

**DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR  
BENJAMIN ELLIOTT'S COAL TRESTLE,  
A LOCAL ARLINGTON COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICT**

**I. PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

These design guidelines are intended to assist the current and future property owners, Arlington County staff, and the Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) in the preservation and protection of the historic character and physical integrity of Benjamin Elliott's Coal Trestle. The trestle is located on the southern side of the Washington & Old Dominion (W&OD) Trail near the southwestern corner of Lee Highway and Fairfax Drive, adjacent to the northern property line of 6873 Lee Highway (a portion of RPC #11-065-001). The guidelines reflect the preservation principles and recommendations of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (see Section V for applicable standards).

The design guidelines offer guidance on how to preserve the existing structure, but also allow for the repair of its deteriorated historic features and potential changes to the surrounding landscape (space between the piers) in order to better interpret the siding as an historic resource. Any proposed changes to the structure must be respectful of and compatible with the existing historic fabric and character of the Historic District. As part of the design review process for any proposed modifications to the Historic District, factors such as appropriateness and compatibility, durability, and design integrity will be considered.

**II. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE BENJAMIN ELLIOTT'S COAL TRESTLE LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Constructed in 1926, the elevated coal trestle consists of 13 reinforced concrete piers with a northwest to southeast orientation. Spaced 11 feet apart, each pier is approximately 10 feet high, 15 feet wide, and 2 feet deep. The piers have two notches at the top to hold the railroad girders that supported the wooden railroad ties. In turn, the railroad ties supported a pair of railroad tracks. All of the girders, tracks, and ties have been removed from the center section of the trestle. The first and last three piers, however, have retained these railroad elements.

In June 2014, the portion of the trestle located on the adjacent parcel was demolished and the remaining extant original railroad ties and track elements were salvaged. There have been no other alterations to the defunct coal trestle. Deterioration of the materials is limited to cracks in the individual piers, spalled concrete, exposed rebar, and corroded steel. The trestle continues to convey its period of construction and maintains integrity of location, materials, workmanship, and design.

The character-defining features of the site include the concrete piers, railroad girders, wooden railroad ties, tracks, and topography (elevated nature adjacent to embankment). The priority for preservation will involve the protection and retention of these character-defining features, while allowing for limited replication of historically-documented missing materials in order to better interpret the site.

The utilitarian structure reflects the former industrial and commercial landscape of the East Falls Church neighborhood. Such small-scale commercial coal trestles were instrumental in the processing of coal for local delivery to residences and businesses. This coal trestle is a visual

reminder of a critical early-20<sup>th</sup> century energy infrastructure that fueled the electrification and development of Arlington County and the region. There are no other coal trestles extant within the County.

The significance of Benjamin Elliott's Coal Trestle is augmented by its association with the W&OD Railroad. The rail line provided a variety of services over its extensive period of operation, including the transportation of goods, freight service, and passenger service to Washington, D.C. The tracks laid for the coal trestle in ca. 1926 are the last remaining visible rails or tracks associated with the W&OD Railroad in Arlington County.

### **III. REQUIREMENTS FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS (CoA)**

There are seven standard guidelines covering the type of work that will require a Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA) from the HALRB.

1. The removal or demolition of part or all of the structure.
2. Any modification or alteration to the existing structure or a portion of the existing structure.
3. Any repair to the existing structure or a part of the existing structure when using a different material.
4. Any alteration or proposed changes to the existing site elements or landscaping within the Historic District, including topography, paving materials, fencing, plantings, shrubbery, or lighting.
5. The painting of previously unpainted materials.
6. The installation on the structure or within the Historic District of historic markers or any type of signage.
7. Any other action which is not ordinary maintenance, but which modifies, alters, or otherwise affects the structure.

### **IV. LANDSCAPE AND SITE ELEMENTS**

While the design guidelines necessitate the preservation and rehabilitation of the 13 reinforced concrete piers and associated railroad elements, the space between the piers may be utilized for interpretation and landscaping that respects the historic nature of the site. With the exception of the installation of the salvaged original railroad ties and track elements, any proposed elements to be placed between the piers should be independent from the structural system of the trestle in order to maintain its physical integrity. All such proposed landscaping changes within the Historic District will require a Certificate of Appropriateness from the HALRB. The pruning and weeding of existing vegetation located on or immediately next to the coal trestle would be considered regular landscape maintenance and thereby exempt from the CoA process.

### **V. APPLICABLE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION**

**The following Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are applicable to the Benjamin Elliott's Coal Trestle Historic District:**

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
5. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
6. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.