

Testimony of Town of Chevy Chase, Maryland
Office of Zoning and Administrative Hearings
Public Hearing on LMA H-148
March 24, 2023

Hearing Examiner Robeson Hannan,

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 clear to us. Overall, Planning staff and the Town have agreed on many important points regarding this application

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.

As a result of this productive engagement, Corso has committed in the proposed Binding Elements to address issues that matter a great deal to our residents and to ensure compatibility with the single-family homes in our community. For example, Corso has agreed to prohibit construction of new public streets through the property, provide certain paths connecting the development to our community, place three acres of their land in a Category I Conservation Easement, and reduce building heights facing Town homes. The commitments made by Corso to undertake comprehensive traffic and parking studies are also of vital importance.

Considering the modifications made to the plans, the Binding Elements set out in the Application, and Corso’s commitment to enter into a separate Declaration of Covenants with the Town, which will include certain items 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.

Regarding the draft set of Binding Elements that is now before you, we have one significant comment:

- 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 transmittal from the Planning Board state only that these studies need to be *commissioned* by the time of the submission of plan applications. We interpret that word to mean “authorized,” or “initiated.”

We feel strongly that these studies need to be completed before submission of plan applications.

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: 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 previously, 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, as this issue is of vital interest to the Town. We will pay close attention both to the impact of the project on ancillary traffic on Town streets and to pedestrian safety.
- 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.