



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
Item # 10
4/10/03

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 4, 2003
TO: Montgomery County Planning Board
VIA: John Carter, Chief, Community-Based Planning Division SAC
FROM: Judy Daniel, AICP, for the Department of Park and Planning JD/ma

REVIEW TYPE: Zoning Map Amendment – Floating Zone
APPLYING FOR: Zoning Change from R-200 to Country Inn
REVIEW BASIS: Chapter 59, Zoning Ordinance; Advisory to County Council
APPLICANT: Old Hundred Road LLC
CASE NUMBER: G-804

AREA: 5.26 acres
MASTER PLAN: Master Plan for the Preservation of Agricultural and Rural Open Space
LOCATION: 18831 Comus Road, Comus

FILING DATE: November 8, 2002
PLANNING BOARD: April 10, 2003
PUBLIC HEARING: April 28, 2003 at the Hearing Examiner

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL of the Country Inn Zone and APPROVAL of the Development Plan, for the following reasons:

1. The application meets the purposes and standards for the Country Inn Zone.
2. The application is in substantial compliance with the recommendations of the Master Plan.
3. The country inn, as shown on the Development Plan, will be compatible with surrounding uses.

Approval of this zone requires site plan review by the Planning Board after approval of the zone by the Council. There are a few outstanding issues to be resolved at time of Site Plan review. These issues are discussed in the compatibility section of this report.

PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION

This application is a request to rezone a 5.26 acre parcel of land in the R-200 Zone to the Country Inn Zone, a floating zone. The property is located in the northwest quadrant of the intersection of Comus Road and Old Hundred Road (MD 109) in the center of the Comus community. The property has contained a restaurant at this location since 1960 (authorized through a special exception), and the new owners propose to continue this use within the Country Inn Zone. The location is in the midst of the Agricultural Reserve, governed by the Master Plan for the Preservation of Agricultural and Rural Open Space.

A. Description of Property

This 5.26-acre property is level at the site of the inn, sloping down gently toward the rear of the property. Structures on the site include the inn structure, an accessory building housing an antique shop (formerly a chicken house), and a storage shed at the rear of the property. The structure fronts on Old Hundred Road, with a circular drive between the Comus Road and Old Hundred Road entrances. The existing parking area is gravel, and there is an existing landscaped area between the inn and the roadway.

The property contains no forest or streams, and vegetation consists primarily of trees and shrubbery, including ornamental landscape immediately around the restaurant building and parking lot. Other improvements include a small decorative pool, patio, and walkways that connect the building to the parking area and accessory building. A split rail fence runs along the north and west property lines, and for an approximately 200-foot segment along Comus Road near the main structure. There is also an historic marker on the perimeter of the parking area describing the history of the surrounding area.

B. Surrounding Area

1. Definition: In a floating zone application, the surrounding area is less rigidly defined than is required with a Euclidean zone application. In general, the defined surrounding area takes into account those areas that are most directly affected by the proposed development and any special study areas that may have been defined by a master or sector plan.

In the case of the subject application, the staff defines the surrounding neighborhood for this rezoning to include properties in an area bounded by the intersection of Comus Road and Slidell Road to the east, the intersection of Old Hundred Road and Barnesville Road to the south, the intersection of Ephraim Road and Comus Road to the west, and the intersection of Thurston Road and Old Hundred Road to the north.

2. Uses: The existing land uses in the area are primarily low density residential and rural or agricultural in nature with smaller lots clustered around the Comus crossroads. Open fields are located to the north and west, and 7-8 homes are located on large lots along the east side of Old Hundred Road, before another area of open fields. An additional home is being developed across from the subject property along Old Hundred Road.

The proposed rezoning is located in a rural area. The property is at the center of the rural village of Comus. The village is a very small crossroads community that consists primarily of small residential lots with a small area allowing convenience commercial uses (currently a seasonal farm market). The village is surrounded by large rural residential lots and agricultural land in the Rural Density Transfer (RDT) Zone. The Comus Inn property is within a limited area zoned R-200, and a small area encompassing portions of several small properties adjoining across Comus Road and along Old Hundred Road to the south are in the C-1 (Convenience Commercial) Zone.

C. Intended Use and Approval Procedures

The Zoning Ordinance defines a Country Inn as:

“ An establishment primarily for dining in a rural area of the county, removed from planned or existing commercial areas and generally accessible for patronage only by automobile transportation. A country inn may contain in the same building a maximum of 12 guest rooms where, for compensation, food and lodging are provide for guests, and may also contain specific commercial uses. A country inn is not a bed and breakfast lodging, motel, inn or other use defined or regulated elsewhere in this ordinance.”

The applicants are requesting a local map amendment to rezone the property from the R-200 Zone to the Country Inn Zone. The zone requires approval of a site plan after approval of the zone. The property is identified as Parcel 347 on Tax Map DW. No new structures are planned for the use. The applicant plans to operate a restaurant with a seating capacity of 268 in the primary structure. An accessory antique store will be located within the existing structure to the north. In this instance, the applicant is applying for a restaurant use only, with no lodging element.

The submitted development plan indicates the continuing use of the existing structures as a restaurant and accessory antiques shop. The primary structure is a two-story frame building (originally a residence) that has served as the main restaurant (and tea room) since it opened in 1960. Secondary structures include the antique shop (originally a chicken house), a small shed (formerly a smokehouse), and a small wellhouse. No development phasing plan is proposed since no new structures are planned.

Subdivision will not be required for this property as no enlargement of the structures requiring a building permit are proposed. If there is no new construction on the site (other than required to meet Building Code requirements) or an increase in the building square footage, the property does not need subdivision review.

The proposed hours of operation for the Country Inn are:

Weekdays (Monday through Thursday) 11:00 AM to 11:00 PM, with the last meal served at 9:30 PM and last guests leaving by 11:00 PM.

Weekends (Friday to Saturday) 11:30 AM to Midnight, with the last seating at 10:00 PM. Sunday: 10:00 AM to 11:00 PM to allow for an earlier Sunday brunch.

Wedding receptions will be scheduled to be over by midnight, but there may be very occasional special events where the last guests might be served at 11:30 PM. The applicant states that these hours are very similar to the other gourmet country type restaurants in the region such as La Auberge Chez Francois in Great Falls, VA; and the Inn at Little Washington in Washington, VA.

D. Zoning and Regulatory History

The current zoning of the property is R-200, as designated in the 1980 Master Plan for the Preservation of Agricultural and Rural Open Space.

1. Comprehensive Zoning:

- a. 1981 SMA G266 for Agricultural and Rural Open Space Master Plan: RR reconfirmed to R-200 (Residential) Zone.
- b. 1974 SMA F925: RA reconfirmed to RR (Rural Residential) Zone.
- c. 1958 Countywide Comprehensive Zoning: RA (Rural Agricultural) Zone mapped.

2. Local Map Amendment Applications:

None

3. Special Exceptions

In 1960 special exceptions BA 932 and BA 933 were approved on this site for a teahouse or restaurant with an accessory antique shop. The only substantive issue in that approval was the proximity of the existing dwelling to the road because it did not meet the required setback from MD 109 (Old Hundred Road). The petitioners agreed to move the structure to conform to the recommended setback of 90 feet from the centerline of MD 109.

In 1982 a transfer, with modifications, of that special exception to a new owner was approved by the Board of Appeals. The transfer confirmed a series of changes in the operation of the special exception that had gradually occurred since the initial approval in 1960. Because the restaurant use is no longer allowed in residential zones, it has continued to operate as a legal non-conforming use in recent years.

E. Master Plan Recommendations

1. Land Use Plan: 1980 Master Plan for the Preservation of Agricultural and Rural Open Space

The master plan notes the existence of a number of historic rural settlements (such as Comus), and reconfirms their zoning and existing land uses. The Plan further “supports limited convenience and agriculturally related commercial activities in the rural settlements.”

2. Zoning: R-200

F. Public Facilities

1. Water and Sewer Service Categories: The subject site is in the Little Monocacy Basin, with Water Category W-6 and Sewer Category S-6. No changes to this status are anticipated due to the property location in the Agricultural Reserve. The Country Inn will use existing private well and septic facilities. (Source: Environmental Planning Division and WSSC).
2. Roads: The following is a general description of the two roads that serve the proposed Country Inn.

- a. Old Hundred Road (MD 109)

Classified as a rustic road with two lanes and a master plan right-of-way of 80 feet. This two-lane rural road with approximately 22 feet of pavement provides access from the I-270 interchange to the site.

- b. Comus Road

Classified as a rustic road with two lanes and a master plan right-of-way of 70 feet. This two-lane rural road with approximately 20 feet of pavement connects MD 355 to the east and Sugarloaf Mountain to the west.

ANALYSIS

A. Purpose of Zone and Required Development Standards

The staff finds that the submitted Development Plan meets the purpose clause and development requirements of the Country Inn Zone found in Sections 59-C-4.390 through 59-C-4.399 of the Zoning Ordinance as noted below:

Purpose Clause – The purpose clause of the Country Inn Zone states:

“This zone is intended for the purpose of permitting country inns at appropriate rural locations. It is primarily intended that country inns be located in existing structures, but this does not preclude such uses being located in new structures where appropriate. Since this zone permits commercial uses in a rural location, approval of this zone shall be based upon certain restrictions not imposed upon other uses in rural areas nor upon restaurants and inns in commercial areas. Construction and development of a country inn zoned site must ensure that the proposed uses permitted in the zone will be compatible and will not adversely affect the rural character of the surrounding area. In addition, it is the purpose of this zone to preserve and maintain significant trees.

Development shall be in conformance with a development plan submitted in accordance with the provisions of division 59-D-1 and approved as being consistent with the purposes of this section. The use of this category at any location is not an indication that the surrounding area is other than rural, that its character is altered by the granting of this zoning category or the presence of the country inn, or that any other change in zoning is appropriate because of this change.”

The proposed Country Inn is located in the rural Comus community, in an existing historic structure and existing accessory buildings that have been in use as a rural restaurant with accessory shop since 1960. No existing landscaping or other trees are to be removed. The applicant states that the Country Inn Zone is proposed to protect the existence of the buildings and setting, and to facilitate the continued operation of a country inn restaurant at this location. Since the restaurant use is no longer allowed as a special exception use in this zone, it is more appropriate to seek the Country Inn zone approval, where it will be a conforming use.

The staff believes it will be compatible with surrounding uses, and thus will not adversely affect the rural character of the area. Existing trees will be preserved, landscaping will be augmented, and existing older structures renovated and preserved. The rural character of the property and area will be preserved and enhanced by this use.

Comparison of Development Standards:

	<u>Required/Allowed</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
<u>Minimum Lot Area</u>	2 acres minimum	5.26 acres
<u>Building coverage</u>	10% maximum	3.9%
<u>Green area</u>	50% minimum	84.7%.
<u>Building Height</u>	2 ½ story maximum	2 stories
<u>Parking Spaces</u>	88	89
<u>Setbacks (buildings)</u>		
Street	50 feet minimum	60 feet
Other property lines	75 feet minimum	over 75 feet
<u>Setbacks (parking)</u>		
Street	25 feet minimum	25 feet
Other property lines	50 feet minimum	over 50 feet

Setback Issues

Building Setback from Street – Setback requirements are measured from future right-of-way. In this instance, the rezoning is for existing buildings only so no subdivision is required at this time, and therefore the future right-of-way cannot be officially established. The only modifications proposed to the structure are those necessary to meet current code requirements. The structure, as existing, is deemed to meet the building setback requirements. Also, this historic building has already been moved (in 1960) to accommodate a road right-of-way situation as noted in the special exception history of this property.

If the applicant desires to add onto the restaurant in the future, subdivision and road dedication will be required. Although the building setback would be 45 feet from the apparent future right-of-way (thus 5 feet below the required 50 feet), the staff believes that the existing situation could be accommodated during subdivision in determining the right-of-way. But it would be preferable if the Country Inn Zone requirements clearly allowed a setback exemption for existing historic structures on rural roads.

Although the Country Inn Zone was created primarily for the purpose of using historic structures that are very likely to be set closer to the road, no provision for exemption from setback is included in the zone requirements. Because of this concern, the applicant is working with the Council staff on a zoning text amendment to address this issue. The staff would support such a text amendment in principle.

Parking Facility Street Setback - As with the building, the existing parking lot meets the street setback if measured from the edge of pavement, but cannot meet the setback from the future road dedication. The parking facility must be modified at site plan anyway to accommodate required buffering (discussed below), so it should be altered at that time to allow adequate setback for the buffering and to meet the setback from the future right-of-way along Old Hundred Road.

Parking Facilities are subject to the requirements in section 59-E-3.7 for restaurants, rural resort hotels, and retail commercial establishments. The application provides 89 parking spaces in accordance with a requirement for 88 parking spaces for a 3,500 square foot dining area (at 25 spaces per 1000 square feet of dining area). Approximately two-thirds of these spaces (61) are stacked double spaces, reflecting the intent to provide valet parking for the use. This is not unusual for restaurants that provide valet parking, and it reduces the imperviousness on the property.

The design and location of the parking facilities must minimize adverse effect upon surrounding properties, including the following requirements:

1. No parking space within 25 feet of any street or highway, nor with 50 feet of any other boundary of the lot;
2. Adequate screening, including planting;
3. Low-level lighting, designed so as to prevent glare off the site;
4. Such other matters as the Planning Board shall find to be necessary.

The existing parking facility has adequate setbacks and landscaping, except along the Old Hundred Road frontage. Existing screening includes a row of cherry trees, a fence and shrubs along the northern edge, and evergreen trees and perennial vegetation along the southern side.

Adjoining Old Hundred Road, several parking spaces must be relocated to allow room, outside the future right-of-way dedication area, for a required landscaped buffer. The area between the parking facility and Old Hundred Road must be moved out of the future area for public road dedication, and required screening provided in the form of a low wall and landscaping provided as required in the zoning ordinance. This must be indicated at the time of site plan review.

Also, the landscaping immediately adjacent to the restaurant and the loop that is to be installed in the driveway must be evaluated for compliance with buffering requirements. These issues must be addressed at time of site plan review. In all other portions of the site, the existing landscaping appears to be sufficient to meet required standards.

The restaurant utilizes low-level lighting that illuminates the signs and building, and pole lights for the parking lot use with a cut-off feature to prevent spillage of light onto area residential uses. Review of the landscaping, lighting and signage plans at time of site plan review will consider these issues.

Signage is limited to identification signs, and the location, design and illumination of signs shall be subject to approval by the Planning Board in the process of site plan approval. Signs will mark the entrance to the site, and must meet the standards within Division 59-F of the Zoning Ordinance. Designs will be presented at time of site plan approval as required.

Retail uses are only allowed when accessory to the main country inn use. The only proposed retail use is the antique shop that has been in operation as an accessory use at this location for many years.

Review and Approval Procedures include application and development plan approval in accordance with the provisions of division 59-D-1; and Site Plans must be submitted and approved in accordance with the provisions of division 59-D-3. The application and development plan meet the requirements of Division D-1, and the applicant is cognizant of the Site Plan requirement.

B. Master Plan

The Country Inn Zone as proposed will be compatible with the intent of the Master Plan for the Preservation of Agricultural and Rural Open Space to maintain the rural character of the surrounding area and the existing land use patterns in the historic rural settlements. A rural gourmet restaurant has the potential to also provide a market for locally grown produce and locally raised poultry, beef and lamb products. This will assist the economic viability of agricultural uses within the Agricultural Reserve.

C. Compatibility with Surrounding Area

The staff believes that the level of use proposed is compatible with the surrounding area, especially given the long history of this type of use at this location. As previously noted, this property has been authorized for use as a restaurant since 1960 as noted in the following special exception history:

Special Exception Applications - In 1960 special exceptions BA 932 and BA 933 were approved on this site for a teahouse or restaurant and an antique shop. The only substantive issue in that approval was the proximity of the existing dwelling to the road. The petition approval states:

“...The farmhouse is located too close to the Comus-Hyattstown Road [*now Old Hundred Road*] to conform to the 90 foot setback from the center line of that Road as recommended by the Park and Planning Commission. Petitioners have agreed to move the existing structure to such a location on the property as would conform with the Park and Planning Commission recommendation.”

This followed a May 1960 report from M-NCPPC that stated:

“The location involved here lies outside of the Master Plan of Highways. The Road Classification Map adopted by the Upper Montgomery County Planning Commission, which is used to establish right-of-way widths in the upper part of the County, shows an 80 foot width for the Comus Hyattstown Road. With a 50-foot building restriction line in the R-A Zone, the total setback required is 90 feet.”

That petition was approved for 4-6 employees, open from noon to 8pm, for 3-4 days per week, including weekends. The facility was approved for a 600 square foot restaurant, with a seating capacity of 60-80 persons. The parking area was to have lighting, and 2-3 signs of 3-4 square feet were approved. The antique shop was approved to be open from 8am to 9pm.

Transfer of Ownership - In 1982 a transfer, with modifications, of that special exception to a new owner was approved by the Board of Appeals. The transfer confirmed a series of changes in the operation of the special exception that had gradually occurred since the initial approval in 1960. These included:

1. A change in ownership in 1973,
2. An increase in employees to up to 30 instead of up to 6,
3. Approval of a liquor license in 1973,
4. Additional hours of operation of 11:30am to 9pm, with extended hours for dancing until 11:30pm.

The increase in employees reflects increased seating capacity although the seating capacity was not noted. There were no modifications to the antique shop operations. The inn structure must have been moved as required in 1960 since it is now located a bit over 90 feet from the centerline of Old Hundred Road.

OTHER ISSUES

Historic Preservation - This site is within the Locational Atlas Historic District of Comus, and the Historic Preservation staff supports the application. The applicant is working with the Historic Preservation staff on any necessary requirements for structures within Historic Districts.

D. Traffic and Circulation

Access to the site is provided from Old Hundred Road (MD 109) and Comus Road. A traffic analysis for rezoning was prepared to determine the impact of development of a country inn restaurant with an ancillary antique store as proposed under the requested zone. The staff agrees with the conclusion of that study that reopening the Comus Inn will not have an adverse traffic impact on the surrounding roadways.

Based on the traffic analysis submitted by the applicant's traffic consultant, the restaurant would generate 16 peak hour trips during the weekday evening peak period (4:00 pm to 7:00 pm). Thus, this application is not subject to Local Area Transportation Review. Also, the site is in the Rural Policy Area where there is no staging ceiling limit.

Access and Vehicular/Pedestrian Circulation

The applicant proposes access from Old Hundred Road (MD 109) as an entrance only and access from Comus Road as an exit only in order to provide safe and

efficient internal traffic circulation. Staff finds the existing access points and the ingress/egress proposal safe and adequate. Staff also finds that internal pedestrian circulation using the parking area and walkways as shown on the site plan is safe and adequate.

The staff concludes that with the following elements recommended for the site plan, the Comus Inn restaurant with an ancillary antique store will not have an adverse traffic impact on the surrounding roadway network. The elements are recommended for approval of the site plan for this use as part of the APF test for transportation requirements for approval of the rezoning:

1. Total development under this zoning application is limited to a country inn restaurant with a maximum seating capacity of 268 persons and an ancillary antique store.
2. The Old Hundred Road (MD 109) driveway should be designated as an entrance only and the driveway on Comus Road should be designated as an exit only.

E. Environment

The NRI/FSD (#4-03212) has been approved for this property. There are no environmental issues of concern with the property. The property will be subject to Forest Conservation Law and a Forest Conservation Plan at time of Site Plan Review. There are two specimen White Oak trees within the proposed road right of way, on the corner of Comus Road and Old Hundred Road. The site plan should indicate that these trees should be protected from any future development or construction impacts.

F. Community Issues

The staff has received no comments concerning this application.

CONCLUSIONS

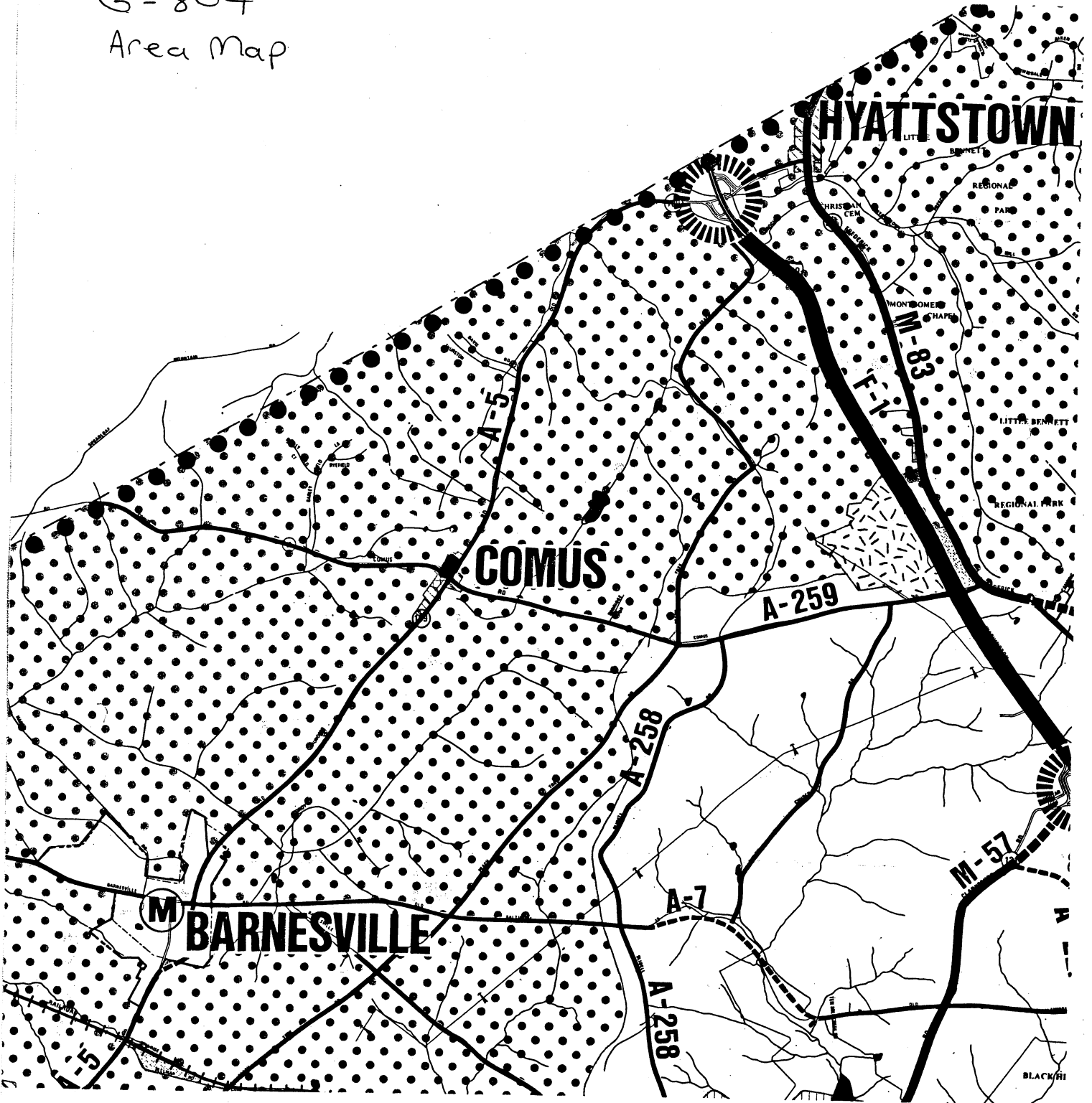
The staff recommends APPROVAL of the Country Inn Zone for the Comus Inn, a zone that will better reflect its history and its relationship to the surrounding Comus community because:

1. The application meets the purposes and standards for the Country Inn Zone, and is in substantial compliance with the recommendations of the Master Plan, and
2. The proposed Country Inn, as shown and limited on the Development Plan, will be compatible with surrounding uses.

As previously discussed in this report, the staff notes the need for the following issues to be fully addressed at the time of Site Plan Review, to ensure compatibility with the surrounding area, and compliance with all development standards:

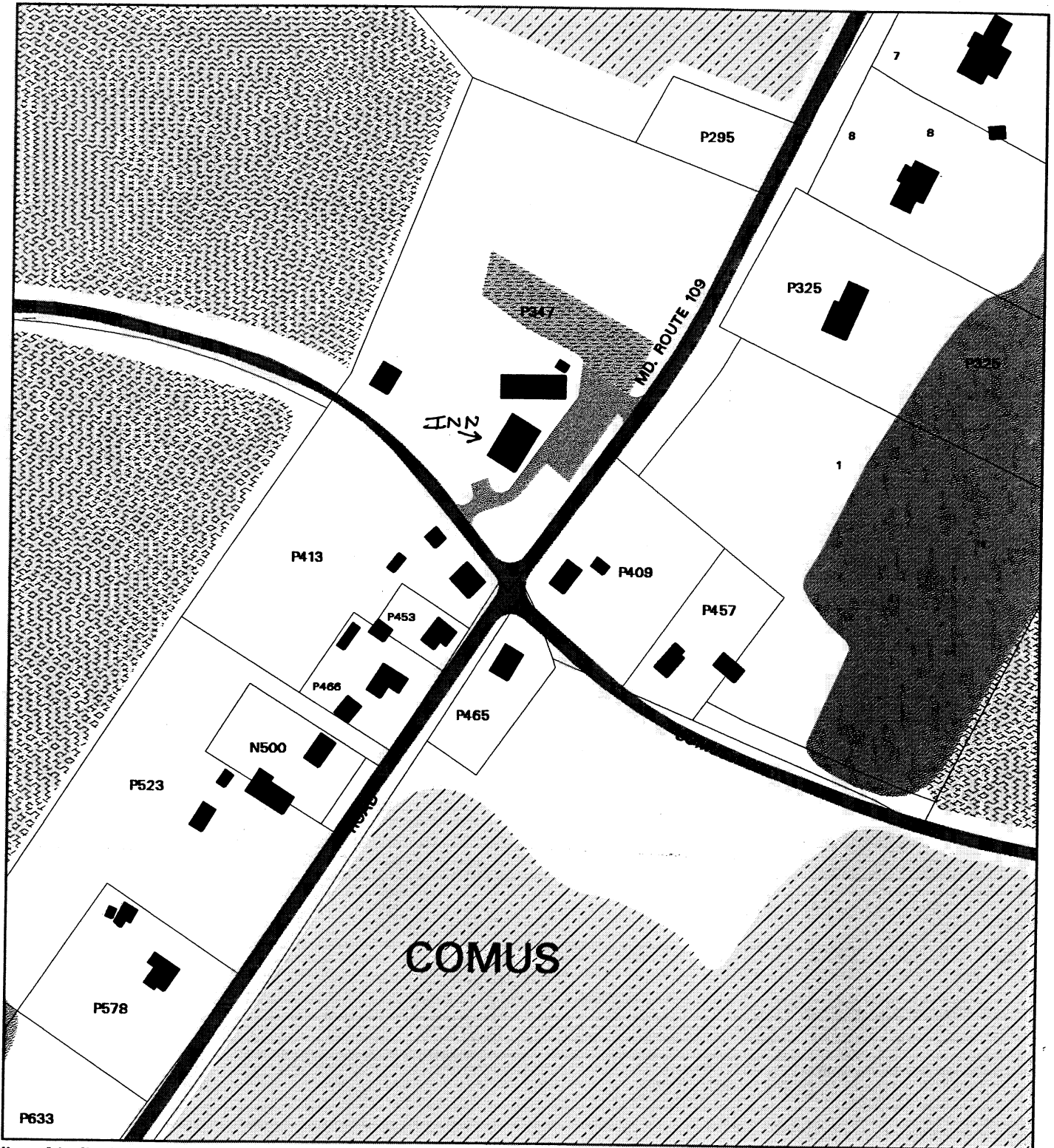
1. Landscape, lighting and signage plan to include:
 - a. Modifications to the parking facility to meet setback and buffering requirements of the Country Inn Zone and Chapter 59-F of the Zoning Ordinance. Modifications must address screening along Old Hundred Road, and relocation of several parking spaces away from the future road right-of-way dedication line.
 - b. Provision of additional landscaping as required along the entrance drive where the new circling loop is to be installed.
2. Total development under this zoning application is limited to a country inn restaurant with a maximum seating capacity of 268 persons and an ancillary antique store.
3. The Old Hundred Road (MD 109) driveway should be designated as an entrance only and the driveway on Comus Road should be designated as an exit only.
4. The property is subject to Forest Conservation Law and approval of a Forest Conservation Plan at time of Site Plan Review.
5. A memorandum received from the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service notes that there are several outstanding fire code issues that must be resolved, but no other site issues. The applicant must submit proof that noted outstanding Fire Code issues have been resolved at time of Site Plan Review.

G-804
Area Map



VICINITY MAP FOR
COMUS INN

G-804



Map compiled on March 11, 2003 at 10:07 AM | Site located on base sheet no - Z33NW17

NOTICE

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G-804 zoning



RDT

RDT

SUBJECT PROPERTY
R-200
BA-922 & 923

RDT

R-200

R-200

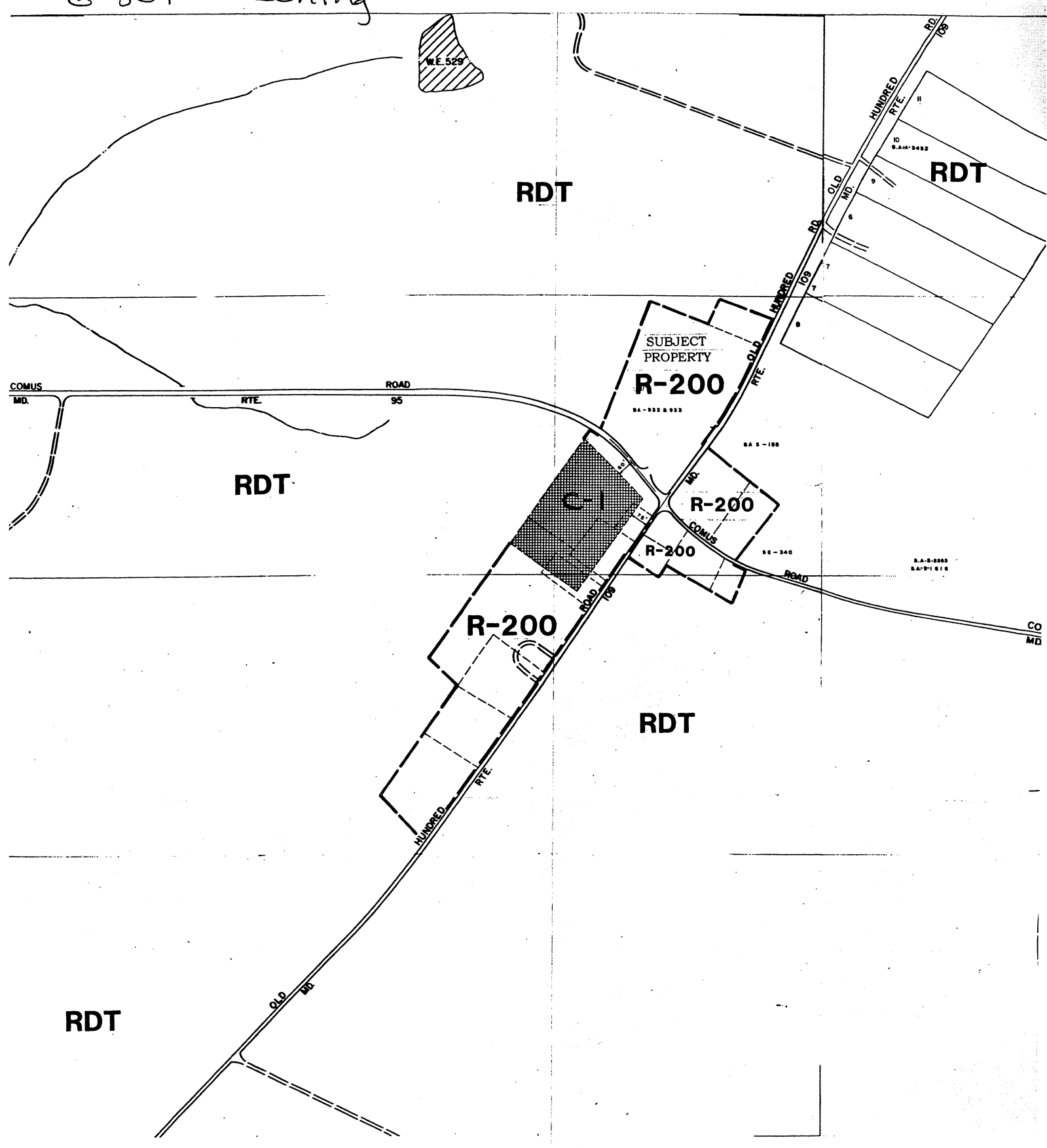
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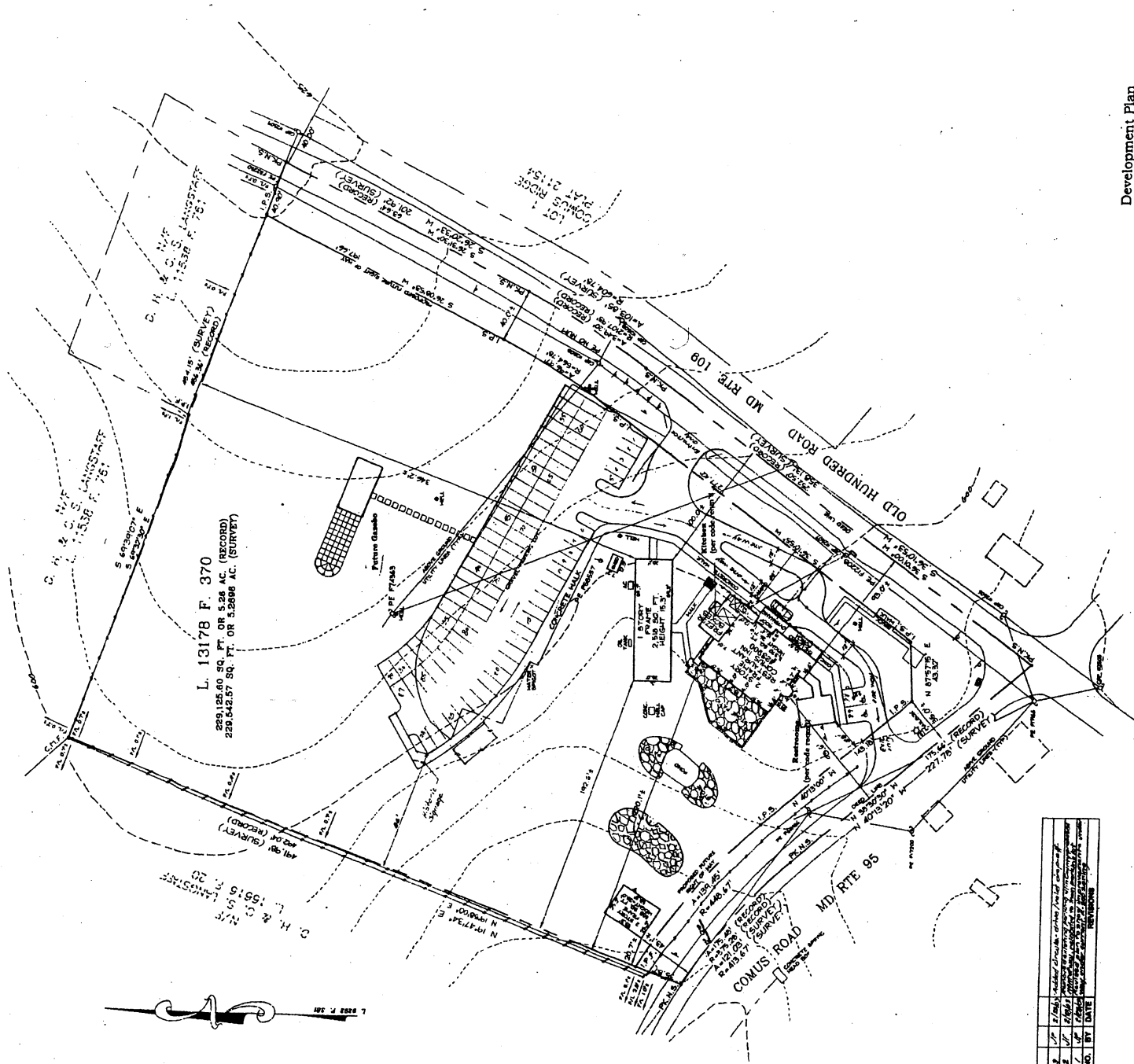
Development Plan
The Comus Inn
at Sugarloaf Mountain

Parcel P347
Election District 11
Montgomery County, Maryland

EXISTING ZONING



G-804 Comus Inn Development Plan



NO.	BY	DATE	REVISIONS
1	PLP	1/15/10	PRELIMINARY PLAN
2	PLP	2/10/10	REVISIONS
3	PLP	3/10/10	REVISIONS
4	PLP	4/10/10	REVISIONS

Development Plan
The Comus Inn

PERRINE PLANNING & ZONING, INC

Community effort means renovation for Comus Inn

MONT. BUS. GAZETTE
 by Kristen Milton | Staff Writer
 12/26/02

From the installation of a new wine cellar to the transformation of a second-floor storage room into a bridal room, neighbors who joined together to purchase the Comus Inn in Dickerson are looking forward to watching the landmark come alive again floor by floor in coming months.

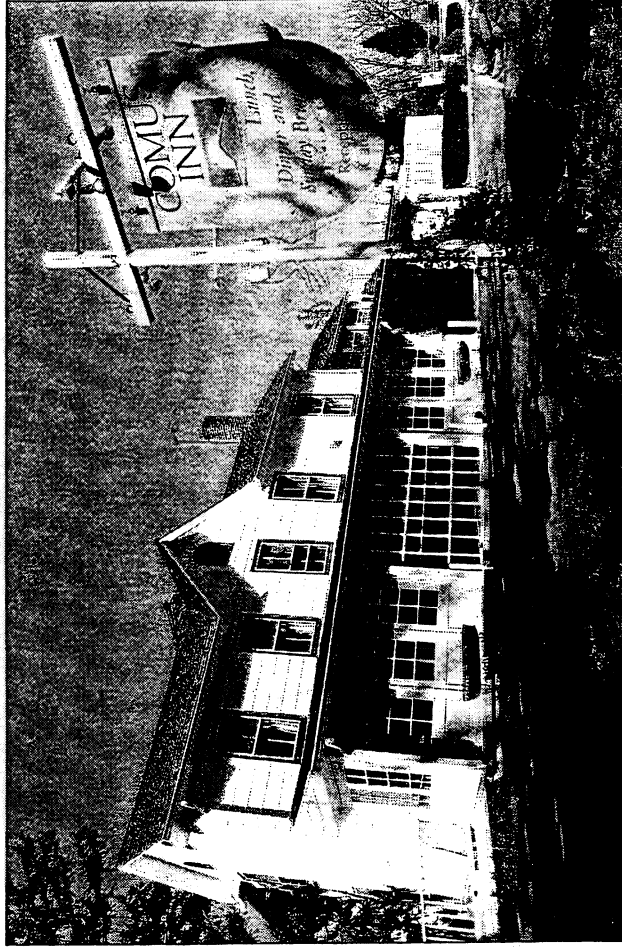
"I literally watched the place sort of crater over the last four years. ... It lost its cache," said R. Christopher Goodwin, Comus resident and president of Old Hundred Road LLC.

When the inn closed in November 2001 and wasn't purchased for nearly a year, Goodwin decided to act.

"I thought, what a great opportunity to have some fun and do a good thing for the community and create a destination restaurant close to home," he said.

Goodwin eventually united several adjacent landowners and various upper Montgomery County and Frederick residents to form the group that bought the restaurant in September for about \$600,000, said Tom Rozynek of the Frederick Land Co., the real estate firm that represented the property.

Now the group is preparing for a multi-million-dollar renovation and going through the process of applying for a zoning



GAZETTE FILE PHOTO

The Comus Inn sat vacant and ownerless for nearly a year before a community group bought it and began renovations. The rehab is expected to pay off next year when the historic property reopens.

ing change so the restaurant can grow in the future.

Attorney David Freishtat has submitted an application to Montgomery County's Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings in November requesting a zoning change

"just to legalize what's out there." In the approximately 40 years since the rustic, two-story home was converted to a restaurant, he said, the provision allowing a restaurant in the residential zone was deleted, making the Comus Inn a non-conforming use.

Without changing the zoning, "the only thing [the owners] could do is make it smaller, which is not conducive to an expanding business," Freishtat said. The requested country inn zoning would allow lodging at the site but Goodwin said that is not planned.

What is planned is a step-by-step renovation that Goodwin says he hopes will end with the re-opening of the restaurant in mid-2003. Workers will bring back the hardwood floors, expand and modernize the kitchen, make the bathrooms handicapped-accessible, bury utilities and restore the 19th-century facade of the house, Goodwin said. There are also plans to re-

| See **Comus**, page 111

but we also want community involvement," Goodwin said.

The Comus Inn's old friends have not forgotten it, Goodwin said. He said he turned down nearly 200 reservations for Thanksgiving — and the changes will make it even more desirable.

"It certainly will be notched up from where it was," Rozynek said. "I think it will be a great addition to the whole region, not just the upcounty but the whole Frederick area as well." ■

store the outbuildings and perhaps host art shows and seasonal festivals.

Chef Patrick J. Schrader, a former executive chef at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, has been hired to prepare the food.

Goodwin said he hopes the results will be comparable to L'Auberge Chez Francois in Great Falls, Va., or The Inn at Glen Echo. The restaurant will also reach out to the community with Sunday brunches and a less expensive weekly Family Night.

"We want to have the destination quality,

37

Community effort means renovation for Cornus Inn

by Kristen Milton Staff Writer 12/26/02

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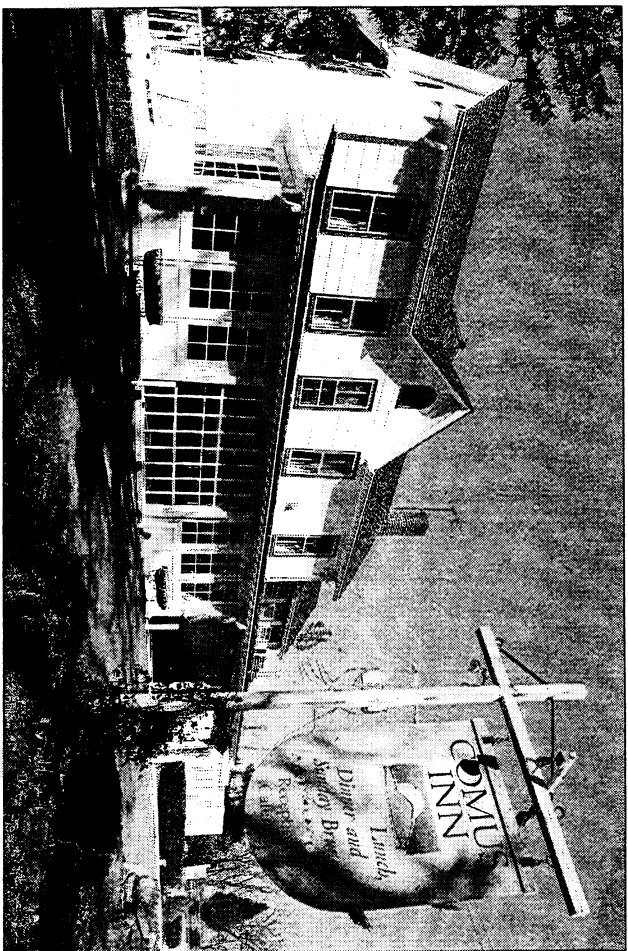
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ing changes so the restaurant can grow in the future.

Attorney David Freishat has submitted an application to Montgomery County's Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings in November requesting a zoning change

from residential to county inn zoning for the five-acre property. The project is tentatively scheduled to be considered by the county Planning Board on Feb. 13 and at the county hearing examiner Feb. 26.

Freishat said the rezoning request is

store the outbuildings and perhaps host art shows and seasonal festivals.

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To learn more

For information about the Cornus Inn, go to www.thecornusinnatsugarloaf-mountain.com.

"Just to legalize what's out there." In the approximately 40 years since the rustic, two-story home was converted to a restaurant, he said, the provision allowing a restaurant in the residential zone was deleted, making the Cornus Inn a non-conforming use.

Without changing the zoning, "the only thing [the owners] could do is make it smaller, which is not conducive to an expanding business," Freishat said. The requested county inn zoning would allow lodging at the site but Goodwin said that is not planned.

What is planned is a step-by-step renovation that Goodwin says he hopes will end with the re-opening of the restaurant in mid-2003. Workers will bring back the hardwood floors, expand and modernize the kitchen, make the bathrooms handicapped-accessible, bury utilities and restore the 19th-century facade of the house, Goodwin said. There are also plans to re-

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but we also want community involvement," Goodwin said.

The Cornus Inn's old friends have not forgotten it, Goodwin said. He said he turned down nearly 200 reservations for Thanksgiving — and the changes will make it even more desirable.

"It certainly will be notched up from where it was," Rozynek said. "I think it will be a great addition to the whole region, not just the upcounty but the whole Frederick area as well." ■

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