

3.13 Cultural Resources

3.13.1 Visual Resources

Existing Visual Character and Views into the Site

The project site is located in a setting of rolling topography and suburban development, where views are generally limited by the nearby hills, vegetation and curving roadway corridors. The configuration of the site, with its narrow end along US Route 6, provides for limited views into the site from this primary transportation corridor. Route 6 is characterized by its variety of commercial and retail businesses that line it for miles east and west of the project site. The moderately-dense residential developments that exist in the immediate site area -- established single-family residences on Gay Ridge Road, Jennifer Court, Timberlane Court, Stonewall Court, and Jefferson Court to the west -- all have limited views of the site due to the existing vegetation and topography. No views exist of the site from Curry Street or other roads in the local area due to existing tree cover and topography. Land to the immediate east of the property (in the Town of Somers) is wooded and undeveloped, a large portion of it being wooded wetland.

A visual resources field survey was conducted from local roads in the project area on December 19, 2003, to identify locations in the vicinity where the project site may be visible from roads and properties with public access. At this time of year, the leaves had fallen from the trees and maximum visual exposure could be assessed. During times of year when trees are in leaf, the project site would be notably less visible, and visible from shorter distances than discussed in this section.

The extent of the field survey was initially determined by inspection of US Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps with the aid of 3D viewing computer software (Terrain Navigator Pro), which reveal the potential visibility of the project site based on topography. Thus, the survey established the *potential viewshed* of the proposed project. The field survey refined this assessment based on limiting factors of the actual visibility of the site, accounting for topography, vegetation, and buildings. The field survey identified the *actual viewshed* of specific locations in the site vicinity where the site (and potentially the proposed project) were visible.

The field survey included identification of any prominent land forms, land cover types, and the visual character of the site and local area. The survey also investigated whether there are any natural areas of significant scenic value and structures of significant architectural design in the vicinity of the project.

Currently, portions of the site are open and used for agricultural purposes and other portions are heavily wooded with a mix of large deciduous trees and a mixed understory of small trees and herbaceous cover. Areas in the north and central portions of the site, which generally coincide with areas of very deep, well drained soils and gentler slopes, are open to cultivation. In general, topography on the site slopes from a high point of approximately 614 feet near the center of the property to low points of approximately 525 and 530 feet at the northwestern and southeastern corners of the property, respectively. Topography rises approximately 85 feet across the site. Knolls of similar elevation exist to the immediate east, south and west of the site.

Elevations of the numerous hilltops in the site vicinity are similar to the hill upon which the site is situated. The project site character is not unlike that of other lands in the project vicinity. The topography of the local region renders views of the site only from points relatively close to the property along a short portion of US Route 6 to the north of the site and from nearby points west within the residential neighborhood cul-de-sacs that come off of Curry Street. From no publicly-accessible vantage point can the entire project site be seen (refer to Figure 2-3, which shows the site in relation to its surroundings on an aerial photograph of the area).

From US Route 6, views reveal the northern third of the site, limited by topography. Since this is a heavily traveled two-lane road, views to the site are generally experienced as a passing glimpse by motorists rather than a fixed view. The developed or undeveloped nature of the site in relation to its surroundings are experienced to some extent, rather than any detail of its character, as one travels the corridor.

Views from the eastern ends of Gay Ridge Road, Jennifer Court, Timberlane Court, Stonewall Court, and Jefferson Court are generally limited to about 500 to 700 feet into the site due to topography and the intervening trees. The topography slopes up from Curry Street toward the site and limits views from these cul-de-sac roads to the very eastern ends. From Gay Ridge Road and Jennifer Court, views also reveal most of the northern third of the site, limited by the intervening vegetation on and off the project site.

From Timberlane Court and Stonewall Court, views are more restricted into the west-central area of the property by vegetation that exists in a wooded, undeveloped Town-owned neighborhood park situated between the existing residential properties and the subject site. From Jefferson Court, the southwestern corner of the site can be seen, but views into the site are largely obscured due to the topography and dense woods cover.

There are no visually prominent features on the project site. No publicly-accessible view points to the project site other than the local road network were identified. No views of the project site were identified from other local roads or public facilities in the site vicinity.

Aesthetic Resources

No visually prominent land forms or land cover types were identified in the site vicinity. The character of the project area includes established residential development such as in the Curry Street area, with mature trees on single-family lots, a variety of commercial/retail development in the US Route 6 corridor, and open space that is either undeveloped woods or in agricultural use. The local region is characterized by its suburban development within a backdrop of wooded hillsides and developed road corridors.

The project site is not atypical in this regional landscape. While the Town has documented numerous resources that are worthy of protection in its Comprehensive Plan (Draft, 2003) for the Town of Yorktown (which may be adopted in 2004), no aesthetic resources (historic resources or scenic resources) have been designated by the Town in the immediate project area. No public facility was identified within the potential viewshed of the project site. No natural areas of significant scenic value that would be sensitive to changes in the visual environment were identified within the site viewshed.

No structures of significant architectural design were identified in the immediate vicinity of the project.

Potential Visual Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

Construction of the project as proposed will remove approximately 24.62 acres of existing woods and cultivated fields on the site and replace it with house lots, roads, a ballfield, and stormwater management facilities, thus creating a change to the visual character of the site. Following construction of the proposed subdivision, views of the site from US Route 6 and from the identified view points west of the property will change to a more developed setting, similar in character and density to housing development in the Curry Street area and other developed areas in the site vicinity. The visibility of this development is anticipated to be limited by topography to the proposed house lots closest to the viewer, whether on US Route 6 or on the local roads to the west.

From US Route 6, existing trees are proposed to remain at the northern end of the site that will shield views of much of the project as one travels past the site. Houses on Lots 1, 2, 11, 12, 33 and 34 could potentially have visual access directly from US Route 6, similar to existing houses along that road. A view directly into the proposed subdivision road at its intersection with US Route 6 would reveal the developed house lots to a greater extent than any other portion of the site frontage. Due to the topography on the site, views of the majority of the site development would be obscured from any traveler on US Route 6.

From the east ends of Jennifer Court, Timberlane Court, and Stonewall Court the rear of adjoining new house lots beyond the existing wooded buffer would likely be visible to some extent, over a distance of 300 to 400 feet. The visual buffer would include land that would remain undisturbed from its wooded condition (both land within the project site and the existing parkland) some 200 feet and more in depth. Construction of a roadway connection to Gay Ridge Road, necessitating removal of vegetation that separates developed portions of the site from Gay Ridge Road, would result in slightly increased visual exposure from this local road toward proposed Lot 34. From the eastern end of Jefferson Court, the rear of adjoining new house lots beyond the existing wooded buffer would also likely be visible to some extent, over a distance of about 300 feet. From these local roads, preservation of the intervening woods would minimize the change in the wooded landscape views from points west of the project site.

As stated above, no views exist of the site from Curry Street or other roads in the local area due to existing tree cover and topography.

New views of the project site in the post-development condition will be mitigated by tree plantings and other landscape plantings that are expected to be installed by the future lot owners, and by the preservation of existing trees where possible within the project. In particular, preservation of wooded vegetation along the western side of the property, both on the subject property and on the neighboring Town park site, will provide a natural buffer between this development and the established single-family developments to the west. The new recreational field in the project will be visually compatible with the adjacent Town parkland. The minor change in view from US Route 6 is anticipated to complement the existing character of the corridor by retaining trees along the State right-of-way and placing the new home sites back from the road.

The described changes in views of the site will not result in a stark contrast in visual character as compared with the surrounding landscape, either in terms of type of use, or in the make-up of buildings and landscape treatment. The project as proposed will not dominate the suburban

view from any publicly accessible location. To the contrary, the combination of a residential subdivision and associated areas of open space will complement the suburban residential character that exists in the area.

No views from significant aesthetic resources have been identified that would be adversely affected by this project. The suburban character of the site area will be maintained by preserving vegetation at the perimeter of the site and in large contiguous areas in the northern portion of the property. The proposed development will be visually compatible with surrounding residential and undeveloped land. Since provisions to preserve the visual character of the region are part of the project design, as identified above, further mitigation measures are not proposed.

3.13.2 Historic and Archeological Resources

Existing Conditions

There are no structures of significant architectural design identified or designated in the immediate site vicinity. Information provided by NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) and NYSM (New York State Museum) indicates that no historic and/or prehistoric sites listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places are located on, or within the vicinity of, the project area. Furthermore, lands located adjacent to, or in the vicinity of, the project area contain no structures identified as National Register eligible, or structures that are not yet included in the National Register of Historic Places. There are also no structures located on the site, or adjacent to it, that are currently under consideration for listing on the State or National Registers of Historic Places.

Based on a visual inspection and walkover of the property, it appears that the site consists of former cropland. The current state of the land indicates that hay was most likely the crop that was being grown on the site most recently. At the present time, the subject site consists of open fields edged by woodland. Many stone walls, marking the boundaries between the fields, were observed. Access into the site is by way of a series of overgrown farm lanes and trails, with some limited evidence of use of these trails by All-Terrain-Vehicles (ATV's).

Other than the stone walls, no structures were observed during the site visit. Map research indicates that while the project area abuts US Route 6, the project area served as interior fields for a farm located on the east side of Gomer Street, which is located to the west of Curry Street. The construction of Curry Street and recent residential development of the area in the past few years has altered the historic relationship of the project area to the farm to which it belonged. However, there were no dwellings or outbuildings located within the boundaries of the project area.

Prehistorical Sensitivity

There are no documented prehistoric sites in the immediate vicinity of the subject site. During the walkover of the site, no evidence of prehistoric activity was observed. There are no rock outcrops within the project area that suggest the potential for either rockshelters or quarries.

Historic Sensitivity

Examination of historic maps and research into the historic sensitivity of the area indicate that during the 19th and 20th centuries the project area was owned by various families living on Gomer Street, and north of US Route 6. No structures were located on the property, and it is not likely that any significant historic material would be located on the site. There are numerous stone walls on the site, but these represent divisions between farm fields and are not significant historic structures.

Potential Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

As previously discussed, information provided by the OPRHP indicates that no historic or prehistoric sites or structures listed on the State Register and National Register exist in the vicinity of the proposed project area. No structures identified as National Register eligible, but not yet included in the National Register of Historic Places, or structures currently under consideration for the State/National Register, are located adjacent to, or in the vicinity of, the project area.

No adverse impacts to historic and archeological resources have been identified for the proposed project. Therefore, no mitigation measures are warranted.