viewsheds, and core battlefield areas.
- Preserve viewsheds from historic roadways and scenic byways that approach battlefield sites.
- Avoid grading within 25 feet of earthworks, except to the extent necessary to construct trails or interpretative signage.
- Encourage the placement of interpretative signage describing earthworks and/or other battlefield features. If possible, include a publicly-accessible parking/turnoff area to allow visitors to read the signage.
- Consult the National Park Service regarding significant development proposals near protected battlefields.

Resources have been developed that provide more detailed information about critical Civil War battlefields, including *A Survey of Civil War Sites in Hanover County, VA*.