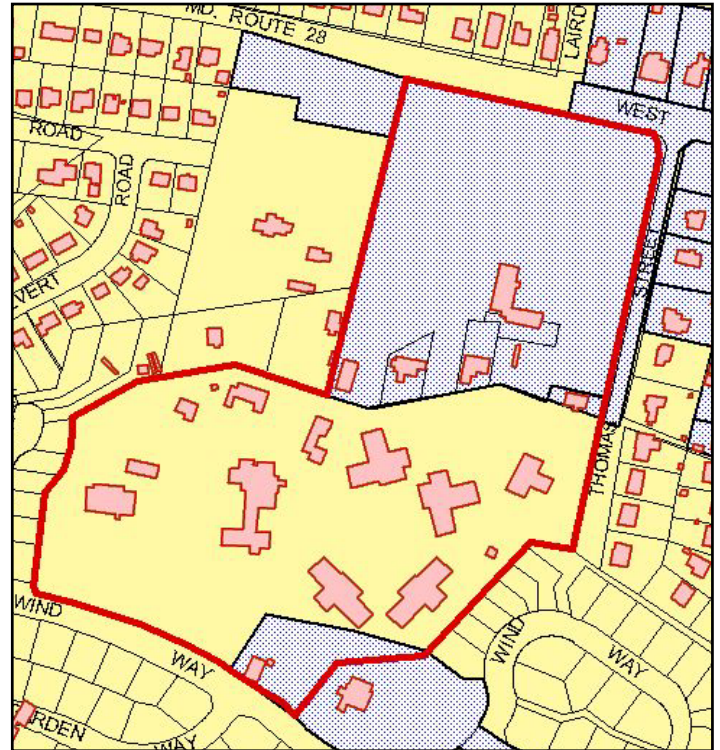


CITY OF ROCKVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT
for
July 21, 2005
MEETING NO. 07-05

ADDRESS: 500 W. Montgomery Ave.
OWNER/APPLICANT: Chestnut Lodge Properties, Inc.
REQUEST: Recommendation regarding Exploratory Application PRU2005-00022 to Mayor and Council
STAFF: Cindy Kebba



Chestnut Lodge property is outlined in red.
Historic districts are in gray.

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends that the HDC recommend approval of the Chestnut Lodge Exploratory Application PRU2005-00022, with comments as noted below, to the Mayor and Council as the Exploratory Application follows the majority of the Chestnut Lodge Design Guidelines.

1. Detailed recommendations regarding proposed demolition of the Stable and Upper Cottage and reconstruction and relocation of the ice house are provided in the staff report for Certificate of Approval application HDC2005-00336. In summary, staff recommended approval of the demolition of the Upper Cottage, denial of demolition of the stable, and approval of reconstruction of the icehouse, but denial of relocation to the lot near Frieda's Cottage. The final determination will be made by the HDC on July 21, 2005.
2. The garage proposed for the Little Lodge is the only new structure proposed for the historic districts aside from the addition to the Lodge building. New structures in the historic districts, with the exception of an appropriate rear addition to the Lodge, are

discouraged by the Guidelines. The existing stable, either re-constructed or extensively rehabilitated in its original location, could serve as a garage/accessory structure for the Little Lodge.

3. The Application preserves open areas, but adds a new road and brick pedestrian walkways to the east of the Lodge. A modified curb design that is more sensitive to the historic setting is recommended.
4. Although a landscape buffer is recommended along the east, south and west property boundaries in the Citywide Master Plan, flexibility is encouraged to maintain traditional public views from West Montgomery Avenue and Thomas Street.
5. Substantial landscaping screening along the new road is not recommended if it would further block views of the Lodge and Frieda's Cottage from West Montgomery Avenue and Thomas Street.
6. The HDC will review and provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission on the detailed architectural plans and materials for the new residential development at the time of the PRU Detailed Application.
7. Exterior alterations of all buildings that are retained in the historic districts will require HDC review and Certificate of Approval.
8. The HDC requests assurance that all historic buildings that remain on the site are adequately maintained and that any deferred maintenance is corrected as soon as possible.

BACKGROUND:

Property Area: 20.43 acres. Approximately 8 acres within West Montgomery Avenue Historic District and National Register Historic District; approximately 1 acre within Rose Hill Farm Historic District.

Structures in Historic Districts: The Lodge (formerly the Woodlawn Hotel, subsequently the main administration building of Chestnut Lodge Sanitarium), Frieda's Cottage, Upper Cottage, Icehouse, Little Lodge and Stable in the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District; Rose Hill Barn in the Rose Hill Farm Historic District. These buildings are identified in Appendix 1, attached.

Zone: The entire site is currently zoned RS, with the front 8-acre portion within the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District overlay zone (RS-HD) and the southeastern corner (containing the Rose Hill Barn and Milk House) within the Rose Hill Farm Historic District overlay zone (RS-HD). The owner/applicant proposes to develop the property in accordance with the Special Development Procedures – Planned Residential Unit Development (PRU) – techniques of Article XII, Division 4 of the City of Rockville Zoning Ordinance. This development procedure includes two phases; this exploratory phase and a detailed phase which will follow upon Mayor and Council approval of the exploratory plan.

Zone Standards and Requirements: Following the recommendation of the adopted 2002 Citywide Master Plan, the applicant is using R-90 development standards with regard to minimum lots size, maximum lot coverage, and minimum setback requirements. The PRU development procedures do allow for waivers/modifications from applicable development standards and for parking, access, and loading requirements.

The R-90 development standards require a 9,000 sq. ft. minimum lot size; 25% maximum lot coverage; 30-foot front setback (or established setback up to 60 feet); 20-foot side setback with side street abutting; 11 feet if land abutting. The rear setback is 25 feet. The maximum lot width at the front setback line is 80 feet. The maximum height of the main building can not exceed 35 feet.

A front setback waiver from the R-90 development standards will be needed for Frieda's Cottage if the carport is retained because it is only 13 feet from the right-of-way. Rose Hill Barn is only 9 feet from the right-of-way and, therefore, will also require a waiver of the front yard setback requirement. A height waiver will also be required for the Lodge and its new addition.

The proposed residential density of the entire project is 44 dwelling units, which is the maximum allowed. This is calculated by dividing the total acreage of the property by the minimum lot size in the RS zone which is 20,000 square feet ($20.43 \text{ acres} \times 43,560/20,000 = 44.4 \text{ units}$).

There are three criteria for granting approval of an Exploratory Application (Sec. 25-510 of Zoning Ordinance). The criteria state that the proposed development will not (1) affect adversely the health or safety of persons who will reside or work in the neighborhood of the proposed development; or (2) be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements located or to be located in or adjacent to the development; or (3) be consistent with the intent or purpose of this article (Article XII, Zoning and Planning).

Master Plan Recommendations (Chapter 2, pages 14-15):

The Citywide Master Plan, adopted by the Mayor and Council in 2002, notes that “The preservation of the historic buildings and the site’s mature trees and limiting traffic impacts are key concerns.”

The Master Plan recommendation for this property is stated as follows: “This plan recommends that the site be maintained in an institutional use and retain its RS zone in order to offer as much protection as possible for the site’s historic buildings and mature trees. A residential use on the property may be acceptable if the historic buildings and trees are protected. Development under a

Special Development Procedure, such as a variable lot size development, cluster development or Planned Residential Unit (PRU), is recommended if the historic and tree preservation goals are achieved. Development under the Planned Residential Unit development procedure is preferred for its flexibility in site design. However, the number of new residential dwellings on the property should be limited to the base level of development afforded by the R-S Zone, and by the goals of this plan to retain the setting of the historic structures and treed area along West Montgomery Avenue with as little disturbance as possible. The governing minimum lot size, maximum lot coverage and minimum setback requirements that apply to the property shall be those of the R-90 Zone in order that the new development be compatible with existing surrounding neighborhoods. In addition, landscaped buffer areas must be provided on the eastern, southern and western property boundaries, adjacent to existing residential dwellings. Given the property's relationship to the historic character of the West Montgomery Avenue streetscape, it is appropriate for an expanded portion of the property to be located within the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District [*this zoning change was completed in 2002 via Map Amendment*], and for additional design review of the new structures on the remainder of the site by the HDC to ensure their compatibility. This plan recommends against allowing C-1 uses that are normally permitted in a planned residential unit development. Finally, a hotel/spa use in the Main Lodge Building may be an acceptable use as long as it is limited primarily to the existing buildings, without major additions, and is buffered from the adjacent neighborhoods, and protects the site's historic buildings and trees. This would require either a text amendment or the creation of a new zone to provide for this option."

Chestnut Lodge Design Guidelines: Design Guidelines for the Chestnut Lodge property were adopted by the Mayor and Council in 2004 in anticipation of development proposals for this unique property. The stated purpose of the Guidelines is "to provide guidance for maintenance and exterior alterations to contributing resources and site characteristics of the historic areas of the property so that the character of the site and historical, architectural, and environmental features are preserved."

The goals of the Guidelines are as follow:

- To provide clear direction about the City's preservation priorities in the preparation of plans for development and reuse of the entire site.
- To preserve and protect the existing character of the historic districts, including both the natural and built environments.
- To identify significant historical buildings and features on the property.
- To encourage sympathetic and orderly changes to the site.
- To provide for development that is compatible with the historic buildings and their environmental setting.
- To provide guidance for rehabilitation and alteration of existing buildings and discourage the introduction of incompatible features and inappropriate alterations.
- To provide guidance for decisions regarding the demolition /relocation of buildings.
- To encourage adaptive re-use of the buildings and structures.
- To protect the architectural heritage, established character, and value of the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District.

Location and Surrounding Residential Development: The Chestnut Lodge property is bounded by West Montgomery Avenue to the north and Thomas Street to the east and is surrounded by residential subdivisions. The Rose Hill and Rose Hill Falls subdivisions are located to the south and were developed under the PRU procedures. The Thirty Oaks development (former Buckingham Property), also zoned RS and developed under the PRU procedures, is immediately to the west and contains 11 new single-family homes in addition to two existing homes. The three lots that front West Montgomery Avenue are in the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District. Further west is the Roxboro subdivision, zoned R-60 with a minimum lots size of 6,000 square feet. Immediately to the east, along Thomas Street, is Brewer's Addition to Rockville, zoned R-90. West End Park, across West Montgomery Avenue is zoned R-60 west of Laird Street and R-90 east of Laird along West Montgomery Avenue.

Significance: The Woodlawn Hotel/Chestnut Lodge property has two periods of historic and architectural significance. First, it is the only surviving example of a late 19th century hotel complex with original building hierarchy from Rockville's summer resort hotel era. Second, it is significant for its role as a nationally renowned facility for the treatment and research of psychiatric disorders in the 20th century. It is also unique for the integrity of the site, buildings, and grounds, which allows the site to convey its history as both a hotel and hospital.

The appearance, setting, and materials of the historic buildings are largely intact and the site preserves the original suburban park-like setting. The original spacing between structures and the placement of buildings according to use and needs are intact. The treed lawn, orientation, and buildings in their original locations contribute to its importance in understanding the use and development of the Woodlawn Hotel/Chestnut Lodge property as the product of another era.

The Chestnut Lodge Design Guidelines provide a more detailed significance summary of both the hotel period (1889-1906) and the sanitarium period (1908-2001).

DISCUSSION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT:

Summary of Exploratory Application PRU2005-00022

The PRU Exploratory Application will be reviewed by the HDC and then by the Planning Commission. Recommendations from each body will be provided to the Mayor and Council. The Exploratory Application must be approved by the Mayor and Council before the detailed application can be reviewed.

This Exploratory Application proposes the construction of 36 new single-family detached houses at the rear portion of the property; the rehabilitation and reuse of the existing Little Lodge within the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District as a 37th house for sale; and the rehabilitation and conversion of the Lodge (Woodlawn Hotel/Administration Building of Chestnut Lodge Hospital, within the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District) into 7 luxury condominium units which will require a rear addition and underground parking. In total, the Exploratory Application proposes 44 market-rate dwelling units.

Frieda's Cottage (c. 1936) is proposed to be deeded to a non-profit historic preservation organization (i.e. Peerless Rockville) to be used as a museum/library documenting the history of this property and the City of Rockville. It will be located on its own 15,083 square foot lot. The applicant intends to make a financial contribution to assist in the structure's renovation and re-use.

The stable (c. 1887, to the southwest of the Lodge) and the Upper Cottage (c. 1942, to the rear of the Lodge) are proposed for demolition. The above-ground portion of the Icehouse (c. 1888-9, located between the Upper Cottage and the Little Lodge) is proposed to be rebuilt, using existing salvageable materials where possible, and relocated to the new Frieda's Cottage lot so that the Cottage owner, proposed to be Peerless Rockville, will have control over its use and maintenance.

Rose Hill Barn and its lot, at the rear of the Chestnut Lodge property and in the Rose Hill Farm Historic District, will be deeded to the owners of Rose Hill Mansion who, according to the applicant, plan to renovate the structure. It will be covered by a maintenance and preservation covenant.

The wooded and lawn areas to the front of the site comprise most of the front 8 acres and are proposed to be retained as open space, with some changes to vehicular and pedestrian pathways. Otherwise, there will be no new development to the front of the Lodge.

Vehicular ingress/egress for the property is proposed to be limited to West Montgomery Avenue opposite Laird Street. This is the current vehicular access to the property and there is a traffic control signal there now. An existing emergency vehicular access to Autumn Wind Way at the rear of the property will be retained. This will only be accessible to emergency vehicles and will not allow resident or cut-through traffic.

The main entry road ("Bullard Circle") will be re-aligned and extended around the east side of the Lodge to access the new houses. This was recommended by planning staff to avoid the mature trees that are concentrated on the west side of the property. The right-of-way for the entrance road will be 28 feet wide (26 feet of paving), which is the minimum public road width allowed by the City. The Exploratory Application plan shows a meandering brick walkway that generally parallels the road but in some areas is separated by it by as much as 50 feet and does not provide direct pedestrian access to the Lodge. The City's transportation staff has requested that another sidewalk be added to the west side of the road to more directly access the Lodge from West Montgomery Avenue and because sidewalks are generally required on both sides of new roads. The transportation staff also requests that this road have curb and gutters to facilitate maintenance and prevent parking on the grassy areas adjacent to the road, although the Exploratory Application calls for no curb or gutters within the historic district. It is HDC staff's position that the least amount of paving, while allowing for necessary linkages, is preferred in the historic district and that a modified curb design be used that is sensitive to the historic setting.

Another brick pedestrian path will link the Lodge to Frieda's Cottage. This linkage has been there historically, although the new alignment will be somewhat altered.

Vehicular access to the seven Lodge condominium units will generally follow the existing roadway east of the Lodge but will terminate at the back of the Lodge in an underground garage. There will be a vehicle circle at the front of the Lodge, widened a bit from the existing circle to facilitate traffic flow. This circle will be used primarily as a drop-off and turn around for Lodge residents, guests and deliveries. There will be 7 on-street guest parking spaces along the Lodge road.

An evergreen buffer is proposed along the boundary that divides the portion of the property in the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District from the portion that will contain the new single-family homes and is not in this historic district. There will also be a 10-foot deep landscape buffer adjacent to all surrounding residential subdivisions (as is recommended in the Master Plan). An entry feature will be constructed where the road enters the new development to demarcate between the old and the new. There will be an entry feature at the main entrance to the property at West Montgomery and Laird as well.

Road improvements may be necessary along Thomas Street as three of the new houses and Frieda's Cottage front on this street. Thomas Street is currently considered to be sub-standard with partial curb, varying road widths and sidewalk on only a small portion of the east side. Transportation staff may require upgrading the road to a standard 26 feet (paving) width with curb and gutter. A new sidewalk and tree buffer would be installed on the west side, from Frieda's Cottage to the dead end, in front of the new houses. A full street length sidewalk extending to West Montgomery Avenue may not be required on the west side because there are numerous mature trees in this area between West Montgomery Avenue and Frieda's Cottage that would have to be removed. These conditions will be further examined by transportation and forestry staff.

The 36 new single-family homes will be built outside the historic districts. The developer plans to use Victorian and Craftsman style architecture and rear detached garages. Proposed building materials include Hardiplank clapboard, brick, stucco and stone. All of the new homes will have front porches and walkways from the front doors to the street. The HDC will have the opportunity to comment further on the architecture and materials at the detailed application stage of the PRU, as this portion of the property abuts two historic districts.

Staff Comments: The Exploratory Application for the PRU follows most of the Chestnut Lodge Design Guidelines. Specifically relevant guidelines to the HDC review of the Exploratory Application are included in: 6.1 Site Character Alterations; 6.2 Use of and Alterations to Historic Structures; 6.4 Construction of New Buildings or New Additions to Buildings; 6.5 Environmental Setting; and 6.6 Circulation Network. These guidelines are listed below:

6.1 Site Character Alterations

- A. Preserve the hotel building as the dominant architectural feature on this property. The hotel is the site's primary historic structure and has historically and purposefully served as the primary focus of the site's development pattern. All accessory buildings were built to the rear of the hotel. This trend continued with the building's subsequent use as a hospital. In keeping with this pattern, construction of new buildings is strongly

recommended to be located outside the boundaries of the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District. **Application follows guideline, with the exception of the new garage proposed for the Little Lodge property.**

- B. Rose Hill Mansion and Rose Hill Barn share a similar spatial and functional relationship. The open area linking the two structures was historically used as a garden. Construction of new buildings is not recommended between the Barn/Milk House and the rear façade of Rose Hill Mansion. Leaving this area open will help to maintain the relationship between these structures in the Rose Hill Farm Historic District and minimize the public view of any new structures from Autumn Wind Way. New construction within this district is encouraged to be located outside of the visual plane between the two buildings. **Application follows guideline.**
- C. Maintaining the public view of the east and north facades of the hotel building and Frieda's Cottage from West Montgomery Avenue and from its intersection with Thomas Street should be considered in any development plan. The east and north facades of the hotel were designed as the most formal, probably to impress guests approaching westward from the town. Fewer elaborate finishes were used on the less visible south and west facades. Most of the potentially applicable development regulations, such as in the PRU development approach, contain flexibility to achieve this objective. **Application follows guideline.**
- D. Preserve and use existing open areas, roadways, and pathways so that they can continue to link the elements within the site. These networks are integral to understanding the site's historic development. **Application preserves open areas, but adds a new road and pedestrian walkways. The main road is needed to access the new development and was aligned along the east side of the Lodge specifically to avoid the mature trees that are concentrated on the west side. A walkway will be added on the east side of the road and another sidewalk is requested by transportation staff on the west side. A pedestrian linkage between the Lodge and Frieda's Cottage will be maintained, but realigned.**
- E. Parking areas should be sensitively designed and minimized to have the least impact on historic and environmental resources and surrounding residential neighborhoods. **Application follows guideline. The underground parking garage for the Lodge will reduce the amount of surface parking required. The number and type of parking spaces required for Frieda's Cottage will be determined by its use.**

6.2 Use of and Alterations to Historic Structures

- A. Uses should be determined for all historic buildings prior to development of the site to ensure that individual buildings do not further deteriorate from lack of use and that the proposed reuse of the property is reviewed comprehensively. **Application follows guideline for Lodge, Little Lodge and Frieda's Cottage. Staff proposes possible uses for stable and icehouse. HDC does not regulate use but must be assured that there are viable uses for all historic structures.**

- B. Adapt compatible and appropriate re-use functions for historic structures that will require minimal alteration of their exteriors (with the exception of specific recommendations for the Lodge). Re-uses should also provide minimal alteration of the historic relationships of the buildings and the environmental setting, including minimal grading. **Exterior alterations of all buildings in the historic district will require HDC review and Certificate of Approval. Frieda's Cottage, The Upper Cottage and the Little Lodge were all originally built for residential use and continuation of this use for each would likely require the least amount of alteration.**

- D. All proposed alterations to building exteriors or landscapes within historic districts must receive approval from the Historic District Commission. Proposed exterior alterations within the historic districts will be reviewed by the HDC for their compatibility with existing designated buildings in terms of massing, size, scale, materials and architectural features and in accordance with the City's Technical Guides for Exterior Alterations (2004). **Exterior alterations of all buildings in the historic district will require HDC review and Certificate of Approval.**

6.4 Construction of New Buildings or New Additions to Buildings

- A. Construction of new buildings within the West Montgomery Avenue Historic District portion of the Chestnut Lodge property is discouraged. **Application follows guideline, with the exception of the new garage proposed for the Little Lodge lot.**

- B. Construction of new buildings within the portion of the Rose Hill Farm Historic District that lies between the Rose Hill Barn/Milk House and Rose Hill Mansion is discouraged. New structures in the Rose Hill Farm Historic District should be located so that they are minimally visible from Autumn Wind Way. **Application follows guideline.**

- E. If a residential use is proposed, the PRU Method of Development is encouraged to avoid new construction within the historic districts, by providing more flexibility in design than allowed under the R-S zone. **Application follows guideline.**

- F. Design and exterior construction materials of a new building or exterior alterations to an existing building abutting, adjoining or confronting the historic districts should be compatible in mass, scale and character with the contributing resources in the historic districts and will be reviewed by the HDC. **Detailed architectural drawings and materials for the new residential development must be provided for HDC review at the time of the PRU Detailed Application which will follow this Exploratory Application.**

6.5 Environmental Setting

- A. Maintain the historic and aesthetic character of the public view of the historic structures and streetscape from West Montgomery Avenue and the intersection of West Montgomery Avenue and Thomas Street. **Application follows guideline.**

- B. This site contains a large number of mature and significant trees that define and contribute to the streetscape of West Montgomery Avenue. Preservation of the open front portion of the site also helps to achieve the 20% afforestation requirement of the RS

zone. Tree removal within historic districts must be approved by the Historic District Commission. If the City Forester determines that a tree is dead or presents a safety hazard, HDC staff authorize immediate approval of its removal. **Application follows guideline.**

- C. A landscape buffer on the east, south and west property boundaries is recommended in the Master Plan. Flexibility is encouraged to maintain the traditional public views from West Montgomery Avenue and from its intersection with Thomas Street. **Application follows Master Plan recommendation. No buffer is planned for the north or east property boundaries that are within the historic district.**

6.6 Circulation Network

- A. Maintain the entrance opposite Laird Street as the main point of ingress/egress. **Application follows guideline.**
- B. Align ingress/egress and interior roadways to minimize negative impacts on existing trees and views of the Hotel/Lodge, Frieda's Cottage and other buildings. **Application follows guideline.**
- C. Alternative street standards (Road Code waivers) should be considered to improve compatibility with the historic character of the property. **Application follows guideline.**
- D. Paved areas should be kept to a minimum and screened with landscaping. **Application follows guideline except additional landscape screening along the new road would further block views of Lodge.**
- F. Streets and street accessories (lighting, sidewalks, etc.) within the historic districts should be appropriate to the districts and must be approved by the HDC. **Application follows guideline. Brick sidewalks will be used in the historic district. Curb and gutter is not preferred, but may be requested by the City's transportation department for easier maintenance, to discourage vehicles from being parked on grassy areas adjacent to the road and to protect tree roots. A modified curb design that is more sensitive to the historic setting would be more appropriate. The detailed application will provide greater specifics and opportunity for HDC review/approval.**