

Refreshing the Vision for the Cedar Ridge Property

The Vision for the Cedar Ridge Property

The vision for the property, as expressed in the *Integrated Property Team Proposal*, was to use the 63 acres “to the fullest extent possible” for growth, community and servanthood. In particular, the vision was for the property to model environmental stewardship; provide an opportunity for service through farming operations, mentoring/tutoring for children, and classes for adults; be open to the community for camping, picnics and a ropes course; and provide opportunities for contemplation and prayer, spiritual counseling, emotional healing and spiritual awakening.

Current Reality

Over the last ten years, the property has been developed in the following ways:

- A half-acre farm has been developed and operates efficiently, with volunteers producing 1-2 tons of organic food each year
- Beehives have been installed, producing hundreds of pounds of honey annually, and promoting healthy bee colonies
- Investments have been made in maintaining the buildings, including repairs and major structural reinforcements to the barn in 2008-2009 (\$250k) and the current maintenance plan initiated in 2015 (\$200k)
- The facility has been maintained for an ongoing renter (Reaching Hearts International)
- The facilities have been used to accommodate numerous events ranging from weddings and funerals to larger-scale festivals
- Playing fields have been maintained and rented out (or used in return for a donation)
- The labyrinth and prayer walk have been maintained
- Small steps have been taken to reduce our environmental impact through recycling and the purchase of recycled products

Property Mortgage Information

- Land purchased December 1995 for \$1.25M
- Original Deed of Trust to the Carr estates was for \$850K
- Mortgaged with Citizens National Bank in December 1997 for \$1.85M at 9% interest maturing December 2002 (plus a letter of credit for \$125K at 11% interest)
- Second mortgage of \$485K taken out in January 2001 for barn renovation with 9% interest maturing July 2006
- Refinanced in April 2010 with Sandy Spring Bank for \$1.85M at 6.125% interest maturing April 2015
- Modified in March 2013 to extend maturation to March 2023 at 5.5% interest (remaining principal was \$1.6M)
- Modified in June 2016 to increase principal by \$200K (to \$1.4M) at 4.65% interest and extend to June 2026
- Principal in February 2017 was \$1.375M; monthly payment is \$15K

Fruit trees were planted, but proved unproductive—which is consistent with the experience of other organic farmers in the area. A farmers’ market was held for two years, but the church location appears to be sub-optimal for this. Other ideas such as solar panels and windmills, and an outdoor pavilion have

not progressed due to permitting questions and financial limitations. The building remains energy inefficient (largely as a result of the original design), and No Trespassing signs have been added in response to unauthorized ATVs and youth congregating at the fire pit to drink and smoke pot.

See Annex 1 (page 11) for a simplified map of the property.

Land restrictions

The property falls into two zones:

- *Single Family Residential (RE-1)*—15.7 acres close to the Spencerville Road are zoned for single family “moderately priced dwelling units” at a density of no more than one per acre. Alternative development options under RE-1 include churches, daycare homes, libraries and museums, parks and playgrounds.
- *Rural Cluster (RC)*—47.1 acres behind the church are zoned as a rural cluster, the purpose of which is to provide a “compatible mixture of agricultural uses and low-density residential development to promote agriculture, and to protect scenic and environmentally sensitive areas.”

The property also falls within two environment-protected areas:

- *Patuxent River Watershed Primary Management Area (PMA)*—As land bordering a tributary of the Patuxent River, no more than 10% of the property can be under impervious surface (i.e., under buildings, parking lots, rooflines, gravel paths, or other types of development).
- *Upper Paint Branch Special Protection Area (SPA)*—In addition, most of the RE-1 land (12.3 acres) lies within the SPA overlay. This had a 10% impervious surface ceiling when we bought the property in 1995, which was reduced in 2007 to 8%.

When Cedar Ridge submitted its preliminary plan to the Park and Planning Commission, engineers calculated that 9.8% of the area within the SPA was under impervious surface, and 7.3% of the property overall. This means that only 1.63 acres are available for impervious surface cover.

Two areas along the perimeter of the property, totaling 18.1 acres, are designated Forest Conservation Easements. These areas must be kept forested and cannot be developed in any way.

The property as a whole is designated historic on the Montgomery County Master Plan. This means that the Historic Preservation Commission has to approve any substantial changes to the exterior of historical buildings or the environmental setting (i.e., the property as a whole). It also has to grant permission before any part of the historic buildings can be demolished.

Farmhouse

The farmhouse was built in 1855 and extended in or around 1870. When we purchased the property in 1995, the house was in poor condition, but was structurally intact. In 2003, the farmhouse was inspected by an employee of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission who warned us about our responsibilities and potential punitive action for demolition by neglect. Sporadic correspondence has taken place over the years between Cedar Ridge staff and members of the Commission, and we have openly communicated our desire to demolish the addition (which we were

warned against doing in 2003). It appears that no one from the Commission has visited the property since 2003.

The farmhouse has since fallen into a state of extreme disrepair. The foundations are crumbling in places, water infiltration has led to the collapse of the second floor of the extension, groundhogs and other animals have infested the building, etc. This opens us up to the possibility for punitive action by the Park and Planning Commission beginning with issuance of a written notification of necessary maintenance and repairs, which must be initiated within 30 days. Within 10 days of receipt of such a notification, we could request a public hearing to appeal the decision, citing “substantial hardship.” This hearing would occur after 30 days’ written notification, and if unsuccessful, we would again have 30 days to commence repairs.¹ Failure to comply could theoretically² lead to the county repairing the farmhouse and placing a lien on the property, and/or the imposition of substantial (daily) fines.

While not completely unprecedented, research to date suggests that an appeal to de-list the property as historic is unlikely to be successful.

In order to receive permission from the Historic Preservation Commission to demolish the extension and seal up the original farmhouse until the building can be rehabilitated, we have been advised by attorney Patrick O’Neil to do the following:

- *Tell the historical story*—Show that we are aware of and care about the historical significance of the property and of the farmhouse in particular.
- *Tell our story*—Document our attempts to protect and repair the building, and demonstrate our financial difficulties in investing in the farmhouse given the expenses incurred in rehabilitating the historic barn.
- *Tell the story of how we will use it in the future*—Present the Commission with a believable and feasible plan to use the farmhouse in the mid-term (e.g., 5 years from now) to demonstrate our incentive to not allow the rest of the farmhouse to fall into disrepair.

Options Moving Forward

Once we decide what we want to do with the property, we should contact Simin Rasolee at the Department of Permitting Services to be assigned a case manager, who will guide us through the permitting process.

Land sales

Land can be sold by deed without going through the process of subdivision. However the Park and Planning Commission strongly recommends against this, as it would remove all ability to develop the land until a new plat had been submitted and approved. The only exception would be selling the playing fields to the Adventist Academy, if they intend keeping them undeveloped. Park and Planning permission is required to subdivide the property—an engineer would need to be contracted to draw up the preliminary plan.

¹ Historic Resources Preservation (Section 24A of County Code)

² The Maryland Historic Preservation Commission Training Manual advises that it is rare for a local government to fully repair a building and bill the owner, although boarding up buildings or covering with tarps is more probable.

If we were to subdivide the property in order to sell some of the land, the most lucrative area for development is the playing fields, which has sewer access (because of the school). Road access would probably be via our driveway, and to overcome the impervious surface limitations, the parking lots closest to the road would need to be relocated further back on the property. (See photo on right). To ascertain whether this option is financially viable, we would need to hire an engineer to draft a preliminary plan (likely cost: \$4K-\$8K), and then realtors could estimate the selling price. To prepare the land ready for sale through subdivision would cost \$100K-\$300K (for sewer connection, driveway access, permitting, etc.) and take at least 18-24 months. The back part of the property could be sold to a developer to build one or two residences. Putting in road and sewer would be costly and so the profitability would need to be carefully investigated.



Land uses

- *Construction*—As described above, only 1.63 acres are available for impervious surface cover, including any roads or paths leading to new structures. RC zoning does not allow for a commercial conference center, but a spiritual retreat center may be approved. Any enclosed buildings are likely to require us to connect to the public sewer (currently we use a septic system), which can be very costly. An outdoor pavilion would be unlikely to trigger this requirement. All construction requires a building permit from Park and Planning, and approval by the Historic Preservation Commission.
- *Solar farm*—For this option, which was part of our original vision, there are a number of issues to take into consideration:
 - Current zoning for RC stipulates that solar capture cannot exceed 120% of our own energy needs. However, this is currently being debated, and there is consideration of solar “farming” as a legitimate agricultural activity in an RC zone. It is very possible that we would receive permission for a larger-scale solar farm.
 - Solar panels do not constitute impervious surface³ but the bases or posts supporting them do. (The Park and Planning Commission said, however, that they do not bother to calculate such small areas.)
 - Since our entire property is designated a county historic site, plans would need to be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission. It is likely they would approve them behind the church, away from the historic buildings and not easily visible from the road.⁴
 - Projections made by a solar company last spring—which assumed no upfront costs by Cedar Ridge, an 8-month installation period, and coverage of less than an acre in the meadow—estimated (in addition to environmental impact) modest cost savings of

³ Chapter 702 of the Session Laws of 2012

⁴ According to the Historic Preservation Commission minutes approved December 1, 1985, only 9 acres were considered the environmental setting for the farmhouse. However the full 98-acre farm was designated historic and is included on the master plan.

\$28K over 10 years and \$81K over 20 years, at which point the panels would be fully paid for and the rate of savings would increase (\$158K over 25 years and \$289K over 30 years).

- *Windmills*—According to the Department of Environmental Protection, Montgomery County does not generally have prime wind speeds sufficient to make residential wind energy systems cost-effective. Since we would be considering a larger-scale wind energy project, we can apply to borrow an anemometer (a wind measuring device) from the Maryland Energy Administration to see if such a project would be feasible.⁵ According to the Department of Permitting Services, windmills of less than 50 feet would be permissible under our zoning restrictions, but approval from the Historic Preservation Commission would also be needed.
- *Organic cemetery*—This option has been raised recently as a niche, and potentially profitable, service that could be offered, which would be vision-aligned and would maintain the natural look and feel of the property. Cemeteries of any kind require a special exception, which is a very long, complicated and expensive process. This option would only be worth investigating further if we were prepared to devote a large section of our land to the cemetery; in which case, the organic cemetery would likely be a component of a more traditional cemetery. The land use planner consulted strongly advised against this option, but should we wish to pursue it further, we can contact Stantec, a company with expertise in this area.

Land leases

Some of our property could be leased. Leasing to a farm would be the optimal choice from the point of view of the Park and Planning Commission. The agronomic suitability of available land would need to be investigated, including ways to address the lack of access to water in the area behind the church.

Leasing farmland may be a preferred option in terms of vision-alignment by making the land productive, creating employment, and/or possibly leasing to a hunger-focused organization.⁶ However, it is unlikely to be a significant source of income. Additional research would be needed to ascertain possible revenue from our property, including an assessment by the Office of Agriculture of the agronomic conditions of possible arable land. The Montgomery Countryside Alliance can organize this assessment, as well as help to match the land with suitable farmers looking to rent. Initial indications are that the rental amount would be less than \$200 per acre annually. (See textbox above for more details.)

Commercial Land Leasing

There is significant demand for small parcels of land (less than 10 acres) in Montgomery County for cultivation or animal grazing, particularly among young farmers, women, and returning veterans. The terms of land leases vary dramatically and can specify the use of chemicals and the types of crop to be grown. Rental payment options range from free, to a share in the produce, a percentage of profits, or a fixed monthly sum. The value depends on the location and the suitability of the land for high-value crops, with small plots for specialized crops (such as hops for micro-breweries) reaching as much as \$360 per acre annually.

⁵ See <http://energy.maryland.gov/Residential/pages/Incentives/anemometerGrants.aspx>

⁶ No interest to date has been shown by hunger-focused organizations such as First Fruits (based in Northern Baltimore County) or Arcadia (a 4-acre demonstration farm and educational children's garden in Alexandria).

The pros and cons of leasing to a commercial farm would need to be balanced against those of other options: for example, with a sizable farm operation on-site, the property might be a less desirable site for weddings or spiritual retreats.

Rental of facilities

The pros and cons of renting out our existing facilities have been discussed in the past. Reasons in favor of renting include income generation, increased community exposure, responsible resource use, and offering needed services to people and organizations in our community. Reasons against include the potential distraction of managing non-vision oriented events, demands on staff time, wear and tear on facilities, the unavailability of facilities for our own use, and questions concerning the profitability of *ad hoc* rentals.

Realtors have suggested that facilities rentals would be our most profitable short- to medium-term option given limited funds available for investment in more expensive options, such as subdivision and sale for development. Additional research would need to be made into possible revenue from the rental of facilities, but comparisons with other church facilities available in our area suggest reasonable rates of approximately \$200 per hour for the auditorium, \$20 per hour for the larger classrooms, and \$100-\$150 per hour for the barn⁷—with discounts for regular use and nonprofit organizations.

Concerns about renting the facilities have been raised with regards to zoning, licensing/permitting and taxation:

- **Zoning**—The rental of existing facilities is allowed under our current zoning, according to the Department of Permitting Services, as long as being a religious community remains the focus of our activity. (I.e., staff time and attention is not primarily devoted to rentals, and/or most of our income is not generated from rentals.)
- **Licensing/permitting**—Irregular rentals—particularly rentals connected to our community and our vision (weddings, life events of members or extended relations, spiritual retreats, etc.)—are unlikely to require licenses and permits. However, if we want to substantially expand this area, advertise our facilities, hire a rental property management company, or rent long-term to an organization other than another faith community or a small pre-school/daycare, we will need to apply to the Department of Permitting Services. (This Department has not been willing to date to discuss hypothetical situations: they want us to submit an actual plan.)
- **Taxation**—Income derived from profit-generating activities such as rentals *can* be subject to unrelated business income tax, however rental income is generally *not* taxable. The rendering of personal services in connection with rentals can in some circumstances make the income taxable.⁸ (See textbox on next page.)

⁷ Given its uniqueness, the barn is particularly hard to compare with other properties available to rent. \$150 is high for the size of the rooms, but in the past, the barn was rented out for events at a rate of \$1,800 per day; and the barn together with two classrooms were rented out to a private school for \$300K for 9 months—which translates into approximately \$180 per hour.

⁸ As specified in IRS Publication 1828, page 20. Available at: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p1828.pdf>

Unrelated Business Income Tax

Income may be taxable if all three of the following apply:

- The activity constitutes a trade or business,
- The trade or business is regularly carried on, and
- The trade or business is not substantially related to the organization's exempt purpose

Even then, income may be tax-exempt if one or more of the following holds:

- Substantially all the work is performed by volunteers,
- The activity is conducted by the organization primarily for the convenience of its members, or
- Substantially all of any merchandise sold was donated

Specific ideas for rentals include the following:

- *Conferences*—As noted above, RC zoning does not allow for a commercial conference center.
- *School*—Renting to a school is possible from a zoning perspective. Since we are already licensed for a pre-school or daycare of up to 53 students, amending this to a private school should not be too difficult, but we will need to apply to the Department of Permitting Services. Our preliminary plan allowed for a total of 49 peak-hour trips, so if the school is the same size or smaller, we should not need a traffic study. Strong interest in renting the barn has been expressed by a local Montessori middle school.
- *Weddings*—Since performing a wedding ceremony is a widely recognized function of a place of worship, this option should be acceptable to the relevant authorities, subject to the licensing/permitting issues outlined above. Catering for weddings (and similar functions) might be more profitable and attractive if kitchen facilities were available on-site. Currently we only have planning permission for a “warming kitchen.”⁹ Modifying this to a full kitchen should be possible, but will require various permits from the Department of Permitting Services and the Department of Health and Human Services (amongst others).
- *Camping, picnics, etc.*—Opening up the property to the community for camping, picnics, nature walks, star-gazing and the like was a key objective of the *Integrated Property Team Proposal*. The land at the back of the property was rented annually (for a nominal donation amount) to the Webelo Scouts for 5 years, but this arrangement was terminated in 2014 when camping during/after heavy rain led to deep ruts in the path back to the camping area, and to complaints from Reaching Hearts about the parking lot being full. The Department of Permitting Services recently confirmed that renting our property for camping is not allowed under our zoning restrictions. Property maintenance concerns must be balanced by concern for implementing our vision for the property. Security and liability issues also need to be carefully considered. Under our current insurance policy, we are insured against “no fault” medical costs for members of the public for up to \$15,000, and additional funds are available to defend against any legal action brought against us by members of the public who are injured on our property. Organizations who rent our property (such as the scouts) should carry their own insurance. New activities, such as fully installing and opening the partially built challenge ropes course, are likely to require additional coverage.

⁹ As per Consent Agreement recorded as LF 15785.111-114

Environmental improvements

The *Integrated Property Team Proposal* expressed a desire to “become a model of healthy, balanced, sustainable living in Christ... [which] should include our people, our buildings and our land.” As stated previously, various improvements have been made to the land, including the establishment of bee hives and an organic farm.

Unfortunately, the original design of the church building limits our ability to model environmentally sustainable living. The building is basically a large metal, barn-type structure, which is very inefficient to heat and cool. The walls do not have Tyvek wrap to keep out wind, the glass doors do not seal well, and the windows—although themselves insulated—are in metal frames that allow drafts to pass through. None of the windows open, and to replace them would be expensive (approximately \$600 per window for the classrooms and front of the building; considerably more for the ones in the auditorium). Most church appliances are old and are not energy-efficient.

Switching to energy-efficient LED lighting is expensive, but BGE currently offers to cover 80% of the switching cost through its Smart Energy Savers Program. An energy audit conducted in October 2016 by Matrix Energy Services (the approved BGE contractor for our location) stated a total cost of \$19,442 for the main building and \$3,307 for the barn—for a combined cost to Cedar Ridge of \$5,413. Energy cost savings through the program are projected at over \$4K per year.

Disposable kitchen supplies are made of recycled materials (napkins) or are biodegradable and compostable (plates and cups). Plastic flatware is recyclable—although Cedar Ridge members often put them in the trash cans, even when recycle bins are made available—suggesting the need for some education about the importance of recycling. Office paper is FSC-certified and paper hand towels are made of recycled materials. Bathroom tissue is not made of recycled materials due to past complaints about quality, and concerns about the capacity of the septic system.

Past efforts at on-site composting were disbanded after a couple of years due to insufficient quantities of compostable materials to warrant use of the tractor, the labor involved in composting by hand, and concerns about attracting additional wildlife onto the property. (Commercial recycling and waste disposal is not permitted in an RC zone.)

Decisions for Moving Forward

At the Vision Refresh Retreat in February 2017, the Board and Pastoral Team discussed the opportunities and limitations presented in this paper, and agreed on a way forward, as described below.

Land sales

The property currently allows us to pursue many aspects of our vision by providing meeting space, farmland, a labyrinth and prayer walk, and a natural setting to unplug and reconnect with God. This precious resource has the potential to be used more productively, profitably and responsibly. Given our current financial position, there is no compelling reason to sell the property in its entirety at this time.

The subdivision of the property for sale would require substantial upfront investment. By selling plots, we would lose control over how that land is developed, which could impair the beauty or value of our

remaining property. Since income can be generated in ways other than land sales (e.g., leasing or rentals), subdivision of the land for sale to developers will not be pursued.

The sale of land to adjacent properties—such as the Adventist Academy—will be considered on a case-by-case basis. For example, if the Academy is interested in purchasing the playing fields and leaving them undeveloped, this may be a mutually agreeable option. We will be open to such opportunities, but not actively pursue them at this time.

Land leases

Leasing to a likeminded crop farmer (organic, hunger-focused, environmentally conscious, etc.) could be an attractive option from a vision standpoint. Once we know what land is needed for other developments we decide to pursue, we will further investigate the feasibility of partnering with a farmer in this way.

Land development

We will investigate the feasibility of establishing a solar farm for ethical as well as financial reasons. Buying solar panels is more lucrative than leasing (although as a nonprofit we do not have the same tax incentives as private companies), but it requires substantial investment. The Adventist Academy expressed interest in the past in collaborating in a solar farm, which warrants further investigation if such collaboration would allow us to generate 120% of our *combined* energy needs.

We will remain open to future construction of buildings, such as an outdoor pavilion or possibly a retreat center, but will not pursue this option until there is a compelling reason to invest resources in this way.

Facility rentals

While *ad hoc* rentals require substantial time and energy to organize, long-term rentals can be both profitable and relatively easy to manage. We will pursue one (or even two) long-term renter on Saturdays or Sunday late afternoons/evenings to replace income lost as a result of Reaching Hearts International's departure. We will also pursue a preschool or elementary school renter for weekdays, and work with them to obtain the necessary permits. Although these are primarily business decisions, we will seek to rent to likeminded organizations, where such a possibility exists.

We will put together a business plan for wedding rentals. We can develop multiple offerings—the location, pre-marital counseling, the service, possibly catering—and generate significant income in a relatively predictable manner.

We will also remain open to occasional one-off rentals that are financially attractive, as well as consider on a case-by-case basis reduced-cost (or free) rentals that contribute to our vision.

Environmental stewardship

The BGE Energy Savers Program makes financial sense and helps to reduce our environmental footprint. As such, we will move forward with enrollment.

We want to recapture our vision of being “a community that treasures the Earth.” This includes a need to (re)educate Cedar Ridge members on the importance of creation care, as well as practical actions on the property to create more of a haven for wildlife (such as new birdhouses, bat and owl boxes) and to reduce our negative impact on the environment (e.g., through a greater commitment to recycling).

With this in mind, we will take a more proactive approach to recycling, water/energy efficiency, reducing waste, etc., through educational signage, more visible recycling bins, the development of messages and announcements for Sunday services, and events (such as Earth Day). We will seek to have youth take a leading role in these initiatives. We will also put together a team to identify ways to make Cedar Ridge more of a haven for wildlife, and will create and promote a list of environmental projects for scouts to undertake.

Land use

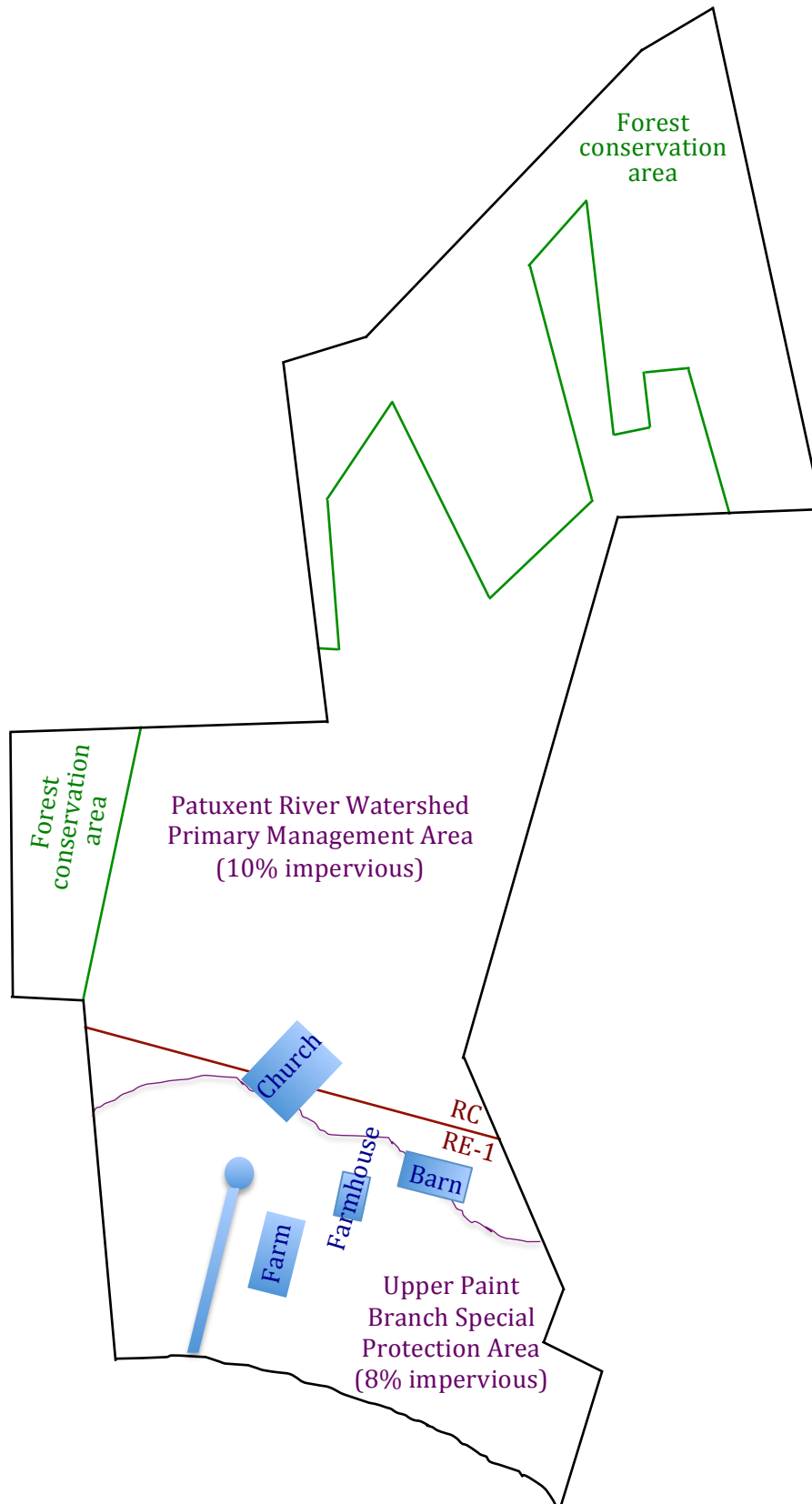
Clearly there is a need to balance our desire to open the property to the public with the need to ensure the security of the property, particularly as new investments are made (e.g., in solar panels or animals on the farm). Specific areas will be fenced off or secured as needed, while some areas (e.g., the labyrinth and prayer walk) will remain open—and promoted as such—to the public. Areas such as the farm and, in the future, the farmhouse, may be opened to the public on certain days of the month. We will be more proactive in welcoming people to the property through signage, leaflets at Cedar Ridge community events, and on the website, and by adding a geocache location.¹⁰ We will also be more explicit about the terms of use of our property through signage on the paths into the back of the property.

Farmhouse

Since we need to meet the legal requirements of our property, we will approach the Historic Preservation Commission without further delay with the document we were advised to prepare (including a summary of the historical importance of the property, explanation of our attempts to preserve the building and the limitations we faced, and a plan for its future use). This document is attached to this paper as Annex 2, beginning on page 12. To strengthen ties to the local Guatemalan community, we will proactively solicit cost estimates from qualified Latino-owned firms.

¹⁰ This is a small hidden container, the coordinates of which are visible online to people registered to play. See www.geocaching.com.

Annex 1: Property Map



Annex 2: Cedar Ridge Farmhouse

Brief History of the Cedar Ridge Property

In 1703, a 600-acre tract of land was conveyed by the Lord Proprietor of Maryland and surveyed for Mark Richardson.¹¹ This land was named Bear (or Bare) Bacon—reputedly because of the wild animals that roamed the area.¹² Adjoining or possibly overlapping land in the same vicinity was patented in 1715 as “Snowden’s Manor Enlarged” in what was then Prince George’s County.¹³ Montgomery County was formed out of Prince George’s County in 1776.

In the 1740s, Anglicans began moving into this part of Maryland, including the Duvall family.¹⁴ Lewis (Louis) H. Duvall was born in Prince George’s County in 1827. He purchased 251 acres of Bear Bacon from Isaac B. Iglehart in 1851 for \$600.¹⁵ Iglehart had bought the property the previous year from Elias Ellicott of Prince George’s County in payment of a debt of \$333.34 plus interest.¹⁶ This may be the same Elias Ellicott who co-founded the Muirkirk Furnace in Prince George’s County in 1847 with his brother Andrew. Although Quakers had long opposed slavery (Sandy Spring Quakers, for example, banished households from meetings for holding slaves in 1781), the brothers relied on slave labor to operate the furnace.¹⁷

Duvall married Mary Jane Spencer (1834-1904) in 1853, and they had 8 children. Mary Jane’s passing was noted in the Annals of Sandy Spring:

“Also on 20 November, Mary J., wife of Louis H. Duvall, of Spencerville, passed from earth. Although not actually a resident of Sandy Spring, she was well known to many of our people, for she was active in the temperance movement, and ready to help in any good work. She will be keenly missed and long remembered by many outside her own immediate circle of relatives and friends.”¹⁸

In April 1855, Lewis Duvall sold 122 acres of Bear Bacon to his father-in-law, William H. Spencer (1805-1892) for \$610.¹⁹ William Spencer, together with his wife and five children, other relatives and neighbors from Southampton Township, Pennsylvania, arrived in this area, originally called Drayton,²⁰ in 1848.²¹ This small community, formed by Spencer on the Laurel Road (present day Spencerville Road), connected the Quaker settlements of Sandy Spring and

¹¹ “The History of Montgomery County, Maryland” by Thomas H. S. Boyd (1879), p 32

¹² Volume 1 of the Annals of Sandy Spring, p xvii

¹³ Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-80 (PACS D3.39)

¹⁴ Volume 6 of the Annals of Sandy Spring, p 14

¹⁵ Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., STS 5/449

¹⁶ Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., STS 4/367

¹⁷ Meyer, Eugene L. (February 3, 1999). *Reliving A Time Cast In Iron*. Washington Post

¹⁸ The Annals of Sandy Spring, Volume 3, p 303-304

¹⁹ Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., JGH 4/485

²⁰ Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-80 (PACS D3.39)

²¹ Lord, Elizabeth, M. (1976). *Burtonsville Heritage: Genealogically Speaking*.

Ashton with the railroad line at Laurel. Drayton was renamed Spencerville in William Spencer's honor, and he became the first postmaster of Spencerville in 1859.²²

William Spencer bought 91¾ acres from the William Holmes estate (also known as Bealls Manor) in or before 1856²³ and farmed the land, which was noted as being productive for wheat, corn and hay.²⁴ He is thought to have built the front part of the farmhouse around 1855 and the addition circa 1870.²⁵ Since William Spencer owned several parcels of land, and there are no maps available showing the property lines for these parcels, there is confusion in the records as to whether the farmhouse was built on Bare Bacon,²⁶ or (more likely) on adjoining land, such as land from the William Holmes estate.

William Spencer sold both the 91¾ acres from the William Holmes estate and the 122-acre Bare Bacon tract to his son-in-law Charles Dickenson in 1857 for \$2000—together with 3 horses, 2 mules, 5 cows, 3 wagons, a cart, 4 ploughs, 3 harnesses, 7 beds, 500 bushels of corn, winter grain, furniture and farming implements for an additional \$1000.²⁷ William Spencer repurchased the land for the same price of \$2000 from his daughter Amelia A. Dickenson in 1859,²⁸ following the death of Charles the previous year.

William Spencer sold Bare Bacon to his son Hiriam Spencer in 1861 for \$1000.²⁹ Hiriam married in 1868,³⁰ and died two years later from tuberculosis at the age of 31. In compliance with a court order, his property was sold at auction. Hiriam had greatly increased the value of Bare Bacon with a large house (the Spencer/Oursler house located behind Burtonsville Park at 15920 Oursler Road³¹) smokehouse, icehouse, and orchards.³² William Spencer repurchased Bare Bacon in 1873 for \$4650 through the court-ordered Trustee sale³³ and one month later, took out a mortgage on the property for \$1000 from Thomas Conley, which was transferred to Joseph Stabler in 1886.³⁴

In 1871, William Spencer purchased 35¼ acres of Snowden's Manor Enlarged from Charles and Sarah Stabler for \$616.87. Ten years later, he sold this land, the 122-acre Bare Bacon and the

²² Geraci, Ron, Vicki Walker, and Linda Donnary. (1976). *Old Building Survey of Burtonsville Area*. Sponsored by the Bicentennial Committee, Burtonsville, Md. See also *The Annals of Sandy Spring*, Volume 6.

²³ Montgomery County Commissioners Tax Assessment Book of 1853-63, p 326

²⁴ Boyd, T.H.S. (1879) *The History of Montgomery County, Maryland, from its Earliest Settlement in 1650 to 1879*. p.142

²⁵ The date is based on the date that William Spencer purchased the property, tax assessments, and appearance on the Martenet and Bond map of 1865.

²⁶ As claimed in Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-55 (PACS D3.32)

²⁷ Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., JGH 5/593

²⁸ Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., JGH 7/349

²⁹ Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., JGH 8/485

³⁰ Lord, Elizabeth, M. (1976). *Burtonsville Heritage: Genealogically Speaking*.

³¹ See Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-58 (PACS D3.29)

³² Montgomery County Equity Case Record, 193 (1870).

³³ Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., EBP 11/165

³⁴ Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., EBP 10/201

91¾-acre William Holmes estate—less 23 acres, which had been sold off previously—together with 3 horses, 5 wagons, 4 cows, 9 hogs, 4 harnesses, crops of wheat and corn, a mule, a hay rack, a mower and household and kitchen furniture to his daughter, Margaret Jamison for \$3,000.³⁵

The William Spencer household is described in the 1880 census as including William (a 75 year old widowed farmer); John Spencer (his 36 year old son) and U.W. Jamison (his son-in-law) who worked on the farm; Margaret Jamison (his 47 year old daughter); and Laura Johnson, an 18 year old black servant.³⁶

William Spencer died in 1892, and Joseph Stabler began mortgage foreclosure procedures against Margaret Jamison the following year, which led to the sale in 1894 of Bare Bacon for \$1342.³⁷

Margaret lived on the remaining property until her death about 1905, at which point, her only living child, Anna Wilson,³⁸ sold the house on 62½ acres, referred to as Snowden's Manor Enlarged (or "whatever name or names the same may be known or called"), to farmer Edward Carr for \$3,100.³⁹ The Carr family added outbuildings to the property during the 1920s.⁴⁰ Edward died in 1956, leaving the farm to his wife Laura and their children Gilbert and Clara. At that time, the farm consisted of the farmhouse, two tenant houses and various outbuildings.⁴¹ Later, Laura conveyed the house to Gilbert and Clara.⁴² Clara Carr was the owner of the farm until her death in 1986. Cedar Ridge Community Church purchased the farm from the estates of Gilbert and Clara Carr in December 1995.

Description of the Farmhouse

The farmhouse (Spencer/Carr House) was originally constructed ca. 1855, and is a rare surviving example of a once common farmhouse type locally identified as the "Spencerville style." The symmetrical building, with a near flat roof, is a variation of the three-bay I-house form that adds a distinctive third (attic) level decorated by vernacular Greek Revival frieze band windows directly beneath the cornice.

³⁵ Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., EBP 25/36

³⁶ 1880 Census cited in Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-58 (PACS D3.29)

³⁷ Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., JA 44/164

³⁸ Jenkins, Howard, M. (1904), *Genealogical Sketch of the Descendants of Samuel Spencer of Pennsylvania*.

³⁹ Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., 184/167

⁴⁰ Montgomery County Commissioners Tax Assessment Books cited in Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-55 (PACS D3.32)

⁴¹ Will #19407, Montgomery County Register of Wills cited in Maryland Historical Trust Addendum Sheet M:15-58 (PACS D3.29)

⁴² Land Records of Montgomery County, Md., 320/174



The farmhouse in 1973

The main block of this three-story house has six-over-six sash windows on the first and second floors, and shorter three-over-three windows on the third floor. The three-over-three windows were unique to the time, and give the house architectural significance. The hip-roofed front porch is shorter than most front porches found in Burtonsville; it being only half as long as the house. It has chamfered posts and elaborate corner brackets. The gable ends are plain, with a pair of small two-over-four windows in the gable. A chimney rises from within each gable end. This main block contains a central stair flanked by one room on either side. There is a full depth basement under this portion of the house, which was rare for the time. There is no stair hall, and access to the slightly later rear addition is through the room to the left.

The frame rear addition containing the kitchen is only two stories high. There are two box stairs, each containing winder steps, at each end of this addition, providing access to the second floor. A box spiral stair in the main house connects the second and third floors. The rear wing originally consisted of a frame two-story room. The kitchen room was added later, probably during the 1870s, and the porch to the west of the wing is enclosed.

Unusually for farmhouses of this period, the studs, second floor and roof framing are milled (rather than hand-hewn) lumber. Species range from pine to oak, and both circular and band

saws were used, suggesting the lumber came from different mills. The house was sheathed in dimensional boards (of varying widths but consistent thickness) laid diagonally, and then lap siding was applied. This was uncommon for the day—typical practice being lap siding only—and would have made the frame exceptionally strong.

The lack of an open-hearth fireplace and the presence of chimneys with thimbles (holes to receive stovepipes) suggest the house was heated with iron stoves, as pioneered by Benjamin Franklin a generation before. The presence of an old well under the rear addition to the house may indicate early indoor plumbing, with a hand pump at the wellhead, later replaced by an electrical pump.

Recent Changes to the Property

In 1973, the Spencer/Carr farm was visited by a park historian from the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), and nominated for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places with the National Parks Service. The property was visited by a surveyor from the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) in 1981, and inventoried by a representative of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) in 1982. The farmhouse was described at that time as being “well preserved.” In 1986, the entire property was designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and therefore protected under the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 24A of the Montgomery County Code.

When Cedar Ridge purchased the property in 1995, the farmhouse was in very poor condition: it had been unoccupied for at least nine years, had been vandalized by local youth, and was infested with various animals and insects. While restoring the farmhouse was a priority for Cedar Ridge (as indicated by the repeated discussions held with the M-NCPPC, as well as internal Cedar Ridge communications), all available funds were required for the construction of the church building.

In late 1996, Cedar Ridge contacted Neubauer-Sohn Consulting Engineers to conduct a structural study of the farmhouse. The technical drawings were reviewed the following year by Dave Morrison, who noted access issues with shoring up the basement under the main block of the house. Additional studies of the basement were conducted by WQQM Architects, who described the foundational problems as “very severe.” They recommended temporary support through shoring, cribbing and jacks, and the replacement of the foundation walls and footings.

In 1998, Cedar Ridge requested a proposal from WQQM Architects for design services to rehabilitate the original 3-story block of the farmhouse and seal up the connection to the rear addition. The proposal for these services was priced at \$7,360. SPN, Inc., provided a proposal for the renovation based on WQQM Architects design, and estimated the cost to be \$175,883.

Such funds were unavailable at the time, as the church building was still under construction, but volunteer work was undertaken to remove debris from the farmhouse, and ready it for rehabilitation.

The Cedar Ridge property was again inspected by the MHT in 2001, to ensure the new church building had not interfered with the “architectural integrity and distinction of the house.” The new construction did not interfere with the historic house. MHT staff noted: “The house itself remains intact, if in a somewhat deteriorated condition.”

Based on the findings of the structural studies of the farmhouse, Cedar Ridge discussed with the HPC the possibility of removing the rear addition to the house.

In 2001, the historic barn was determined to be in need of immediate attention as the barn sills were rotten, and this was noted by professionals to be a liability and of concern for collapse. All Cedar Ridge resources were therefore put to barn renovation. Robert Schwartz Associates Architects was hired and SPN Construction completed the barn renovation at a cost of \$902,832.

In 2003, M-NCPPC conducted a site visit to inspect the farmhouse. Staff described the house as “in extremely poor condition... Damage is severe, even apparently structurally threatening on 1870s wing. Building is open to the elements... Windows were recently vandalized...” The officials noted the immediate need to close the house to protect it from the elements, as well as the longer-term need to develop and implement a preservation plan. Cedar Ridge staff again asked about demolishing the addition, and was told that it was not usually permissible, but could be possible as part of a restoration plan, particularly if the restored house was opened to the public.

The following repairs were made by Cedar Ridge in an effort to preserve the structure: All the windows were boarded with plywood to protect from further vandalism of the windows. The plywood was painted to mimic a 6-over-6 window to preserve the view from the road. The exterior siding was scraped and painted to preserve the original wood siding. The gutters were cleaned and repaired to keep water away from the building.

In 2003 and 2004, Cedar Ridge made inquiries about available grants to support the rehabilitation of the farmhouse, but these inquiries did not lead to concrete funding opportunities. Discussions with Habitat for Humanity to restore the farmhouse fell through when their plans to build other structures on the property conflicted with zoning limitations.

From 2003 to 2008 a local contractor worked extensively to restore much of the exterior I-frame of the house. The front porch foundation was repaired, the rotten porch floor was replaced in-kind with tongue and groove wood, the siding restored and painted, the foundation holes filled to prevent further pest infestation, gutters were cleared and secured, and the roof was patched to prevent water infiltration. Non-historic dilapidated basement doors were replaced with a new a wood hatch to secure the basement from vandals and animals. The well was securely covered. The roof on the back addition was also patched.

In 2008, a structural engineer inspected the historic barn and determined it was still not stable, despite the expensive professional renovation. Cedar Ridge raised an additional \$224,809 and employed Fitzgerald's Heavy Timber for one year to secure, restore and re-open the barn. This effort left no funds for work on the farmhouse restoration.

In 2011, Cedar Ridge met with the HPC to discuss the historic requirements for our buildings and property. Cedar Ridge staff was told it was unlikely that we would be able to obtain approval for demolition of the addition to the farmhouse. We were also instructed to have a professional review of the foundation, framing and roof issues to give an overview of needed repairs.

Cedar Ridge therefore contacted Heritage Building and Renovation, Inc., who recommended using volunteers to gut the interior to expose all of the structure, contracting an architect to produce "as built" drawings, and hiring a structural engineer to inspect the building. Heritage would then provide an estimate of cost, which could range from \$100K to \$400K.

Cedar Ridge drew up a rehabilitation plan, but other cost demands meant that funding was not available for implementation of the plan. Cedar Ridge investigated the establishment of a farming enterprise to help fund the renovation, but the unexpected relocation of key personnel meant this plan was no longer feasible.

In 2015, Cedar Ridge hired ARC Environmental to conduct an assessment of the property, including the farmhouse. The report read: "The rear addition is dilapidated and beyond feasible rehabilitation. It is unstable, unsafe, and at risk of collapse, creating a dangerous condition." The report noted that the first priority should be the removal of the electrical drop from this part of the house. The main block of the farmhouse was considered to be in better condition, and could eventually be restored. The estimated cost of repairing the exterior of the main block and demolishing the rear portion was up to \$91,500. This would include relocating the electrical service drop, repairing the foundations, replacing the cellar doors, reframing the front porch and adding new flooring, and replacing the roof.

Despite ongoing efforts to keep water away from the house and keep it sealed from the elements, the side wall of the addition to the farmhouse separated from the floor joists and the second story partially collapsed in late 2015 while Cedar Ridge was in the process of renegotiating the mortgage to release funds for needed property repairs.

Cedar Ridge has relocated the electrical drop, as instructed by ARC Environmental as a first step for the farmhouse, and is moving forward with recommended repairs to other structures on the property. A leadership retreat was held in February 2017 to determine how to restore and utilize the farmhouse. Immediately following the retreat, the Cedar Ridge Board voted to approach the HPC for permission to move forward with these plans.

Proposed Plan for the Farmhouse

Cedar Ridge is fully cognizant of the rich history of the farmhouse, and wishes to preserve and use the house for the charitable purposes of the church as well as opening it up for the education and enjoyment of the surrounding community. Cedar Ridge is also a relatively small and resource-constrained congregation with a substantial mortgage and limited funds available for investments on the property. Reflecting both of these realities, Cedar Ridge would like to raise funds to demolish the partially collapsed and unsafe rear addition and transform the main block of the farmhouse into a multipurpose meeting and living space in a way that preserves its historic character.

Downstairs, there would be a small museum describing the history and architecture of the farmhouse, the history of the property as a whole, and of the Spencerville area. It would also include information about issues relevant to the historic property and to the Cedar Ridge community. Potential topics include the following:

- The history of agriculture in and around the property, including the Cedar Ridge farm,⁴³ linked to hunger issues and opportunities for advocacy and action in Montgomery County.
- The history of slavery and racism in the area, linking to current racial reconciliation initiatives and resources at Cedar Ridge and elsewhere in the county.
- Information about the wildlife and indigenous plant species on the property, ecological concerns and initiatives to protect and enrich local natural resources,⁴⁴ and links to the 40-minute prayer walk through the property, which is open to the public.

As a multi-purpose meeting space, the two downstairs rooms would be used for neighborhood coffee houses, book discussions, and other social and educational purposes. Comfortable, private space will also be used for prayer and counseling. The downstairs may also house a small library.

Upstairs the bedrooms and bathroom will be restored. Hospitality facilities (microwave and refrigerator) will also be installed. This living space will be used to accommodate short-term guests at Cedar Ridge, such as farm apprentices, volunteers through Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms, and/or pastoral interns.

⁴³ The farm at Cedar Ridge is an organic half-acre plot cultivated by volunteers, which grows 1-2 tons of fresh produce each year for groups working with the homeless and food insecure.

⁴⁴ Current Cedar Ridge initiatives include beehives, birdboxes, “no mow” meadows and reforested areas.