

Viewshed Protection

Description

A viewshed is defined by Oxford Dictionary as *the view of an area from a specific vantage point; a computer model of this; and the area that comprises this view*. Defining the viewshed along a Scenic Byway effectively delineates the qualities and features of the Byway Corridor. During the Corridor Management Plan (CMP) development for a byway, the viewshed typically is taken from a point along the road and can be a closed-in view, panoramic view or view in-between. The viewshed encompasses the:

- Right-of-Way (signs, lighting, street trees, parking, storm water management facilities, etc.)
- Natural features (physical geography – land forms, land cover-water, land cover-vegetation, ability to see the sky and its affect on the landscape, etc.)
- Built environment (land form-manmade, which includes historic and non-historic structures, utilities, multi-modal facilities, and other features)

All of these features make up, contribute to, or take away from the aesthetic quality of the viewshed and the traveler's experience. Finding the "right" tools to assure that the traveler's experience is the best it can be requires:

- Understanding the viewshed;
- Defining character typologies along the byway or within the viewshed – urban skyline, suburban strip development, town square, rural hamlet, farmland, forest, ocean view, etc.; and
- Exploring the opportunities for preservation and improvements that embrace quality views, enhance areas of lesser quality and character, and mitigate negative views.

Applying a Context Sensitive Solutions process during or after the CMP development should involve all byway stakeholders, and has the potential to uncover creative, innovative and viable solutions for a byway road and landscape. Overlay zones, scenic easements, place-sensitive development, conservation zoning, historic preservation districts, and road diets are among the tools that can lead to viewshed protection. More detailed information can be found in the NJ Scenic Byways Guide Book.

The view from the road is a significant community resource which reflects its local character, while the road itself is integral to community life and development.

Purpose

The NJ Scenic Byways Guide Book describes the State as being rich in scenic, historic and cultural resources that range from spectacular views of urban skylines to tranquil lakes in rural settings. More notably, the Guide Book states that *"the view from the road may be one of a community's most important resources."* Recognizing, preserving and enhancing or improving that view is a critical element in sustaining a Scenic Byway's unique character-defining features, sense of place and transportation network.

A landscape is built by people, accumulatively, over a long period of time and it is around roads that they build it. - William H. Whyte, The Last Landscape, 1968, p. 325

Resources

- NJ Green Acres Program
www.nj.gov/dep/greenacres/
- NJ Future
www.njfuture.org/
- HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities
www.epa.gov/dced/partnership/
- Land Trust Alliance
www.landtrustalliance.org/
- Project for Public Spaces
www.pps.org/

Viewshed Protection - Case Examples

Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance Protected Lands along the Delaware Scenic Byway, NJ

The Frenchtown Greenbelt Preserve is now part of the D & R Canal State Park. In late 2006, the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance completed the acquisition of 150 acres of land within the borough of Frenchtown, preserving the last large undeveloped tract in this small community. The preservation of this land will benefit generations of residents and visitors to come and will help ensure that this byway community retains its charm, and one of its last wild places. It is important to recognize how other organizations along a byway can work toward measures that reinforce a byway's vision, and can support a byway organization's effort to establish and achieve the actions outlined in a CMP. Public and private investment offer implementation opportunities.



The Frenchtown Greenbelt Preserve is now part of the D & R Canal State Park.

The Frenchtown Greenbelt Preserve property was zoned for high density housing; it is estimated that over 100 residences could have been constructed on the site. The Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance recognized the importance of this property to the local community, the water protection and species habitat it provided, and the recreational opportunities it presented. The land trust worked to cultivate support for the preservation of this property from a variety of critical partners, the State of New Jersey Green Acres Program, Division of Parks and Forestry, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, Frenchtown Borough, Hunterdon County, and the Open Space Institute. With a cost of more than \$4,000,000, the property could not have been preserved without these partners. *Credit: Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance, www.hlta.org*

Visualizing future development within the viewshed of the Upper Freehold Farmland Byway, NJ

Recognizing that the site would otherwise be developed, the CMP defined a schematic design for creating a hamlet where residents and visitors can meet, eat, and get other services. This design idea is intended to facilitate discussions with future developers to preserve the rural character while creating economic benefit and byway services. This visualization of a commercially zoned property illustrates an option to develop the site so that it fit within and related to the context of this rural landscape and byway character. *Credit: Monmouth County Planning, Upper Freehold Historic Farmland Byway Corridor Management Plan*



Existing Conditions



Visualization