

THE RHODE ISLAND SCENIC ROADWAYS STEWARDSHIP GUIDEBOOK

PREPARED FOR THE

Rhode Island Scenic Roadways Board

PREPARED BY

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Prepare For The
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I. INTRODUCTION

Roads are the platforms from which we see much of the world. The views we see as we ride our bicycles, drive our cars, ride in buses or take our walks through the neighborhood largely determine our visual knowledge of a place. Aside from public parks and our own homes and places of work, we normally do not physically access most of the land and structures around us, but we see these things every day. We come to appreciate and value views, historic structures and landscaping because they enhance our travel experience. At times, they are the reason we travel.

What makes a road visually appealing? What is it about some roads that encourage us to choose one route over others? If we are concerned that over time a road may lose its special qualities, what are the specific elements of the landscape that are most important to manage or protect so as to preserve the road's character? If we know a road's visual quality has eroded over time, what specific elements of the landscape might be enhanced or improved so as to improve its overall scenic quality?

This Scenic Roadways Corridor Stewardship Guidebook gives you the tools to answer these questions for the roads in your community. It presents an approach for looking at the landscape, evaluating your road and its corridor, and choosing strategic options to address the most critical problems.

The word *stewardship* is used throughout this document. What does it mean to provide stewardship of a scenic road? If a road's character is sufficiently important to residents or business people, then they will seek ways to preserve, enhance and shape that character. Stewardship in this sense means taking care of the road, just as we care for our homes and other important places in our cities and towns.

This Guidebook is designed to help Rhode Island communities clearly understand what it is that gives our roads their special scenic or cultural qualities, which roads in a community have important scenic qualities, how those qualities can be damaged, and finally how to manage roads to preserve or enhance scenic quality.



The roadway acts as a platform from which we see the surrounding landscape. These images range from urban development....



... to rural, pastoral scenery.

The material in this Guidebook is advisory: while it contains ideas for regulatory strategies, the Guidebook itself has no regulatory effect. Its primary objective is to raise the general public's awareness of the value of Rhode Island's scenic roads and suggest paths that communities may follow to manage their roads in ways that meet local values and needs.

The Guidebook has three basic sections:

- *"How to Look at a Landscape"* gives the reader some background concepts to use in evaluating a scenic road and its corridor. This section introduces a scenic evaluation vocabulary for describing what makes a landscape scenic, reviews typical Rhode Island landscapes and roadway features, and discusses how visual quality can degrade. More detailed information on these concepts is contained in the Appendices.
- *"Preparing a Corridor Stewardship Plan"* presents a set of specific steps to help the community prepare a full corridor stewardship plan for their roadway in order to manage the change that is likely to occur along the scenic roadway.
- *"Strategies for Success"* presents examples of how to strengthen and ensure preservation of intact scenic resources. It also reviews strategies for correcting degradation.

THE GUIDEBOOK AND THE SCENIC ROADWAYS PROGRAM

In 1985, Title 24 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, entitled "Highways," was amended by the addition of Chapter 15 to establish a state system of scenic roadways. Chapter 15 also established the Scenic Roadways Board.

The purpose of the Rhode Island Scenic Roadways program is to identify and protect scenically and culturally significant routes designated as scenic roadways. A nomination and application process has been adopted by the Scenic Roadways Board to review candidate roadways and evaluate their scenic potential.

This Guidebook is intended to help Rhode Island communities consider whether their road may merit scenic road designation and whether there are existing or potential problems along the roadway that merit Stewardship action. This document will help readers understand the landscapes that lie along their scenic roads and help to clarify how those landscapes might change over time. If a community decides that stewardship actions are necessary, this Guidebook also provides a set of steps to prepare a corridor stewardship strategy or stewardship plan.

A stewardship plan is not a prerequisite for designation under the scenic roadways system. However, the Scenic Roadways Board encourages the preparation of stewardship plans for all scenic roadways. These strategies will demonstrate that careful thought has been given to issues of managing transportation and landscape protection and thus increase the chances that the designated roadway will preserve its special character into the future. Therefore, the Scenic Roadways Board will take into account the existence of a stewardship plan when it reviews an application for designation. In addition, to the degree that federal funds are available in the future to manage scenic roads, only roads with an adopted stewardship plan will be likely to be eligible for these funds.

Stewardship plans may be prepared by any organization or entity within a community, including the local government, a private organization, or some partnership of public and private entities. In all cases, the stewardship plan must be adopted by the local elected governing body (town council or city council). The process used for this adoption, including the required hearings at the local level, should follow the process required under the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning Act.

SCENIC ROADS AND TOURISM

Across the nation, communities and states are taking very different approaches to the issues of promotion and protection along scenic roads. In some areas, a primary objective of designating a scenic road is to increase the flow of tourists and thus to strengthen local businesses. In other areas, scenic designation is primarily a way to protect the road from changes to its character.

In Rhode Island, the primary purpose of the program is to identify, manage and protect for future generations the visual qualities of the state's most scenic roads. It is up to the individual communities to determine if they want their scenic road to be promoted as a tourist destination or not.

This Guidebook is oriented toward understanding and managing the scenic qualities of Rhode Island's roadways. Therefore, little attention is given on how to promote or manage the impacts of tourism. Instead, it is recommended that all communities seeking tourism carefully consider each of the potential impacts described in this manual and decide whether they might be exacerbated by tourism activity.

If each of the categories reviewed in this Guidebook are considered from a tourism perspective, a community will understand how to manage both the positive and negative impacts that tourism may have on the scenic qualities of the corridor.

II. HOW TO LOOK AT A LANDSCAPE

UNDERSTANDING A LANDSCAPE'S CHARACTER

Every road has a character, whether that road is an interstate highway, busy commercial area, quiet country lane, rural village street or sand road leading to an ocean beach. Few roads are static; most change and evolve as they undergo increasing or decreasing use, as they are maintained or reconstructed, or as the surrounding landscape changes.

Evaluating a road's landscape, therefore, must take the road's character into account. A context is needed to differentiate among roads. One does not expect to see the same type of road design or land uses on a beach road as on a heavily used city street. Therefore, one should not apply the same standard of scenic beauty or roadway design to these two streets: for example, wide shoulders may be inappropriate for a rural road but appropriate for the in-town street. In other words, the character of each road must be assessed and used as a context within which to understand scenic quality and potential landscape change.

A road's character is an expression of a variety of related factors that involve both the roadway and the surrounding land. The roadway's *design* and construction affects how it looks, how fast people travel and the transportation needs it serves. The abutting *land uses* define what one sees from the road and whether there are residents or shoppers exiting from driveways. A road's *intensity* is defined by how many people and vehicles use the road. Finally, the road's *history* provides a context for how all the above aspects interrelate.

The character of a road also has an emotional component. How does the road make a traveler feel? What personality does the road express? Is the road restful, quiet, breathtaking, interesting, busy, challenging, overwhelming, or dangerous? The answers to these types of questions can be combined with the previous objective analysis, enabling the expression of the road's character in both emotional and physical terms: for example,

"The Seaside Drive is restful due to its gentle curvature and the parkland which provides views of the ocean." For

roads that do not currently offer the scenic character desired by the community, stating a desired future character will be important. One can use these same ideas to express how the road should be in the future: "The Village Road will provide more space for bicycles and pedestrians in order to improve the friendliness and accessibility of the road."

Understanding a road's existing character as well as its desired character is important. This becomes the framework within which one assesses the corridor landscape. The remainder of this section provides concepts and perspectives to help you define your road's character.

SCENIC EVALUATION CONCEPTS

A vocabulary can be useful when talking or thinking about a landscape. Rather than looking at a view and saying, "It's pretty" or "It's wonderful," these terms allow you to look at the view and understand *why* it is pretty and wonderful. For example, terms such as *integrity*, *distinctiveness*, *contrast*, *variety*, *focal points* and *scale* are all words that allow one to describe a scene with more precision. This precision then allows one to better understand what could change in the landscape-either to damage the view or to protect or enhance the view. For example, rather than saying, "What a dramatic seaside view," one can instead analyze the landscape and identify the fact that it is the *integrity* of the historic buildings near the dock in the foreground coupled with the *contrast* of the background views of boats and barrier island that gives the view its beauty.

These scenic concepts and the idea of an evaluation method may sound too technical or artificial. You may say, "Why pick apart a scene? Just enjoy it." If you have roads in your town with no potential for an erosion of scenic quality, then there is no need to understand the specific reasons why the road is scenic. Just looking and enjoying will suffice. But, if you need to describe to someone else why the road is scenic, or if you feel that either private property owners or local government should be thinking about how to preserve the scenic resources of the road, then having a language to talk you feel that either private property owners or local government should be thinking about how to preserve the scenic resources of the road, then having a language to talk about the road will be helpful in finding the best means to manage the road.

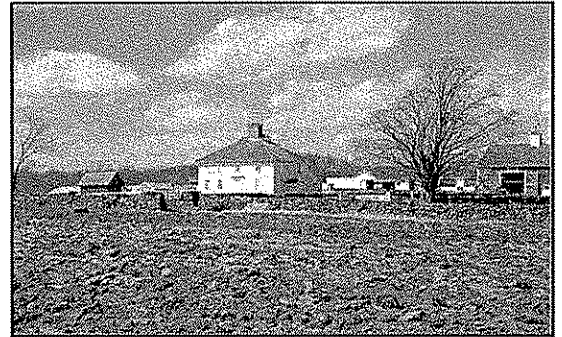
Integrity

Integrity refers to the extent to which a landscape expresses a consistent and coherent character. For instance, a view with a barn, a farmhouse and fields can express agricultural landscape with integrity. If that landscape also included a recently constructed gas station, the integrity of the landscape would be damaged. The message would no longer clearly be one of expressing the current or past agricultural character of the state, but instead would be a mixed message of farming surrounding the introduction of a commercial establishment.

Most landscapes change, and some changes can damage the integrity of the original landscape. Over time, with sufficient change, the landscape takes on a new character. In many parts of Rhode Island, what were once agricultural landscapes are now residential neighborhoods with all signs of the former agricultural activity removed. These new landscapes may present a new integrity. For example, neighborhoods constructed during the immediate post-war period present a very different character from those neighborhoods constructed during the 1980's. Each, if unified, could present a landscape with its own integrity.

Completeness

Completeness is the extent to which the landscape is untouched in its original form, whether this be natural or cultural. Complete natural landscapes could include unspoiled natural areas; complete cultural landscapes could include well preserved historic districts or sites. Ideally, the landscape is nearly in its original natural or cultural condition. There should be a lack of alterations, intrusions or modifications. For natural areas, look for pristine conditions, a lack of visibility of human alterations and visual and environmental integrity. For cultural landscapes, look for the original features of the landscape preserved relatively undamaged in their original state.



This photo of Casey Farm, North Kingstown, with open fields, stone walls, main house, barn, and other outbuildings express the agricultural integrity of this scene.

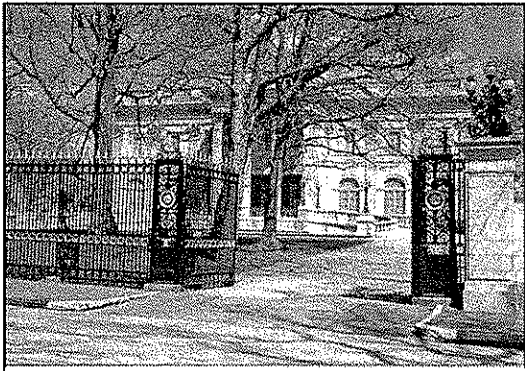
Uniqueness and Distinctiveness

Uniqueness is the extent to which a landscape/townscape is one of a kind and exemplifies an unusual quality or characteristic. This attribute suggests just what it means: the element should be rare. Rare landscapes, buildings and structures that illustrate a part of Rhode Island's history or character fall into this category. Stone-enders, lime kilns and sites from the Narragansett Tribe's history are rare within the state and non-existent in other places.

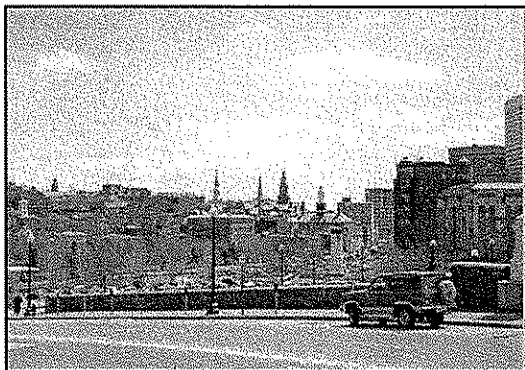
Distinctiveness is the degree to which the character of a landscape, while not unique in the state or region, none theless is of a quality and character that makes it different. Examples of landscapes that might be distinctive could be farming landscapes or fishing village landscapes. Rhode Island contains a number of each of these types of landscapes and thus, it would be unusual to find one which would be classified as unique; however, a well-preserved fishing village or well-tended and beautiful farming landscape might indeed be distinctive within the state. Distinctiveness should be demonstrated by discussing the specific elements in the landscape and demonstrating that their particular character stands above similar landscapes.

Variety

Variety refers to the amount and diversity of differing visual features in the landscape or townscape. A landscape without variety is uniform and unchanging with few visual elements. Variety implies there are many different aspects to the scene, many things to look at. If a scene is monotonous, there is little to see beyond the one thing that creates the scene. A scene with high variety has a wide range of positive visual features in the foreground, middle ground and background of the landscape. There is significant diversity and contrast of the features.



The density of mansions found along Bellevue Avenue in Newport and its seaside setting create a unique characteristic which can be found nowhere else.



The diversity of the Skyline of Providence is an illustration of variety.

Contrast

Contrast is the amount of difference in shading, color, texture or form of landscape/townscape features. Strong, distinct and dramatic differences in shading, color, texture or form are normally positive landscaping qualities that create a pleasing scene. The greater the difference between features, the greater the contrast. Fall foliage is pleasing due to the combined factors of color and contrast. The red and orange colors are more distinctive because of their contrast with the greens and yellows. A seascape composed of bright, white sand against a blue ocean has more color contrast than a scene where vegetation runs right to the water's edge. In other cases, an outline of graceful trees may provide a striking contrast with the water's edge.

Color

The quality and intensity of color in the landscape or townscape as seen in vegetation, soil, water, sky, and man-made features is an important visual attribute. Color can be found everywhere, including geologic formations, flowering plants and trees, changing fall foliage, boats and buoys, buildings and signage. When is color appropriate for scenic routes and when is it garish? This decision can be shaped by considering the context for the color: is it part of nature's colors, are the colors part of the historic culture and landscape of the area, and do the colors enhance the surrounding natural and cultural landscape?

Scale

Scale is the relationship in size and bulk between two things. Typically, structures and landscape elements are in scale if there are minimal proportional differences in size between the elements, and the relative size of the elements does not diminish the personality of one of the elements. For example, a five-story building placed next to a small beach cottage would be out of scale with the cottage. That five-story building might be out of scale with a 20-story skyscraper. Good scale means that the elements in the landscape *fit* together. If a structure or element looks too big or too small compared with everything around it, it is most likely out of scale.



The differing characteristics of the foreground vegetation and the background cityscape illustrates contrast.

Focal Points

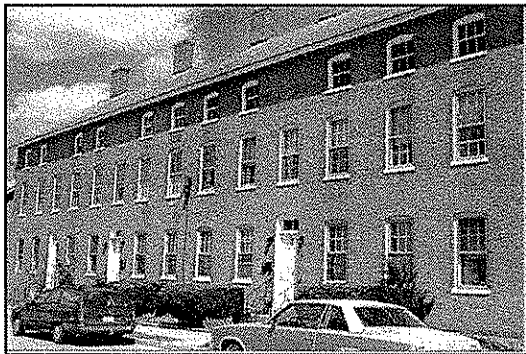


This state House as seen from Francis Street is a focal point of this road corridor.

These are the distinctive natural features or structures that draw the viewer's attention and help define a view, such as rolling hills, church spires, or bridges. One's eye is naturally drawn to the feature and that feature may help to define the landscape by acting as a symbol. In New England, a church spire might be a focal point that symbolizes the historic roots of the community and the scene.

Focal points can also detract from a view. For example, radio towers, smokestacks and power lines might draw the viewer's attention, but nonetheless degrade the view.

Rhythm



The consistent nature and spacing of the windows in this building create rhythm.

Rhythm is the even, appealing repetition of visual features. The columns bordering a hallway give the scene rhythm. The placement of windows across the face of a well-designed building will be rhythmic. Silos, trees, gates in stone walls, street lights and many other features can give a scene rhythm.

Fitness

Fitness is the degree to which the landscape exhibits the care of the people who live in it, work in it, or travel through it. Fitness would be illustrated by well cared for family farms, villages and town streets with pavements and sidewalks in good condition, and traditional centers with well maintained or restored buildings. These centers might include newer buildings but those buildings would be sensitively designed to complement historic buildings and development patterns.

A certain amount of disorder can also be visually pleasing though such items may detract from fitness. Older junk, such as abandoned antique cars or farming equipment, that is beginning to weather with age will present a certain amount of historic character.

The lack of fitness displays itself in a variety of ways: evidence of poor land management practices, trash dumps, junkyards, derelict buildings, dilapidation in visually prominent locations, and scattered amounts of junk or litter.

Summary

At first, it may feel awkward or strange to apply these concepts to a scenic landscape to describe in analytical terms what is first and foremost and emotional response to the landscape. Remember that the value of these concepts is in providing common terms of reference for all those who have an interest in protecting and preserving the important qualities of the scenic roadway. Combining these scenic evaluation concepts with an inventory of specific features will help you to describe these qualities clearly to others and to establish the basis for stewardship strategies.

ELEMENTS OF THE RHODE ISLAND LANDSCAPE: VISUAL QUALITIES AND THE POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE

The next steps in understanding the landscape along a scenic road are to identify the elements or features that one typically sees in Rhode Island that give the landscape its beauty and to understand how the landscape might change as time passes.

The typical landscape elements that one encounters in Rhode Island-as well as many other places-are reviewed on the following pages. The elements are explored in an order that begins with the context of the roadway-its natural environment combined with the effects of human activity on the landscape and then focuses on the details of the roadway and road edge. For some communities and roadways, the right of way elements will be most important, whereas other roads will be most dependent on the surrounding landscape for their scenic character.

Each scenic element is reviewed in terms of the way that it relates to the general landscape as well as how it might detract from the road's visual appeal. Many roads start out with appealing visual characteristics, but with time the scenic quality of the road fades. What happens to these roads? What might threaten the scenic road in your community? What can change along these roads which will degrade scenic quality?

Change of some magnitude is inevitable along most roads. The challenge is to identify ways to shape change to

maximize its scenic contributions and minimize its negative scenic impacts. In order to shape change, one must first understand what change is likely to occur. This section presents information to help you understand how and why your road might change and whether that change could have a significant effect on the scenic roadway's character and quality. Using this information, your community can then evaluate whether steps should be taken by the private and/or public sectors to manage that change.

THE ROAD'S CONTEXT

Although we focus much of our attention on the way a road is designed, constructed and maintained, the experience of driving along a scenic road is greatly determined by the character of the area through which it travels. Does the road provide access to historic routes or districts? Is it urban or rural? Are there important or characteristic geologic or natural features visible from the roadway? Does the drive provide a serene or a dramatic experience?

Thus, describing the road's *context* is the first step toward identifying what makes the road scenic. This context is a combination of natural features-landform, vegetation, wildlife-and features created by human activity-buildings, farms, towns, bridges, and so on. These contextual features are relatively unchangeable as compared with the details of the roadway, and so the roadway's "scenic" quality is a function of how well it relates to its natural and built environment.

When considering the road's context, think about the following factors:

The Natural Environment

- *Vegetation*: How do trees, shrubs and other plants affect the road's character, views or scenes of enclosure?
- *Topography*: Rhode Island's rolling hills and seascape offer a variety of topography. Is this an important factor in your road?

- *Geology:* Are there rock outcroppings that catch the eye? Can one see the underlying geology of the coast?
- *Water and Wetlands:* These features are prominent throughout the state. Water softens a landscape, and provides contrast and variety.
- *Wildlife:* While animals, insects and fish may not be readily seen while driving, they may be the basis for special hikes or other outdoor experiences that travelers on your road might find interesting.

A more detailed discussion of these landscape elements is presented in Appendix A.

The Built Environment

The following features are useful for analyzing the context of a roadway based on human activity. Not only will they help in making the determination as to the urban/rural character of a particular roadway, but they will also point to the specific features of the roadway that make it scenic.

- *Town and Village Centers:* A village is often the heart of a community. If your road goes through or near a village center, consider how the center's character affects the character of the road. Must drivers slow down? Do the buildings provide a sense of history? Does the activity in the village help to explain what people do in the town?
- *Residential Areas:* While many subdivisions may not offer a special or unusual view, look for residential neighborhoods that are unusual. Think about historical integrity and distinctiveness.
- *Commercial Areas:* Do these enhance or detract from your scenic roadway? Look for well-designed, well-landscaped businesses. Look for businesses that express a sense of individuality and personality. If the business areas are not scenic, consider how they can be improved.

- **Industry:** Don't rule out industrial buildings-they are an important part of Rhode Island's landscape. If there are old mills or factories along the roadway, how intact are they? Do they tell a visual story? Do they provide a backdrop to a river? If the sites are not visually appealing, try to understand why.
- **Agriculture and Fishing:** Many farms are beautiful. Think about how the landscape would change if houses were built in the fields. Could some development be accommodated without ruining the landscape? Active fishing villages provide landscapes that are distinctive. Does the character of the landscape change as fishing boats are replaced by recreational craft?
- **Bridges:** Many bridges are scenic. Note where you have bridges and note the degree to which they enhance the view.
- **Designed Landscapes:** Consider the parks, cemeteries, recreation areas and other deliberately designed outdoor spaces.

DETAILS OF THE ROADWAY AND ROAD EDGE

The following two sections list the landscape elements that lie within the road right of way and immediately along the edge of the road. These areas include the physical elements that the road user sees most closely and which are most susceptible to detailed management. For example, if one sees single family houses from a distance, there is little reason to be concerned with the details of how each home is painted or whether each home has shutters or not. That level of detail is inappropriate for scenic road management if the scale of the homes is small compared with the overall landscape. In this case, the homes fall outside of the *zone of detail*. The zone of detail is the area in which the design specifics of a structure are a significant part of the visual experience. The zone of detail that exists on and along the road itself, however, is very relevant and important. The specifics of pavement width, shoulder width, guardrail type and color and roadside vegetation all can have significant impacts on the road's character. The treatments for most of the elements one finds within the right of way includes the following:

- minimum lane width,
- minimum shoulder required,
- maximum grade,
- pavement surface type,
- guardrail types, and
- vegetation maintenance guidelines.

The material presented below is intended to act as a primer on how these details affect the road's character. Local public works or highway departments of towns and cities and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation will work most effectively together to manage scenic roads if there is a common language and understanding of why these elements are important.

As importantly, there is a strong connection between the management of the road right of way and the adjacent properties. Therefore, in order to manage both the right of way and the immediate corridor, it is important to understand how the two relate and interact.

Within the Road Right-of-Way

Consider the following aspects of the road right-of-way when evaluating its character.

- *Road Surface*
- *Lane Striping*
- *Shoulder Width*
- *Shoulder Material and Design*
- *Bike Lanes*
- *Curbs*
- *Guardrails*
- *Crosswalks*
- *Sidewalks*
- *Side Slopes*
- *Utilities*
- *Vegetation within the Right of Way*
- *Signage*
- *Adjacent Biking and Walking Paths*
- *Road Intersections*

These elements are discussed in detail in Appendix B.

The Edge of Abutting Properties

There is an important area lying between the road and views one sees along a road. This defines the road and frames what drivers see. The following are critical elements in managing a road's scenic character.

- *Vegetation and Lawns*
- *Fencing and Stone Walls*
- *Driveways*
- *Parking Lots*
- *Commercial Signage*

Refer to Appendix C for a detailed discussion of these elements.

Summary

Understanding the context of the road, becoming accustomed to a language that helps you describe scenic qualities of a roadway, understanding the various elements that make up a landscape and how those elements might change are the necessary preliminary steps one must take to understand how to manage a road. The next section of this Guidebook presents a step-by-step approach to preparing a stewardship plan for your roadway, using the information presented above.

III. PREPARING A CORRIDOR STEWARDSHIP PLAN

There is no single approach for managing scenic roadways and their corridors: each community and roadway will have its own challenges and needs, and stewardship strategies should be designed accordingly. Using the techniques presented in this Guidebook, you will be able to analyze and understand why the roadway is scenic and what aspects of the roadway may have the potential to change, either for better or for worse, in the future. The process set out below will be applicable whether the community is looking for ways to encourage the preservation of its roadway's scenic character through regulatory or non-regulatory means.

A fundamental goal of the Rhode Island Scenic Roadways program is to provide communities with the information and tools they will need to manage their scenic roads in the ways that they see as appropriate. In the end, it is hoped that the efforts made by communities will ensure that future generations of Rhode Island residents and visitors will be able to find and appreciate the same beauty in the Rhode Island landscape that appeals to all of us today.

The Process is Simple

The Scenic Roadways Board believes that stewardship plans should be kept simple. The most important functions of the plan are as follows:

- (1) Identify what is scenic, and
- (2) Define strategies to keep it scenic or to make it more scenic.

The process described below has four phases with a few steps under each phase:

- Phase One: Understand the roadway
- Phase Two: Involve property owners and the public
- Phase Three: Review your strategy options
- Phase Four: Choose a strategy

The process makes use of forms to help with the inventory process, ideas on how to involve the public, a review of

how you might protect the corridor and a method to select a strategy.

PHASE ONE: UNDERSTAND THE ROADWAY

The first phase of preparing a stewardship plan is to perform an inventory of the roadway. This inventory can be as detailed or general as is necessary for the given roadway. The guiding principle should be one of understanding the roadway to the degree that you identify what changes may be possible.

For communities that are applying for scenic designation of a road, the following Steps 1 and 2 will be useful to help you complete the application to the state program. The application includes a section that asks communities to identify and describe the scenic qualities of the roadway. Using the scenic evaluation concepts presented in Section II and the Appendices, a community will be able to thoroughly complete that application by following the steps outlined below.

For communities whose roads were inventoried during the course of the Statewide Scenic Roadway review much of the needed information is already on file at the state Department of Transportation. Nonetheless, these steps should be taken so that people in your community understand specifically what is valuable about the roadway.

Step 1: Identify Important Scenic Features

A most important and useful type of research to perform in the course of preparing a stewardship plan is to spend time on the road looking at the landscape and understanding why it works as a scenic roadway. In this first step, you should assemble a group of people interested in preparing a stewardship plan to become a team who can inventory the roadway. The group should drive the roadway several times. In each car, there should be a person who is taking photographs and a person who is taking notes, along with the driver.

To help in organizing the inventory process, it is recommended that the team make multiple copies of the Scenic Inventory Form (Form A), reproduced at the end of this section. This form is designed to capture the most scenic and important landscapes along the route. The

pictures taken of the route can be mounted on Form A, and the associated questions can be answered. The Scenic Inventory Form will help the group the viewers to identify the specific landscape elements and to apply the scenic evaluation concepts discussed in Section II.

Step 2: Evaluate the Potential for Change

The next step in Phase One is to identify how the landscape may change in the future. Referring back to Section II as necessary, look at each of the key landscapes that you inventoried in Step 1 and consider whether there is a potential for change. For example:

- Could new homes be built on an open field?
- Could a commercial area be expanded?
- Might vegetation be removed in the future and thus significantly alter the scenic value of the landscape?
- What impact would the construction of sidewalks or wider shoulders or utility lines have on the landscape?

Think through the full range of types of structures and types of change that could occur in the landscape and note these potential changes on your scenic inventory sheets. Once the types of potential changes have been identified, go through the most typical landscape and estimate when the changes might occur or under what circumstances the changes might occur.

Step 3: Identify Critical Areas

Finally, organize the information you collected in the first two steps and evaluate the degree to which the landscapes that are most sensitive to change are also those landscapes that could change in the shortest period of time. Assess each of the critical landscapes along the roadway and determine which are the priority landscapes that should receive your attention in the stewardship plan.

For those users of this guide who are seeking to complete an application to the Rhode Island Scenic Roadways program, the above information will provide the majority of the field work necessary for you to complete that application. The other aspects of the application are self-

explanatory for the information needed to complete those as described in the state program application document.

PHASE TWO: INVOLVE PROPERTY OWNERS AND THE PUBLIC

The next three steps are intended to help you clarify who will want to be involved in the process of preparing and considering the stewardship plan and who must be involved in the process in order for the project to be successful.

Step 1: Identify Interest Groups

In this step, identify those persons or organizations who have interest in the future of the roadway and the scenic landscape. Keep an open mind during the course of this effort and consider the full range of people and groups who could be affected by the roadway. Some of the typical groups that should be contacted and involved include property owners, neighborhood associations, local municipalities, state land management agencies, recreation groups, bicycling or running groups, and local and state transportation departments. This list of individuals and people should cover the full range of people who have an interest in the landscape. The next step should identify those persons who have control over the landscape.

Step 2: Identify Property Owners, Managers and Regulators

In this step, your group should identify those individuals or organizations from the above list who have actual control over the land in the corridor in some manner. Obvious groups include the property owners themselves, the local and state departments of transportation, regulatory bodies such as historic preservation commissions, planning boards, and state regulatory agencies. Less obvious entities that should be considered are power companies that have easements and rights of way along the corridor and/or other entities that may have partial rights to the land.

Step 3: Organize the Planning Effort

Identify who must or should be involved in the planning process, invite participation, and expand the planning

group. Specifically, organize meetings and workshops and invite all interested or impacted parties.

Step 4: Begin the Planning Process

In the course of the initial meetings to prepare the stewardship plan, the objectives of the various interested and impacted parties should be defined and clarified for all those involved. For instance, the groups identified in Steps 1, 2 and 3 may have a number of varying interests in the roadway. These might include preservation, development, maintaining privacy, widening public access to properties or managing roadway safety. In the course of the workshops, each group should be given the opportunity to express their interests and concerns relative to the roadway. Each of the interests of these groups should be then compared, in open discussion, with the inventory of scenic features and the inventory of potential changes that could occur along the roadway. By reviewing these three perspectives, the group should then be able to identify the degree to which the interests of the various participants coincide or conflict with the preservation of the road's scenic character. From this exercise should come a clear definition of the problems that can be resolved in ways that are compatible with the interests of the impact parties and, secondly, the problems that will need more complex solutions given that the interest of the parties may be in conflict with the overall objective of preserving the scenic character of the road.

PHASE THREE: IDENTIFY STRATEGIC OPTIONS

Step 1: Consider the Alternatives

Once the planning group has identified the resources, identified potential problems with the maintenance of the road's scenic character, and then identified the ways in which those who are interested or impacted by the stewardship plan would support or oppose preservation efforts, there are a range of alternatives that can be considered when designing the stewardship plan. Some of those options are briefly reviewed below.

- *Acquisition:* This technique involves the actual purchase of some or all of the rights associated with the land. A fee simple purchase would involve the

complete purchase of all of the rights to the land. A purchase of the development rights would involve the removal of the rights to develop the property. Other rights that could be considered include scenic easements, air rights or water rights.

- *Regulations:* The zoning powers held by local municipalities are broad and give communities a wide range of ways in which to manage the types of land uses that can occur on land and the ways in which development occurs on the land. From the perspective of scenic roadways management, several key elements of zoning regulations should be considered.

First, the planning group should consider whether the types of *uses* allowed are appropriate given the current and prospective character of the roadway. In other words, if the area is primarily residential at this point and the scenic qualities are primarily agricultural, and the scenic quality is largely defined by those farms, then zoning for commercial or high-density residential development is likely in the future to negatively impact the scenery of the roadway.

The second way in which zoning should be evaluated is in the area of *site planning*. Rhode Island zoning laws give municipalities the right to guide the site planning and design for all projects. It is within the scope of zoning to review the distance that buildings are placed from the road, the amount of landscaping that is placed on the site, the location of parking relative to the building, the design and size of signs, the overall height and bulk of the building and the general design of the site as it relates to pedestrian, bicycle and automobile traffic.

In case of scenic roadway management, a particularly useful tool is the *special use permit* in which a local board—normally the zoning board of review—is given the power to review more specifically and carefully the way in which the project will proceed. Conditions may be placed on special permits such as insuring that key views are protected through the sensitive siting of buildings or that trees and other vegetative material are left intact during the course of development. Other local and state regulations may also come into play and help to preserve the character of a scenic

roadway. These include local historic district designation, wetlands regulations, and septic system and waste disposal regulations. If the scenic roadway is owned by the state, then a curb-cut regulation is required by the state Department of Transportation. The state Department of Utilities oversees the placement and development of all utility facilities and transmission lines. For a wide variety of very specific uses (e.g., mental health facilities and prisons), there are state regulatory agencies that will guide the development of these projects. Finally, if the roadway is already designated as a Rhode Island scenic roadway, then the Rhode Island Scenic Roadways Board has authority to review all alterations, construction or activities within the road's right of way; this includes a separate and independent review of curb cuts.

The roadway planning group should tap into the expertise of local municipal planners to help them understand the wide range of potential regulations that could help to preserve the character of the roadway.

- *Private Actions:* There may be a tendency at times for private planning groups to feel that public acquisition or regulation is the only effective way to manage scenic resources. This is not the case, however, as there are many roadways where the maintenance of the road's scenic character is in the economic and neighborhood self-interest of property owners. In these cases, private actions can be as or more effective than public regulations in preserving the road's character. Perhaps the most effective means of protecting the character of a scenic roadway is for landowners to take care of their properties. Basic landowner actions include planting and maintaining trees and shrubs, managing lawns and fields, repairing stone walls and using care when modifying the site or the buildings so as to protect the property and the road.

Other examples of private actions include donating conservation easements immediately alongside roads in order to restrict development or improvements in that area, placing deed restrictions on properties that specify ways in which the property will be managed or developed in order to preserve scenic character, forming homeowners associations and placing covenants on all participating properties that specify

how specific scenic resources will be managed. In addition, private funds can be collected and used to acquire some or all of the rights on key pieces of property. In the case of agricultural land, arrangements made between the state and the state/town and the farmer can resolve the purchase of agricultural development rights on these lands. Often a clear understanding of the ways in which property management can affect the scenic character of the roadway and thus property values can encourage property owners to assist with the overall management of the roadway: for instance, avoiding clear cutting of lots all the way to the road edge or ensuring that ongoing maintenance occurs to stone walls and other fences. All of these steps can be initiated or taken on solely by the private sector and each can have a significant impact on the future appearance of the road.

- *Design Standards:* In some cases, communities and property owners will feel that the best way to manage a particular area is to adopt a special design district in which a locally appointed board of design professionals provides input on the design of new buildings as well as the alteration of existing buildings. For example, local historic district commissions may adopt specific regulations stipulating the types of materials and architectural approaches that can be used within the district. The purpose of these districts is to insure that all future development is done in a manner that maintains or enhances the historic character of the area. Less rigid design review boards can be established by communities wherein the review processes do not necessarily stipulate specific materials or design approaches but instead engage the property owner in a discussion of the potential ways that the project can be designed. Often these discussions and the recommendations flowing back and forth between the applicant and the board result in significantly improved projects.
- *Roadway Maintenance:* As discussed in Section II, the ways in which the road itself and the immediately adjacent landscape and roadway structures are managed can have a significant impact on the character of the roadway. For instance, inappropriate guardrail design or type or size can negatively impact the background views. Therefore, roadway planning groups

should involve in the planning process the road department that will have responsibility over the highway. This will usually be the state Department of Transportation or, in some cases, the local municipal department of public works. In each case, the engineers and supervisors who provide maintenance and repair on these roads should be involved in the planning process.

While the overarching objective of the scenic roads program is to protect the scenic character of these roads, safety for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians must be the first concern. If those responsible for roadway maintenance are not involved in the process, there will be a critical lack of information on how to balance the needs of safety with the need for scenic and historic preservation. Roadway planning groups should specifically discuss with road maintenance supervisor's issues such as vegetative maintenance practices, signage policies, guardrail policies, and future plans for any improvements that might be made to the roadway.

- *Signage and Interpretation:* Whether the stewardship of the roadway is intended solely to protect the landscape for the enjoyment of residents and casual drivers, or it is intending to attract visitors, good signage and appropriate interpretation can enhance one's experience. Continuity in all directional and informational signage is critical. Common logos, colors or graphic concepts should run through all public signage. Coordination by private businesses to incorporate some of these design features should be considered. Interpretive signing can benefit everyone. A road with historical markers sends a message that it is a more special, cared for place than a road without such markers. A sense of history gives any place an image of specialness and importance.

By considering the preceding range of strategic options that you will have along your roadway and by involving individuals from local and state government who can provide professional expertise relative to management in the corridor, a roadway planning group can develop a detailed and specific set of strategy options. The options chosen should always

seek to accomplish the objective with the lowest cost and the least regulatory burden possible.

Step 2: Identify Costs and Benefits

Once the various strategic options have been chosen, then an analysis should be performed of the likely costs and benefits associated with each alternative. For example, the roadway planning group should consider whether potential regulations would significantly increase the time required for review of a project. Perhaps of greater importance is the question of whether changing the land use regulations will change the value of the property to the landowners. It should be understood by those involved in the roadway planning process that many of the parcels of land that offer the most spectacular scenery (i.e., open fields and estates) are owned by individuals who have made significant investment in the land for the long term. These people must be involved in the process and their economic interests must be taken into account by the roadway planning group. Consideration should also be given to the potential benefits that may arise from a roadway management plan.

For communities seeking additional tourism the corridor stewardship plan may insure that the views that attract tourists to the road will be sustained into the future. There will be cases when there is almost unanimous support of property owners along a roadway for the stewardship plan. In these cases it is most likely that the property owners will see the stewardship plan as insurance that will protect the road's character and thus protect the character of their neighborhood and their specific property.

Each of the potential costs and benefits as seen by each of the potential interest groups involved in the planning process should be laid out for all to review.

Step 3: Evaluate the Likelihood of Success

With the management of the strategic options laid out and the pros and cons for each option described, the roadway planning group should seek input from the full range of individuals and entities who have an interest or who have control over the land in the corridor. By reviewing each of the strategic options with each of these groups, the likelihood of success for each of the options will become clear. Success may be defined as the degree to which the

landscape would be preserved. Success may be defined as options that are politically feasible and realistic. In other cases, success may be defined as strategies that can be largely accomplished at the lowest possible costs. These types of parameters will emerge and should be clearly stated and defined during the course of the planning project.

PHASE FOUR: STRATEGIC CHOICES

With a full analysis performed and careful consideration given to range of strategic options available, the roadway planning group is ready to select the most important actions to take in order to manage the most important issues along the roadway.

Step 1: Preferred Options

With all of the preceding information taken into account, the group should identify the strategic options that make the most sense for the key areas along the roadway. The top priority issues and actions should be organized into a brief summary that can be reviewed by all the various impacted and interested parties. A workshop should be held to allow the impacted and interested parties to comment on the preferred planning strategy alternative. Revisions to the strategy should be made based on feedback from the public and the final strategy should be then prepared.

Step 2: Assign Responsibilities

Once the overall strategy is defined and accepted by the public then specific responsibilities for implementation should be assigned. These assignments should be reviewed with each of the affected parties before they are finalized.

Step 3: Assemble the Stewardship Plan

All of the preceding work should be organized into one document. This document should be concise and to the point. It should record the process that was used to involve the public and all interested and impact parties; and discuss the decision-making process that was used to choose the range of strategic options and to narrow that

range to the preferred strategic alternative. The pros and cons of the chosen strategy should be reviewed so that those who were not involved in the process can, at a future date, understand why the final choice was made. To the degree possible, those charged with implementation should be clearly identified, the costs should be defined and timetables for implementation should be laid out. This document should be reviewed by the roadway planning group as well as all other parties and then finalized for public and state review.

It is the desire of the Scenic Roadways Board that all stewardship plans be reviewed by local elected officials and the public. If a community so chooses, it can select to vote on and adopt the stewardship plan in a manner similar to that required for the local comprehensive planning process. When appropriate, it is encouraged the communities adopt the stewardship plan as a component of the local comprehensive plan.

Summary

If the preceding steps are followed, the roadway planning group will be able to produce a corridor stewardship plan that will lay out a clear set of actions to preserve the scenic character of the roadway. While the Rhode Island Scenic Roadways Board does not require a stewardship plan for designation as a Rhode Island scenic roadway, it does encourage the preparation of stewardship plans for all scenic roadways. In addition, to the degree that federal funds are available in the future to manage scenic roads, only roads with an adopted stewardship plan will be likely to be eligible for these funds. Therefore, there is a financial incentive for all communities to prepare stewardship plans.

The preceding process is designed to help the community touch each of the necessary elements that should be incorporated within a plan. The final structure and presentation of the plan is entirely left up to the community. While there is no need for excessive levels of detail analysis, the Scenic Roadways Board encourages all communities to approach this process with a high level of thoroughness in order to ensure that the final recommended strategies are doable, politically acceptable and appropriate given the character of the community and the roadway.

Form A
Scenic Inventory Form

Insert photo above and indicate the location of this view on the USGS base map.

What landscape elements are critical to the view's scenic quality?

Which of the following scenic evaluation concepts help to compose or create this scene?

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> integrity | <input type="checkbox"/> uniqueness | <input type="checkbox"/> distinctness | <input type="checkbox"/> completeness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> intactness | <input type="checkbox"/> variety | <input type="checkbox"/> contrast | <input type="checkbox"/> rhythm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> color | <input type="checkbox"/> scale | <input type="checkbox"/> focal points | <input type="checkbox"/> fitness |

Form B

Scenic Resource Summary

1. What are the elements of the landscape that lend the corridor its beauty (e.g., mountains, plains, vegetation, views, water, buildings)?

2. Using the relevant scenic quality concepts (i.e., integrity, order, variety, contrast, color, scale and harmony), describe *why* the roadway offers a pleasing scenic experience.

3. Does the landscape vary along the corridor, or does the roadway have a consistent feeling? If there are segments with distinctive difference, how do the segments differ? Indicate the location of the segments on the map.

4. How does the roadway fit into the landscape? Does its scenic quality result from harmony with the landscape, or from contrast? That is, does the roadway relate closely to the topography or natural features (hills, rivers, mountain ranges) or does it run in obvious contrast to the natural topography?

5. Is the experience of driving the road itself (e.g., curves, surface, etc.) unusual or noteworthy? In what ways is the experience of traveling along this roadway different from the experience of driving other routes in the state or region?

Attach more pages as necessary to answer these questions.

IV. STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

You understand the roadway and its corridor-what makes it appealing, what could change, what is most valuable and where attention should first be applied. Now what?

The solutions to most problems along scenic roads will be specific to the road and site, but there are lessons to be learned from the ways in which challenges have been addressed in similar situations on other roadways in the state. Therefore, this final section presents examples of how typical problems encountered along three Rhode Island scenic roads have been addressed in their Stewardship Plans.

The three roads from which the examples are drawn represent a cross-section of the types of scenic roads that exist in Rhode Island:

- *Veterans Memorial Parkway* in East Providence is an urban parkway designed in the early twentieth century by the Olmsted firm;
- *Shannock Road* in Charlestown and Richmond provides access to and through Shannock Village, an historic mill village lying along the Pawcatuck River and bordered by open fields and woods;
- *Ministerial Road* in South Kingstown is a rural and residential road characterized for much of its length by dense roadside and overhanging vegetation.

This sample of problems and recommended strategies illustrates the ways in which you might choose to approach your road's specific challenges.

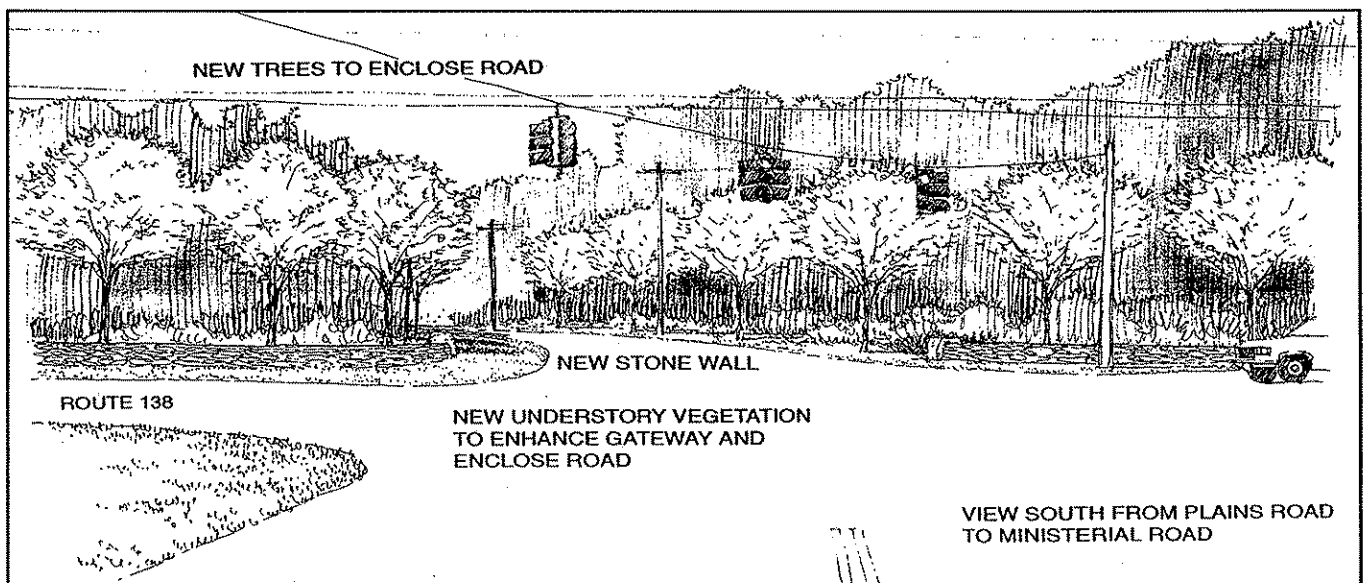
GATEWAYS

The points at which travelers enter a scenic roadway are important locations to focus stewardship efforts. Such "gateways" establish a sense of arrival, and send visual cues to the type of driving environment that lies ahead. They also provide an anchor for management activities. However, these endpoints of the scenic roadway are also part of the larger roadway network and built environment,

and must function as transition areas. As a result there is always a tension between the protection of the scenic qualities of the gateway area and the erosion of these qualities through a series of incremental changes to the roadway, landscaping or signage designed to address problems on the intersecting (non-scenic) road.

The Stewardship Plan for *Ministerial Road* in South Kingstown identified the northern gateway as an important area to enhance through design. This end of Ministerial Road intersects with Route 138, and thus is a point of transition between the rural, residential scenic road and a state route with relatively higher traffic volumes and speeds. Recommended design improvements included district identity markings such as stone signs and shade tree plantings, and intersection edge controls such as stone walls and shallower clearance markings. To serve as a basis for planning and a common frame of reference for residents and local and state officials, the Stewardship Plan includes a sketch of what the intersection would look like after implementation of these design improvements. The Stewardship Plan also includes additional recommendations for reinforcing and enhancing the character of Ministerial Road's northern gateway. These include:

- maintaining the existing residential zoning on all four quadrants of the intersection (i.e., avoiding the common tendency to designate major intersections for commercial uses);



The Route 138 intersection after design improvements.

- defining site planning objectives for University of Rhode Island land in the southeast quadrant of the intersection, such as requiring vegetative buffers and prohibiting additional curb cuts onto Ministerial Road; and
- establishing a joint planning process for the URI land involving the University, the Town and the Ministerial Road Preservation Association.

Veterans Memorial Parkway in East Providence offers a different set of issues relating to its gateways. Both the northern and the southern gateways pose challenges as they do not announce the beginning of the Parkway through either signage or design elements.

At its northern end, the Parkway emerges from the urban street network around Watchemoket Square in a somewhat confusing manner. Poor sight distances combined with the highway ramp system create hazards for bicyclists and pedestrians. Construction of the East Bay Bicycle Path entailed the removal of a large stand of evergreens which defined the end of the Parkway, and now there are no visual cues to make the driver aware of this new, different roadway. Signage also is cluttered and confusing.

The southern gateway to the corridor has a clearer identity than the northern gateway, but could still be improved through vegetation management, identifying signage and improved traffic control. Residents identified the transition from northbound Pawtucket Avenue into the Parkway as a traffic issue of concern, and suggested that improvements and warning signs on the Pawtucket Avenue approach could improve safety as the traffic merges from two lanes to one.

The Stewardship Plan for Veterans Memorial Parkway recommended that a unified signage program be created, to include not only the gateways but also directional signage, traffic controls and interpretive or informational signs along the Parkway. The Plan also recommends developing specific plans for gateway improvements at both the northern and southern gateways, including actions to coordinate signs and reduce signage clutter, enhance landscaping and improve pedestrian links. It suggests that special plantings be used to demarcate the

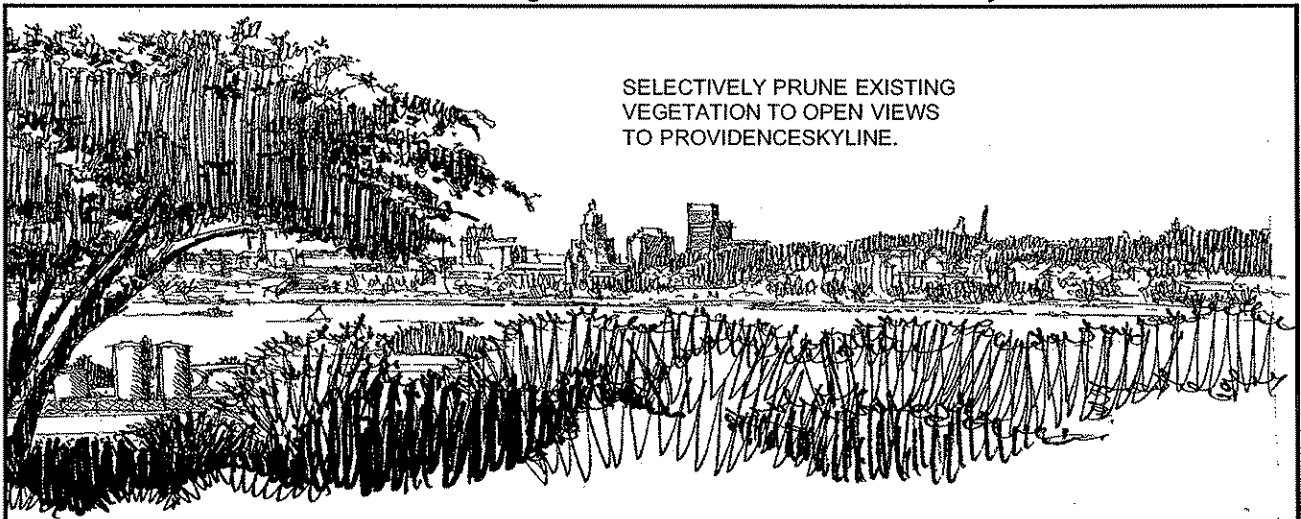
two gateways and soften the visual impact of major intersections.

OVERLOOKS AND PARKLANDS

Many scenic roadways offer opportunities for passive recreation and quiet enjoyment of the corridor through provision of scenic overlooks and/or public parks. Maintaining or enhancing existing park areas and creating new ones can both be important elements of Stewardship Plans for scenic roads.

Veterans Memorial Parkway provides an excellent example of how a Stewardship Plan can contribute to the enhancement of an existing facility. The Parkway is one of five contour-graded parkways in Rhode Island. Historically, the Parkway provided expansive vistas of the Providence River and the City of Providence. Old photographs of the area show the Parkway running along an open escarpment with only sparse vegetation to obstruct views. Over many decades, these vistas have given way to dense woods, and it was suggested that consideration be given to limited clearing and thinning in order to reestablish the sense of openness and the glimpses of long views at intervals along the northern segment of the Parkway.

The Parkway's original design included a scenic overlook at Fort Hill, which was only partially implemented. The Stewardship Plan recommends that additional plantings be considered to add variety and interest to the site, and to soften the visual impact of any expansion to the parking area or any new facilities that might be needed to serve the neighborhood and users of the East Bay Bike Path.



On the other hand, trees and shrubs have grown up in front of the parking area, severely closing in the view of the river, port and city. The Plan recommends that historic views be restored through concentrated clearing and ongoing management of vegetation. In addition, the Plan recommends consideration of zoning changes to ensure protection of views as redevelopment occurs along the waterfront.

A different example of park planning along a scenic roadway is provided by the *Shannock Road* Stewardship Plan. Rather than enhancing an existing facility, the Plan envisions creating a new park to lessen the visual impacts of a major transportation project and to enhance the tourism potential of a historic village center. As the Plan was being developed, improvements to the Amtrak railroad line through Shannock Village were underway. These improvements relate to the electrification of the rail line and upgrading of tracks to provide for high speed rail service between Boston and New York, and include the installation of electric power poles and wires and erection of special structures at the sides of bridges, both of which will be clearly visible from the scenic roadway. Eventually, fences may be constructed along the right-of-way, including the segment in the village center where the rail line closely parallels the roadway.

The Stewardship Plan for Shannock Road recognizes that Shannock Village has appeal to residents and visitors because of its physical and visual environment, and that it is important to protect these qualities from being eroded by deteriorating infrastructure or by the rail project. The Plan recommends the construction of a raiiside wall that not only buffers the Village from the rail line but also creates a usable public space in an area that is now vacant and unimproved. As an initial step, the Plan suggests including benches, arbors, and plantings, as well as murals, photos and other materials interpreting the history of the Village, the railroad, local industry, and/or the nearby Pawcatuck River (designated as a Wild and Scenic River).

At the next level, the Plan recommends that the Town work with Amtrak and private landowners to create a Raiiside Park along the wall. This would include reuse of a ruined mill along the river to provide space for outdoor activities such as fairs, concerts, educational programs and

general public gathering. Public access to the river could be provided next to the mill.

These two examples suggest the range of park and open space activities that can be included in a Stewardship Plan. Where the Plan for Veterans Memorial Parkway recommends relatively modest enhancements to an existing scenic overlook, in part to restore it to its previous condition, the Shannock Road Stewardship Plan envisions a major effort to mitigate the impacts of the rail line electrification project and to enhance the Village for the enjoyment of both residents and visitors.

BICYCLE PATHS AND FACILITIES

By their nature, scenic roadways are usually attractive destinations and routes for bicyclists. However, as the popularity of cycling increases, and as more investments are made in facilities such as dedicated bicycle paths, the potential increases for conflicts among various groups using the road. Visually, a bike path can resemble a minor service road—an additional lane of paving parallel to the existing road. This can have impacts on the density and appearance of the vegetation along a scenic road. In addition, heavy bicycle use can create new safety concerns and may require that additional provision be made for vehicle parking at key access points. All of these issues require careful planning in order to minimize their impacts on the scenic qualities of the roadway.

Veterans Memorial Parkway provides a good example of the relationships between a scenic road and a popular bicycle facility. The East Bay Bicycle Path runs between the Parkway and the Providence River, and closely parallels the Parkway along the northern third of its length. When the Bike Path was constructed, a large stand of evergreens was removed at the northern gateway, altering the visual character of this segment of the scenic road. The Stewardship Plan for the Parkway recommends that vegetation be replaced and managed to restore the previous character of the area.

The parking area at the Fort Hill scenic overlook is a popular access point for bicyclists. The Stewardship Plan notes that consideration must be given to expanding the amount of off-street parking available in a way that will

respect the Parkway's multiple uses and protect its scenic and recreational qualities. The Plan suggests that, as an alternative to expanding the existing parking area at the overlook, a new parking area should be considered as part of recreation planning for the City-owned Squantum Woods reservation, since this could be accomplished with significantly less visual impact.

Ministerial Road presents a different set of challenges and opportunities in terms of accommodating bicyclists, since the planned South County Bikeway will run across, rather than parallel to, the scenic road. The Stewardship Plan recognizes several ways in which the needs of non-automotive users should be addressed.

First, the Plan expresses a policy that Ministerial Road, because of its narrowness, heavy bordering vegetation and lack of shoulders, "is most suitable for cars, and less suitable for pedestrians, cyclists or horseback riders," but recommends providing two-foot paved shoulders and reducing vehicle speeds in order to make the road safer for multiple users.

Next, the Plan recognizes that the South County Bikeway will provide a safer alternative route for cyclists who might otherwise ride on Ministerial Road, and therefore supports state efforts to create the Bikeway. It recommends that all parking be away from the roadway so as not to impact the visual qualities of the scenic road, and suggests that school parking lots be considered for Bikeway parking.

The Stewardship Plan recommends that a separate bike path connecting Route 138 and the South County Bikeway be constructed alongside Ministerial Road. Placing this path on the east side of the road would avoid disturbing an identified archeological site and would also provide access to the bikeway from a large parcel owned by the University. Finally, the Plan recommends that the Ministerial Road Preservation Association encourage local youth groups to explore the potential for short ancillary walking and cycling paths along and near Ministerial Road.

The Ministerial Road Stewardship Plan thus addresses the issues of bicycle use and safety in a variety of ways: ensuring safe use of the roadway, defining the interface between the Bikeway and the roadway, and establishing

side connections to both the Bikeway and the road. This set of recommendations provides the groundwork for a comprehensive strategy for accommodating bicycle users safely while preserving the distinctive scenic qualities of Ministerial Road.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Whether on a designed urban parkway or a country road, the type and condition of vegetation plays a significant part in defining scenic quality. However, the trees, shrubs, ground covers and flowering plants along the roadside come under increasing pressure as the numbers of motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians using the road increase. Every Stewardship Plan should consider the effects of vegetation on the road's scenic quality and on the travel experience that it provides; and should also address the ways in which roadway management activities will affect and perhaps alter the amount, type, location and health of that vegetation.

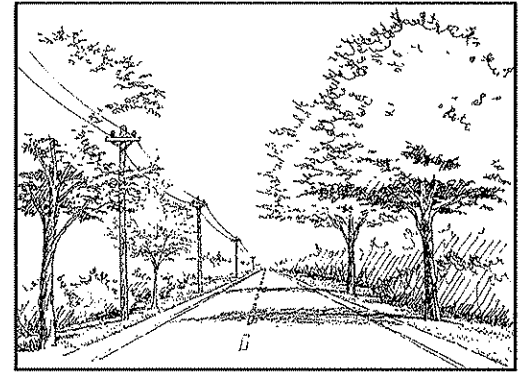
The *Veterans Memorial Parkway* Stewardship Plan recognizes two aspects of vegetation management as being important to the scenic quality of the corridor. First, recognizing that the Parkway is the result of careful landscape design by the Olmsted firm, the Plan stresses the importance of using landscaping to strengthen the road's image. It recommends that a landscaping and vegetation management plan for the entire corridor be prepared based on historic plans—either the original Parkway design plans or, if those are not obtainable, documentation of what Olmsted did in similar settings (for example, Veterans Parkway in West Roxbury, Massachusetts).

The second aspect of vegetation management, alluded to earlier, is that of view enhancement.

Roadside vegetation defines the special character of *Ministerial Road*. For almost its entire length, vegetation hugs the edge of the roadway. Mountain laurel, rhododendron and evergreen shrubs provide multi-season color, changing textures and variety. Overhanging trees enclose the road and create experiences of traveling through leafy tunnels.

Thus, maintenance of vegetation is essential to the protection of Ministerial Road's scenic quality. The Stewardship Plan addresses two aspects of vegetation management: protection and encouragement of the native roadside flowering shrubs, and maintenance of overhanging tree canopies.

The Plan recommends that guidelines for the maintenance and care of mountain laurel and rhododendron be prepared and distributed to all property owners along the road, and discussed with state DOT maintenance officials and workers.



INTERSECTING DRIVEWAYS AND SUBDIVISION ROADS

Most scenic roads provide some combination of through traffic and local access functions. If the land along a road has further potential for development, the need to provide for local access can result in significant character changes as new driveways and subdivision roads are constructed.

The Stewardship Plan for *Ministerial Road* addresses the design and location of roads for new residential subdivisions. The Plan recommends the adoption of specific guidelines or standards for development within the Ministerial Road corridor, such as:

- Encouraging continued use of shared driveways, rather than creation of individual curb cuts for homes fronting the road;
- Allowing reduced standards for subdivision road design (e.g., narrower roadways, smaller corner radii) and construction (e.g., packed gravel rather than paved surfaces).

The Plan also recommends that the Town and the Ministerial Road Preservation Association seek to obtain donations of conservation easements along the road right of way as frontage lots are developed, in order to preserve the visual character of the road.

Along *Veterans Memorial Parkway*, commercial rather than residential access has the greatest potential to affect the scenic qualities of the roadway. There are several waterfront locations where redevelopment is anticipated and, indeed, desired by the community. The challenge

here is to accommodate the increased traffic that would result without significantly changing the appearance of the road.

One of the future redevelopment sites is at Kettle Point, toward the southern end of the corridor. The site has an existing driveway which joins the Parkway at a difficult location (in the middle of an "S" curve), near the foot of a hill that rises from Watchemoket Cove, so that sight distances are limited by both horizontal and vertical alignment. In addition, the driveway enters the Parkway at a sharp angle, which further complicates the turning movements.

The Stewardship Plan recommends that the Town prepare design criteria for access points to Kettle Point and other waterfront redevelopment areas. In this way, the visual impacts of improving access and safety can be dealt with proactively, rather than having to react to a development proposal.

MANAGING TOURISM AS A PART OF THE BYWAY

Although tourism promotion is not likely to be the major focus of most scenic roadway management efforts in Rhode Island, tourism can be a significant factor in some situations. The Scenic Roadways programs offers an opportunity to combine tourism promotion with resource protection in a mutually reinforcing relationship-increased visitation can provide public awareness of the corridor's intrinsic resources and can support economic vitality to ensure the continued health of existing businesses within the corridor.

Shannock Road provides an example of a scenic roadway that can benefit from carefully managed tourism. The corridor provides an unusually clear perspective on a part of Rhode Island's industrial history. Many of the elements of the small mill village are evident in Shannock Village. Visitors can see not only the relationships among the river, dams, mills and railroad, but also the homes of the mill owner and managers, village businesses, utopian mill worker housing and surrounding farmlands. The classic architecture and original road layout are also well preserved in the Village.

These historic elements, combined with Shannock Road's designation as a scenic roadway and the designation of the Pawcatuck River as a Wild and Scenic River, provide the foundation for achieving a modest increase in tourism visitation in the corridor. The Plan recommends that when the proposed Railside Park is constructed and roadway improvements are completed, a set of affordable tourism promotion strategies be developed to attract more visitors and thus provide more customers for local businesses. New small-scale recreational services and amenities, canoe and bicycle rentals, materials on natural resource interpretation could also be provided to encourage visitors to access and enjoy the river and surrounding countryside.

V. CONCLUSION

Rhode Island's scenic roadways are important elements of the state's heritage. They provide glimpses into Rhode Island's rich history and culture, and opportunities for residents and visitors alike to experience the variety of rural landscapes and urban streetscapes that exist in the state. As Rhode Island continues to grow and change, it becomes ever more important to preserve this heritage so that it can continue to be a source of enjoyment and knowledge.

The concepts and techniques that have been described in this Guidebook can be used by local governments, organizations and individuals to develop strategies for protecting and enhancing (and, perhaps, promoting) their scenic roadways. By involving a broad cross-section of the community in the stewardship of these resources, we will help to ensure their continuing contributions to the quality of life in Rhode Island.

APPENDIX A – LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS

The Natural Environment

Vegetation

Vegetation is the dominant forest patterns, field and forest edges, agricultural fields and significant single trees or stands of trees that one sees in the landscape. Examples of strong vegetative features include rows of trees or hedge rows, tree-lined roads creating a leaf tunnel effect, orchards, masses of wildflowers or ferns, dense forests, fields, wet meadows and stands of evergreens. As Rhode Island is a very lush state, vegetation will be found everywhere. Truly scenic vegetative features can be distinguished using the evaluative concepts of contrast, variety, uniqueness, focal point and rhythm.

Improper management of vegetation along roadways is a significant contributor to the degradation of scenic road character. For instance, clear-cutting of all vegetation drastically changes the characteristic of the road. In a similar manner, the removal of large established trees or the planting of inappropriate vegetation can all change the character of a roadway. Conversely, vegetation must also be controlled in order to maintain high-quality scenery. Trees and shrubs which grow to high or too dense can obscure views. Given Rhode Island's lushness, there are even roads where roadside vegetation can creep too close to the edge of the road and thus degrade the road's established character.

Topography

Topography is the relative relief of the landscape. It is the shape of the land: mountains, valleys, hills, plateaus, plains and basins. Often the greater the topographic relief, the greater the interest created in the landscape. This is not always true, however, as views of vast flat areas have their own emotional impact. In Rhode Island, the dominant landforms that give interest in the landscape are the rolling hills and the landforms found along the coast, including bluffs, beaches and the landforms created by water (e.g., inlets and coves). Typically, topography can not be significantly changed, and thus there are few actions by people

relative to topography that can change the character of a road. However, there are exceptions to this rule. Major earth moving operations can remove rolling hills or create buffers and berms which can change the feel of the original landscape.

Geology

Geology describes the landscape's mineral and soil composition and structure, both at the land's surface and beneath it. This term refers to geology as it relates to the visual landscape. Examples of geologic features could include dramatic rock outcrops, unique mountain formations, exposed cliffs and other visible geologic features. Large-scale, prominent, dramatic or unique geologic features such as rock formations, ravines, glacial formations with strong colors, patterns or shapes are all geologic landscape elements. Obviously, geologic features are everywhere and they may be unique or hidden or lack physical form. This term only refers to those geologic features that one can see. As with topography, geology does not change dramatically as people affect the landscape. However, in cases where rock outcroppings are a prominent feature of the landscape, blasting or vandalism can mar those features of the landscape.

Water and Wetlands

The presence of water in one of more of its forms-lakes, ponds, rivers, brooks, marshes, wetlands and waterfalls is almost always scenic. Size can be, but is not always, a determining factor. The visual impact of water, as with other landscape features, is often a function of how long the viewing time might be. A beautiful waterfall passed in a split-second at 60 m.p.h. has less visual impact on a road than a broad vista of a lake which can be viewed for a longer period of time.

Water in its natural form almost always enhances a roadway; the structures that humans build to manage and control water can at times degrade the landscape. Care should be taken with the design of dams, bridges, sluiceways and embankments so that the man-made structures do not overwhelm or detract from the natural beauty of water.

Wildlife

The presence of wild animals or their habitat in view of the roadway can offer scenic interest that is typically difficult to predict. Visible signs of wildlife habitats such as beaver dams in ponds, trout streams, waterfowl nesting areas, or deer yards would also fall into this category. Interpretation is often needed to assist travelers to appreciate the presence and habitats of wildlife.

The Built Environment

The following features are useful for analyzing the context of a roadway based on human activity. Not only will they help in making the determination as to the urban/rural character of a particular roadway, but they will also point to the specific features of the roadway that make it scenic.

Town and Village Centers

Historic town centers typically offer a pleasing visual experience if the areas are intact relative to their historic character and if they are reasonably economically healthy. Newer developments located within historic centers should demonstrate a respect for the traditional building themes and site development patterns found within the village. Ideally there should continue to be a differentiation between the center and the surrounding rural or suburban landscapes. Older buildings should still express the majority of the elements from their original character. Extensive changes in facades or rooflines or signage that obscure or detract from the building's original historic qualities tend to decrease the visual character of most village center buildings. Most damaging to village centers is the demolition of historic buildings followed by the construction of new, modern buildings that have no relationship to the surrounding structures or to the historical context of the village. The construction of franchise buildings in the center of historic villages is a typical example of town/village center degradation.

Residential Areas

Since housing developments sprang up in great numbers since the end of World War II, identifying residential areas that are especially visually pleasing is typically a function of uniqueness and fitness. Older residential areas that are

economically healthy tend to offer a more notable visual experience due to the fact that the architecture is less common and more interesting to the eye. Residential areas surrounding historic mill villages and the Newport Mansions represent perhaps the two extremes of residential neighborhoods in Rhode Island that one would find visually attractive.

Another aspect of some residential areas that makes them more visually appealing is the degree to which the housing actually enhances or helps to define the surrounding natural environment. For example, a collection of farming houses within a broad view would be quite appealing as the houses themselves help to define or act as symbols for the surrounding agricultural landscape. In the same way, beachfront homes in some areas may add variety and interest, and define the seaside landscape.

Degradation in residential areas is typically a function of either poor upkeep of the homes or the construction of new homes which are incongruous with the surrounding neighborhood. Many new neighborhoods have immature or non-existent landscaping and the sighting of the homes may not be scenic. A common negative impact that homes have on scenic roadways is when roadside residential development results in clear cutting of trees and shrubbery with the replacement of lawns that run to the edge of a scenic road. Too many homes in a row, using this type of approach, result in a monotonous, typically suburban feel, even along roads which previous to the construction were rural in character.

Commercial Areas

Commercial, retail or office developments outside of traditional city or town centers may offer a positive visual experience, but often do not. The unusual, isolated commercial property lying outside of a town center that is visually appealing will be a well-designed building that fits within the surrounding landscape and provides a unique focal point for that landscape. The typical roadside commercial strip and office developments found along many Rhode Island roadways are rarely scenic. Even if the building is well designed, the poor placement of parking lots, signs, utility wires and other features that are part of the strip development will detract from the building and decrease the visual quality of the scene.

Industry

Factories, warehouses, processing facilities, smoke stacks and other structures associated with manufacturing or transportation can provide a pleasing visual experience. The historic mill structures found throughout Rhode Island are one example of a pleasing industrial visual scene. More recent industrial structures in very well designed industrial parks may provide a positive visual experience for the traveler. The concepts of uniqueness and scale are very useful when evaluating the visual importance of an industrial building on the landscape. Industrial landscapes that have damaging scenic qualities include modern buildings with little architectural interest or properties holding large amounts of equipment or vehicles that are randomly and carelessly stored on the surrounding site. Industrial areas that have no landscaping tend to be less visually appealing than those that have even a modest amount of landscaping. As with the other types of development that can occur, the incongruity of industrial development within a landscape that has a different character is an issue to guard against along scenic roadways.

Agriculture and Fishing

Working farms unspoiled by suburban or commercial development with well-managed fields and pastures and traditional farm buildings and structures are classic agricultural scenic elements. Moored fishing boats, docks and piers and traditional New England fishing villages offer high scenic value. Agricultural activities rarely degrade the quality of a scenic roadways, except in instances when modern structures are used which do not fit within the historic character of the farm or fishing landscape.

Bridges

Typically, historic bridges are pleasing elements in the landscape; modern bridges tend to be less appealing. With greater concerns over costs and standardized design requirements, modern bridges place little emphasis on aesthetics. Of greatest concern relative to scenic roadway management is when bridges either must be replaced or widened due to increased traffic levels. In many cases, historic bridges have been removed and replaced with plain, uninteresting structures which detract from the

historic character of the landscape. This is typically the case when older bridges must be widened to handle more traffic. Standards of design are used which rarely show any design interest.

Designed Landscapes

This term refers to parks or other areas which were intentionally designed by a landscape architect or other design professionals. In the majority of cases, these landscapes offer a pleasing visual experience. Relative to roadway management, the greatest concern is when roadway widening or other improvements within a corridor along the road edge will in some way compromise the original design integrity of these landscapes.

Cemeteries

Given the long period of time in which Rhode Island has been occupied by a European culture which uses cemeteries, cemeteries are a prominent part of the historic landscape of our state. Most cemeteries either suggest great age (with moderate care, they offer a small but pleasing element in the landscape), or they suggest an ongoing larger public institution. The latter category of cemeteries tend to be large, have large monuments and headstones, are well landscaped and tended with great care. Cemeteries almost always enhance the scenic value of a roadway.

The greatest concern relative to cemeteries and roadway change is when roadway improvements result in the removal of structures and/or landscaping that provided the buffer and border around the cemetery. This type of physical transition space between the cemetery and the surrounding world is very important to maintain the identity of the cemetery. These border spaces should be preserved in all cases.

Recreation Areas

Most recreation areas consist of large amounts of open space and as such, these are pleasing elements in most landscapes. Golf courses, lakes, public parks and other recreation spaces that are dominated by the natural landscape are always positive elements along scenic roadways. Recreation areas consisting of a large number of structures

or recreation facility structures (e.g. basketball courts, tennis courts or racing tracks) can be positive elements on the landscape; but if poorly managed and poorly designed these can detract from the scenic roadway. As these recreation facilities are often publicly-owned, there is a higher likelihood that poorly maintained facilities can be improved and thus the negative impacts from such facilities can be lessened along scenic roadways.

APPENDIX B – DETAILS OF THE ROADWAY AND ROAD EDGE

Within the Road Right of Way

Road Surface

The surface of the road plays a major role in the character and visual quality of the route. Dirt, sand and gravel express a very different feel from asphalt. Speeds must be slower and the overall feel of the road is rural and unimproved. New asphalt has a different character from older asphalt. Fresh paving suggests a new road; worn pavement blends with the landscape. In rare cases, asphalt blends can be used which contain material taken from the immediate landscape and which relate directly to that landscape.

The primary way in which the surface of the road can detract from the visual quality of the roadway is when the roadway surface is inappropriate for the overall character of the road. A typical and dramatic change that can occur is when a sand, dirt or gravel road is paved. While safety and efficiency considerations can be appropriate and urgent reasons to pave a road, there is no doubt that the character of the road changes fundamentally when it moves from an unpaved surface to a paved surface. This change in character is most obvious when the alignment, adjoining land uses and roadside vegetation all continue to have a backroad feel, but the pavement surface suggests a more suburban or urban road.

Lane Striping

The introduction of lane striping is a necessary modern-day control over where one drives on the road, but it does have an impact on character. Lane striping defines the travel lanes and road edges. Edge striping separates the driver from the landscape along the road. Travel lanes appear narrower when striping is painted and the driver has a clear direction on where he or she should direct the vehicle. A road without lane striping suggests that one is in an area away from people and with low levels of traffic. Roads without lane striping give one a sense of what it was like to travel in the era before highway departments and roadway maintenance standards. Roads without

striping blend more easily into the landscape; the road shoulder feels like it is a part of the road.

Shoulder Width

The addition of shoulders or the widening of shoulders is another aspect of the surface of the road that dramatically affects its visual character. Roads without shoulders suggest slow speeds; they suggest to the driver that the road is rural and of some age. Lack of shoulders places the driver closer to the road edge and thus closer to the landscape. Adding shoulders increases travel speed.

Most importantly, adding shoulder width changes the visual relationship or ratio of road width to the landscape's breadth of field. The road takes up a larger percentage of the view and it becomes more prominent. This balance, however, is affected greatly by the depth of the surrounding view that one has from the roadway. If the view is very long and the landscape is large, then this diminishes the impact of additional pavement width. If the views are shallow or the vegetative edge is such that it frames the visual character of the road, then road widening can have a significant impact on the scenic quality of the road.

Shoulder Material and Design

Shoulders can be composed of asphalt, packed gravel, or at times packed gravel covered with loam and grass. Each of these materials gives a very different character to the road edge. In addition, shoulders can be composed of different colors of asphalt and this can also affect the character of the roadway. Shoulders constructed of the same material as the travel lanes will increase the visual width of the road. Contrasting materials or colors visually define the shoulder as a different space from the travel lane and can reduce the road's visual impact on the scene.

Bike Lanes

Bike lanes are the striped lanes between the travel lanes and the road edge or curb which are specifically marked for bicycle use. The visual impacts of bike lanes are similar to those from shoulder widening. The additional width can increase travel speeds and perceptually move the

traveler further away from the road edge and the landscape. The wider the paved area becomes the more predominant a part of the traveler's visual experience it becomes. Along with the visual impacts of the additional pavement associated with bike lanes, additional striping is required and this has a similar impact to that discussed in the line striping section above.

In addition to these visual impacts, bike lanes bring bicyclists to the roadway. The presence of bicyclists has a minimal visual impact on the roadway but does affect the degree to which those driving can focus on the surrounding landscape. Watching out for bicyclists requires more attention on the part of drivers. The presence of cyclists can also reduce travel speeds and this can have a positive effect on the way in which the driver experiences the landscape.

Curbs

Curbing provides a feeling of order to the roadway. Vertical granite curbs suggest a village and are generally used in conjunction with sidewalks. Cape Cod berms or sloping asphalt curbs have a more suburban feel and give less definition to the roadway. Curbing is one of the fundamental physical changes that can be made to a roadway. It shifts the viewer's perception of the road from being a rural road to being a village, suburban or urban roadway. Travel speeds tend to drop when curbs are installed due to the road narrowing and the basic message sent by curbs: people are walking here!

Guardrails

Guardrails affect the character of a road in several ways. First, the presence of guardrails sends a visual message that the topography at the road edge poses a danger for cars traveling off the roadway. Guardrails enclose and protect the traveler. Their curvature also helps to define the road's curvature and helps the unfamiliar traveler to safely negotiate turns.

Second, there are many types of guardrail and the type of guardrail influences road character. The older the type (e.g., wooden post and rail, chain mesh or post and cable), the older the apparent character of the road. Guardrail is

also sized to address the degree of hazard and traffic volumes and this can affect road character. For example, Jersey barriers running down the median of a roadway have a much greater visual impact on road character than does common W beam guardrail.

The third issue for consideration is the impact of the guardrail on the view from the road. While double high guardrail might be recommended on some roads to address safety concerns, it should also be recognized that the view from an automobile will be restricted and this will affect roadway character.

Finally, in a similar manner, the type of guardrail material will affect road character. Galvanized guardrail stands out more in some environments than other materials. The degree of contrast of the guardrail material should be considered when evaluating visual impacts.

Crosswalks

Crosswalks signal that pedestrians may be present. They are road features found in villages, not on rural roads or arterials. Generally speaking they tend to follow the installation of traffic lights. Therefore, given the other land use and roadway improvements that precede crosswalks, their introduction tends to not have a dramatic impact on roadway character.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks are either at grade (i.e., at the same level as the roadway) or elevated. These two types have different impacts on road character. Elevated sidewalks provide a clearer distinction between car and pedestrian. Raising people up by 6" to 8" makes them more visible to the driver. The presence of the raised curb protects the pedestrian. The curbing also tends to keep vehicles further away from the road edge as it is difficult to gauge distance from a curb when traveling at higher speeds. This augments the pedestrian's feeling of safety. Drivers tend to go slower when pedestrians are visible. Elevated sidewalks are one of the clearest visual cues to drivers that the surrounding environment is one of a mixture of users and that the car must be driven more slowly in order to anticipate people, bicycles and other users of the road.

At grade sidewalks are often made of asphalt to save costs and they offer little or no separation distance between the edge of the shoulder and the sidewalk. The greater this distance, the greater the safety for the pedestrian and the more visually pleasing the road edge. In this case, the width of this buffer strip (or tree strip, as it is sometimes known), provides the visual cue that pedestrians are present. The amount of distance between the road edge and the sidewalk provides the visual safety cue in this setting, rather than the guarding signal of the granite curb and the elevated sidewalk.

Slopes

The slopes adjoining roads affect scenic character primarily by their degree of naturalness or artificiality and the quality of their design and maintenance. The degree of slope is not, per se, a critical factor in road character, but if steep slopes interfere with the growth of sustainable vegetation or require the construction of bank retention structures that loom over the driver, then scenic quality is impacted.

Of more concern is the way in which the cut or fill slope was created and shaped. Does the slope reflect similar natural or well established slopes elsewhere along the road? Is the replanted vegetation in character with the road? If retaining structures are used (i.e., concrete walls or stone), do they mesh with the surrounding environment (e.g., native stone)?

As in so many cases, the way in which an introduced landscape element works will be dependent on the underlying character expressed by the road. A tree-lined rural road might be ruined by constructed slopes that cut all mature trees back from the road and are then planted with grasses. In a wide valley with sparser vegetation, a similar treatment might be very suitable.

Utilities

Utility structures (i.e., gas lines, electric lines, transmission towers, electric poles and cellular antennae) present special problems along any road. For ease of maintenance, utility managers prefer to have such structures within easy access of the road. However, in the majority of cases, utility structures placed adjacent to or over scenic roads will

disturb viewsheds and modify the road's character. When possible, lines and pipes should be buried underground along scenic roads, unless the utility in question somehow fits with the road's historic character (for instance, in the case of a rail line following a road, the short power and communication lines that run parallel to the rail line are historically important and might be left in their original state), or unless the damage caused to vegetation during digging will be more significant than the above ground utility.

Basic utility structures are addressed in the *Design Standards*.

Vegetation within the Right of Way

In Rhode Island, roadside vegetation is one of the most critical landscape elements along scenic roadways. Its removal or alteration can greatly affect a road's character. While all roads must have roadside maintenance and too much vegetation can create safety problems, care must be taken to leave or replant vegetation that continues the in-place vegetative character of the road. Post-construction plantings that differ greatly from the surrounding plant materials will significantly damage the road. Generally speaking, Rhode Island roads are most scenic when there are significant amounts of roadside vegetation which enclose and soften the road edge.

Signage

Signage within the right of way can be as important to the road's visual character as the more commonly discussed private signs adjoining the road. Directional, speed, safety, adopt-a-road, mile marking and other signs can all add to visual clutter along the road. The fewest possible ROW of signs should be the objective. While federal and state standards tend to define when specific signs are needed, there are also cases where there is flexibility in the placement decision. Placement should avoid disrupting critical views whenever possible.

Adjacent Biking and Walking Paths

Bike lanes are part of the roadway. Adjacent biking and walking paths lie four to 10 feet away from the road. The most critical issue for scenic road visual management is the degree to which the bike/walking path blends with the landscape or stands out against the landscape. If the path is busy and located too close to the road, it will visually detract from the road's inherent character. Parking facilities and the bike and pedestrian movement between the pathway and parking will also raise management issues.

Road Intersections

The point where roads intersect with the scenic road is an important landscape element to manage. The most critical issue is the relationship between the radii and width of the intersecting road with the dimensions of the scenic road. A new subdivision street built too much larger standards than the scenic road will be a jarring element in the visual experience. Curbing, turning radii, striping, pavement material (at least on the apron) and road width should all be complementary with the scenic road.

APPENDIX C – THE EDGE OF ABUTTING PROPERTIES

There is an important area lying between the road and views one sees along a road. This space between the nearby properties and the road defines the road and frames the views drivers see. Vegetation, fencing, parking areas and signage are some of the elements of this part of the landscape. They are critical to managing a road's scenic character.

Vegetation and Lawns

Perhaps the greatest single contributor to road edge character is vegetation. It is rare to find a road outside of an urban setting that has no vegetation along its edge and is also visually pleasing. The color, shapes, movement, mystery and privacy provided by roadside vegetation is critical to the Rhode Island landscape. Tree-canopied roads are at one end of the spectrum and carefully manicured lawns and yards are at the other.

There is a need for a basic level of vegetation to help to define the transition from road to adjacent property. If no vegetation is present-other than mowed grass-then the adjacent lawn will appear to run to the road's edge. This lack of space separation is confusing. Defined spaces are a part of New England's heritage and this should be emphasized.

Fencing and Stone Walls

Stone walls and fencing can provide the transition noted above if vegetation does not. Ideally, vegetation should enhance fencing wherever possible. Of prime importance with fencing is defining the degree to which the fencing either visually separates the road from the property or enhances the visual experience of seeing the property. Stone walls and picket fences allow the road user to visually enjoy the property. Tall private fences do not. Where privacy fences exist, vegetation should be used to provide a transition between the road and the fence.

Driveways

Driveways should be scaled to a size that suggests the relative importance of the driveway compared to the road. In other words, driveways should not approach the scale of the road. If they do, the imbalance of width discussed above under intersecting roads will come into play. Driveways, due to their low levels of use and the slow speeds of the vehicles can be landscaped at each side with plants, posts or fences. These elements suggest an entryway and provide more variety in the roadside landscape.

Parking Lots

Parking lots can overwhelm a road or they can be invisible. There is little in the inherent nature of parking lots that demands they be visible from the street. If the commercial structure and/or its sign are effective, the visual presence of the parking lot should not be needed. Buffer and hide parking lots whenever possible. When not buffered, parking lots widen the visual size of the road immensely. Ideally, the building being served by the lot should be close to the road and should be the focus of the viewer's attention. Parking lots often interfere with this experience.

Commercial Signage

For commercialized sections of scenic roads, sign management policy should seek to bring signs into an appropriate scale with the vegetation, the buildings and the surrounding landscape. Signs should blend with the landscape rather than becoming the focal point for the viewer. Heavily developed commercial areas may choose sign strategies that allow signs to overwhelm the landscape. Scenic roads should seek to let the landscape be the dominant feature; signs should be secondary.

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Abstract: This document provides communities throughout the state with guidelines to prepare a Corridor Stewardship Plan. These guidelines will help communities to understand what it is that gives the subject road its special scenic or cultural characteristic, help to identify which roads in a community have important scenic qualities, how those qualities can be damaged, and how to manage the road and its scenic characteristics to preserve and/or enhance the scenic quality.

