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The Importance of Place: Viewshed Protection at Monticello

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"And our own dear Monticello, where has nature spread so rich a mantle under the eye? mountains, forests, rocks, rivers. With what majesty do we there ride above the storms! How sublime to look down into the workhouse of nature, to see her clouds, hail, snow, rain, thunder, all fabricated at our feet! And the glorious Sun, when rising as if out of a distant water, just gilding the tops of the mountains, and giving life to all nature!"

– Thomas Jefferson to Maria Cosway, October 12, 1786

"On the east side, the front of the building, the eye is not checked by any object, since the mountain on which the house is seated commands all the neighboring heights as far as the Chesapeake. The Atlantic might be seen were it not for the greatness of the distance...the eye may further wish to discover a broad river, a great mass of water..."

- La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, Travels Through North America, Canada etc. (May 1796)

Image A

Introduction

Monticello, or "small mountain," is located in the piedmont of Virginia on the roots of an old mountain range known as the Southwest Mountains. Its location has been described as the "little mountain with a big view."¹ Jefferson was the first Virginian to construct a "great" house on a hill, a task that would take him forty years. He first cleared the mountaintop in 1768. As Jefferson said, "architecture is my delight, and putting up and pulling down, one of my favorite amusements." His Roman neoclassicism design for Monticello continues to attract visitors – but it is not just the architecture that is the attraction. Visitors want to experience the view and the setting the way Thomas Jefferson did. The view is as much a part of the experience as the buildings and the history.

The term *viewshed* is used in this article to define what is visible from Monticello, specifically from various viewpoints around the house, the foundations of which rest some 857 feet above sea level. The views towards the west are bounded by the Blue Ridge Mountains some thirty miles distant and to the east the view extends beyond fifty miles into the coastal plain of Virginia. As related by an unknown visitor in 1820, "To the right the eye ranged over an expanse of forty miles and was limited by the verge of the horizon, which resembled that of the ocean."

Jefferson starting building Monticello in 1768 and by 1800 the population of the area (what now makes up the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County) had increased to 16,429 residents. Today this area has approximately 128,000 residents.ⁱⁱ It is part of the growing megalopolis of the eastern seaboard of the United States. With development pressures and the expansiveness of the view from Monticello, viewshed protection is a perpetual discussion and an on-going source of concern to the stewards of Monticello, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation. This paper explores the tools and strategies the Foundation has used - with varying degrees of success – to preserve the view form Monticello. It is hoped that this paper will also serve as a call to action for other World Heritage sites that setting does matter and that it is the responsibility of all stewards to preserve the greater landscape.

The Thomas Jefferson Foundation and Monticello

The Thomas Jefferson Foundation (formerly the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation) owns and operates Monticello, the mountaintop home of Thomas Jefferson and the only home in America on the elite World Heritage List of the United Nations.

Incorporated in 1923, after the federal government waived its third opportunity to acquire Monticello for the nation, the Foundation purchased the house and land from the Levy family, stewards of the estate for 89 years. As a private, nonprofit organization, the Foundation receives no regular federal or state budget support for its twofold mission of **preservation and education**.

Since 1923, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation has steadily expanded its role as a museum and educational institution. Its facilities now include the house and gardens on approximately 2,300 acres of Jefferson's original 5,000 acres; the Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies next door at Kenwood, a headquarters for Jeffersonian research and teaching and home to the Jefferson Library; a museum shop; and the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants, which propagates heirloom varieties and makes them available to institutions and individuals.

About a half a million people visit Monticello each year.

Source: Monticello website. www.monticello.org

Lessons learned – Creating Broader Sustainable Protection Strategies

Monticello's mission of education and preservation has varied and matured in meaning since the Thomas Jefferson Foundation was established and began its stewardship. Someone once likened the expanding focus of the Foundation as similar to the view one would have from a hot air balloon as it begins its ascent. First, the Foundation was focused on the preservation of the house and its immediate environs. Over time, the Foundation was able to acquire more of the original Jefferson plantation and the view of its stewardship became more expansive and the view from the balloon revealed a greater landscape.

In 1989, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation requisitioned an analysis of its viewshed and developed recommendations for protecting its setting. This study recognized the expanded definition of viewshed and the growing awareness of the importance of the greater setting and its physical beauty. Like many areas along the eastern seaboard of the United States, the local government (Albemarle County) in which Monticello resides

experienced double digit population growth in the 1970s, with no foreseeable downward trend in land development. A countryside which until the 1970s had remained largely rural, was quickly being converted by development. Projects thought untenable, such as locating homes on adjoining mountain ridges, became both financially and physically feasible. The landscape changes were, and continue to be, dramatic and rapid.

In response to this “raising of the balloon” view, the Foundation partnered with The Trust for Public Land and Land and Community Associates, a private consultant. After fifteen months of research, this joint effort produced a report titled *Monticello, Viewshed Analysis and Protection Strategy*. The report provided an important resource inventory of the lands visible from Monticello in 1990 and was accompanied by a series of maps of environmental resources and existing conditions examining a host of factors such as visibility in the winter, critical slopes, priority views, land use and development potential. The maps, on Mylar overlays, are crude by today’s GIS standards but provided a very effective first step in helping the Foundation to identify some key, close in properties and to begin to take steps to protect views or to at least consider ways to ameliorate development impacts on the views from Monticello.

With a heightened awareness about the importance of the views to the setting and meaning of Monticello, the Foundation Board began a practice, which it continues to this day, of purchasing lands within the immediate, close in viewshed when available. The most recent acquisition by the Foundation of former Jefferson owned property is Montalto, or “large mountain.” The maps from the environmental resource inventory and analysis have provided very practical tools to the board for setting acquisition priorities. (See text box.)

Monticello completes purchase of Montalto property

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA. – The Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc., has completed its purchase of a 330-acre parcel on the mountain immediately facing Monticello to the southwest, land once owned by Jefferson and known to him as Montalto.



The transaction was finalized Tuesday, April 20, concluding an agreement that had been reached in January.

The property was purchased from Mountaintop Land Trust for \$15 million, making it the largest acquisition in the history of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, the private, nonprofit corporation that has owned and operated Monticello since 1923.

The realization of a long-held goal, the purchase of Montalto represents a momentous step in the foundation’s efforts to safeguard the historic and scenic nature of the views from Monticello. Of the 330 acres acquired, 225 are in Monticello’s viewshed.

At 1,278 feet, Montalto (“high mountain”) rises more than 400 feet above Monticello (“little mountain”). Jefferson acquired 483 acres on the mountain from Edward Carter in 1777 and used the property as a source of lumber and the site of woodlands grazing. Jefferson’s heirs sold the land in 1832, six years after Jefferson’s death. The property changed hands numerous times in subsequent years and was known by a variety of names, most recently Brown’s Mountain, after the family that acquired it in 1950 and added apartment units, some in renovated farm buildings, in the 1960s. Mountaintop Land Trust, whose trustee is John C. Haskell, Jr., of Richmond, purchased the property in 1974.

The Thomas Jefferson Foundation is in the process of developing a comprehensive plan for the use and administration of Montalto.

The *Monticello, Viewshed Analysis and Protection Strategy* report also set forth a number of goals and recommended implementation strategies. These goals included

- Develop a Monticello Viewshed Easement Program
- Purchase Key Properties
- Encourage Agricultural and Forestal Districts
- Encourage Use and Strict Enforcement of Existing Regulations
- Encourage Enactment of Historic Corridor Overlay Districts
- Support Enactment of and Purchase of Development Rights Programs

To some extent, most of these goals continue to shape the Foundation's viewshed protection strategy and are in use.

Case Studies of Various Protection Strategies

Strategy- Working with Your Local Government

As no man is an island, no property is self-contained or solely preserved. Monticello happens to be owned by a private, non-profit Foundation and is therefore subject to local, state and federal regulations. Even if Monticello were owned by another level of government, the critical importance of working with the local government would still be tantamount to viewshed protection. It is not possible to own or protect every view, adjoining property or road corridor leading to a World Heritage site. A relationship/partnership with government agencies, property owners and other associations is critical.

In the case of Monticello, most of the now developing area is supposed to be guided by the Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan, quote: *"The major goal of the comprehensive plan is to balance two goals: to protect and enhance the attributes that make Albemarle county an attractive place to live, while accommodating the additional people and businesses which are drawn to the County."*ⁱⁱⁱ

In order to have a seat at the table during the discussions of public policy, particularly that of land development, Monticello determined it was important to be officially recognized in the local government's plan. Monticello is included in the section of the Comprehensive Plan that describes the importance of historic resources. This same Historic Resources section of the Plan establishes the overarching goal – "Protect the County's historic and cultural resources." This is followed by specific strategies, the one that pertains to Monticello is:

Strategy: Defining the Monticello viewshed as all the property visible from the Monticello mountaintop, protect Monticello's setting and viewshed as follows:

- *Notify the TJJ of proposed developments in the designated viewshed area so that they are afforded opportunity to provide comment during the approval process;*
- *Strongly encourage the developer to consult with the TJJ about the visual impact of the project;*

- *Strictly enforce existing regulations;*
- *Carefully review by-right development plans with suggestions for voluntary protection measures;*
- *Require protection measures as appropriate on discretionary land use proposals and;*
- *Consider the impact of proposed land use regulations and decisions on Monticello's viewshed^{iv}*

How has this strategy been implemented? The answer is that when a property requires zoning or additional development approvals from the local government, this step or process can allow Monticello the opportunity to comment on the visual impact of the project. For example, in the area developing most rapidly (known as Pantops), Monticello has worked with developers to modify building location and orientation, roofs, lighting, color schemes, and major landscape elements. Projects have included a national chain grocery store, a drug store, office complexes and a retirement community. In 2000, Monticello developed a series of viewshed guidelines for developers (see text box) which continue to be used as a starting point in determining the best approach for viewshed mitigation. Each project is reviewed individually. Monticello also documents its changing viewshed by taking photos bi-annually.

Images B and C

Monticello Viewshed Guidelines for Developers

1. Monticello is renowned for its vistas. Those from three areas are paramount:
 - a. From the northwest terrace (elevation 871 feet). This promenade is where visitors exit from the house tour and begin to explore the landscape.
 - b. From the shuttle bus stop northeast of the house.
 - c. From the "First Roundabout," the uppermost road that encircles the house. This primary pedestrian road is approximately a half-mile in circumference.
2. Parking lots are best concealed when located on the far side of the building (as viewed from Monticello) and the area broken up by plantings.
3. Building facades are less intrusive if articulated and not monolithic.
4. Earth-tone colors such as reddish-brown brick help to soften the visual impact of a building. If not adopted for the street side, consider it for the back of the building if it faces Monticello.
5. Dark roofs (black, gray) are preferred. Expansive flat roofs can be camouflaged by mottled patches of light and dark stone.
6. Screening by a long narrow border of trees of a single species should be avoided.
7. Consider a canopy of lofty trees (such as tulip poplars) to screen out development if the vista from Monticello is angled down on the site. The lower limbs of the trees can be pruned to open ground-level views while protecting the vista from Monticello.
8. The lighting of buildings and parking areas should be shielded to eliminate glare.

Source: Bill Beiswanger. Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Director of Restoration. February 28, 2005.

One local development project worthy of special discussion in the Pantops area is a regional hospital. Expected over the next twenty years to add 400,000 square feet of buildings to the Monticello viewshed, the Martha Jefferson Hospital leaders approached Monticello in the early stages of their planning for the hospital complex to discuss viewshed protection. During that process a memorandum of understanding was developed between the Thomas Jefferson Foundation and the hospital (see text box) and Monticello staff even participated in selection of the initial architect for the first phase of construction.

Memorandum of Understanding
between
Thomas Jefferson Foundation (TJF)
and
Martha Jefferson Health Services Corporation (MJHS)

June 18, 2003

Martha Jefferson Health Services Corporation is pursuing the approval and development of a replacement hospital campus according to ZMA 01-015 and SP 01-056 and 01-057, and has worked closely with the Thomas Jefferson Foundation to solicit its input in the conceptual design process in a cooperative and mutually beneficial process. It is the desire of both parties that this level of cooperating and communication continue through the execution the ultimate development of the campus to be respectful of the viewshed concerns of the TJF, while also respecting the special needs of a community hospital campus. To that end, the parties desire to enter into this Memorandum of Understanding.

Martha Jefferson Health Services intends to incorporate the following procedures and design elements in the development of the campus:

1. MJHS intends to provide advanced copies of design documents for visually significant structures as viewed from Monticello to the TJF in advance of submission to the County of Albemarle for formal approval, including site plans, and Architectural Review Board designs, and will be available to meet with TJF to review these designs.
2. The following architectural features will be important design characteristics in the development of the campus:
 - a. Natural / neutral colors shall be utilized for building materials so that buildings blend with the surrounding landscape, not contrast with it.
 - b. The use of white materials will be minimized
 - c. In addition to standard required landscaping, additional landscaping shall be interspersed throughout the development to help integrate the development into the surrounding landscape.
 - d. Parking structures shall be coordinated in appearance with other buildings on site
 - e. The site design should appear as natural as possible after development. This may involve randomly placing trees on a slope rather than having a large mowed area or a staggered row of evergreens. It may also provide for screening evergreen trees to be mixed with deciduous trees so as not to create a "block of green" every winter when the deciduous trees in the naturalized areas surrounding the development drop their leaves. An emphasis will be placed on indigenous trees, with plantings scattered or in clumps whenever possible instead of in rows. Consideration will be given to species that will grow to a substantial size and are disease resistant so they will survive and integrate into the native habitat.

In spite of these good efforts with some members of the development community, other projects have had a deleterious impact on views from Monticello. A visitor to Monticello in 2005 wrote his impression of viewshed protection to the Mayor of Charlottesville, noting:

“We recently visited Monticello on a beautiful fall day. It was our first visit in about eight years and we really wanted our young twins to see this national treasure and the beautiful view. In that last regard, I must tell you, we were quite disappointed. The view from Monticello is marred in a way that it wasn’t a decade ago and we are really surprised – and dismayed—that the city of Charlottesville let that happen. It really impacts the context of the home and the era.”^v

Part of the problem is that while the Monticello viewshed is mentioned in the County's comprehensive plan and historic plan, it is not referenced in any of the regulatory ordinances. This means that practices to promote viewshed protection must be developed through the rezoning process or special exception process, but are seldom or never discussed when by-right development is approved. Also, the constantly shifting county planning staff requires Monticello to constantly reassert interest in viewshed protection. This need to remind the county of its responsibility and to “watch dog” all development projects requires time and staff resources that are not always the first priority of a historic site.

Monticello will continue to see development in its viewshed and will continue to be an advocate for protection, or at least mitigation, of landscape impact. Development challenges facing Monticello include expansion of a large gated community to the east, continued development of ridge lines and mountain sides in direct view of Monticello and continued infill development of the urban growth area.

Strategy-Taking a Stand on Larger Regional Issues

In the Fall of 2001, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation took the unusual step of testifying at an adjoining County’s Board of Supervisors public hearing and going on record with the State Corporation Commission regarding concern about the potential construction of a gas/coal burning power plant in Fluvanna County. This plant was one of several proposed in the Monticello viewshed, to be connected to an eastern seaboard pipeline with the objective of generating electricity to sell on the national power grid. The natural gas pipeline is approximately eight miles east of Monticello. The Foundation made the following case to the local government and state air permitting agency:

“More than half a million visitors come to Monticello each year from all over the world. Not only do they learn about Thomas Jefferson, architecture, the plantation community, gardening, and history, but they also experience the beauty of the Virginia Piedmont. In Jefferson’s day, the vista to the east was called the “sea view.” This view, both east and south overlooking Fluvanna County, has been appreciated by tens of millions of people. The proposed power plant will be

within this viewshed. We are concerned about lighting at night, the expansion of power corridors to the proposed plants, and the potential impact on air quality and visibility not only to Monticello's visitors but to local residents as well."^{vi}

For Monticello to have critical comments about an adjoining government's proposed project was not necessarily appreciated nor was Monticello seen by all as a legitimate stakeholder. The County Planner, Cabell Lawton opined: "You'd have to have an eagle eye to see some of the things they were talking about." The County reported that a 10-foot wide orange balloon was floated where the smokestacks would be constructed and they contested that it was not visible from Monticello.

The Foundation responded that the lights and the plumes atop those smokestacks could be visible from Monticello. "Depending on the weather sometimes you can see 50 miles from the hilltop. In a rural area, eight or 10 miles is in the neighborhood."^{vii}

One of the proposed power plants has been constructed since Monticello expressed its concern and the verdict is still out as to impact on local and regional air quality. One indicator that there maybe a problem is the decline in visitation to the adjacent Blue Ridge Parkway which is in part attributed to increasing air pollution and decreasing visibility. A comparison of recent studies in 2006 shows that visitors place a high dollar value on the scenic views along the Blue Ridge Parkway, but those who travel the Virginia section are most worried that adjacent development is compromising those views, while those in North Carolina put air quality as their top concern.^{viii}

Strategy- Developing an Understanding of Economic Value

In February of 2002, the Weldon Cooper Center at the University of Virginia issued an economic impact study of Monticello in the Charlottesville-Albemarle area. The study was commissioned by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation to both uncover and make the case for the economic value of historic preservation. While local residents and business leaders know Monticello and refer to this region as "Jefferson's Country," they are not necessarily knowledgeable about the economic value of visitors. The study found that Monticello resulted in \$34 million of direct spending annually in the Charlottesville area in 2000, with a total economic impact of \$47 million. The impact on employment was the equivalent of 919 full-time jobs.

The study also noted that the typical visitor to Monticello fits the profile of a heritage/cultural visitor by spending more per capita than other type of tourist, is more highly educated and earns almost twice the national median for income.

The development of this report on the economic value of Monticello has assisted the Foundation in making the case for the monetary value of viewshed protection. Like any other business, the Foundation has both a right and responsibility to protect its assets, including the view. The fact that the analysis was performed by an accredited, third party also has been invaluable.

Strategy –Obtain Special Historic and Scenic Designations

Monticello has supported local and state programs designed to heighten awareness of historic and scenic resources, and in some cases add additional regulatory scrutiny of development projects. One of these designations is “rural historic district.” Monticello is adjacent to the Southwest Mountains RHD and will be part of the newly proposed Southern Albemarle RHD.

Rural historic districts are collections of sites, buildings, cultural and historic landscapes, and all supporting heritage resources. In Virginia there are fourteen rural historic districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the United States’ list of national cultural resources. It is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect historic resources. A rural historic district defines a rural historic landscape and is a “geographic area that historically has been used by people, or shaped or modified by human activity, occupancy, or intervention, and that possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings, structure, roads and waterways, and natural features.”^{ix}

The designation of an area as a rural historic district is intended to inform the public about the significance of the area. It encourages local governments and property owners to take the registered areas’ historic, architectural, archaeological, cultural, and natural significance into account in planning and decision making. However, rural historic districts do not, in and of themselves, impose any land use regulations or restrictions on the local government or on property owners within the district.

In the early 1990’s the Foundation offered support for the designation of approximately 32,000 acres of Southwest Mountains as a state and nationally registered Rural Historic District (RHD). The Southwest Mountains RHD has over 978 contributing buildings and adjoins another district, the Madison-Barbour RHD, effectively linking the homes of President Thomas Jefferson and President James Madison. It is a remarkable landscape that would be easily recognizable today if Thomas Jefferson were to again ride along Virginia Byways of Routes 22 and 231. Since the formation of the district, private property owners and the local conservation organizations have worked to put in place a series of protection tools for this landscape including: scenic river and road designation, open space easements and the formation of agricultural and forestal districts.

Monticello expects to soon be in a rural historic district when the Southern Albemarle RHD is completed. This district will encompass 87,000 acres, linking Monticello and the Rivanna River (a designated Virginia Scenic River) to Scottsville and the James River. Once approved this rural historic district will be the largest in Virginia and the second largest on the east coast of the United States. In addition to Monticello, some 1600 historic buildings will be included in the district.

Rural historic districts have been very useful in helping to educate and inform property owners and local officials of the existence and value of historic, scenic and other natural resources. In and of themselves, however, these districts do not provide any land use protection. The districts can trigger 106 Review if Federal funds are used for any development project. The Southwest Mountains are extremely important to Monticello’s

northeast view as the Southern Albemarle RHD will be for our southeastern vistas. Property owners in the Southwest Mountains RHD have placed 37% of the land under permanent protection from development.

Image D

Another tool for scenic protection has been the acquisition of land and creation of a parkway for the main entrance to Monticello. This parkway development has been complemented by the creation of scenic corridor overlay districts. Thomas Jefferson Parkway is a 179-acre linear park that protects in perpetuity Monticello's entrance corridor and includes an 89-acre arboretum and 2.2 mile hiking trail with wonderful vistas of the Blue Ridge Mountains. However, this parkway was not created without controversy. Originally, the University of Virginia announced that it intended to build several office buildings and locate three state agencies' office buildings along this entrance road to Monticello. The Foundation Board was informed that the matter had been approved by the Governor and that the project was finalized. In the fall of 1988, the Foundation Board felt that their stewardship responsibilities required them to have the University and Governor take another look the situation and 135 meetings later, the Foundation acquired the property and began developing preservation plans for a parkway.

The Thomas Jefferson Parkway opened to visitors in 2000 and was developed by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation to create a scenic entrance along Route 53 to Monticello. The Parkway also serves as a recreational and educational resource for visitors and as a pedestrian and cycling link between Monticello and the local community. Along the Parkway, four miles of utility lines were buried, guardrails were removed when possible, and the road shoulders were landscaped.

The Parkway was funded in part by the ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) program and a private donation, totaling over \$7 million in investments. In addition to creating a scenic corridor, the parkway has enabled the Foundation to protect the visitor experience and view upon arrival to the House.

There are other protections in place for both this road and other roads leading to Monticello. The county of Albemarle has designated some road sections as local scenic byways and has enacted additional review at the local level for development projects impacting scenic views. This process includes greater review and requirements for landscaping, design overall, screening of parking as well as signage. Route 53 has also been designated a state scenic road, or "Virginia Byway." The state designation is more honorific in nature but does have some limited additional signage regulations intended to assist in maintaining scenic quality.

Strategy- Protecting Monticello's View from Monticello's Own Development

While asking outside partners to be sensitive to visual impact to Monticello, the Foundation itself has had to grapple with its own development needs. The Foundation has taken a number of innovative steps including creation of a unique zoning district, the setting of design guidelines for a proposed visitor center on its own property and the

stripping of development potential from much of its landholdings through the donation of historic and open space easements.

Because Monticello is a privately owned property it is subject to local land use control (zoning). Over time the Foundation, which predated the local government establishment of zoning regulations, discovered that its uses as a house museum were not really recognized by the local government. County staff and officials knew that Monticello existed but no special provision had been established to recognize Monticello's current uses much less establish a process for expanding or creating new uses (such as construction of a visitor and education complex).

The County of Albemarle and Monticello worked together to solve this problem by the creation in 2004-2005 of a special zoning district known as the "Monticello Historic District." The district includes approximately 868 acres of Monticello's 2,300 acres and encompasses the areas that include activities that were not in compliance with Albemarle's zoning ordinance. The new district allows for a new visitor's center, service center, administrative campus, and restoration of the Monticello mountain top.

As part of the Foundation's commitment to viewshed protection, the plans for the district and future development/redevelopment include removing 20th century additions surrounding the Monticello mansion (such as the gift shop, storage, and restrooms) as well as removing offices from the basement and upper floors of Monticello. The Foundation plans to relocate these uses to less obtrusive locations at lower elevations and as far from the historic house and structures as possible.

The Albemarle County Planning staff made the following observations about Monticello's district:

Rural Area: The primary objective of the current Rural Area section of the Comprehensive Plan is not compromised with this proposed application. Agricultural and forestal activities and watersheds will not be adversely impacted by this proposal. Service delivery to the Rural Areas will not be expanded to accommodate proposed facilities. This application helps to further preserve unique natural, scenic, and historic resources not found elsewhere in the County, or even Virginia or the World. In addition, the proposed MHD zoning district will have reduced residential potential as compared to the current Rural Areas zoning; the MHD proposes one dwelling unit per 21 acres.

Historic Preservation Plan: The goals of protecting historic resources, recognizing their value, pursuit of additional protection measures and incentives to preserve Albemarle's historic and archeological resources are all being achieved through this proposed rezoning. It is suggested in the Comprehensive Plan that an important strategy to further the historic preservation goals of the County is to adopt a historic district overlay ordinance to recognize and protect historic and archeological resources, including individual sites and districts, on the local level. The County's Historic Preservation Planner, Julie Mahon, has commended Monticello on their application and has indicated that the MHD may serve as a model for future historic zoning in the County.

Open Space Plan and Mountain Protection Plan: Monticello is an identified mountain resource in the Mountain Protection Plan. This rezoning does not cause substantial new disturbance of the mountain and actually removes obtrusive modern day structures from the ridge/mountain top area. No negative impacts to scenic resources are anticipated with this proposed rezoning, including the Rivanna River, which is designated as a Virginia State Scenic River from Woolen Mills to the Fluvanna County line.

Greenways and Trails Plan: Through this project, the goal of a countywide network of greenway trails is furthered with the dedication of an easement along the Rivanna River on the Shadwell property. The Rivanna River from the Ivy Creek Natural area to Fluvanna County is specifically identified as a location for river and stream trails in the Rural Area. This will provide a trail along one of the only two State Scenic Rivers in the County.

Anticipated impact on natural, cultural, and historic resources: Monticello is listed on the Virginia Landmarks (State) and National Register of Historic Places and is designated as a National Historic Landmark, the highest national recognition category for historic resources. Most notably, Monticello is on the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List. Impacts to Monticello are expected to be positive. This application will allow the relocation of modern intrusions from the mountaintop to more appropriate sites. The applicant will be able to heighten restoration efforts through this rezoning application and eventual completion of the application plans. The applicant has indicated that impacts on natural resources will be minimized to the greatest extent possible. The Visitor's Center and Service Center will be constructed in areas where tree clearing has already occurred. The majority of the project will remain in open space and over 95% of the project area will not be disturbed, which is 831 of the 868 acres included with this application.

With the creation of the Monticello Historic District, the Foundation had the vehicle to begin to plan and design a new visitor center. After several years of discussing various locations both within and outside its 2,300 acre site, the Foundation selected the one area that had been previously disturbed and basically designed backwards, catering to the carrying capacity of the site. Working with Ayers/Saint/Gross Architects + Planners, a Baltimore, Maryland firm providing master planning and architectural services for college and university campuses and non-profit organizations, the team developed a unique set of design principles. These principles have been used to shape a 40,000 square foot complex of buildings, organized around a central courtyard and incorporating many "green" concepts including green roof technology and geothermal wells. With regard to visual impact, A/S/G in addition to the "green" buildings, worked to retain important trees in order to block views of the complex from the mountaintop, incorporated existing parking and tree preservation, shaped the entire complex to conform and make use of the slope etc. As Adam Gross, Partner for A/S/G noted, "these buildings, courtyard and greenways are designed to lie lightly on the land and draw strength from the landscape...we have found on this project that often less is more."

Construction on the Monticello Visitor Center and Smith History Center is expected to start in 2006 and be completed by the fall of 2008.

Design principles for visitor complex:

- Design the site so that it can accommodate as much of the required program as can be responsibly contained on previously disturbed ground.
- Design the site in a way that minimizes impingement upon views from and to the Mountaintop.
- Design the site so that construction will be economical.
- Design the site in a way that preserves, protects, and respects all that is known to be of historic or archaeological significance.
- Build in currently disturbed areas to the extent possible, focusing on most disturbed areas first.
- Design the site for maximum convenience.
- Respect the roundabouts and as much as possible of Jefferson's landscape.

Image E and F

Strategy – Placing and Promoting Historic and Land Conservation Easements

Perhaps the boldest and most novel tool that the Foundation has used to protect the Monticello viewshed is the placement of historic and open space easements on key portions of its property. This step puzzled some Monticello supporters who wondered why a not-for-profit would place voluntary restrictions on its own future development. The Foundation noted that as it wanted property owners in the Monticello viewshed to consider placing easements on key visual properties, it seemed only right and fitting that Monticello would take the same leadership step. The Foundation Board also acknowledged that while the current Monticello stewards were united in their understanding and support for preserving the greater setting of Monticello, future boards might not have that same commitment. The placement of easements removed the option for future boards to consider development of Monticello land for non-compatible uses.

An *easement* is a legal document relating to the use of a particular parcel of land. It is one of the “bundle of rights” included in the legal ownership of property. The owner may choose to give or sell this right to a charitable organization or government entity. When the parties to the easement record it in the local land records, it becomes part of the chain of title and runs with the land. This means that subsequent owners of the property must abide by the terms of the easement agreement.^x

How do easements help preserve historic and open space values?

- Easements protect the resource in perpetuity - forever.
- Easement holders have the right to regularly monitor the property for compliance by the owner.
- If an owner or subsequent owner violates the agreement, easement holders can actively enforce the terms of the agreement.

- Easements prevent fragmentation of agricultural and forestall land in rural areas threatened by unregulated growth.
- Easements can help prevent unsympathetic alterations to historic structures by allowing the property owner to consult with the easement holder on design issues.
- Easements preserve the viewsheds from historic roadways of rural property.

Usually, conservation and historic preservation easements require the owner to refrain from altering or developing the property without the prior agreement of the easement holder. They can require the owner to maintain his property by painting or repairing it. Easements can easily be tailored to meet a particular property owner's goals and needs; they do not necessarily preclude all development options or prevent alterations. Consulting the easement holder, however, is a necessary step before the owner may proceed with plans to alter the property. Easement donors most often seek to protect the natural, scenic or historic nature of their property while retaining other rights of ownership, including, if applicable, the right to live on the land or to continue to farm it and live in the building. In the case of Monticello, the Foundation placed a portion of its land in an historic preservation easement (held by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources) and in an open-space easement (held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation).

In 2000, Monticello placed the first easement on 214 acres. This easement is on property known as the "Shadwell Estate." Peter Jefferson acquired the land in 1735 and built a home there around 1741. Thomas Jefferson was born at Shadwell on April 13, 1743 and lived there intermittently until 1770. When the house burned in 1770 Jefferson moved to Monticello. The Shadwell Estate remained an important part of the plantation owned and managed by Thomas Jefferson. There are nationally significant archaeological ruins on this site including burial grounds and historic artifacts of major importance to the interpretation of the Monticello plantation and to the Jeffersonian legacy. Shadwell is considered part of the Monticello plantation and its historic significance is recognized by its listing as a National Historic Landmark. Shadwell is also a very important view from Monticello Mountain.

The value of placing an historic preservation easement has been apparent in recent years. One example is its value of informing other agencies, such as the state highway department. The state highway department began in 2000 to analyze traffic needs along the Route 250 East corridor. This road forms one of the boundaries of the Shadwell tract. A very preliminary study suggested that traffic would be better served if the existing two-lane road was expended to two 37-foot lanes and with a 16 to 28-foot divided median. This scale of road would require significant right-of-way. Due to the historic preservation easement on Shadwell, it is now protected from condemnation for road right-of-way construction and future road expansions will not endanger the rich archeological resources on the property.

In December of 2004, the Foundation also placed 1,060 acres in open space easement with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. The land that Monticello placed in easement consisted of the wooded mountain hillsides that provide much of the visual backdrop and protection to residents of the City of Charlottesville and the residents of Albemarle County, including the rapidly growing Pantops area. The easement also included 560

acres of land that is the prime view from Monticello as well as protection of 80 acres along about three miles of the scenic Rivanna River, at the base of Monticello.

Bob Lee, executive director of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, said the land protected around Monticello helps maintain the cultural and natural heritage of the area. “We’re not only maintaining the integrity of the Jefferson’s viewshed but also the cultural environment.” Daniel P. Jordan, President of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, said: “Our Jeffersonian stewardship must be forward-looking, and this conservation easement will protect a vital part of Jefferson’s legacy for the enjoyment and inspiration of future generations.”^{xi}

Not only has Monticello placed much of its land in easement but the Foundation has been fortunate that approximately 60,000 acres are in easement in Albemarle County. Much of this land contributes to the protection of the viewshed. As noted before, easements have been invaluable in protecting land visible from Monticello. For over thirty-years a regional, not-for-profit conservation organization, known as the Piedmont Environmental Council, has made easement promotion one of its chief tools in conservation and preservation.

Another partner is The Nature Conservancy (TNC), which has recently been focusing locally on protecting the Rivanna River Watershed. At the end of 2005, the TNC accepted an easement, as part of this project. This property, called Buck Island, also lies within the viewshed of Monticello. As part of its easement, The Nature Conservancy added provisions to ensure that future development would not adversely affect the view from Monticello. These provisions included a maximum building height restriction of 35 feet, prohibitions against the use of white or other highly reflective roof or exterior wall colors, and shielding of outdoors lighting.

The TNC easement specifically cites Monticello’s view as one of its conservation purposes and notes that, the “Grantor will not perform, nor knowingly allow others to perform, any act on or affecting the Property that is inconsistent with the purposes of this Conservation Easement.” Further, the easements states that, “Any activity on or use of the Property inconsistent with the terms and purposes of this Easement is prohibited.”

Conclusion

...I have been planning what I would shew you: A flower here, a tree there; yonder a grove, near it a fountain; on this side a hill, on that a river. Indeed madam, I know nothing so charming as our country.

-Thomas Jefferson to Angelica Schuyler Church, February 17, 1788

What the eye beholds matters. Beauty matters. Views matter. Monticello, Jefferson’s architectural experiment and timeless gem was created by him on a small hill in the Virginia countryside because the scenic values of the landscape called to him and mattered. It was with great forethought, planning and labor that Monticello was created.

The view is part of the experience that was important to Jefferson and is important to us today both as a link to the past but also as the link to the living, vital world around us.

Today it sometimes seems that one has to be apologetic about caring about a place or for having a passion for a landscape. Those of us who have been acting as stewards for Monticello and the Virginia piedmont landscape have often been told “it is not your business to tell me what to do with my land”, “why should you care or have an opinion”, and “you can’t stop progress.”

But if not us, those of us who have chosen to be stewards and associated with World Heritage sites, then who is going to speak for these precious places and their setting? What we have learned at Monticello is that you need to pursue every strategy listed ...and we need to figure out how to build a few more. If past is prologue, we will continue to struggle daily with a changing landscape. Some of these changes can be ameliorated. Some of the landscape changes wipe out a rural countryside forever. But some changes add to the growing urban landscape and not always disagreeably. We are in a constant balancing act. As our experience has grown, we have also begun to recognize in new ways that not all views are equally important. Distance and elevation in relationship to our own site play major roles in determining visual impact. We need to update our own landscape analysis tools and work with the strategies we have in play.

We also need to move forward with a more expansive and inclusive partnership program. Not only does insensitive development obliterate a landscape, but apathy leads to the destruction of place as surely as the bulldozer. People need to care and to have a vehicle for their preservation and conservation interests. The landscapes that are now most critical to the views of future Monticello visitors are not owned by the Foundation. They are in the hands of many individual landowners....some of whom are farming their land and others posed for residential and commercial development. We need to more fully engage the minds and hearts of our neighbors and continue to explore the ways we can all help protect Mr. Jefferson’s landscape.

So start today by developing your own strategies for your site. Know what you have to protect and promote through inventory and analysis. Track your changing world through photography and mapping. Create design guidelines for development both for your own property and to assist others on their lands that are important to your viewshed. Use every avenue to build public awareness and support not just for your site but for the larger setting. Purchase what you can afford to own and place protections on your lands through easements. Help others through your preservation and conservation leadership to see their way to protecting their own lands through such devices. Work with your development community. They too will care if you do. Quantify your value. For some audiences, you have to have that information to get a seat at the public policy table. Make sure that your local governing officials embrace the value of place and have local planning documents reference your property and its importance. Help format and set local, regional and state goals and strategies for your site. Utilize every scenic designation program that you can find. While typically these do not provide any significant level of land use protection, they do bring heightened awareness of your site. Build partnership and friends for your world heritage site.

Start today.

Image G

ⁱ Fox, Abby. "A Little Mountain with a Big View". *Preservation Magazine*, August 9, 2001.

ⁱⁱ (2004). Historical Census Browser. Retrieved January 2006, from the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center
<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus/index.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Albemarle County Office of Community Development. Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan, 1989.

^{iv} Albemarle County Office of Community Development. Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan, 1989.

^v Billigmeier, S. Letter to Major David Brown, October 27, 2005. On file with the Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

^{vi} November, 2001 letter from K. Imhoff to The Honorable Hullahen Williams Moore State Corporation Commission. On file with the Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

^{vii} Whoriskey, Peter. "Preserving the View at Jefferson's House, Monticello at Odds with Builders." *The Washington Post*. August 9, 2001.

^{viii} National Park Service Scenic Experience Project. <http://www.nps.gov/blri/pphtml/newsdetail10827.html>

^{ix} Imhoff, Kat. *Virginia's Rural Historic Districts*.

^x Nagel, Stefan *Easements* in Landmark Yellow Pages (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press) 1993, p. 71

^{xi} Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Press Release, December 22, 2005. www.monticello.org.

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Whoriskey, Peter. "Preserving the View at Jefferson's House, Monticello at Odds with Builders." *The Washington Post*. August 9, 2001.

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- A) Monticello, The Home of Thomas Jefferson
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- B) View towards Pantops from Monticello showing the future site of Westminster Canterbury. April 1986.
Source: Thomas Jefferson Foundation
- C) Westminster Canterbury site under construction. April 1990
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- D) Protected Lands in Albemarle County
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- E) Rendering showing aerial perspective of the Monticello Visitor and Smith History Center.
Source: Ayers/Saint/Gross Architects + Planners.
- F) Monticello Visitor and Smith History Center. Section.
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- G) Monticello, The Home of Thomas Jefferson
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