FINAL DRAFT

December 8, 2017

Design Advisory Panel

George Howard Building

3430 Court House Drive

Ellicott City, MD 21043

RE:   #17 – 15 Erickson Living at Limestone Valley

Dear Panel Members,

After having reviewed the documentation presented to the River Hill Community Association and broader Clarksville/River Hill community, the Association’s Board of Directors (RHBOD) is compelled to challenge the proposed creation of a Community Enhancement Floating – Mixed Use (CEF-M) District for the Erickson Living at Limestone Valley project. We acknowledge that much of the current design meets the minimum enhancement requirements set forth in Section 121.0 of the Howard County Zoning Regulations; however, it is the position of the RHBOD that there is an insufficient net benefit of the project to the Clarksville/Village of River Hill community, especially given the permanent loss of the views to agricultural preservation land to the rear and the community’s connection to its more rural and agrarian past. However, we understand that the subject properties are in a prime location and recognize they will ultimately be developed in some manner. Therefore, to compensate for the unquantifiable aesthetic and emotional losses that development of these properties will bring, the State, the County, the developer, and the community must ensure that their development of the highest quality and of maximum long-term benefit to the surrounding area.

It is the Association’s position that all new development along MD 108 between Trotter and Guilford Roads must be consistent with the *Clarksville Pike Streetscape Plan and Design Guidelines (February 2016)*. It is our expectation that the Design Advisory Panel will evaluate the Erickson project with the *Plan’s* vision of a main street aesthetic and the need to create cohesiveness and a sense of place in the corridor as the foundations for your recommendations.  Traffic volumes, pedestrian and vehicular safety, and community/open space improvements are the RHBOD’s prime concerns with respect to the Erickson Living proposal. Before the application for a CEF District and the concept plan moves forward for review by the Planning Board and Zoning Board, it is the RHBOD’s position that the developer must modify its plans to ensure:

* the safety of the project’s proposed main entrance on MD 108;
* the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists; and
* open space amenities that benefit the entire Clarksville/River Hill

Area.

If the change to CEF zoning is approved, it is essential for the project’s traffic-related improvements to be completed in the first phase and timed appropriately to maintain traffic safety and flow along MD 108 during construction. The opening of more businesses in the Clarksville Commons center, the buildout of the new shopping center at the Ten Oaks Road/MD 108 intersection, the additional traffic resulting from the ongoing expansion of MD 32, and the construction of the Enclave at River Hill residential community at the Guilford Road/MD 108 intersection all will put more pressure on this already congested and unsafe section of highway. The RHBOD considers the signalization at the MD 108/Linden Linthicum Lane intersection and proposed access road essential for the Association to support a change in zoning.

**Safety of Main Entrance**

The RHBOD is gravely concerned about the safety of proposed main entrance on MD 108. In the current plan, vehicles traveling in an eastbound direction on MD 108 must make a left turn into this entrance and cross two possibly three lanes of traffic. (This third lane is the right turn into the development traveling westbound on MD 108). We believe this left turn will mitigate the other roadway enhancements proposed in the current design and will create new, unanticipated hazards. We ask that Erickson Living eliminate the left turn into the development entirely and require all eastbound MD 108 traffic to enter the development using the proposed signalized intersection and Linden Linthicum Lane “access road”.

Given the proposed widening of MD 108 to two through lanes in each direction along the development’s frontage and improved traffic flow with synchronized traffic signals at Linden Linthicum Lane and Sheppard Lane, we expect traffic speeds will increase at times, making this left turn at the main entrance even more difficult to navigate. Additionally, given the resident age statistics provided by Erickson Living, we anticipate the age of the drivers exiting and entering (visitors and residents) will increase above the driving age of drivers currenting traveling along this section of MD 108. Combine this situation with less experienced drivers traveling to and from River Hill High School and the opportunity for accidents and injury rises. We believe the design can be modified to ensure that this area is safer for everyone traveling on MD 108 as well as those individuals working, residing, and visiting the Erickson development.

**Enhanced Safety for Pedestrians and Bicyclists**

The current Erickson plan includes enhancements for pedestrians and bicyclists that meet the minimum CEF criteria and the vision expressed in the *Streetscape Plan and Design Guidelines.* We believe the significant change in land use requested to develop the properties as a retirement community warrants significant enhancements. If mass transit is expanded to Clarksville, the appropriate facilities for riders need to be incorporated into the plan. Additionally, adequate pedestrian and bicycle amenities must be included along the Linden Linthicum Lane “access road.” It is our position that the 8’ – 10’ wide multi-use pathway should be carried across Sheppard Lane and extended to the Broad Meadow Lane as envisioned by the *Plan*. Expansion of these features will improve safety, encourage integration of the new development and its residents with the existing Clarksville/River Hill community, facilitate the use of more diverse modes of transportation, and set the standards for all new construction and redevelopment projects along this corridor.

**Enhanced Open Space Amenities to Benefit the Community**

While Erickson Living listened to the Association’s previous comments and has modified their design to include a playground and dog park, we believe the changes as presented only meet the minimum expectations for enhancements. More should be done to integrate the development into the community. While the Village of River Hill has many “tot lots,” the Clarksville/River Hill area needs an amenity that serves as a community gathering place, not another “tot lot.” At a minimum, what is needed is a playground facility that:

* incorporates an area of 10,000 or more square feet???Dalia, what is the typical size of community playgrounds in other villages???? or more;
* has play equipment for a range of ages;
* is located close to an adequately sized parking facility; and
* contains park benches and picnic tables.

This type of playground would serve two purposes, the first being a safe place for the area’s youngest residents to play and grow; and secondly, a place for residents of the retirement community to bring their grandchildren and other young guests to play and create memories. A community playground could help bridge the generational and physical divide between the proposed Limestone Valley residents and the surrounding residential communities and commercial development. Combine an upgraded playground concept with the proposed dog park, or other park amenities such as pickleball courts or access to adjacent environmental features and the potential increases for even greater integration and sense of place for Clarksville/River Hill.

We ask the Design Advisory Panel to keep the Association’s concerns in mind as you review the project and make your recommendations.

On Behalf of the Board of Directors,

Renee DuBois, Chairperson

Development Advisory Committee

Tony Miceli, Chairperson

Traffic and Safety Committee

Cc:    Steven Montgomery, Erickson Living

Planning Board

        Zoning Board

        Linden Linthicum United Methodist Church

        Steve Breeden, Security Development Corporation