



Amy Gowan, Director

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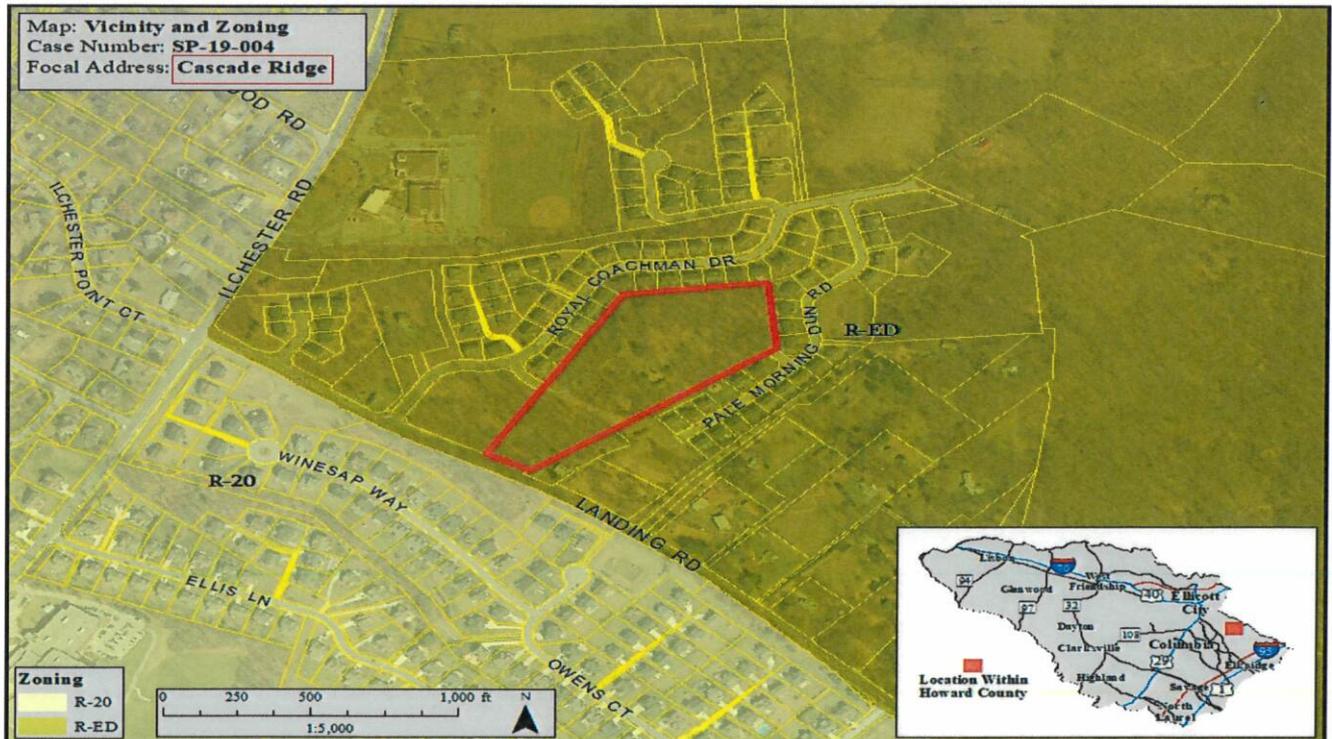
TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT

Planning Board Meeting of February 4, 2021

Plan No./ Applicant SP-19-004, John Neels
Project Name: Cascade Ridge
DPZ Planner: Derrick Jones, djones@howardcountymd.gov

Request: The applicant is requesting Planning Board approval of a preliminary equivalent sketch plan for residential development adjacent to a scenic road in accordance with Section 16.125(c) of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. This request is for an application to subdivide 9.085 acres of R-ED zoned land into 16 residential single-family detached lots and 3 open space lots.

Location: The property is located at 7330 Green Drake Road in Elkridge. The property is mostly forested, and has a stream, wetlands, and a floodplain area. There is an existing house and garage on the property. The property may be found on Tax Map 31, Grid 11, Parcel 474 in the First Election District.



Vicinal Properties: The subject property is surrounded by an existing residential subdivision named Cascade Overlook, except for where the property abuts Landing Road to the east.

Legal Notice:

The property was properly posted and verified by DPZ in accordance with the legal requirements for Planning Board public meetings.

Regulatory Compliance:

This project must comply with the Amended Fifth Edition of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, the Zoning Regulations, the Howard County Design Manual, the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance, the Howard County Forest Conservation Manual and the Howard County Landscape Manual.

I. General Information:**Plan History:**

- ECP-19-051 - An Environmental Concept Plan was submitted on March 26, 2019 and approved on November 7, 2019.
- HPC-19-035 - The Historic Preservation Commission met on July 11, 2019 and determined that the historic house and garage are not architectural specimens and are not listed on the County's historic site inventory. The Commission recognized that the house could be retained on Lot 16 with some adjustments to the plan, however, the developer did not want to retain the house nor the aesthetic character it would bring to the development. Retaining the house and connecting the roads would also be a challenge due to the vertical grades.
- SP-19-004 - A Preliminary Equivalent Sketch Plan was submitted on April 4, 2019. This plan was initially submitted to subdivide the subject site into 18 residential lots and 3 open space lots. The most recent plan was resubmitted on October 6, 2020 to subdivide the property into 16 residential lots and 3 open space lots.
- WP-20-036 - An Alternative Compliance Petition was submitted on October 18, 2019 to remove 8 specimen trees. The petition was resubmitted on October 20, 2020 to remove 3 specimen trees and was approved with conditions on November 19, 2020. There are no specimen trees located within the forested area of the property that abuts Landing Road.

Existing Environmental Conditions and Site Improvements:

The property contains 9.085 acres and is improved with a house and a detached garage accessed from Green Drake Road. The property contains 7.6 acres of forest and includes a stream, wetland and a floodplain area that are in the southwestern area of the site adjacent to Landing Road. There are thirteen specimen trees on the property of which 3 have been approved for removal. The topography naturally slopes to the south and east with a ridge in the center site. There are no rare or endangered species on the site.

Character and Quality of the Scenic Road (Landing Road):

The subject property has 152 feet of public road frontage along Landing Road which is designated as a scenic road. Section 16.1402 (Subtitle 14) of the County Code defines scenic roads as public roads in the County which has one or more of the following characteristics: 1) an area of outstanding natural environmental features providing views of scenic elements such as forests, steep topography and streams or river valleys; 2) provide outstanding views of rural, agricultural landscapes; 3) follow historic road alignments and provide views of historic resources; and 4) the road provides frontage for properties that are in a historic district or subject to a perpetual or long-term agricultural, environmental or historic easements. In 1994, Landing Road was designated by the County Council as a scenic road. At that time, the County's Scenic Road Inventory described Landing Road as a "rolling, winding road that passes through gently rolling terrain" and that the "scenic character of Landing Road is created primarily by natural features: forest and varied terrain."

With this proposal, the natural environmental features that front at Landing Road shall be preserved within a 230-foot buffer which exceeds the required 100-foot buffer. The scenic elements of forests shall be preserved with very minimal impact of the subdivision views from the scenic road. There are no disturbances proposed within this required buffer.



View of Existing Site Conditions from Landing Road

*This forested area shall remain undisturbed for a depth of no less than 230-feet from Landing Road

II. Planning Board Criteria

In accordance with Section 16.125(c)(5)(i) and (ii) of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, the following criteria must be considered by the Planning Board when evaluating the initial plan submittal.

- 1. Access. Whether the property has frontage on a non-scenic road, the impacts to environmental features, and traffic safety.**
 - a. Wherever practicable, access shall be located along a non-scenic road.**

Access to and from this proposed subdivision will be from Green Drake Road which is a non-scenic road. Green Drake Road currently contains two dead-end stubs and shall provide a connection through this proposed subdivision between two existing public roads: Royal Coachman Drive and Pale Morning Dun Road.
 - b. Only to the extent vehicular access cannot be practicably located along a non-scenic road, access along a scenic road shall be permitted at an existing driveway location.**

This criterion is not applicable. Access to this proposed subdivision is to be located along a non-scenic road (Green Drake Road).
 - c. Only to the extent vehicular access cannot be practicably located along a non-scenic road**

or at an existing driveway, additional access along a scenic road may be permitted.

This criterion is not applicable. Access to this proposed subdivision is to be located along a non-scenic road (Green Drake Road).

- d. **To the extent that any access is permitted along a scenic road, such access shall preserve the alignment, topography, and surroundings to minimize interference with views from the road while ensuring public safety.**

This criterion is not applicable. Access to this proposed subdivision is to be located along a non-scenic road (Green Drake Road).

2. **Buffers. The buffer preserves or enhances the visual character of the road and surrounding area, and whether access minimizes impacts to the buffer.**

This subdivision development has 152 feet of public road frontage along Landing Road. Access to and from this subdivision will be from a non-scenic road and no disturbances are proposed at the frontage where the western edge of the site abuts Landing Road. A 225-foot continuous vegetated buffer from the Landing Road public right-of-way has been established which exceeds the 100-foot scenic road buffer requirement, per Section 16.125(c)(2) of the Subdivision Regulations. Within this buffer, existing vegetation that includes forested areas and understory plant communities shall be preserved and permanently protected in a forest conservation easement within a County-owned open space lot. The scenic elements of forests shall be preserved with very minimal visual impact of the subdivision from the scenic road. The applicant's scenic road exhibit demonstrates that the line of sight from Landing Road will not distort the natural forested views from the new development of single-family homes proposed 460 feet away.

3. **Visual Assessment**

In accordance with Section 16.125(c)(4)(iii) of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations, the initial plan submittal shall include a visual assessment for the purposes of evaluating this project's compliance with the County's regulations for the protection of scenic roads:

- a. **Plans and aerial photographs showing the subject property, its context, and surrounding land uses and development character, including the setbacks and lot layouts of the surrounding area.**

This information was provided with the preliminary equivalent sketch plan and is included as an exhibit attached with this staff report.

- b. **Perspective drawings, photographic simulations, cross sections and/or elevations showing existing conditions and proposed changes associated with the proposed development.**

This information was provided with the preliminary equivalent sketch plan and is included as an exhibit attached with this staff report.

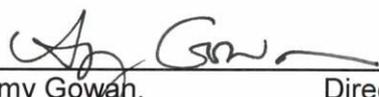
- c. **A survey of existing vegetation showing trees 12 inches or greater in caliper and non-native, invasive species.**

There are approximately 33 trees 12" dbh or greater located in the 100' scenic road buffer. These trees are predominately Tulip Poplar located in and adjacent to the existing wetland/stream system. Other trees include Red Maple in addition to Black Cherry, Green Ash and Black Gum. The shrub layer predominately consists of Japanese Barberry with Multiflora Rose and Wineberry also notable. The understory is impacted by invasive species including Japanese Stiltgrass, English Ivy, Japanese Honeysuckle and Oriental Bittersweet. There are no proposed impacts to the 100' scenic road buffer. A survey plan of existing vegetation has been included as an exhibit attached with this staff report.

- d. **A description summarizing the character and quality of the scenic road, as viewed from the road, using the scenic roads inventory as a guide.**

Cascade Ridge is located approximately 850' east of Ilchester Road on the north side of Landing Road. There are several residential subdivisions located west and east of the subject property. An exhibit has been provided which includes the various views from Landing Road in the vicinity of these developments. Some of the homes in the newer developments are directly visible from the road without any meaningful screening or buffering. However, there are several projects that have retained existing vegetation or provided plantings to buffer the homes. There are also several older homes and farmettes which have direct access to Landing Road which utilize little or no screening. The more recent developments provide landscaping as a buffer or screen to the scenic road although the width of the buffers vary greatly. The proposed 100' vegetative retention buffer for the Cascade Ridge project will be consistent with the largest Landing Road buffers and will exceed a majority of the existing buffers. In addition to the new residential structures, there are several locations where stormwater management facilities are in full view from the road.

- e. **A detailed assessment of any proposed visual impacts to scenic or historic features and proposed mitigation measures, including an assessment of whether the proposed changes comply with the Guidelines for Development of Land Abutting a Scenic Road in subsection (b).** The Cascade Ridge project has been designed to protect the environmental resources which are adjacent to Landing Road. This results in the homes being located away from the right-of-way and therefore should not be visible from the scenic road considering the retention of all existing vegetation within 225' of Landing Road. The closest house will be located over 400' from the Landing Road right-of-way. There are no direct driveway connections or proposed road accesses to Landing Road, further protecting the natural elements and view shed. Although the houses should not be visible from the scenic road, there are no rear facades oriented toward Landing Road. The Scenic visual character of Landing Road should not be impacted by the proposed subdivision due to the location of the homes and the extent of vegetative retention.



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1/21/21
Date