

Cumberland Island development fact sheet

- Lumar LLC purchased this 87.51 acre property in 1998 for \$3.5 million. The parcel is an inholding, held in fee simple, within the boundary of the Cumberland Island National Seashore. There are roughly 1,000 acres of private property held in fee simple within the NPS boundaries on the island.
- The Lumar property is directly north of the NPS Sea Camp campground. It runs the width of the island (from marsh to beach) and is bisected by the Main Road and the Parallel Trail. The owners have indicated that they intend to build 10-12 houses on the property.
- Camden County exempted Cumberland Island from zoning by county ordinance from 1992-2002. In 2009, the parcel was assigned "Conservation Preservation" zoning. CP does not allow single family dwellings, but does allow uses such as nature parks, wildlife sanctuaries, marinas, hotels and motels, museums, cemeteries, churches, etc.
- Lumar seeks to subdivide the property for development. In order to do so, they will need a rezoning. As a first step toward rezoning, Lumar has sought a hardship variance to subdivide the property into a 10-lot split, although the lot does not front a paved road as the Camden zoning ordinance requires. There are no paved roads on the island and the Main Road is in the National Register of Historic Places. The Camden County Planning Commission granted this variance on Dec. 7, 2016.
- SELC represents National Parks Conservation Association and St. Marys EarthKeepers in the appeal of the hardship variance before the Camden County Board of Commissioners. The hearing for that appeal has been delay several times, currently until October 2017.
- The County's current approach is to rezone all of the remaining 1,000 acres of inholdings. This would assuredly lead to more development on this wild island. The County has suggested incorporating a density maximum into the rezoning that would permit 1 house per 10 acres. This scheme would allow approximately 70 additional houses to be built on the island. If the county permits a maximum density of 1 house per 5 acres, potentially 149 new houses would be permitted. If the County permits the density allowed under the Agricultural Forestry zoning classification (1 house per 3 acres) which is currently in place on other parcels on the island, this would allow 263 houses.
- This level of development is unacceptable and would ravage the crown jewel of Georgia's coastal barrier islands. Indeed, the Act that established the national seashore provided that "Except for certain portions of the Seashore deemed to be especially adaptable for recreational uses, . . . the Seashore shall be permanently preserved in its primitive state."
- NPS intervention would prevent this development. If provided the authorization, NPS can exercise eminent domain over the Lumar parcel. NPS acquisition of all remaining private parcels in fee has always been the ultimate goal of the Seashore, in order to carry out NPS' management responsibilities.
- NPS could exercise eminent domain using funds that are privately raised. But in order to do so, NPS requires Congressional approval. The Georgia delegation (Buddy Carter, and Senators Isakson and Perdue) must be willing to approach the House and Senate Natural Resources Committees, as well as the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to request this action.