

**Maureen O'Connell**

1604 Pine Lane Retreat

Annapolis, MD 21409

**Date:** 11/25/2025

**Anne Arundel County Office of Planning & Zoning**

Critical Area Commission

2660 Riva Road

Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE:** *Critical Area Narrative Report – Variance Application for Detached Garage*

**Property:** 1604 Pine Lane Retreat, Annapolis, MD 21409

**Tax Parcel:** 342190027825

**Zoning:** R1

**Critical Area Designation:** LDA

Dear Critical Area Reviewer,

Please accept this letter as the **Critical Area Narrative Report** in support of the variance application for the proposed construction of a detached garage at the above-referenced property.

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## **Critical Area Narrative Report**

### **I. Introduction**

This narrative accompanies the variance request for the construction of a detached garage at 1604 Pine Lane Retreat. The property lies entirely within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area. This report describes existing site conditions, environmental features, the need for the proposed garage, and how the project complies with Critical Area performance standards.

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### **II. Site Description**

The property is located at the top of a narrow peninsula characteristic of the Severn River watershed. The house sits at an elevation of approximately 100 feet, with steep slopes descending outward into valleys on multiple sides of the lot. A continuous slope approximately 360 feet long extends from the front of the residence toward the Severn River, forming one of the major physical constraints on development. Much of the parcel includes slopes exceeding 15%, significantly limiting buildable area. The existing single-family dwelling has an **Above-Grade Living Area of 2,571 square feet**, which represents approximately **1.72%** of the total **3.4300-acre property**. This illustrates the very small proportion of the property that is developed and the extensive amount of natural open space that remains undisturbed.

The property contains a diverse and stable mix of mature vegetation. **Common species include American holly (*Ilex opaca*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), and eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*)**, among other mid-Atlantic woodland species. This vegetation provides important canopy cover, slope stabilization, and wildlife habitat. The proposed garage location was chosen deliberately to avoid larger, high-value vegetated areas.

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### **III. Existing Conditions & Historic Use**

The property has long been used solely as a single-family residence. No detached garage has existed on the lot. As a result, 2 cars, an ATV, lawnmower, and other tools, are exposed to the elements by currently being parked outdoors. The proposed garage will not change the residential use of the property, increase occupancy, or introduce commercial activity. It represents a typical residential accessory structure commonly found in similar neighborhoods.

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#### **IV. Description of the Proposed Project**

The applicant proposes a modestly sized detached garage to be located adjacent to the existing driveway on the only feasible flat area of the property. This location:

- Avoids steep slopes
- Minimizes grading and soil disturbance
- Avoids major vegetation and canopy removal
- Consolidates improvements within an already developed area

Project components include construction of the garage, minimal grading, installation of erosion and sediment controls, implementation of stormwater management, and required mitigation planting.

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#### **V. Impacts to the Critical Area**

While the property lies entirely within the Critical Area, the selected garage location is in the *least* environmentally sensitive portion of the lot. The project:

- Avoids all shoreline and stream buffers
- Avoids slopes greater than 15%
- Avoids known habitat or sensitive ecological areas
- Minimizes removal of existing canopy or vegetation

Any temporary disturbances will be stabilized immediately, and permanent stabilization measures will follow upon completion.

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#### **VI. Stormwater Management**

Stormwater management will comply with Anne Arundel County and State of Maryland requirements.

Appropriate measures may include:

- Micro-bioretenention or infiltration practices
- Roof leaders directed to approved facilities
- Stabilized outfalls
- Erosion controls preventing runoff onto slopes

These practices ensure no increase in stormwater volume or pollutant loads.

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#### **VII. Erosion & Sediment Control**

Because portions of the property slope toward drainage areas, robust erosion and sediment controls will be implemented, including:

- Silt fencing or equivalent barriers
- Stabilized construction entrance
- Immediate stabilization of exposed soils
- Maintenance of controls until vegetation is fully established

These measures will prevent sediment transport and protect downslope areas.

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## VIII. Minimization of Disturbance & Alternatives Analysis

Several alternative garage locations were evaluated but determined infeasible because they would:

- Require major disturbance to steep slopes
- Conflict with septic system areas
- Require excessive clearing or grading
- Create unsafe driveway configurations

The selected location disturbs the smallest area of land, requires minimal vegetation removal, and is the only practical location for safe residential use. The garage footprint has also been designed to be no larger than necessary.

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## IX. Justification for the Variance

The parcel's steep slopes, peninsula shape, and limited flat areas constitute unique physical conditions not common to most residential properties. Strict application of Critical Area restrictions would deny the owner reasonable use of the property by effectively eliminating all viable locations for a garage.

The requested variance:

- Is the minimum necessary to afford reasonable residential use
  - Does not confer a special privilege
  - Has no adverse impact on water quality or habitat due to mitigation and stormwater controls
  - Is consistent with the intent of the Critical Area Program
- 

## X. Mitigation Narrative

To offset environmental impacts associated with the garage construction, the applicant proposes the following mitigation strategy:

### A. Vegetation Replacement

- Planting of **native canopy trees, understory trees, shrubs, and groundcover** in areas outside the garage footprint
- Species may include American holly, red maple, American beech, eastern white pine, inkberry, winterberry, and native sedges

### B. Soil Stabilization

- All disturbed soils will be stabilized immediately using native seed mixes, mulch, and permanent groundcover

### C. Conservation Practices

- A portion of the planted areas may be designated as **No-Mow Conservation Zones** to encourage natural regeneration and provide wildlife habitat

### D. Maintenance

- Watering and replacement of dead plants for at least two years
- Invasive species control and monitoring for establishment success

These measures ensure the project offsets all minor disturbances and enhances long-term ecological function.

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## XI. Habitat Protection Areas

The property contains several natural features contributing to habitat protection:

- **Steep Slopes:** Much of the lot contains slopes exceeding 15%, which provide natural erosion control and wildlife corridors.

- **Riparian and Buffer Areas:** Naturally vegetated areas contribute to the integrity of the riparian ecosystem leading to the Severn River, although the garage is sited outside the 100-foot shoreline buffer.
- **Vegetation and Forest Cover:** Mature trees such as American holly, red maple, American beech, and eastern white pine provide canopy cover, wildlife habitat, and soil stabilization.
- **Wildlife Habitat:** Forested and open areas support local birds and small mammals, forming part of a contiguous wildlife corridor along the peninsula.
- **Natural Features of Local Significance:** The combination of steep slopes, mature forest, and undisturbed open space protects water quality and supports ecological function.

The proposed garage and associated construction have been carefully sited to **avoid all steep slopes, forested areas, and riparian zones**, with any minor unavoidable disturbances fully mitigated through planting and soil stabilization.

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## **XII. Conclusion**

The proposed detached garage has been designed to **minimize environmental impacts**, protect existing natural resources, and comply with Anne Arundel County Critical Area requirements. All mitigation, stormwater, and erosion control measures will be implemented to preserve water quality and maintain ecological function. Approval of this variance will allow reasonable residential use while sustaining the property's natural and habitat values.

Thank you for your review.

Sincerely,

**Maureen O'Connell**

Property Owner

1604 Pine Lane Retreat

Annapolis, MD 21409

**Letter of Explanation****Variance Request – 1604 Pine Lane Retreat, Annapolis, MD 21409****Tax ID:** 342190027825**Applicant:** Maureen O'Connell, Trustee

To Whom It May Concern,

We respectfully submit this Letter of Explanation in support of a variance request for the construction of a detached garage at 1604 Pine Lane Retreat, Annapolis, Maryland 21409, identified as Lot 3 on Map 45, Parcel 0726, and owned by Maureen O'Connell, Trustee.

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**Overview and Justification for Relief**

This request seeks variance relief from:

- § 18-13-104 to allow disturbance to the 100ft buffer / expanded buffer
- § 18-4-501: to allow limited disturbance within the 100-ft Critical Area buffer and expanded buffer
- § 17-8-301: to address development within a buffer consistent with COMAR Title 27
- Setback requirements for accessory structures in an R1 district

Due to the presence of steep slopes and buffer zones on other portions of the property, the proposed location is the only practical area for constructing the garage. While it does not fully meet the standard setback requirements, the structure has been carefully sited to minimize environmental impact and to meet the functional needs of the property owner.

The proposed 28' x 28' two stories detached garage, with a maximum height of no more than 25 feet from grade to roof peak, is appropriately sized to accommodate two vehicles, landscaping equipment including a zero-turn lawn mower, an ATV used for property maintenance, a push mower, and other typical items stored in a garage, such as bicycles, ladders, and garden tools.

The chosen location represents the only viable flat area on the lot that allows safe access to and from the house, while remaining outside of the steepest slopes and the designated waterfront buffer. It is also important to note that the area immediately beyond the property line in front of the proposed garage is maintained by the applicants and serves primarily as access to 1604 Pine Lane Retreat, being used almost exclusively for that purpose and for vehicle turnaround.

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### **Property History and Unique Constraints**

The property is on 3.43 acres of land with 2,571 SF built and was originally developed in 1910 and served as the only homestead in what is now the Hickory Hill community.

The property is situated at the top of a peninsula at an elevation of approximately 100 feet, with steep slopes descending into valleys around much of the lot. A long, continuous slope, approximately 360 feet in length, extends from the front of the house down toward the Severn River, as shown on the topographic map.

From 1962 to 1979, the property was used as a religious retreat by the Capuchin Order of Saint Augustine. When the land was subdivided in 1979, Lot 3 retained the original house, but the barn, formerly the garage, was included in Lot 2 and is now privately owned.

As a result, Lot 3 has no garage or other structure for safe storage of cars and other vehicles necessary for the maintenance and use of the property. The construction of a permanent garage is essential to restore basic utility and improve the appearance of the property by providing appropriate shelter to the described items.

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### **Site Conditions and Minimization of Impact**

The garage is proposed for a flat, previously cleared portion of the lot that:

- Avoid steep slopes to the greatest extent feasible
- Is approximately 375 feet from the waterfront
- Only requires removal of two trees of approximately 18" in circumference, plus two smaller trees 8" Circumference
- Maintains a 10-foot separation from the existing septic drywell

#### **Slope proximity details:**

- **North corner:** 21'
- **West corner:** 10'
- **South corner:** 78'
- **East :** 63'

#### **Lot Proximity**

- **North corner:** 11'
- **East corner:** 34'
- **South corner:** 58'

The selected location reduces grading needs and avoids soil instability. The design complies with height restrictions (not exceeding 25' at the ridge) and remains subordinate to the existing house.

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### Compliance and Mitigation Measures

We are committed to minimizing impact and complying with all applicable regulations. In support of this application, we will:

- Submit an **Erosion and Sediment Control Plan** to protect adjacent areas during construction
- Incorporate **stormwater management features**, such as permeable paving and native vegetative buffers, to manage runoff
- Revise site plans to include accurate setbacks, slope proximity, and structure height
- Continue to preserve the surrounding woodland, including native hollies and mature hardwoods

The garage footprint has been carefully limited to only what is necessary.

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### Conclusion

Due to historical changes, natural constraints, and the essential need for covered storage, we respectfully request a variance from setback and slope-related requirements to construct a 28' x 28' detached garage. The selected location minimizes environmental impact and provides the **least disruptive and most practical** solution for restoring the property's original function.

We remain committed to preserving the character of the area and have received no objections from neighbors. Thank you for your consideration. We welcome site visits, additional plan review, or supplemental documentation as needed.

Sincerely,

Maureen O'Connell





1604 Pine Lane Retreat  
Annapolis, MD 21409  
301-512-9182

Commented [MO1]: Or "are" submitting?

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Submit

Commented [MO3]: The hearing judge will not know  
about this overhang, I think.

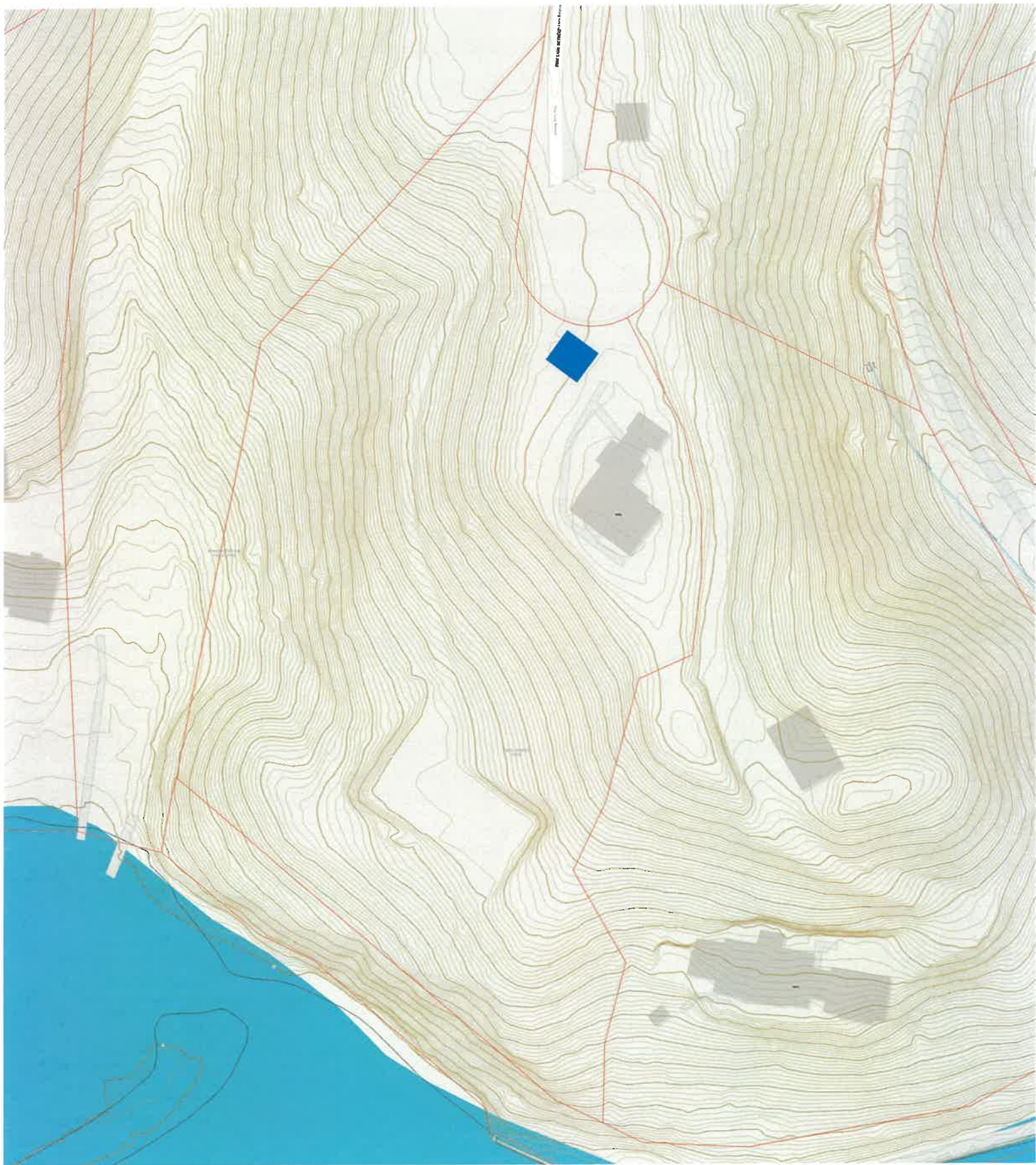
Available files:

Topography.pdf	Vicinity.doc	Critical area.doc	Full survey.pdf
			

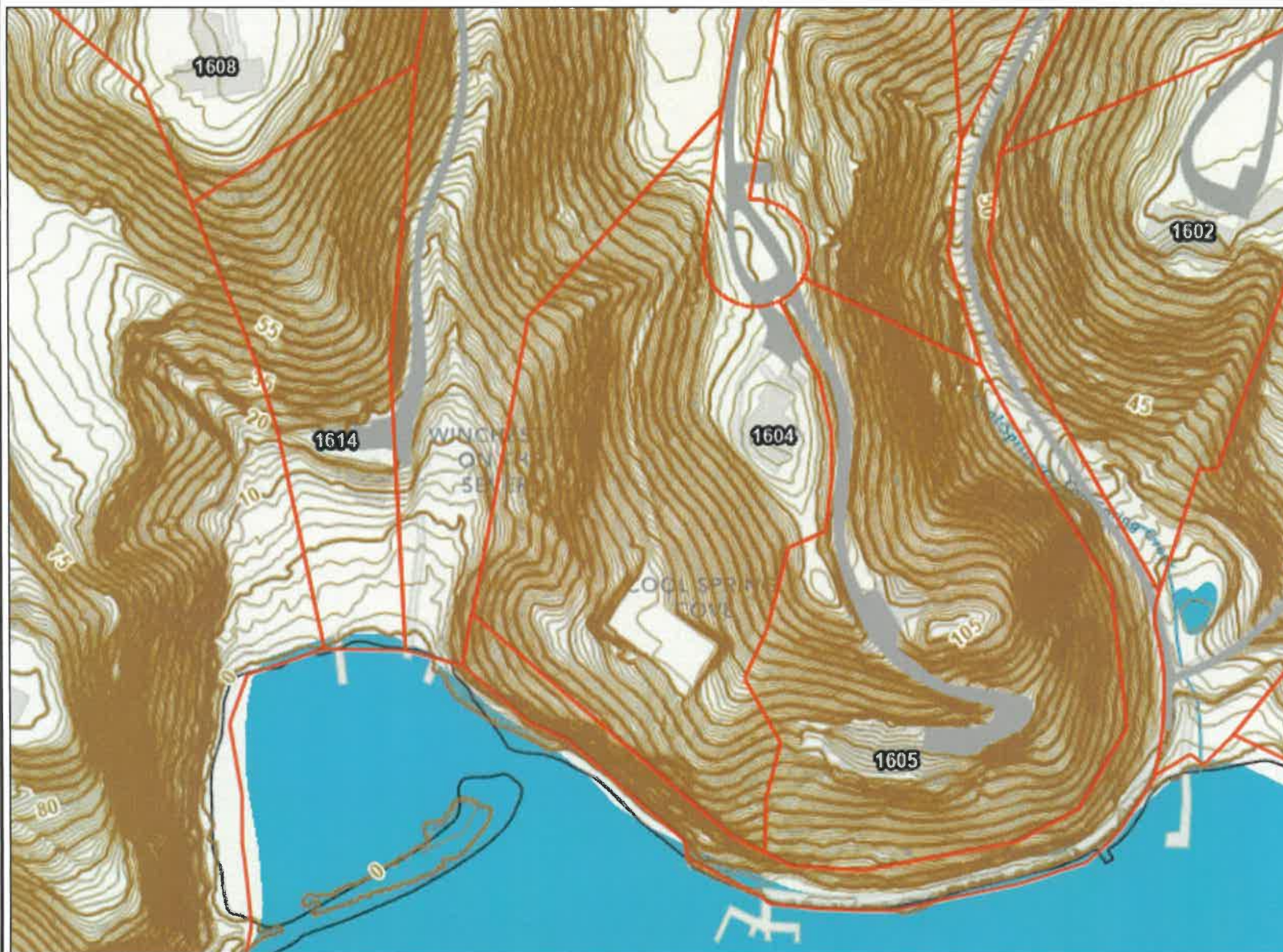
Sketch View 1	Sketch View 2	Landscape 1	Landscape 2
			

Site Plan.pdf



# 1604 Pine Lane Retreat topographic map



## Legend

Foundation

Addressing



Parcels



Structure

County Structure



Elevation

Topo 2023

Index

Intermediate

This map is a user generated static output from an Internet mapping site and is for reference only. Data layers that appear on this map may or may not be accurate, current, or otherwise reliable.



0 200 400  
ft

Esri Community Maps Contributors,  
County of Anne Arundel, VGIN, ©  
OpenStreetMap, Microsoft, Esri,  
TomTom, Garmin, SafeGraph,  
GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA,



THIS MAP IS NOT TO BE  
USED FOR NAVIGATION

Notes 1"=200'

John M. ...  
Stanley P. Watkins, Sr. Date

William E. Hayman  
2025/523

Pipe found

40' Minimum Building  
Restriction Line

Lot 3  
152,356 ±

Hurricane  
Tide Level

SEVERN

Pipe found

PINE  
LANE (40') RETREA

Lot 2

Minimum Build  
Restriction Line

1604

Ex. house

1605

Ex. house

N 24° 01' 22" E  
55.30'

N 29° 24' 08" W  
71.17'

N 12° 41' 09" E  
59.29'

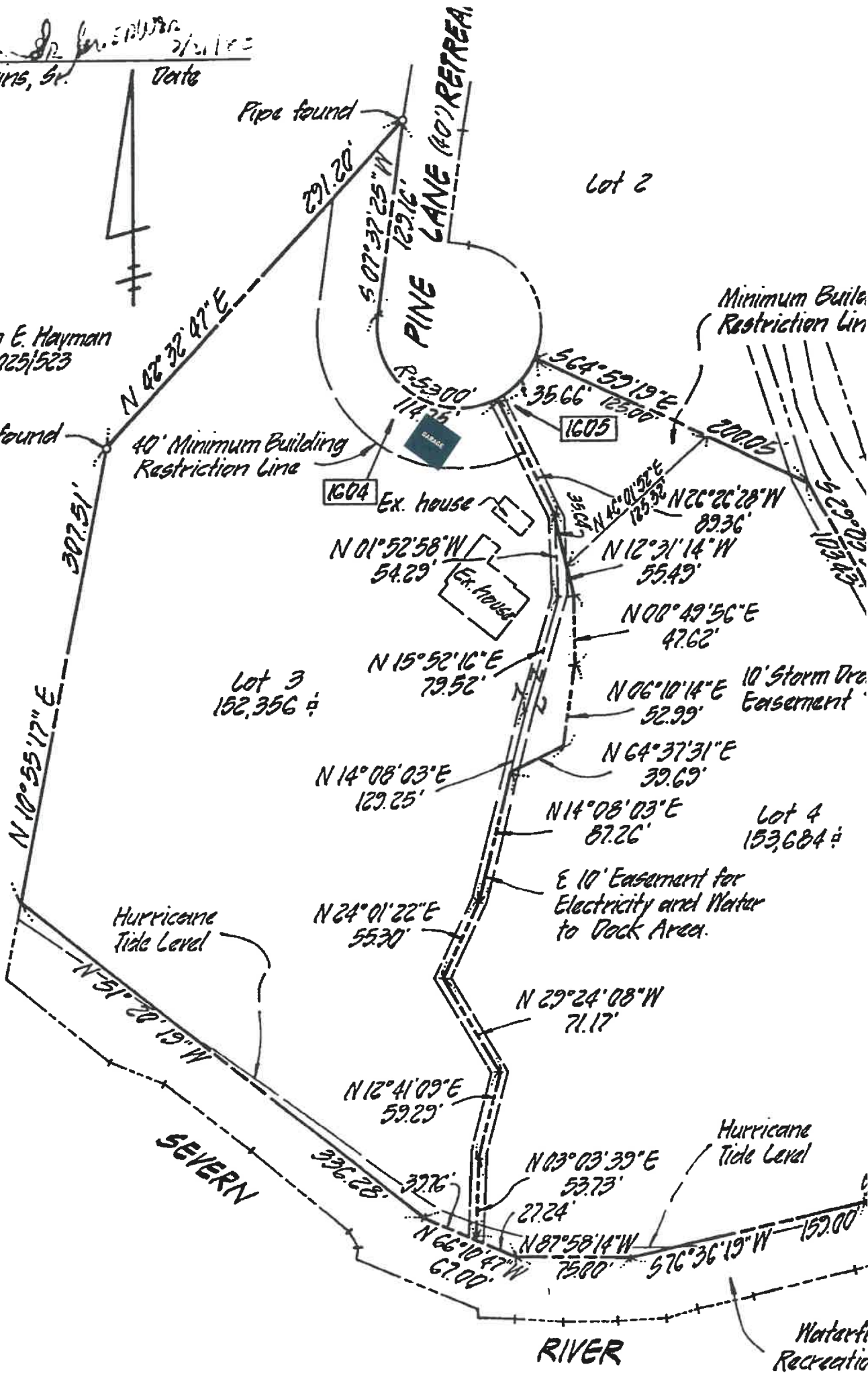
N 03° 03' 39" E  
53.73'

N 66° 10' 47" W  
67.00'

RIVER

Hurricane  
Tide Level

Waters  
Recreation



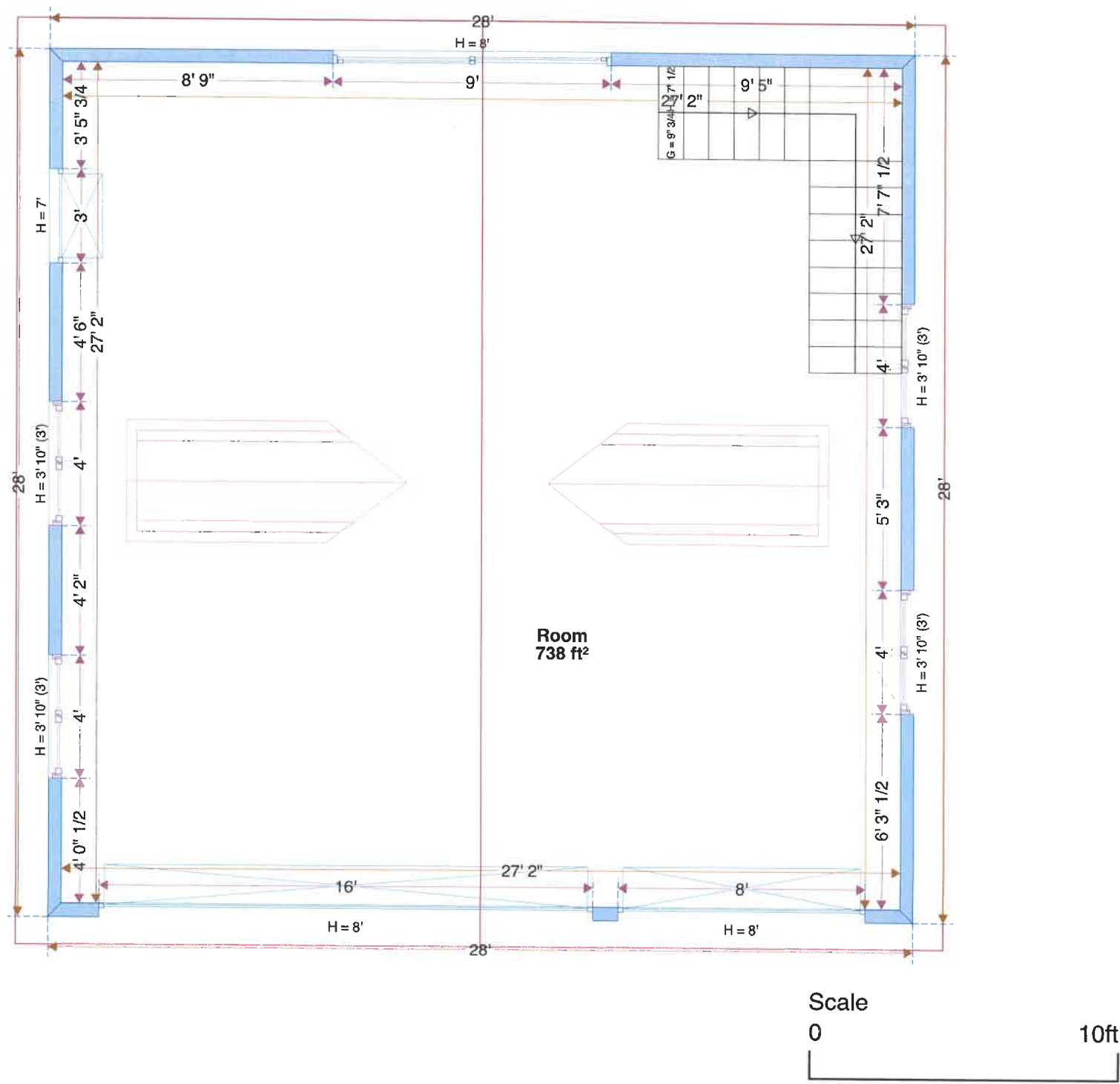




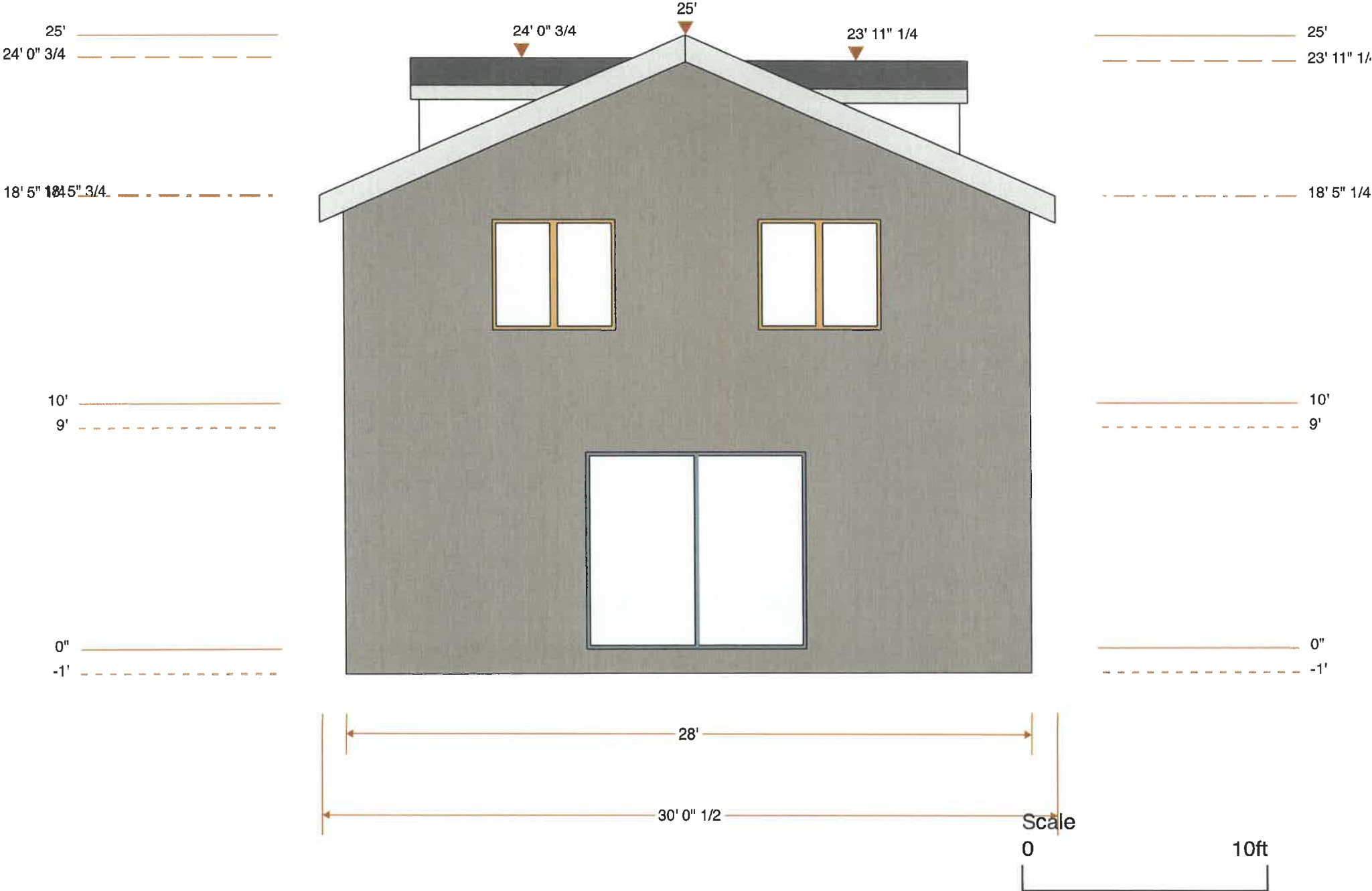
Driveway to  
1605 Pine Lane Retreat

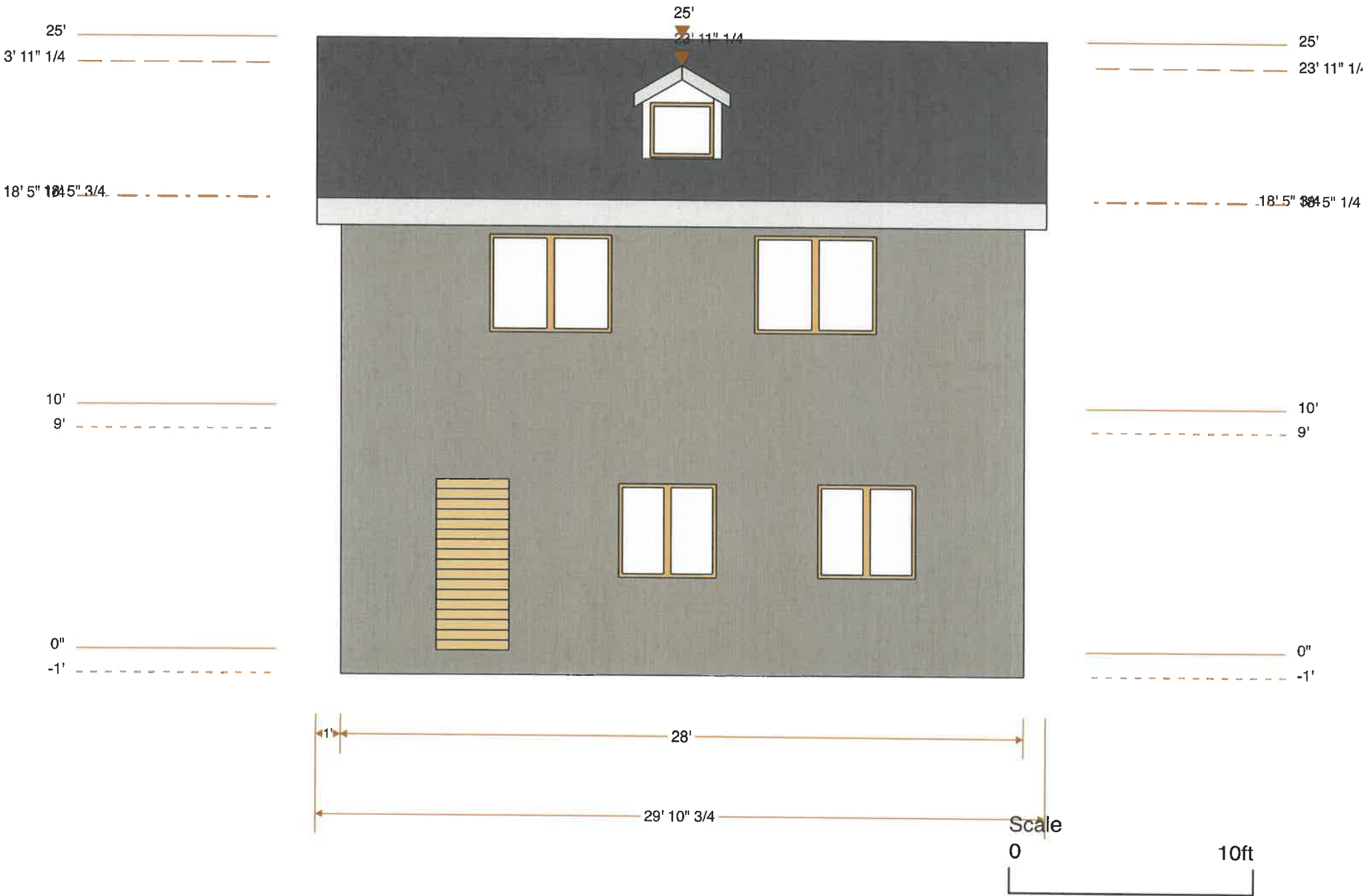
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1604 Pine Lane Retreat

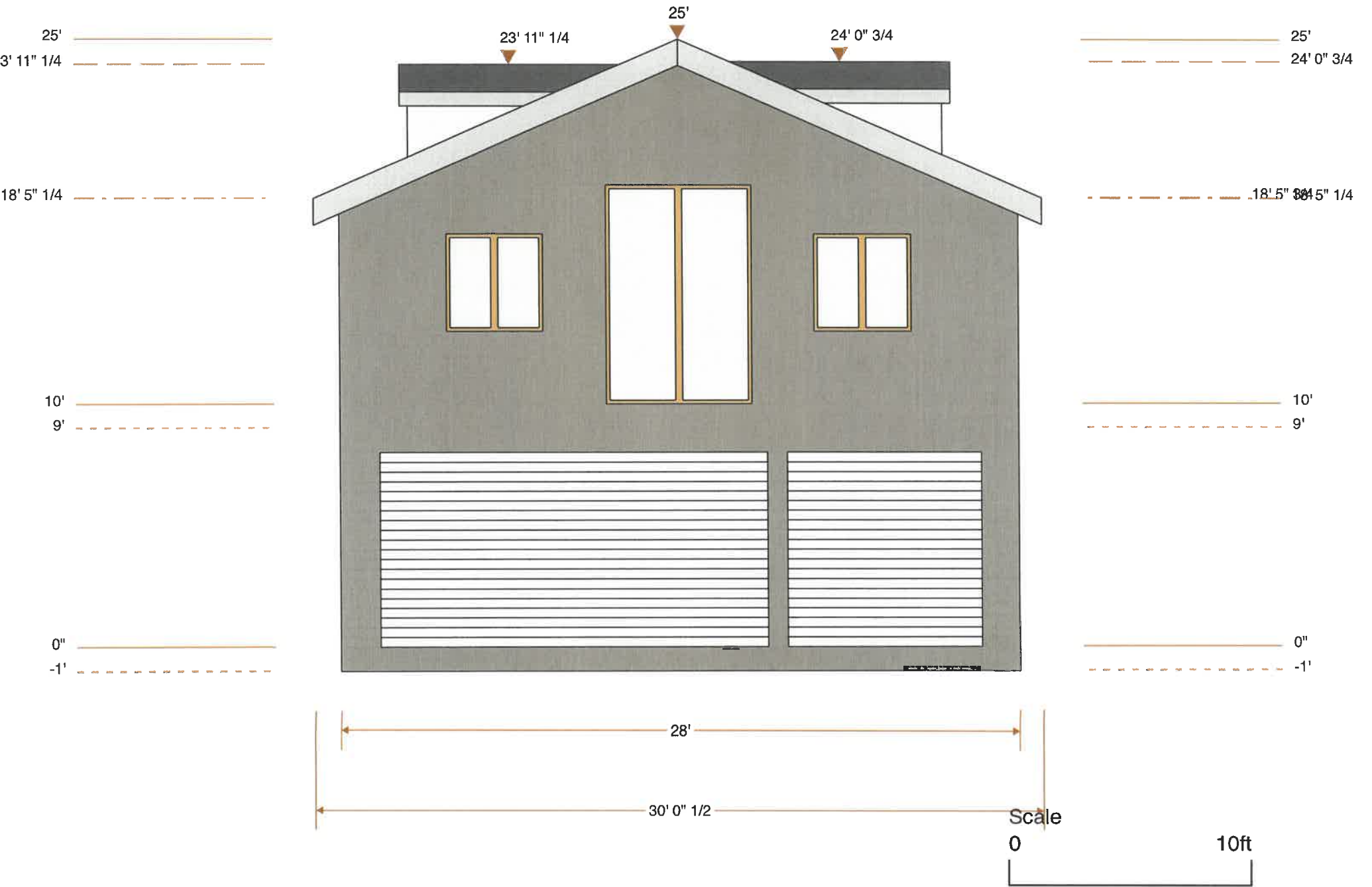
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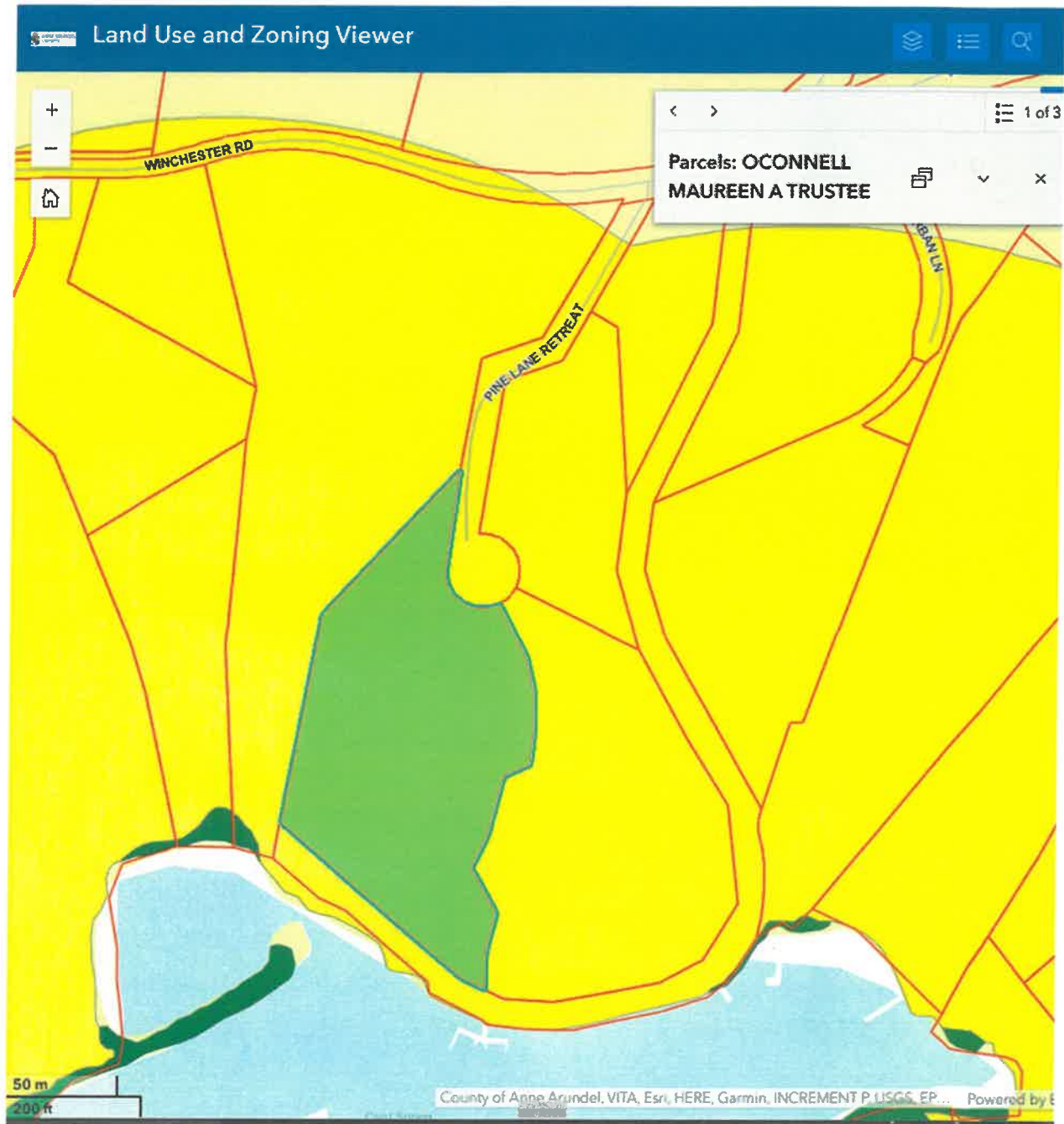
garage PLR - North elevation - Nov 25, 2025







## Critical Area Map – LDA – R1 zoning





CRITICAL AREA COMMISSION  
CHESAPEAKE AND ATLANTIC COASTAL BAYS  
1804 WEST STREET, SUITE 100  
ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401

PROJECT NOTIFICATION APPLICATION

**GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION**

Jurisdiction: Anne Arundel County

Date:

Tax Map #	Parcel #	Block #	Lot #	Section
45	0726		3	

Tax ID: 342190027825

**FOR RESUBMITTAL ONLY**

Corrections ☐  
Redesign ☐  
No Change ☐  
Non-Critical Area ☐

\*Complete Only Page 1  
General Project Information

Project Name (site name, subdivision name, or other) Detached garage at 1604 pine lane retreat

Project location/Address 1604 Pine Lane Retreat

City Annapolis Zip 21409

Local case number

Applicant: Last name O'Connell First name Maureen

Company Property Owner

**Application Type (check all that apply):**

Building Permit ☐  
Buffer Management Plan ☒  
Conditional Use ☐  
Consistency Report ☐  
Disturbance > 5,000 sq ft ☐  
Grading Permit ☐

Variance ☒  
Rezoning ☐  
Site Plan ☐  
Special Exception ☐  
Subdivision ☐  
Other ☐

**Local Jurisdiction Contact Information:**

Last name AACo Zoning Administration Section First name

Phone # 410-222-7437 Response from Commission Required By TBD

Fax # Hearing date TBD

## SPECIFIC PROJECT INFORMATION

Describe Proposed use of project site:

Request of variance to build a detached garage

Intra-Family Transfer ☐ Yes  
Grandfathered Lot ☐

Growth Allocation ☐ Yes  
Buffer Exemption Area ☐

### Project Type (check all that apply)

Commercial ☐  
Consistency Report ☐  
Industrial ☐  
Institutional ☐  
Mixed Use ☐  
Other ☐

Recreational ☐  
Redevelopment ☐  
Residential ☒  
Shore Erosion Control ☐  
Water-Dependent Facility ☐

## SITE INVENTORY (Enter acres or square feet)

	Acres	Sq Ft
IDA Area		
LDA Area	3.43	
RCA Area		
Total Area	3.43	

Total Disturbed Area 

Acres	Sq Ft
	2571

# of Lots Created

	Acres	Sq Ft		Acres	Sq Ft
Existing Forest/Woodland/Trees	2.68		Existing Lot Coverage		2571
Created Forest/Woodland/Trees			New Lot Coverage		738
Removed Forest/Woodland/Trees	0.017		Removed Lot Coverage		0
			Total Lot Coverage		3309

## VARIANCE INFORMATION (Check all that apply)

	Acres	Sq Ft		Acres	Sq Ft
Buffer Disturbance	0.035		Buffer Forest Clearing	0	
Non-Buffer Disturbance	0		Mitigation	0.035	

### Variance Type

Buffer ☐  
Forest Clearing ☐  
HPA Impact ☐  
Lot Coverage ☐  
Expanded Buffer ☒  
Nontidal Wetlands ☐  
Setback ☒  
Steep Slopes ☐  
Other ☐

### Structure

Acc. Structure Addition ☐  
Barn ☐  
Deck ☐  
Dwelling ☐  
Dwelling Addition ☐  
Garage ☒  
Gazebo ☐  
Patio ☐  
Pool ☐  
Shed ☐  
Other ☐



## OFFICE OF PLANNING AND ZONING

### CONFIRMATION OF PRE-FILE

**PRE-FILE #:** 2025-0072-P  
**DATE:** 07/31/2025  
**OPZ STAFF:** Jennifer Lechner  
Kelly Krinetz  
Stacy Poulos

**APPLICANT/REPRESENTATIVE:** Maureen O'Connell & Eduardo Arrossi

**EMAIL:** [moconnelledsa@icloud.com](mailto:moconnelledsa@icloud.com) / [moconnelledsa@icloud.com](mailto:moconnelledsa@icloud.com) / [eddie@eaphoto.com](mailto:eddie@eaphoto.com)

**SITE LOCATION:** 1604 Pine Lane Retreat, Annapolis

**LOT SIZE:** 3.43 acres

**ZONING:** R1    **CA DESIGNATION:** LDA    **BMA:** n/a    **BUFFER:** YES    **APPLICATION TYPE:** Variance

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The applicants are proposing to construct a detached garage (one and a half stories, with upper level overhang).

The following variances are required:

- § 17-8-301, development on properties containing buffers shall meet the requirements of COMAR, Title 27.
- § 18-13-104 to allow disturbance to the 100ft buffer / expanded buffer.
- § 18-4-501 to allow an accessory structure with less setbacks than required.

#### **COMMENTS**

##### **Zoning Administration Section:**

Concurs with the Critical Area Team. The proposed accessory structure does not appear to represent the minimum necessary to afford relief. A 30' x 30' garage with a 6' x 30' overhang seems excessive at the top of steep slopes and within the expanded buffer.

For the Variance application (there is no need to submit another/revised Pre-file request):

Revise the Administrative Site Plan:

- The zoomed detail view, as submitted, is appropriate due to the size of the property. However, the site plan should also show the entire parcel. This would depict the extent of the slopes and expanded buffer on the property.
- Accurately note the R1 accessory structure setbacks.
  - Per § 18-4-501, in an R1 District, the minimum setbacks for accessory structures are:
    - Front lot line = 50 feet
    - Side and rear lot lines = 15 feet
- The distances to the rear and side lot lines should be measured, and noted, as a straight line drawn perpendicular (90 degrees) from the lot line to the proposed garage.
- The height of the proposed garage must be included on the site plan (i.e., noted with the 30'x30' dimensions).

Revise the Letter of Explanation:

- The applicant must provide justification as to why a large garage is required, and why the variance request is the minimum relief necessary.
- Accurately note the R1 accessory structure setbacks.

The applicant is reminded, in order for the Administrative Hearing Officer to grant approval of the variances, the proposal must address and meet all of the applicable variance standards provided under Section 18-16-305. The Letter of Explanation should address each of those standards (a through c) and provide adequate justification for each of the variances required.

**Critical Area Team:**

While some relief may be necessary for redevelopment of this site, the proposed development would not meet the standards for approval for a Critical Area variance. The proposed location is within the Expanded Buffer. In order to meet the standards for approval, the application must be found to be the minimum necessary to afford the applicant relief as well as be located to minimize disturbance to the buffer. A detached 3 car garage located at the top of the steep slope does not meet these requirements.

**OPZ Cultural Resources:**

The subject property has high archaeological potential and contains an undocumented historic structure; however, the proposed project presents no adverse effect and the Cultural Resources Section has no objection. Please note that if future development is proposed, there may be additional archaeological/historic requirements per Article 17-6-501 and 502.

**INFORMATION FOR THE APPLICANT**

Section 18-16-301 (c) Burden of Proof. The applicant has the burden of proof, including the burden of going forward with the production of evidence and the burden of persuasion, on all questions of fact. The burden of persuasion is by a preponderance of the evidence.

A variance to the requirements of the County's Critical Area Program may only be granted if the Administrative Hearing Officer makes affirmative findings that the applicant has addressed all the requirements outlined in Article 18-16-305. Comments made on this form are intended to provide guidance and are not intended to represent support or approval of the variance request.