



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

3430 Court House Drive

Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

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TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT

Planning Board Meeting of August 21, 2025

Case No./Petitioner:

F-24-036/Shiheng Zhao & Quiying Zhu

Project Name:

Old Columbia Crossing, Lots 1-3 and Open Space Lot 4

DPZ Planner:

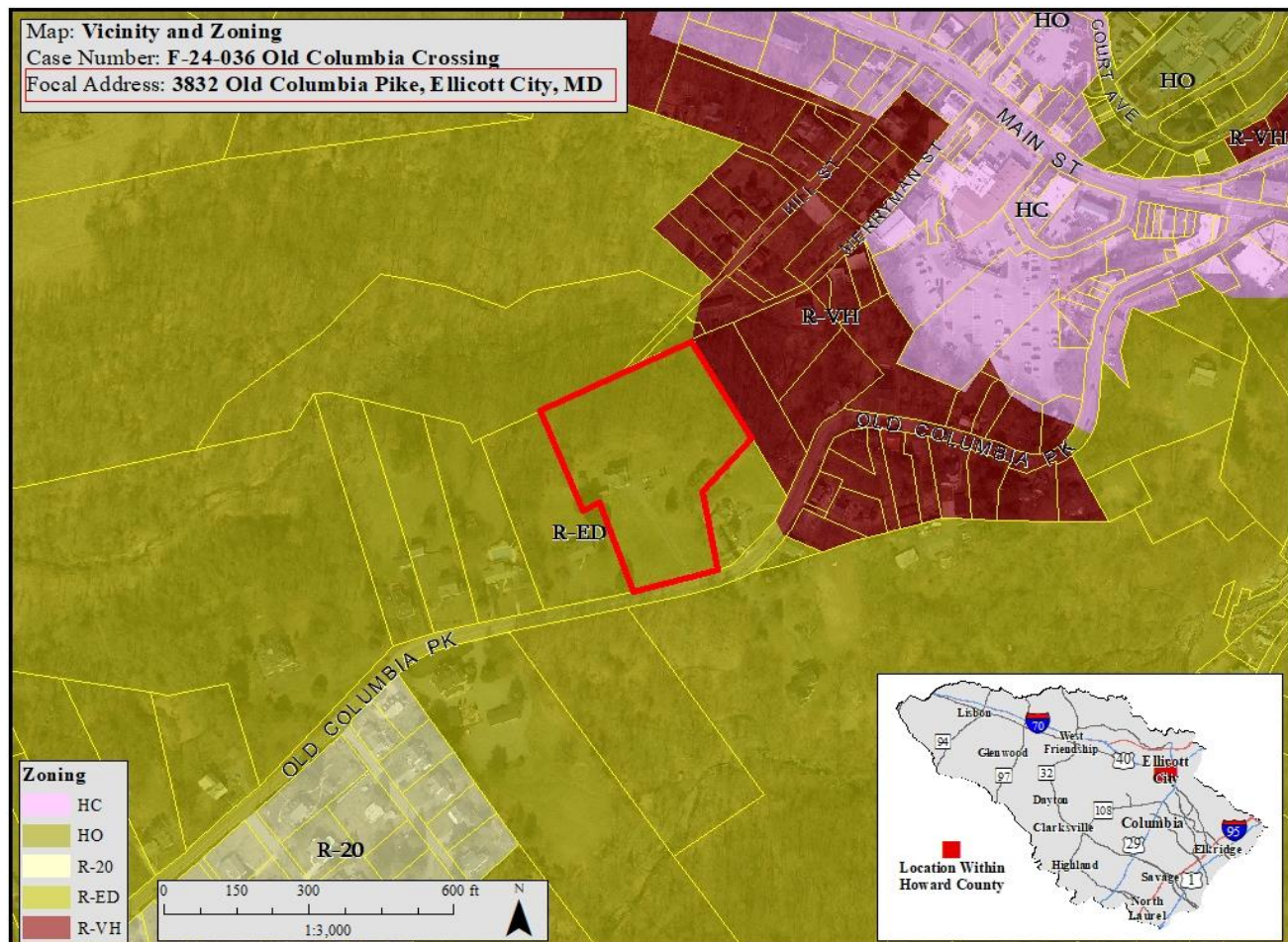
Justin Schleicher, jschleicher@howardcountymd.gov

Request:

Scenic road plan review. A request to review Final Subdivision Plan (F-24-036) in accordance with Section 16.125(c)(1) of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations for a subdivision that abuts or adjoins a scenic road.

Location:

The property is located at 3832 Old Columbia Pike in Ellicott City and is identified as Parcel 262 on Tax Map 25, Grid 13. The property is approximately 2.99 acres and contains a historic house and is in the Ellicott City Historic District. The property is zoned R-ED (Residential – Environmental Development).



Vicinal Properties:

Surrounding properties are zoned R-ED or R-VH (Residential – Village Housing).

North: Zoned R-ED. Howard County Open Space.

South: Old Columbia Pike, a major collector public road right-of-way that is on the Howard County Scenic Road Inventory. Across the road are single-family lots, zoned R-ED.

East: Zoned R-ED and R-VH. A single-family residence built in 1899 and listed as HO-302, Charles Ringley House, on the Howard County Historic Sites Inventory, and a vacant parcel.

West: Zoned R-ED. A single-family residence built in 1972.

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-14-028** – An Environmental Concept Plan to subdivide the property into three (3) residential lots and was approved on December 18, 2014.
- **HPC-20-028** – Historic Preservation Committee meeting in May 2020.
- **ECP-22-057** – An Environmental Concept Plan to subdivide the property into three (3) residential lots and was approved on June 8, 2023.
- **F-24-036** – A Final Plan was submitted on December 11, 2024, to subdivide the property into three (3) residential lots.
- **HPC-25-023** – Historic Preservation Committee meeting on June 6, 2025, to review the current design of the subdivision. The HPC approved the request to:
 - Remove a 24.26" DBH Norway Spruce tree.
 - Install an asphalt use-in-common driveway, to be approximately 16' wide and 240' in length.
 - Installation of initial landscape plans using native species outlined the application plans.
- **Design Manual Waiver** – Was submitted on April 15, 2025 requesting a waiver to the intersection sight distance requirement set forth by the Howard County Design Manual, Volume III, Section 2.1.E.3. The request was approved on July 18, 2025 due to the stopping sight distance requirement being met and the proposed new driveway location improves the existing intersection sight distance deficiency.

Existing Environmental Conditions and Site Improvements:

The property contains 2.99 acres and is improved with an existing house that will remain. The house was constructed in 1860 and is listed on the Historic Sites Inventory as HO-558, Prestage's Folly. The majority of the property is lawn with scattered landscape trees between the road and the house and a steeply forested rear yard that goes downhill to a perennial stream. This property is within the Ellicott City Historic District and Tiber Branch Watershed.

Character and Quality of the Scenic Road:

The property has approximately 178 feet of public road frontage along Old Columbia Pike, which was designated as a scenic road by the County Council in 1994. At that time, the County's Scenic Road Inventory described Old Columbia Pike as a narrow, winding road that ascends steeply from Main Street through the Ellicott City Historic District, then continues to climb gradually, following a ridge between two tributaries of the Patapsco River. The Inventory states the scenic character of Old Columbia Pike is created primarily by the historic buildings and steep terrain of the Ellicott City Historic District. Outside of the Historic District, scenic features of the landscape include varied terrain, historic homes interspersed with forested areas, mature trees along the road and in yards, and stone walls.

A visual assessment was provided in accordance with Section 16.125(c)(4)(iii) of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. The visual assessment complies with the submission requirements listed in subsections a through e. The assessment describes the character and quality of scenic Old Columbia Pike.

This section of Old Columbia Pike is a winding road sloping toward the east in the direction of Main Street Ellicott City. The slope of the road at this property is approximately 6%. The northern side of the roadway, which directly adjoins the property, consists of a varying shoulder width (4'-8') and a curb. There are several utilities within, and along, the existing roadway that include utility poles and overhead utility lines. The properties adjacent to the roadway are single-family detached residential lots, with varying styles and sizes. The views from the existing roadway are primarily landscaped grass lawns with 1- and 2-story houses with individual asphalt driveways. Where tree cover exists, the cover primarily consists of landscape trees with no observed forest areas.

This development proposes a 3-lot subdivision with two new houses and the existing historic house. The existing driveway will be removed, and a new driveway will be constructed approximately 75 feet to the west of the existing driveway to accommodate access for all lots, and will be more centered with the historic home. Trees planted on either side of the use-in-common driveway will create an allée that leads to the historic home. Stormwater management for the driveway will be a bioretention facility that will create a one-foot planted depression and grading along the road. The driveway is being relocated to provide safer sight distance by constructing the driveway farther from the curve in the road and the neighboring house, which blocks sight lines.

The Petitioner surveyed approximately 40 trees with a 12" diameter or larger and anticipates removing one of these trees (22" Norway Spruce). A survey plan of existing vegetation has been included as an exhibit attached with this staff report. A description of the proposed landscape planting to provide a vegetative buffer along the scenic road is described in the evaluation of Planning Board criteria below.

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 located on Old Columbia Pike. There are no other alternatives for access along a non-scenic public 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.**

The existing driveway will be removed, and a new driveway will be constructed that will provide access to all three houses. The existing driveway bisects the middle of the property and the developable area. The new houses are proposed to be located as close as possible to the eastern property boundary to allow the largest viewshed of the historic house.

- 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.**

The petitioner is requesting to remove the existing driveway and construct a new use-in-common shared driveway for the three lots. The petitioner states the relocated driveway will provide safer sight distance by constructing the driveway farther from the curve in the road and the neighboring house, which blocks sight lines.

- 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.**

The existing driveway will be removed, and the proposed use-in-common driveway will be located roughly 75' west of the current driveway location. In order to minimize interference with views from the road, no roadway improvements are proposed along Old Columbia Road and access is being realigned for better intersection sight distance and safety. There is minimal existing vegetation along the property frontage, and majority of existing vegetation on sight will remain and the applicant is proposing additional plantings along the frontage of the sight.

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 is within the Planned Service Area but is not considered a new major subdivision that requires a minimum 100-foot continuous vegetated buffer per Section 16.125(c)(2) of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. There is no existing vegetation along the scenic road to preserve. The petitioner proposes to plant a mixture of shade, ornamental and evergreen trees between the scenic road and proposed houses to establish a buffer and enhance the visual character of the road.

Trees planted on either side of the use-in-common driveway will create an allée that leads to the historic home. In addition to the trees lining the driveway, the applicant is proposing ornamental Eastern Redbud street trees along the property frontage. Ornamental trees will be used to reduce conflict with the existing overhead power lines that will remain along the roadway. A microbioretention facility will be located behind the row of redbud, which will provide stormwater management for the proposed driveway and will be planted with native herbaceous plants. Eastern red cedar trees will be planted between the bioretention facility and the homes to provide a visual screen from the road. The house on lot 1 will face the road and the garage will be located to the rear of the home. The house on Lot 2 will face toward the use-in-common driveway to avoid front-to-rear house orientation. The garages for the two new homes will be adjacent to each other. Perimeter landscaping, including shade and evergreen trees will be planted onto the eastern boundary, providing screening for an adjacent historic home on an adjoining lot, as well as a planted buffer along the western boundary beyond the driveway.

DocuSigned by:

Lynda Eisenberg
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Lynda Eisenberg, AICP, Director
Department of Planning and Zoning

8/7/2025

Date