

# The Capital Top Stories

## Builder seeks homes in critical area

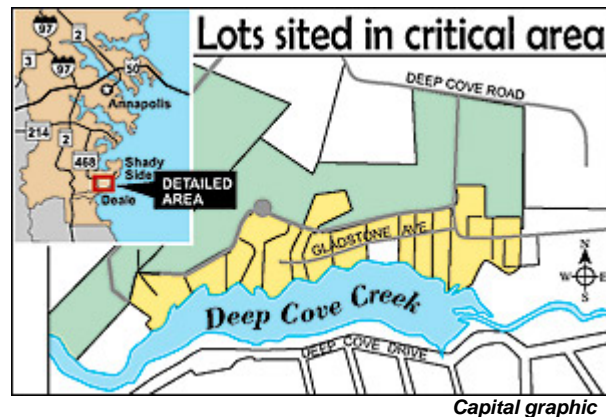
### Scant details offered on Churchton project

By E.B. FURGURSON III, Staff Writer

A developer is proposing to build about twice as many houses on Deep Cove Creek in Churchton as environmental laws appear to allow, pending a review by county land use officials.

Snyder Development will soon seek the county's approval to move the density allowed on four nearby south county lots to build 15 homes in the state-designated Critical Area.

The Resource Conservation Area, the most restrictive of three Critical Area zones, allows only one home per 20 acres meaning the 130 acres should yield something closer to half a dozen homes.



"We are selling nice views," Charles Snyder, president of Snyder Development, said at a recent meeting in Deale, providing scant detail of the project to roughly 20 people who attended.

Mr. Snyder was confident the project would pass muster.

If allowed, it would bring homes along the environmentally sensitive creek, which flows to the state-protected Franklin Point Park downstream.

The project will disturb about 30 of the combined 130 acres involved, with the remainder to be put into conservation and eventually deeded to the county.

But some citizens wondered at what cost?

"What do you have against Deep Cove Creek? Why build along the creek versus building back on the other side?" asked Rob Tufts, a resident of Franklin Manor just across the creek, and county council candidate in the recent election.

"Can you guarantee they won't dredge the creek for their big boats, for their big houses?"

Mr. Snyder said nobody wants anything built, but he too is a property owner.

"I have the right to build ... If I chose that this is what I want, and the county approves it,

then that is what I am going to do," he said.

He insisted he is not creating a subdivision, just combining the allowed homes on the lots he owns.

But whether he would be allowed to build those homes under the most restrictive Critical Area designation remains to be seen.

Maryland Critical Area Executive Director Ren Serey said the final decision of whether Mr. Snyder can build as much is up to the county.

County Land Use spokesman Pam Jordan said the developer would first have to prove the number of legal lots claimed exist within the parcels.

"They also must meet environmental standards, including a review under laws that restrict development due to wetlands, Forest Interior Dwelling Birds, steep slopes, and the (Critical Area) buffer," Ms. Jordan said.

After meeting all of those standards, Ms. Jordan said, "130 acres would typically support approximately seven homes."

Putting all those houses on relatively pristine land along the creek was not the only concern raised by residents. A few worried about added traffic along narrow Deep Cove Road.

"The county won't even bring a school bus down here," one woman said, pointing to a sharp, nearly blind, curve along the road near the county sewage plant.

Others wondered about the impact on schools.

Mr. Snyder, and his engineer, Jerry Tolodziecki, said that because they weren't actually "creating" a subdivision, they don't have to do a traffic study and won't be responsible for school density.

Another neighbor, farmer Bill Morris, worries changes to the property will affect the water that runs into his small farm pond used to irrigate crops.

"That water can't be contaminated in any way," he said. He also talked about the water table in the area, showing photographs of area roads under water following big rain storms.

Four years ago Mr. Snyder attempted to build 13 houses on one part of the land involved in this area, but complications arising from county demands, and the proximity to the county's Broadwater sewage treatment plant, put that on hold.

At an auction two years ago, Mr. Snyder acquired the 62-acre waterfront property on which he wants to put the new homes for \$1.5 million.

Back then he spoke of several lots found on an old plat of that property, but further checking found they were never recorded at the county courthouse and therefore not usable.

Mr. Tolodziecki said they hope to submit the current plan to the county around the first of the year.

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