

Field Guide to Intrinsic Qualities of a Scenic Byway

WHAT ARE “INTRINSIC QUALITIES”?

“Intrinsic” means something that belongs to a thing by its very nature, that is within the essence of a thing. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), which administers the National Scenic Byways Program, requires a scenic byway to have at least one of six “intrinsic qualities,” described below:



SCENIC

Scenic qualities give us a heightened experience from the view from the byway. The landscape and streetscape are striking and memorable. All parts of the view contribute to this quality.



NATURAL

Natural qualities are features of the environment that are in a relatively undisturbed natural and ecological condition. These may include geological formations, fossils, lava flows, landforms, water bodies, vegetation, and wildlife.



HISTORIC

Historic qualities are legacies of the past that are clearly associated with visible parts of the landscape, whether natural or built. Places of historic significance educate visitors and stir an appreciation for the past. Historic qualities reflect the actions of people and may include buildings, settlement patterns, and other examples of human activity. Historic features can be inventoried, mapped, and interpreted. They demonstrate an integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association.



CULTURAL

Cultural qualities show customs or ethnic traditions of a distinct community of people. Cultural qualities include, but are not limited to, crafts, music, dance, rituals, festivals, speech, food, special events, vernacular architecture, etc., that are currently practiced.



ARCHEOLOGICAL

Archeological qualities are physical evidence of historic or prehistoric human life or activity that are visible and capable of being inventoried and interpreted. These include ruins, artifacts, structural remains, and other physical evidence have scientific significance that can educate the viewer and stir an appreciation for the past.

While it is usually necessary to protect these features by keeping the general public unaware of exact locations, archaeological qualities can be explained and interpreted at nearby sites along the byway.



RECREATIONAL

Recreational qualities involve active and passive outdoor recreational activities directly associated with and dependent upon the landscape. Rafting, boating, fishing, hiking, photography, bird watching and nature study are among the many recreational activities that can take place along a scenic byway. Driving the road itself can qualify as a pleasurable recreational experience.

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