

Agency Official 106 Effect Report

*Rehabilitate Lee Drive Entrance at Lafayette Boulevard (US Route 1 Business)
Fredericksburg Battlefield
Fredericksburg, Virginia*

**U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park
120 Chatham Lane**

Fredericksburg, Virginia 22405

Description and Purpose of Undertaking

Purpose

Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park was authorized by an act of Congress on February 14, 1927 (44 Stat. 1091). The purpose of the park, as stated in the act, is “to commemorate the Civil War battles of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania Court House, Wilderness, and Chancellorsville, including Salem Church...” The legislation further states that the park shall “open, construct, and repair such roads, highways, paths, and other approaches as may be necessary to make the historical points accessible...” By Executive Order 6166 in 1933 the park was transferred to the Department of the Interior to be administered by the National Park Service.

Need

A land developer is creating a residential and commercial development along Lafayette Boulevard (US Route 1 Business) within the city of Fredericksburg. The development will be built directly across from the entrance to Lee Drive. Lee Drive is a park road and the primary auto tour route for the Fredericksburg Battlefield. The developer has been working with the city government to address traffic concerns and issues along Lafayette Boulevard. Traffic analysis and reports indicate that the most appropriate, safest and functional entrance to the private property should be on Lafayette Boulevard and directly across from the current intersection of that road and Lee Drive. The construction of the development’s entrance at that location will result in the creation of a four-way intersection. Additionally, the city and traffic consultants have determined that the safest intersection would be on that incorporates a vehicular roundabout on Lafayette Boulevard. The park’s current entrance at Lee Drive was not designed for, nor is it conducive with, the development of a four-way intersection and the park is not willing to alter its entrance or provide land for the construction of the roundabout. As a result, the planned roundabout will serve both the entrance to Lee Drive as well as the entrance to the planned development. The park is also working on the facilitation of pedestrian access from the new development into the Fredericksburg Battlefield. Therefore, the park is proposing to rehabilitate the Lee Drive entrance in order to provide safer pedestrian and vehicular access to Lee Drive and to provide higher visibility for the park’s entrance in a developing area and traffic pattern that may prove confusing to park visitors

Property Description

A. Major Physical Components - The area of the proposed project is the entrance to Lee Drive where it joins Lafayette Boulevard. The site is bordered to the south and east by National Park Service lands on the Fredericksburg Battlefield, and to the north and west by private property slated for residential and commercial development.

B. Historical Significance - The project area is the entrance to Lee Drive, a National Park Service tour road and primary access to the Fredericksburg Battlefield. Constructed in 1931, Lee Drive was the first road built in the park and was constructed parallel to surviving trenches and military defenses used by the Confederate army during the Civil War. Lee Drive was built when the park was under the administration of the War Department.

C. Architectural Significance

1. Lee Drive - completed in 1931, Lee Drive was the first road built in the park. The road, and its entrance, is on the park's List of Classified Structures as IDLCS #82056. Lee Drive consists of two entrances on Lafayette Boulevard. These two entrances converge to create Lee Drive. In the draft of the park's most recent updated National Register documentation, Lee Drive is considered a contributing resource under the historic context of "Park Development."
2. Coolidge Dedication Monument - located at the entrance to Lee Drive is the Coolidge Dedication Monument. This marker was erected in 1928 and the plaque was presented by President Calvin Coolidge to commemorate the start of construction within the park. The monument originally stood along the edge of Lafayette Boulevard, but by 1937 it had been moved back into the corner created by the two entrance lanes of Lee Drive. The monument is on the park's List of Classified Structures as IDLCS #82055. The Coolidge Dedication Monument is considered a contributing resource under the historic context of "Park Development."

D. Archaeological Significance – The project area has not been the subject of an archaeological survey, but it is doubtful that archeological resources will be adversely affected by the rehabilitation of the entrance to Lee Drive.

E. Historical Landscapes - The entrance to Lee Drive was designed in the late 1920s. It has two sweeping entrance lanes that access Lafayette Boulevard and merge together to form the park tour road. The designed entrance will not be altered during the rehabilitation. The park consulted with Tim Layton, Historical Landscape Architect with the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, a National Park Service office and program. Tim provided the following observations and recommendations in his trip report:

From Lafayette Boulevard, vehicles presently access Lee Drive via one of two curved entry drives that merge together and form a triangle land containing a mixture of plant material and the Coolidge Dedication Monument. Both entry drives are presently intended for two-way traffic. The current plans, prepared by Bowman Consulting, connect the east entry drive into the proposed traffic circle and maintain two-way traffic. The west entry drive will be changed to one-way traffic as a new central median will prevent crossing Lafayette Boulevard. The current plans show a pedestrian crosswalk across Lafayette Boulevard ending in a stone cobble drainage swale for Lee Drive (Figure 6). Park staff indicated the crosswalk will be moved east, almost to the middle of the triangular area and asked about pedestrian access to the Coolidge Dedication Monument and on to Lee Drive. Tim discussed a simple walkway to the center of the

monument and a perimeter walkway to connect to the rest of Lee Drive. He also recommended replanting a large deciduous tree, based on the presence of an existing stump, near the west entry drive to match an existing tree near the east entry drive. The existing American hollies (Ilex opaca) around the monument could be removed and replanted with Meserve hollies (Ilex meserveae) that will obtain a lower mature height and form a background for the monument. The park will work with the Harpers Ferry Center on a new sign meeting the agency's graphic identity requirements and located it east of the east entry drive.

Proposed Action

The rehabilitation of the entrance to Lee Drive at Lafayette Boulevard is intended to provide safer visitor access for both pedestrians and vehicles. It is also intended to help protect park resources and provide higher visibility of the park's entrance in an area and traffic pattern that may prove confusing to park visitors. The park proposes to:

1. To facilitate pedestrian access, the park will install a rubberized mulch trail, 4-feet wide and 150 feet in length, from Lafayette Boulevard across the triangle of grass created by that road and the two arms of Lee Drive. This path will connect with a planned pedestrian crosswalk on Lafayette Boulevard and will proceed across the triangle to the Coolidge Dedication Monument. The park intends to install a new park wayside sign near the monument. The installation of the path will involve the excavation to the depth of 3" an area 150 feet in length and 4 feet in width. A gravel base will be installed, followed by 2" of rubberized mulch.
2. Replace the existing small NPS entrance sign with a larger and much more visible NPS marquee sign. The new sign will follow NPS and Harpers Ferry Center design guidelines. It will feature a large NPS Arrowhead and will read "Fredericksburg Battlefield – Lee Drive." The new sign will be double-sided, the same graphics on both sides. It will measure 11 feet in length and 9 feet in height. It will sit perpendicular to the new route of Lafayette Boulevard on land that is currently occupied by the bed of Lafayette Boulevard, which will be abandoned. The property on which the new park sign will be erected will continue to be owned by city of Fredericksburg. The sign will be paid for by the developer of the property on the other side of Lafayette Boulevard.
3. Install a series of wood or recycled wood bollards along the inside entrance arms of Lee Drive. Bollards were part of the original design of the intersection and helped to define the park entrance and prevent vehicles from pulling onto the grass. It's not known when the bollards disappeared, but they were gone by 1941. The park proposes to reinstall bollards on Lee Drive's inside arms. The bollards will be spaced fifteen feet apart and dug to a depth of 2 feet, will stick 2 feet above ground and will be stained brown. The bollards will help control traffic and keep vehicles from pulling to the side and parking inside the triangle.

4. Installation of three wayside exhibit panels near the Coolidge Dedication Monument. One of the exhibits will interpret the monument, the second will interpret Lee Drive, and the third will interpret site-specific Civil War activities. Each of the three bases for the signs will be installed by excavating to a depth of 18-24” for the legs of each base.
5. Removal of five American hollies that form a backdrop for the monument and replace them with five Meserve hollies, which will obtain a lower mature height. The existing hollies will be cut flush with the ground and the stumps’ ground to a depth of 3” below the grade. The new hollies, balled-and-burlapped, will be installed. Some excavation will be necessary to plant the new hollies.
6. Installation of an oak tree, balled-and-burlapped, near the south end of the traffic triangle. This is to replace a large oak that was diseased and removed ten years ago. A surviving oak tree on the northern end of the traffic triangle suggest that the two trees were part of a planned planting. Some excavation will be necessary for the new oak tree.

Effect Analysis

It is park’s opinion that the preferred alternative will have “no adverse effect” on the historic properties of the Fredericksburg Battlefield.

Park Consultation

The proposal will be circulated to the park’s Section-106 advisors for landscape architecture, historic architecture and archaeology.

The proposal will go through a 30-day public comment and review period. During that time, the project will be placed on the NPS public PEPC website. The park will contact representatives of interested local organizations, such as the University of Mary Washington’s Department of Historic Preservation, City of Fredericksburg, the Rappahannock Valley Civil War Round Table, the Central Virginia Battlefields Trust, the American Battlefields Trust, and the Pamunkey Indian Tribe.

The project will go through a 30-day comment and review period with the Virginia SHPO.

Attached Supporting Documentation

- A. Park Map
- B. Photos

Conclusion

At important historic sites, the proposed undertaking would foster fulfillment of the park's General Management Plan directives to protect cultural resources. This project will have "no adverse effect" upon historic resources.

Report Prepared By

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