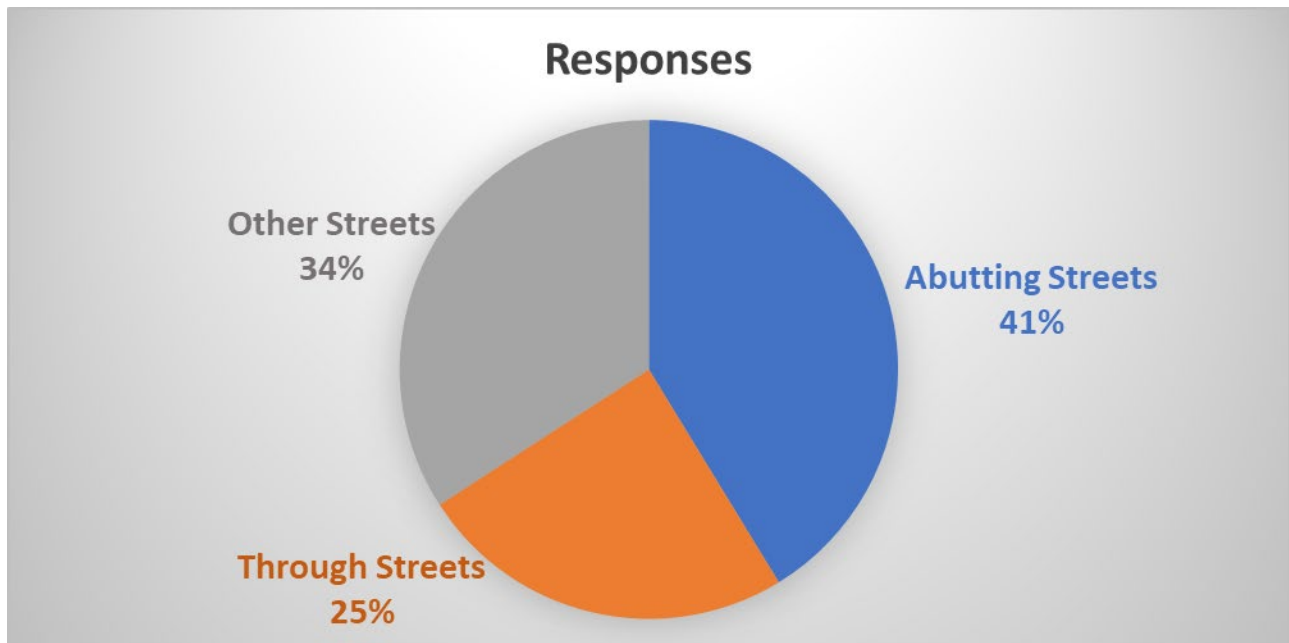


April 6, 2022

TO: Mayor and Council  
FROM: 4H Special Committee

The 4H Special Committee observed the 4H Town Forum on March 30<sup>th</sup> and has reviewed the recent survey responses and email communications. Not surprisingly, Forum participants, survey responses, and emails were heavily weighted to residents closest to the 4H site, and therefore those most directly affected by construction and operations of the Corso development. Two-thirds of all survey response, for example, came from residents on abutting and through streets.



Comments focused on traffic, parking, and ecology of the woods to the north and west of the site.

While the 4H Committee gave greater weight to the surrounding neighbors' concerns, we also considered needs and benefits of the greater community derived from survey responses and expressed in email comments. It is through this lens that we offer our recommendations in this Memo for your consideration.

One note of special importance – the 4H Committee found that the developers' responses to the TOCC's recent set of questions were broad and vague. We acknowledge that it is still early in the process, but we urge the TOCC to negotiate now, much more specific, detailed, and time-bound commitments/covenants from the developers with respect to all matters, including those mentioned in this memo.

In particular, we recommend that the Council seek to retain as many of the covenants in the original April 22, 1993 MOU between the Town and the National 4-H Council as may be applicable, taking into account the potential change in zoning from R-60, on which some, but not all, of these covenants were originally based. The 4H Committee believes that this MOU established a 30-year precedent on such matters as privacy, spill-over parking on Town streets, set-backs, building heights, visual impacts, noise, solid waste management, storm drainage, shared amenities (meeting space in particular), and road interconnections. This would continue the spirit of the MOU, even as we acknowledge that the MOU may not be legally binding on successors in ownership of the property.

## **Walking Trail**

The walking trail will provide public access to considerable green space on the East side of Town where green space is lacking. Just like Elm Street Park and Zimmerman Park, and as evidenced by Survey responses, the 4H Committee believes a walking trail at the Corso site will be used by residents that live within walking distance and that they will walk there to use it. Based on usage patterns of Elm Street and Zimmerman parks, the 4H Committee does not believe that either residents or non-residents will drive to the site and park on abutting town streets to walk on the trail.

We recommend that the Council seek to increase pedestrian connectivity between the Town and the Corso development by connecting the walking trail to Meadow, Woodside, and Thornapple. Our recommendation is conditioned on our assumption that the developers will create an ecologically compatible trail that will not degrade habitat or destroy fauna or flora.

One option to address residents' concerns for habitat destruction, visual impacts on their property, kids loitering under cover of wooded areas, etc. would be to locate the walking path at the edge of the woods nearest the development instead of through the woods. Additional landscaping could then be added between the path and the development (and even between the path and the woods), which would retain the exercise benefits of the path and add even more buffer between the path and TOCC residents.

## **Landscaping**

The 4H Committee observed that the scant landscaping at Galerie's Atlanta site would be inappropriate and incompatible with the green character of the Town of Chevy Chase. We also observed that the landscaping shown on the Corso site plan is more substantial than the landscaping observed at Galerie's Atlanta facility., Based on Galerie's use of raised beds in Atlanta, however, it would appear that the developer intends to replicate the use of raised beds at the Corso site on top of a single slab above the parking lot. This will limit landscaping choices.

The 4H Committee recommends that the Council work with the developers to increase landscaping at the Corso site. This may require the use of a two-layer slab (at least for

portions of the site) that deepens the soil layer by five feet or more, greatly increasing landscaping choices, allowing for planting of native species, and importantly, enabling planting of taller canopy trees, a key defining characteristic of the Town.

Additional landscaping also will help buffer neighboring TOCC residents from visual impacts of a denser development than currently exists and soften facades, especially on the Connecticut Avenue corridor, where the developers have proposed a noticeably short setback.

## **Retail**

We have no concerns with the small amount of retail that is proposed as it is primarily there for Corso residents and guests. We view low-key, walkable retail as an amenity to the surrounding neighbors. Survey results strongly suggest that residents will walk to the retail offerings.

## **Shared Amenities**

We continue to believe an effective way to integrate Corso into the Town is to have shared amenities and activities. If the theater were available for use by TOCC residents, for example, for such events as book author discussions or music recitals, it would provide an opportunity for Town and Corso residents to jointly attend and mingle. We believe this would be attractive to the developers as no-cost marketing to future residents that meet Corso target demographics.

The 4H Committee, as well as many TOCC residents, also think an enlarged swimming pool with additional lane capacity would be a welcome amenity for our senior Town residents. We believe this amenity would be attractive to the developers for the same reason – it would be a low- or no-cost way to attract potential future residents from the TOCC into the Corso facility.

Some Committee members believe that the redevelopment of this site presents a unique opportunity for the Town to obtain space for more significant recreational amenities which could be utilized by all Town residents in exchange for the Town's support of the overall development plan. However, the Committee is not unanimous in this opinion and, based on the most recent feedback from Town residents, is not formally recommending the Council pursue such enhanced amenities.

The Committee does, however, recommend that the Town continue to explore ways to integrate the broader TOCC population with this special Corso sub-population

## **Light Trespass**

We suggest that all exterior lighting comply with DarkSky.org guidelines to mitigate light glare/trespass onto surrounding homes and woodlands.

## **Parking on Abutting Streets**

Given the assurances of the developers regarding capacity of underground parking for residents, staff, and visitors, as well as the developer's pledge to enforce their own rule prohibiting construction workers and operating staff from parking on TOCC streets, we do not believe that the Corso development will result in increased parking on TOCC streets.

Nonetheless, abutting neighbors have expressed strong concerns, which are easily addressed, if needed, by creating park-by-permit zones where resident requests meet our existing process for creating such zones.

## **Traffic on Through Streets**

TOCC residents, especially those on abutting and through streets, are clearly concerned about traffic impacts. Once the developers' traffic impact study is complete, we recommend that this matter be referred to the Public Service Committee for further evaluation and recommendations. The 4H Committee notes that traffic on Rosemary is already a significant problem on school days and that Corso residents that do drive may exacerbate this problem since drivers exiting the Corso development south on Connecticut and heading to Bethesda or points west may well choose to go through the TOCC via Rosemary and Stanford rather than go around via Bradley.

## **Stormwater**

There are State, County, and Town regulations with which the Corso development must comply. We recommend that the Council prepare and distribute to all residents, a monograph on these requirements and processes so that residents fully understand how well-regulated stormwater control will be for the Corso development. We believe that if these requirements are followed at the design, construction, and operations stages of this development, that the TOCC and its abutting neighbors will be even more protected from stormwater runoff than they are now with the existing land use at this site.

## **Additional Considerations During Construction**

Residents have expressed concerns about the effects of construction including noise, workers parking on abutting streets, dust, release of hazardous substances, and rodents, among others. The 4H Committee recommends that TOCC staff prepare and distribute to all residents, summaries of existing control requirements and enforcement mechanisms that address each of these concerns. These will help residents become fully aware of what to expect and provide guidance on potential recourse should residents believe that applicable ordinances are being violated.

## **Phasing of Construction**

The 4H Committee has learned that the developer is planning to build out the site in two phases, separated perhaps by 2-3 years to enable efficient uptake of units. We recommend

that the Council oppose this plan and urge the developer to build out the entire site in a single construction period. The impacts of construction on our residents should not be extended longer than necessary. The council also should point out that phased construction would subject phase-one Corso residents to the noise, congestion, and other impacts of construction of a second phase. Phased construction is not in the best interest of either TOCC residents or early residents of the Corso property.

### **Final Thoughts**

The 4H Committee believes that our recommendations to the Town Council reflect the collective preferences of TOCC residents articulated through survey responses, comments submitted directly to the Council, and concerns expressed during 4H Committee meetings. Further, we believe residents' comments and our committee recommendations are specific to the extent that the developer's plans are specific. Yet, this is still early in a years-long process and the developers have shared relatively little detail about their development. Much remains to be learned as this process unfolds.

Accordingly, we believe it is important that the Council make clear that we will offer the developer additional comments as their plans evolve. As we learn more once the developers share their 3-D model, for example, the Committee is prepared to offer the Council additional comments on building heights, massing, and sight lines. If the site plan changes, we will evaluate it and offer new suggestions.

Finally, 4H Committee did not address many issues and advises the Council that more work needs to be done. For example, the developers suggested that they would be seeking a conservation easement for the woods to the north and west of the site. As we understand it, there are multiple types of conservation easements. We have not done enough research to advise which may be preferable. Some have suggested that a conservation easement may disadvantage the Town. As well, we have not addressed all of the elements of "compatibility," which we understand will be one of the key determinants for County approval of the final site plan/building design. We have been advised that the Town's opinions on compatibility can significantly influence County decisions. More work needs to be done to prepare the Town for this interaction with the County.