



Barney Rush, *Mayor*
Irene Lane, *Vice Mayor*
Joy White, *Treasurer*
Joel Rubin, *Secretary*
Ellen Cornelius Ericson, *Community Liaison*

VIA EMAIL

April 15, 2022

Mr. Grant Epstein, President
Community Three

Mr. Tim Gary, Founder & CEO
Galerie Living

Dear Messrs. Epstein and Gary,

Residents of the Town of Chevy Chase appreciated the presentation provided by Galerie Living and Community Three at our February 17 Town Forum regarding the proposed senior living community, Corso Chevy Chase (“Corso”). Thank you also for your responses to the series of clarification questions that we submitted to you on March 16. While we recognize that there are many details yet to be finalized, your answers were helpful in giving us a better understanding of your concept plan. In addition, it was constructive for several Town representatives to visit you on April 3 at Corso Atlanta. We appreciated the tour you gave of your most recent development. The Town Council has collected extensive feedback on the concept plan from residents, through e-mails to the Town Council, a second online survey, and a Town forum. We also have received advice from the resident committee advising the Council. Finally, the Council itself has held two work sessions to consider our initial response to your concept plan.

Following are our substantive comments on the concept plan, which broadly follow the outline of issues that we set out in our letter of September 30, 2021. But we first want to make a general point. Many of our comments and requests have a common purpose: to encourage the integration of Corso into the Town and to ensure the compatibility of the project within our community. We wish to foster connections and cordial relations among all residents, and we will want to include future Corso residents in programs and activities offered by the Town. Residents of Corso will be paying local taxes and will be entitled to vote in Town elections. As such, it is our goal that both future and current residents should feel that this senior living community is a welcomed part of our Town, not an isolated development. We are pleased to hear that this concept of integration is important to you as well.

Traffic Management: We are pleased that no cut through roads are planned for the site and that the development will not change the status of Woodside Place or bring additional traffic onto Thornapple Street. We also understand that you have consulted with Montgomery County Fire

and Rescue, which appears satisfied, as of now, that access from Connecticut Avenue alone will be adequate.

Request:

- When the traffic study or traffic impact statement (if a full study is not required) is undertaken, we ask for a review, including a signal warrant analysis, of the prospective need for signalization on Connecticut Avenue at the entrance to Corso given the current traffic congestion on this corridor and anticipated additional vehicular traffic once the Chevy Chase Lake project is completed.

Forest Conservation and Public Access, and Stormwater Management: We are pleased that the developers plan to maintain the existing woods, including the wooded area along Thornapple Street, the woods on the west side of the property between the existing parking lot and the back yards of the homes on Meadow Lane, and the trees and bushes along the south side of the property adjacent to Woodside Place. We also note that the plan responds to our request in our letter of last September to provide a public walking path on the property, and we understand that you believe that this is an important amenity for Corso residents. Finally, we look forward to learning more details about the establishment of a Forest Conservation Easement.

Comments and Requests:

- While the walking path could become a shared amenity enjoyed by Town residents, residents in the vicinity of Corso have raised concerns regarding its development. These concerns center on whether a path would jeopardize the roots of canopy trees, disrupt wildlife habitat, and impact the privacy of nearby neighbors.
- Before taking a position on the value of the walking path:
 - We will need to have the views of a professional forester, whom the Town is prepared to retain. Taking account of your plans for the path, the forester can advise us on conservation best practices and whether there are feasible options for location and construction of a path that addresses conservation concerns.
 - We will need to ensure that the location of the path, if it were to be built, respects the privacy of nearby residents through appropriate mitigation, including additional or denser vegetative screening as well as regulations regarding its use.
- It is important that the woods be a healthy ecosystem and remain natural with underbrush vegetation as well as canopy trees. We want the forester to advise on what if any actions should be taken to ensure this goal.
- We support ensuring the preservation of the woods in perpetuity and look forward to learning more details about the establishment of a conservation easement. To that end, we recommend obtaining professional advice on the best way to proceed on this matter and on the type of easement to be established so that it is compatible with whatever decision is ultimately taken regarding the path as well as stormwater management plans. We request that the Town have a recognized role in working with you, Planning Staff, and the County in determining the most appropriate category of easement that will otherwise be required through the entitlement process. We ask that you send us the Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) when it is completed and before it is submitted to M-NCPPC so that we can fully understand the existing environmental features on the property. We further request your agreement that no

changes will be made to any existing environmental features of the site, including especially the wooded areas on the property, outside of the formal review processes that will be part of the entitlement process.

- We request that the Town engineer who works with us on stormwater management issues and Town staff join the consultations that the developers will be holding with Montgomery County officials regarding stormwater management and otherwise have a role in establishing what measures are most suitable to obtain Environmental Site Design to the Maximum Extent Practicable (ESD to the MEP) as required by law. We want to review the engineering plans and specifications that will offer assurance that the homes near the property will not be adversely affected by the development.

Shared Indoor Amenities: We would appreciate more details on the amenities that you plan to include for Corso residents and your intentions for how certain amenities, such as the pool and spa areas, may be shared with Town residents.

Requests:

- Many Town residents are keenly interested in having a pool as a shared amenity. However, it appears that the pool, as currently envisioned, is small. We ask that you consider enlarging the swimming pool, and possibly include lap swimming, so that it can accommodate a higher level of use by Town residents. We understand that the Town and Corso management will need to agree on rules and regulations that define the level of access residents could have to this amenity and how residents would be able to access these indoor amenities. We also ask that residents be allowed to use the underground parking at Corso if they choose to drive, in order to relieve congestion on Town streets.
- We are pleased to see that the project includes a theater, and we ask that there be occasions when Town residents may be able to join events in that space, and times when Town organized cultural events and entertainment could be held there. We also would like to explore with you the occasional use of the theater for official Town meetings, and the prospect that some office space could be used intermittently by Town staff, to facilitate engagement between Corso residents and the Town.

Design and Commercial Use: Though not raised explicitly in our September 30 letter, design and commercial use are important issues to Town residents. We will not be able to form more definitive views about scale and compatibility until we see the digital 3-D model (with heights and sight lines). We also need more information on the architectural style and type of building materials you plan to use for Corso, recognizing the importance that the development be compatible with surrounding residential homes. However, we offer below the following initial comments:

Requests:

- In the spirit of maintaining as much openness as possible between the Town and Corso, we ask that fencing or walls around the complex be kept to a minimum.
- When we review the digital 3-D model, we will be paying attention to the height, massing, and sight lines of the complex, and we may request amendments, such as step backs for the upper floors of buildings that are closest to neighboring residences.

- We recommend that all exterior lighting comply with DarkSky.org guidelines to mitigate light glare/trespass into surrounding homes and woods.
- We observed the modest amount of landscaping at Corso Atlanta. While noting that the concept plan for Corso Chevy Chase appears to be more extensive, we remain concerned that if you intend to use only a single slab of concrete above the garage, landscaping choices will be limited and may not permit matching the green character of the Town of Chevy Chase, including our commitment to nurturing and maintaining our tree canopy. We therefore look forward to reviewing your landscaping plans in more detail as you proceed with your design and that you consider, where it may be appropriate, a two-layer slab and greater soil depth to permit more extensive landscaping opportunities as well as the planting of native tree and plant species. Our hope is that the landscaping will closely mirror the style of landscaping currently in the Town.
- We welcome having some limited retail space, with small stores that enhance integration with the community. We understand that you are considering a coffee shop, ice cream parlor and florist. We ask for you to consult with the Town regarding the prospect of any other retail space that you may consider, and we request that short term parking be provided within Corso so that non-Corso patrons do not use Town streets for parking.
- We request that you agree to having your plans reviewed and evaluated by the Design Approval Panel (DAP) that is in existence by virtue of the Downtown Bethesda Sector Plan. This voluntary submission of your plans to DAP, at each level of the entitlement process, will give the Town great assurances that you are on the way to achieving design excellence and compatibility worthy of the site and its location within the Town and mandated by the law.

Construction: Building Corso Chevy Chase is a large undertaking that will require many years of heavy construction work. The Town recognizes this reality and wants to ensure that disruption to residents is kept to a minimum during the construction period.

Requests

- We request that you agree to enter into a Construction Management Agreement with the Town before the issuance of any permits so that we can cooperatively and collaboratively work through the best management practices for the construction of Corso relative to the comments made below and other aspects of the construction process.
- One term of this Agreement should cover the need to notify residents with regular and special updates providing information on construction matters, including schedule and activities. Many of our residents work from home and, as such, will have ongoing questions about the issues of noise (and enforcement of our noise ordinance), dust, and other disruptions during construction and the timing of construction activity.
- We seek assurance that equipment and vehicles used during construction will not use Town streets, and that you are proactive in working with the County and the utility companies to ensure that any temporary lane closures on Connecticut Avenue that may be necessary to accommodate infrastructure work are as short as possible.
- We now understand that you intend to construct Corso in two phases. We would like to see a site plan that reflects this intention and addresses the following questions: What buildings and garage construction would be in Phase 1 and what would be in Phase 2; the timing gap between the two phases; the impact on any shared amenities, including the

path if it is provided; and what conditions precedent are you setting for proceeding with Phase 2. Overall, we are concerned that phased construction will cause a longer period of disruption to our Town and neighboring residential communities and open the prospect of a long-delayed completion that, in the meantime, leaves an unattractive partially built site. In principle, we would request that the construction be continuous so that the entire project can be undertaken more quickly, thereby minimizing disruption.

Review Process and Documentation of Agreements: We are in the initial stages of working together, and the Town looks forward to frequent and candid conversations regarding the development of Corso Chevy Chase. To that end, you should expect that we will want to offer further comments as more details of your plans become available. In addition, we need to jointly consider how best to memorialize our understandings and agreements. First, upon receiving your response to this letter, we would like to enter into a Letter of Intent that would incorporate agreed points from this letter and would set out our consultation procedures during the entitlement and permitting processes. As we progress, we envision the following means of memorializing our understandings:

1. Attaching “binding elements” to the Local Map Amendment that you wish to obtain. The binding elements can cover many of the comments and requests set forth in this letter and other issues as they are flagged through the rezoning process. To help us consider this matter, we request that you share your application for a Local Map Amendment with the Town sufficiently in advance of your submitting it to the Planning Department so that we can offer comments and begin considering binding elements that are important to the Town.
2. A Declaration of Covenants that would be recorded in the Land Records to establish in perpetuity those mutually agreed binding elements of the project that should run with the land, similar to the declaration that the Town and 4-H Center agreed to in 1968 concerning the 81-foot setback and vegetative buffer along Thornapple Street.
3. A Memorandum of Understanding that would cover such matters as shared amenities and other issues/concerns that will arise throughout the entitlement process and post-rezoning (and thus not part of the binding elements), similar in spirit to the one that the Town has had in place with the 4-H Council since 1993 and that underpinned the collegial and cordial relationship that we had with the 4-H Center for many decades. We look forward to a comparable relationship with Corso Chevy Chase.

We have appreciated the open and cordial discussions we have had to date with you and look forward to discussing the requests we have made above in that same spirit.

Sincerely,



Barney Rush
Mayor