

Testimony of Town of Chevy Chase, Maryland  
*Montgomery County Planning Board*  
*Public Hearing on LMA H-148*  
March 9, 2023

Chair Zyontz and Members of the Planning Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Local Map Amendment H-148.

First, the Town would like to thank the Planning Department staff for their vital role in reviewing this planned development. They have been available to hear our views, ensured that we received information on a timely basis, and made the process to be followed clear to us. We appreciate their support for some key proposed changes -- particularly regarding the height of the buildings -- that matter greatly to our residents. Finally, their help in crafting Binding Elements that will run with the rezoning gives the Town proper assurances related to the future processing of entitlements.

We would also like to thank the developers -- Community Three and its president, Grant Epstein; and Galerie Living and its president, Tim Gary. They have made several presentations to our Town residents, led us on a “walkinar” around the facility, hosted us for a visit to one of their retirement communities in Atlanta, and, in general, paid close attention to Town views and concerns. On numerous points, now embedded in the Binding Elements proposed for this LMA application, Corso has agreed to commit to matters of importance to the Town. These include ensuring no new public street through the property, providing certain paths connecting the development to our community, and placing three acres of their land in a Category I Conservation Easement. We also appreciate the reduction in building heights in their second re-submission, which respects our residents’ strong desire that this new major development indeed be compatible with the surrounding homes.

As a result of the modifications made to the plans, the Binding Elements set out in the Application, and Corso’s commitment to the Town to negotiate a separate agreement with us to account for matters not included in these Binding Elements, the Town of Chevy Chase supports this LMA application. This is the unanimous view of the Town Council, formed after careful solicitation of the views of our residents. We look forward to the timely development and construction of this project and to the Corso community becoming a part of our Town.

We do have some comments on the clear and thorough report from the Planning staff. We request that the following changes be made to the Binding Elements as set out in this report:

- The traffic and parking studies should be undertaken and completed sufficiently in advance of Preliminary Plan of Subdivision and Site Plan reviews so that the Town and other interested parties can review these studies and thereby determine appropriate positions to be taken at the time of such reviews. The relevant Binding Elements in the staff report do not provide a date for these studies to be completed.
- Binding Element #17 states that “the outward facing architectural facades along all sides of the property will be designed to read as 4 stories plus roof, with the exception of the northwest corner of the Property, which shall be designed to read as 3 stories on top of the garage plus roof.” This is the proposed memorialization of the change made to accommodate the request of the Town for a reduction in the heights of the perimeter buildings. We request that this binding element also include a specific reference to the maximum height allowed for these outside facades, as stated in the building heights diagram submitted by the Applicant: 54 feet in general, and 47 feet at the northwest corner, from the established measuring point. To be clear, this is not a request to change the Applicant’s plan; but rather, to ensure that the binding elements mirror the building heights exhibit.
- We appreciate that there is a Binding Element requiring the establishment of a Category I Conservation Easement along the “northern and western boundaries” of the property; but we note that the plans call for a portion of property along the southern boundary to be included in this easement as well. The word “southern” should therefore be added.
- We also appreciate that in this same binding element, Corso commits to including the Town of Chevy Chase forester in the proceedings regarding the creation and maintenance of the conservation easement. We ask that the Binding Element be revised to make clear that our forester be included in the development and review of the Final Forest Conservation Plan, not just regarding the specific portion of the site to be placed in an easement.
- Regarding lighting, we suggest that the Binding Element refer to “exterior” rather than “site” lighting. Exterior is a broader term that will include any lighting on the buildings themselves.

We recognize that there are many issues of great importance to the Town that are not resolved during the LMA application process but will be determined at the subsequent Preliminary Plan of Subdivision and Site Plan reviews by the Planning Board. However, the LMA application commits Corso to specific measures that ensure Town engagement on these issues. The most important of these are:

- Stormwater Management: A Town appointed engineer will be included in the review of stormwater management plans and strategies. In the revised

plans, we take note of the use of green roofs. We find these a very desirable feature and encourage their implementation.

- Forest Conservation: As mentioned above, the Town forester will be included in discussions regarding the creation and maintenance of the conservation easement. In addition, Corso has committed in its letter to the Town, dated January 13, 2023, that it “will comply with the Town’s Urban Forest Ordinance, and seek applicable variances thereof...” The Town will seek, to the extent feasible, to preserve trees along the perimeter of the limits of disturbance and, where possible, other trees that are not within the footprints of the proposed buildings.
- Traffic: Corso commits to a comprehensive vehicular site access study, referred to above, which will include a forecast of future traffic volumes and a signal warrant analysis. The applicant also commits to working with the State Highway Administration and the Town to determine the need for traffic management measures along Connecticut Avenue. We appreciate the specificity of this binding element. We will pay close attention both to the impact of the project on ancillary traffic on Town streets and to pedestrian safety. We are also supportive of other nearby communities along Connecticut Avenue being engaged in reviewing traffic control plans.
- Parking Adequacy Corso commits to undertake a Parking Demand Analysis to ensure adequate onsite parking for all employees and visitors, including during times of peak use and visitation.
- Construction Management: Corso will, in concert with the Town, prepare and codify construction regulations to minimize the impacts of construction, including noise disturbances, on Town residents.

In addition, the Town will monitor compliance with all the other Binding Elements. We expect that Town officials and consultants will be included as members of the Development Review Committee, which will discuss the issues to be addressed at the Preliminary Plan of Subdivision and the Site Plan reviews, and we will provide comments for the Planning staff’s consideration at the time of these reviews. The Town also remains very interested in the final architectural designs that will be reviewed more intently at the Site Plan review.

We look forward to a productive engagement with Corso, County agencies, and the Planning Department, to satisfactorily address the issues that will be resolved during the upcoming reviews.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.