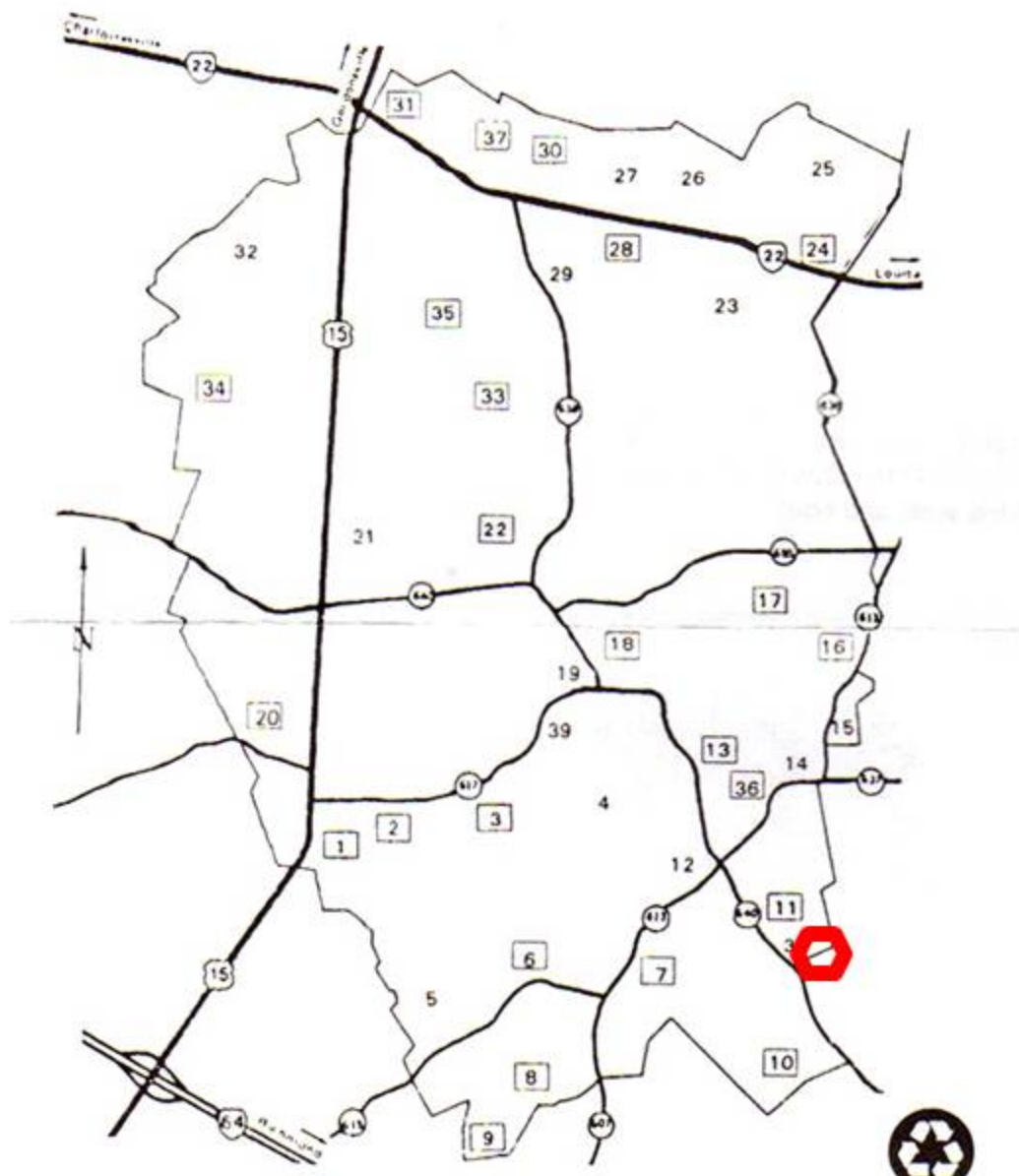


N



**Property Location, Green Springs National  
Historic Landmark District, Louisa County,  
Virginia**

## **Description for ParkPlanning.nps.gov Project Homepage: Proposed Approval of Observatory Structure**

The National Park Service proposes a Determination of No Historic Properties Adversely Affected, for a request by the owners of a 91-acre property in the Green Springs National Historic Landmark District, in Louisa County Virginia. They propose erecting a bolt-together observatory structure, 10' in height and 10' in diameter, atop a concrete foundation-pad, to house a particular type of telescope. The structure would be colored tan to match the color of their existing house, which occupies an adjacent site and dates to 1996 and 2012. The structure would be composed of fiberglass, and is removable. This review occurs under the terms of an NPS-managed conservation easement, from 1973, for the Sunny Banks property.

If at the conclusion of the review, and following consideration of all comments by consulting parties and the public, the proposed No Adverse Effect determination still seems appropriate, the NPS will grant the owners permission to proceed with the proposed structure.

### **Detailed Description, Location of Proposed Observatory Structure**

The observatory structure is proposed for a site adjacent to the 1996/2012 house, and fronting on its parking lot, situated at 4108 East Jack Jouett Road, Louisa, Virginia 23093 in the Green Springs National Historic Landmark District. The house occupies the southern fringe of a 91-acre property, once part of the Sunny Banks estate.

The structure would be a circular-plan, dome-topped, bolted-together fiberglass observatory measuring 10' in height and 10' in diameter, and resting on a concrete pad 12' square in area and 6" in thickness.

The structure would be colored tan to match the tan, earth-tone color of the house and garage.

The observatory would draw power from the house via two underground conduits laid together in a trench. The structure and the conduits would necessitate excavation of: an area 13' square on the surface and 1' in depth under concrete-pad site, and with a deeper depth of 5', in an area 18" in diameter at the center of the pad (for the telescope's mount); and a trench, connecting the house to the observatory, 90' long, 1' deep, and 4" wide for the conduits leading from the house to the observatory, and skirting the parking area.

The structure-proposal is based on the dimensions of the telescope that it would house: a Celestron 14" Schmidt Cassegrain with a German equatorial-style mount, suitable for photography...to accommodate its dimensions, avoid a breakage-risk from moving, and to avoid the wind- and stray light intrusions that would be imposed by a fabric/portable shelter. The set-up for telescope of this type requires approximately one hour for proper polar- and star alignment, and involves moving several heavy and delicate components. Disassembly requires a half hour and involves risk of damaging heavy but delicate components. An observatory structure would allow the telescope to remain set-up and aligned yet protected from the elements and risks associated with moving. Observing through it would become

instantaneous when the opportunity arises. The telescope would remain aligned under the dome when not in use.

### **Easement Stipulations**

Stipulation 2 of the restrictions-section of the NPS-managed Sunny Banks easement states that structures may be erected “in a way that would, in the opinion of the Grantee [NPS] be in keeping with the historic character of the [c. 1885 Sunny Banks] manor house, its setting and the character of the Green Springs Historic District, and provided that the prior written approval of the Grantee to such action shall have been obtained.”

Stipulation 2 also states that the property owners may propose new structures “appropriately incidental to a single-family dwelling.”

### **Area of Potential Effect (Yellow-Outlined Zone in Illustrations Packet)**

Given the easement’s emphasis on setting, character, and visual relationships, the Identification-of-Historic-Properties stage of this review utilizes an Area of Potential Effect (APE) that is bounded on the southwest by Foster Creek Church; on the west by Jack Jouett Road and the c. 1885 Sunny Banks house; on the north by a shared private-access road, and on the east and south by the 1996/2012 house and driveway. To include consideration of potential archeological resources, the APE’s southeast corner also includes the footprint of the proposed observatory structure, and the underground conduit that would connect it to the house.

### **National Register/National Historic Landmark Identification**

The 1996/2012 house at 4108 East Jack Jouett Road, adjacent to the site of the proposed observatory structure, is on property that is part of the Green Springs National Historic Landmark District (Virginia Landmarks Register 1973, National Register of Historic Places 1973, National Historic Landmark 1974). The house, including its driveway; parking area; and landscaped grounds are not contributing elements to the Landmark District. The house dates to 1996 and 2012—the two years of its two phases of construction reviewed and approved by the NPS under the terms of the easement.

The structures nearest the 1996/2012 house and the adjacent, proposed observatory-site that are listed on the National Register as contributing components of the Landmark District are: the c. 1885 Sunny Banks manor house (1,300’ to the west of the 1996/2012 house and proposed-observatory site), and Foster Creek Baptist Church (1,800’ to the southwest). The nearest public thoroughfare from which the Landmark District is experienced is East Jack Jouett Rd./Rt. 640—1,800’-2,000’ to the west and southwest. The nearest, shared, private access-road is 700’ to the north.

To identify potential, National Register-eligible archeological resources during Section 106 review of the 2012 phase of construction for the house, the then-NPS-Section-106 adviser for archeology, prepared an assessment of the property. This 2012 study evaluated soils; slopes; archeological sites inventoried at the Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources; and historical maps and imagery. His assessment concluded: “it is relatively unlikely that the study area includes significant archeological evidence of prehistoric activity,” maps and other records suggested that the area “consisted of unoccupied agricultural land” during historical periods, and that the construction and landscaping of the adjacent home and grounds, in 1996, limited further the likelihood of surviving archeological resources.

For the review of the proposed observatory structure, at the same property, the current NPS Section 106 adviser for archeology, has recommended use of the assessment of 2012, and does not recommend testing or survey.

### **Consideration for Appropriateness of Proposed Observatory Structure (Examples Pictured in Illustrations Packet)**

To help gauge the “appropriately incidental” aspect, referenced in the 1973 easement, the landowners supplied documentation of five private-use observatory-structures, in the same height range of 10’-20’, on private property in the counties adjoining Louisa: Spotsylvania (1), Fluvanna (1), and Albemarle (3).

### **Proposed Determination of No Historic Properties Adversely Affected**

The NPS proposes a determination of No Historic Properties Adversely Affected for the proposed construction of the observatory structure.

The NPS Section 106 adviser for cultural landscapes recommends a determination of No Historic Properties Adversely Affected. The considerable distances—given above and in the attached illustrations-packet—separating the site of the proposed observatory structure from the Sunny Banks manor house and Foster Creek Church, and from the public road; the modest (10’) height of the proposed structure; and the screening by mature-tree woodlots and hedgerows, individual trees, the downward-sloping terrain occupied by the 1996/2012 house would conceal the proposed structure.

The NPS Section 106 adviser for historic architecture recommends a determination of No Historic Properties Adversely Affected, “due to the proximity of the proposed observatory to a ca. 1990s residence and no impact on the view shed from the public right-of-way... Furthermore, the coloration, a beige color, will assist in blending the structure with the tall grasses further masking its visual impact.”

The NPS Section 106 adviser for archeology recommends a determination of No Historic Properties Adversely Affected, and that “the assessment by Laird” from 2012 should also “apply to the area proposed for the observatory. The landform and distance from water make the presence of prehistoric resources and historic occupation unlikely. Additionally the 1996 construction of the existing house site more than likely resulted in extensive disturbance” to the Area of Potential Effect. The adviser for archeology also makes this recommendation conditional on the protocol described in the “Proposed Conditions Regarding Unanticipated Discoveries” document attached to the public webpage for this review.

Rt. 640/East  
Jack Jouett Rd

Sunny Banks manor house  
(1,300' W of observatory)

shared-access rd.  
(700' N of observatory)



Foster Creek  
Church (1,800'  
SW of observatory)

Site Plan: Area of Potential Effect (Yellow) and  
Location of Proposed Observatory Structure

proposed  
observatory





proposed  
observatory:  
10' x 10' on  
12' x 12' pad

proposed  
buried  
conduit: 90'  
long, 1' deep

Site Plan: Location of Proposed Observatory Beside Home, Parking Area

scale

100 feet

10' height

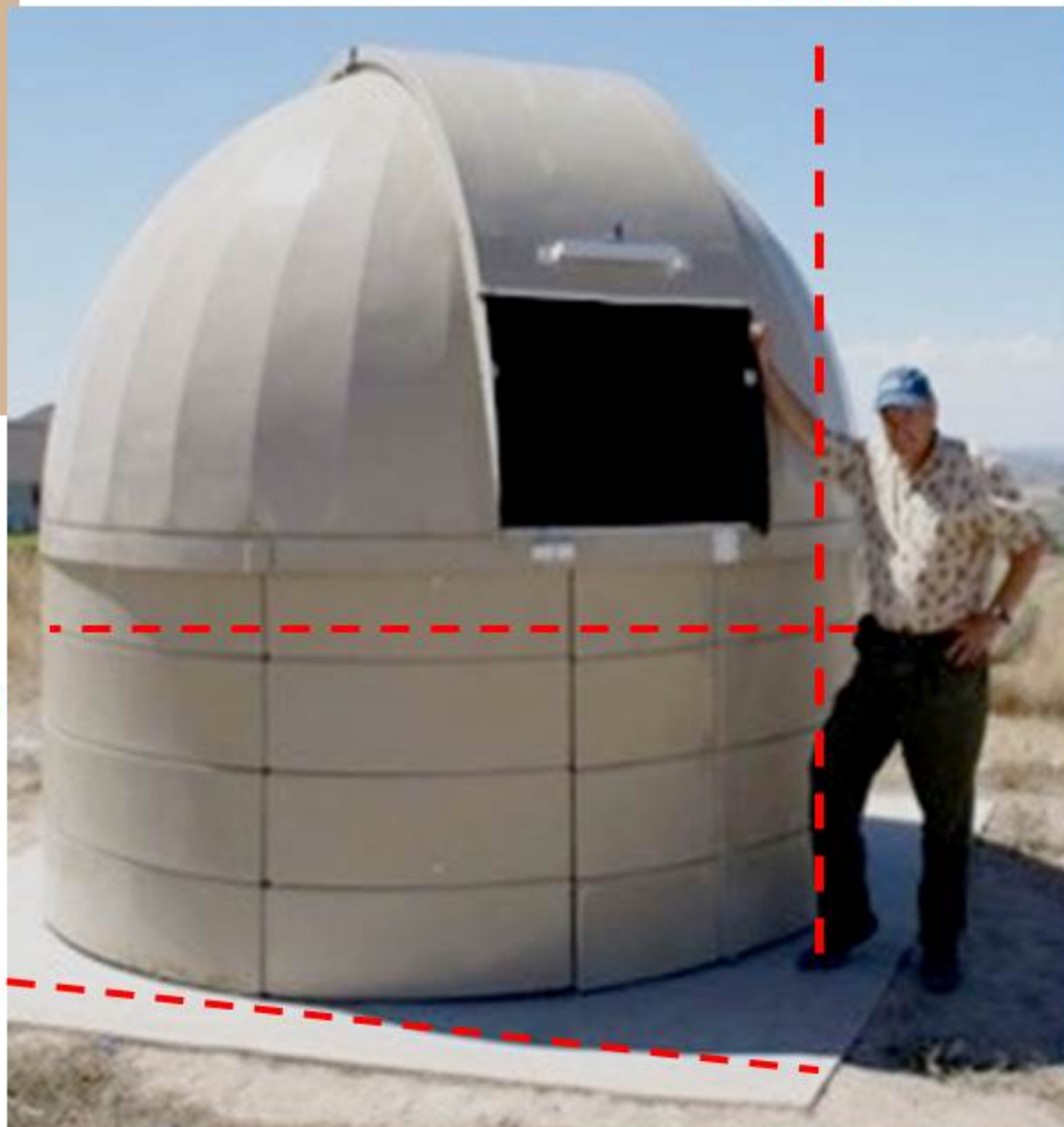
myperfectcolor.com

Proposed Color: Tan

10' diameter

Proposed  
Observatory:  
Color & Design

Concrete  
Pad: 12' square  
1' deep







Spotsylvania

**Private, Non-Institutional Observatories in Counties Adjoining Louisa (Dogwood Ridge in Fluvanna and North Garden in Albemarle not shown)**



Albemarle (Stillhouse)



Albemarle (Preddy)





12' square

**Proposed Observatory, Looking South, Site (Blue)  
in Relation to House, Parking Area, Driveway**



**12' square**

**Proposed Observatory, Looking Southwest: Site (Blue) in Relation to House,  
Parking Area, Driveway**



top of roof of 1996/2102 house /



**Project area, looking southeast in winter (Public road and c. 1885 Sunny Banks manor house behind viewer.)  
Top of Roof of 1996/2012 house visible in middle distance.**