



# Alpha Dressage Association, Inc.

September 6, 2024

Re: City of Venice, Proposed Rezone 24-11RZ, Proposed Ordinance 2024-15  
VIA EMAIL TO CITY CLERK

Dear Mayor and Members of City Council of the City of Venice:

On behalf of the Alpha Dressage Association, Inc., I am writing to you in support of some of the concerns and issues raised by Fox Lea Farm in opposition to the proposed rezone. I am the current Vice-President of the Alpha Dressage Association, which is a not-for-profit organization in Sarasota County that has been promoting dressage as an affiliate organization with the United States Dressage Federation (USDF) for over fifty years. Our members, including myself and the over 80 current members as well as hundreds of members over the years, have shown at and held many shows at Fox Lea Farm. This show venue is an important part of our local horse industry as well as in the State of Florida. I know that this letter is coming to you late in your process, but I hope that you will consider the facts presented in your deliberations and will strengthen the stipulations to protect the safety and welfare of horses and riders at Fox Lea Farm should you decide to approve this rezone.

I listened to much of the prior hearing on August 27, 2024, and felt compelled to speak on behalf of our members and our board in support of needed protections for the horses and riders that show at Fox Lea. Many statements by the applicant indicated to me that there is a serious misunderstanding of horses, horse shows, and the business of Fox Lea Farm. The horse industry is a difficult one to survive in at any levels, including hosting shows. Should the process of development on lands near Fox Lea cause accidents, disrupt the shows, impair the arena footing, or create discomfort for the horses during just one show season or even just one show, exhibitors will go elsewhere and will spread the bad news across the horse world, with little chance for Fox Lea to ever recover those clients.

Even in the best of circumstances, horses are easily startled by unexpected or unusual views or sounds. Most horses at a show have been trailered onto the show site as recently as the morning of the show or may have arrived 2-4 days before the show begins. This means that they are on unfamiliar land along with the excitement of being at a show. Horses at show grounds are in a very different and much more stressful environment than their home stable. Although I appreciate the sound analysis presented by one of the applicant's consultants, it is my understanding that he simply analyzed the

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decibel level or noisiness of the sounds, I do not know the scientific details on how sounds are processed by horses and how it differs from human hearing, but I do know how many of my horses have reacted to sights and sounds over my 55 plus years with them. For example, even when at their home farms, my horses have all been very upset by sudden noises such as the loud staccato firing of a nail gun or the loud bang made when a dump truck bounces the bed and tail gate to empty the last of its load. I experienced some very challenging moments when riding a horse that spotted a crane in the process of maneuvering palm trees suspended in the air at a house ½ mile away from my property. This was despite substantial buffering by mature live oak trees. These are just a few examples to show that what horses react to can be very different and somewhat unpredictable. Their perceptions are not the same as ours and must be respected. When an existing business such as Fox Lea Farm involves horses, the characteristics of the horses must and should be accommodated by those that later choose to locate nearby. I suggest that construction, clearing/landscaping, and dumping activities be limited to specified hours during weekdays and not occur at all on show days to minimize the very real dangers created for horses and riders.

Another example of a lack of understanding of the business of Fox Lea Farm is when the owner of the proposed development showed a document listing 10 "Equestrian Centers Near Residential Developments". He seemed to believe that this list disposed of any compatibility issues and concerns raised by Fox Lea. I looked up each of the listed equestrian centers on the internet and discovered that of the ten: 1 is now out of business, 8 of the remaining 9 are boarding facilities, and one is Wellington International which is a very dense show grounds with surrounding horse farms and residences. The eight properties that are boarding facilities are completely different businesses than the show grounds run by Fox Lea Farm. Most of them are small operations with maybe dozens of horses rather than the hundreds of horses that come to Fox Lea. Most of boarding facilities will have resident populations of horses that can become accustomed to operations on neighboring lands – most of which are still agriculture uses with some scattered residential development. To equate Fox Lea Farm's horse business to smaller horse businesses limited to boarding/training/lessons indicates a basic misunderstanding of Fox Lea Farm's business and provides no useful comparison.

I hope that this information is helpful in your deliberations. Alpha Dressage Association has volunteered this letter on behalf of its current and past members and in recognition of the value to our horse community of the Fox Lea Farm show venue. I hope that whatever development occurs is done with sensitivity to and accommodation of the wonderful horses that are part of our lives.

Sincerely,



Susan Schoettle, Vice-President  
Alpha Dressage Association, Inc.

# Proposed Mitigation Factors

- ▶ Providing a buffer that goes beyond code requirements to provide increased screening.
- ▶ Construction Management Plan
  - ▶ No burning of trees and vegetation during clearing and grubbing
  - ▶ All debris shall be chipped and or hauled off site. Chipping will be done in the north portion of the property.
  - ▶ The southern wall and berm will be constructed prior to site clearing except for those areas necessary to obtain access to work area.
- ▶ Fox Lea Drive will not be used for pedestrian and automotive use to or from the proposed development
  - ▶ A notice of proximity and language in the declaration limiting uses on the property
  - ▶ Connection of the east and west walls to minimize foot traffic on Fox Lea Drive
  - ▶ Leaving the exotic trees in the natural buffer on the southern portion of the property, if allowed by the City of Venice.
  - ▶ Stormwater Management Plan

8/27/2024

Fox Lea Accepted Revisions of 8/20/2024 Cassata Oaks Draft with Additional Stipulations  
**FOX LEA PRESENTED AT CITY COUNCIL**

AUBURN ROAD FC, LLC  
STIPULATIONS

1. Applicant proffers that it will provide a Notice of Proximity in the form attached hereto to future homeowners at the time of transferring a deed or before of the proximity of the subdivision to I- 75 on the east and Fox Lea Farms to the south providing the homeowners with knowledge of the impacts from these adjacent properties.
2. Applicant agrees to support any application from Fox Lea Farm to vacate Fox Lea Drive and agrees to waive any claims to the north half of any future vacated Fox Lea Drive.
- 2-3. Applicant proffers that it will provide restrictive Covenants in its property association documents restricting the use of drones, fireworks, outdoor fires other than a gas firepit in language substantially the same as the following:
  - a. No fireworks, drones and outdoor fires are allowed.
  - b. Grills and fire pits are allowed. Excess smoke will not be permitted.
  - c. Prohibit outdoor loud speakers on the rear of Lots 1E to 10E.
4. Applicant will provide restrictive Covenants in its property association documents requiring that the future Cassata Oaks Homeowners Association maintain a minimum of 70% opacity in the 100-foot natural buffer along the southern boundary of the subject property at all times.
5. There shall be no vehicular access connecting the development on the Property to Fox Lea Drive.
- 3-6. Applicant proffers that it will utilize Construction Best Management Practices to minimize impact on the business to the south known as Fox Lea Farms including the following:
  - a. The 3 ft berm and 8 ft wall along the southern property line will be constructed prior to site clearing except for those areas necessary to obtain access to work area.
  - b. Fox Lea Drive will not be used as a construction entrance.
  - c. During the course of construction, the Applicant and its contractors shall not burn any trash or waste materials on the subject property or utilize open burning of land clearing material and debris during all land development and/or construction activities.
  - d. During the course of construction, the Applicant and its contractors shall not use or fly drones over any portion ~~of the southern boundary~~ of the Applicant's property without permission of Fox Lea.
  - e. All wood chipping will be done on the north one quarter of the property to minimize noise impacts to the southern property.
  - f. The developer shall install a ground water liner at the southern side of the property south of the proposed lakes to prevent negative drawdown of the water table south of Developers property.
  - g. The Applicant will dig one pond at a time.
  - h. No stormwater or other drainage from the developed property shall discharge into the existing ditch that runs east-west within the northern portion of the Fox

Lea Drive right of way. The developed property being that area north of the 3ft berm and 8' wall.

i. The existing vegetation in the 100-foot natural buffer along Fox Lea Drive will be kept in its natural condition subject to City of Venice approval in perpetuity.

j. The Applicant and its contractors shall use its best efforts to limit Horizontal (land development) construction and roofing construction within the Property's southern boundary area (south of the southernmost proposed road) during the months of January, February, March, April, and May.

4.7. Applicant and Fox Lea Farm shall work together in good faith and schedule all land development, construction, and site work on the south half of the Property during such times as no competitions or other events are occurring at Fox Lea Farm so as to limit the impact on Fox Lea Farm's events and operations as much as possible.