

## **THE RANCH SKETCH PLAN**

### ***LETTER OF INTENT***

**DECEMBER 2018, *REVISED MAY 2019***

<b>PROPERTY OWNER</b>	<b>APPLICANT:</b>	<b>CONSULTANT:</b>
PRI #4, LLC	Classic Homes	N.E.S. Inc.
6385 Corporate Drive, Ste 200	6385 Corporate Drive, Ste 200	619 North Cascade Ave,
Colorado Springs, CO 80919	Colorado Springs, CO 80919	Colorado Springs, CO 80903

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### **REQUEST**

Classic Homes requests approval of a new Sketch Plan for The Ranch, located west of Falcon, generally 1 mile west of Meridian Road and 1 mile north of Woodmen Road. The Sketch Plan proposes approximately 2,144 residential units at varying densities, a 15-acre community park and smaller neighborhood parks connected by a network of trails and open space on the 610-acre property

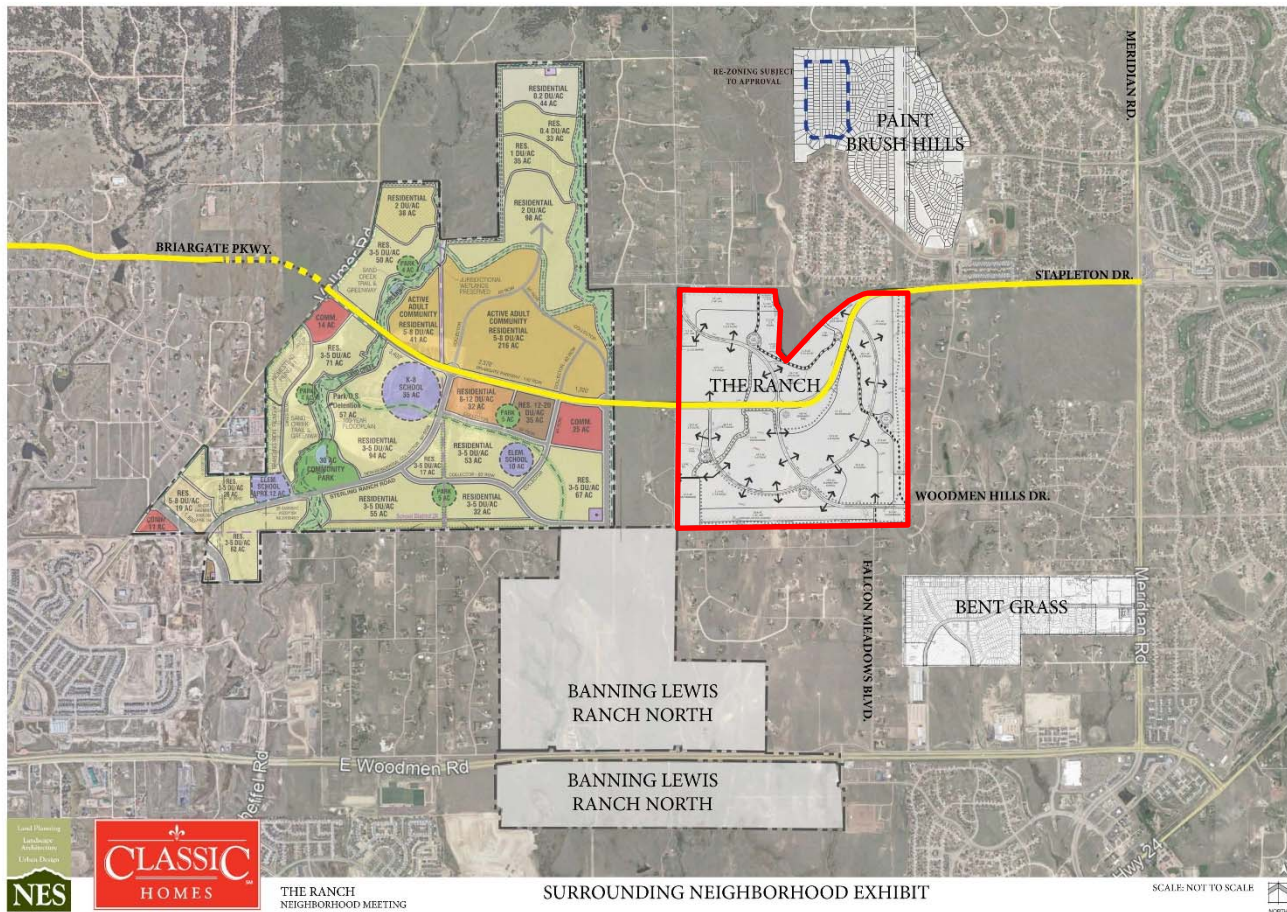
### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

The following reports are submitted in support of this Preliminary Plan and are referenced in this Letter of Intent:

- Master Traffic Impact and Access Analysis by LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.
- Noise Impact Study by LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.
- Geologic Hazard Study and Preliminary Subsurface Soils Investigation by Entech Engineering, Inc.
- Impact Identification Report by CORE Consultants
- Noxious Weed Management Plan by CORE Consultants
- Wetland Delineation Report by CORE Consultants
- Water Resources and Wastewater Treatment Report by JDS Hydro Consulting, Inc.
- Master Development Drainage Plan by Classic Consulting Engineers & Surveyors

## SITE CONTEXT

Figure 1: Site Location



The Ranch comprises 610 acres of undeveloped agricultural land located west of Falcon, generally 1 mile west of Meridian Road and 1 mile north of Woodmen Road. A triangular parcel along the northern boundary is owned by Grace Community Church of Falcon and is not included in this Sketch Plan. Access to the site is currently available from Stapleton Drive and Woodmen Hills Road to the east, Falcon Meadows Boulevard to the south, and Stapleton Drive/Raygor Road to the northwest.

The property is mainly native prairie grassland. A number of minor drainageways traverse the site in a north to southeast and north to southwest direction. The existing drainage corridors are not well-defined and it is proposed to realign them where appropriate and incorporate the drainage and detention as into the open space and trail system as community amenities or remove them and incorporate the flows into the stormwater drainage system for the development. The Wetlands Analysis undertaken by CORE Engineering identifies six wetland areas on the property, all of which are isolated and confirmed to be non-jurisdictional by the Army Corps of Engineers. These wetland areas will either be removed or retained within the proposed open space/drainage tracts identified on the Sketch Plan. Otherwise the property is relatively featureless, with little undulation. A power transmission line runs along the eastern boundary of the property.

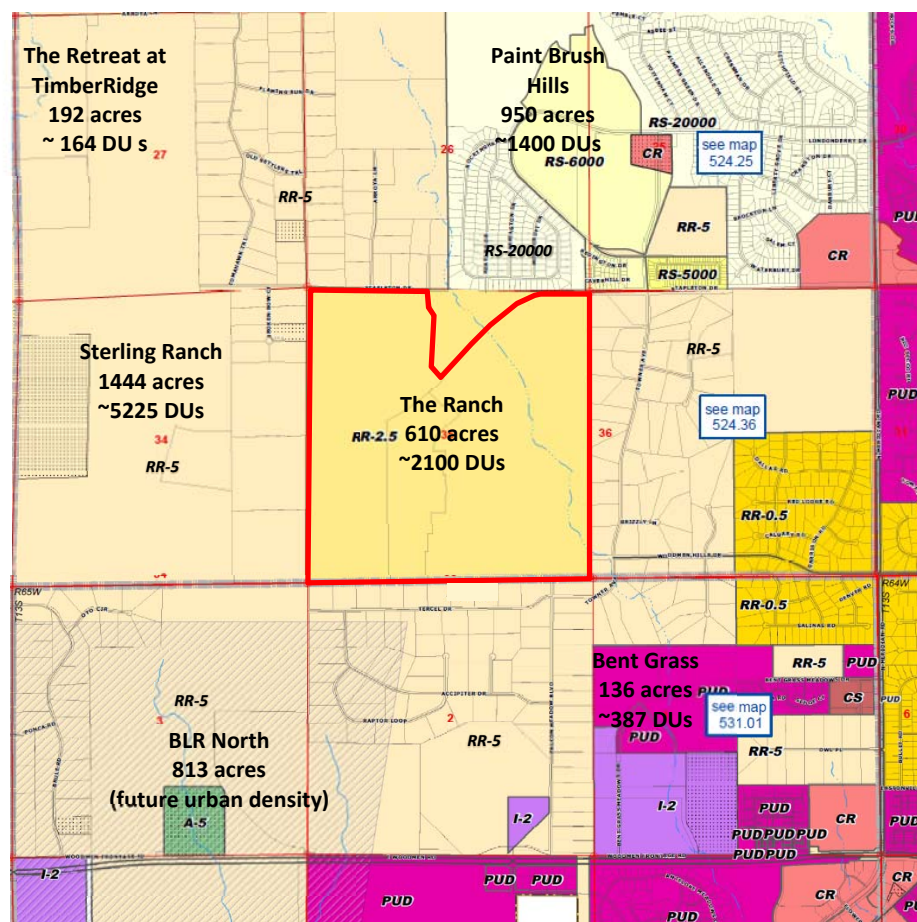
The surrounding neighborhoods comprise the 5-acre single-family lot subdivisions of The Meadows to the south, The Meadows and Elkhorn Estates to the east and Stapleton Estates and Bow Valley to the northwest. To the north is the church property and to the north and northeast is the Paint Brush Hills subdivision, which consist of lots ranging from approximately 5,000 square foot (sf) to 20,000 sf lots. There are three 40-acre parcels to the west.

Further to the west is the developing Sterling Ranch master planned area, which is planned for 5,225 residential units at urban densities. The proposed future extension of Banning Lewis Ranch to the southwest is also anticipated as urban density development. To the southeast is the developing 136-acre Bent Grass subdivision, which is planned for approximately 387 dwelling units, 104 of which are developed.

## ZONING

The property is currently zoned RR-2.5 (Residential Rural, 2.5-acre lot minimum). The property was zoned to RR-2.5 from RR-3 in 2004, at which time a Preliminary Plan for 194 2.5 acre lots was also approved. A Zoning and Conceptual Plan for a PUD zoning for urban density lots was submitted in 2008 but was withdrawn due to the recession.

Figure 2: Existing Zoning



Much of the surrounding zoning is RR-5 (Residential Rural, 5-acre lot minimum). To the west, the Sterling Ranch area is approved for urban density development, via the approved Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan (SKP-18-003) although it is still zoned RR-5. Similarly, Banning Lewis Ranch North to the southwest is also anticipated as future urban density development. The Paint Brush Hills subdivision to the north/northeast is zoned as RS-20000, RS-6000 and RS-5000, which is urban residential zoning of 20,000 sf, 6,000 sf and 5,000 sf lot size minimum respectively.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD OUTREACH**

The Applicant/Developer has made significant efforts to reach out to adjacent neighbors and, where possible and reasonable, address their concerns. An initial neighborhood meeting was held on December 10, 2018 to introduce the project prior to the initial submittal of the Sketch Plan to the County. Just over 100 people attended this meeting. Following the initial submittal on December 21, 2018 and review comments from the County, a series of meetings with the distinct neighborhood groups adjacent to the project to the south, east, and north were held on April 16, April 22, and April 30 2019 respectively. These meetings were also well attended.

At these meetings, general concerns were expressed relating to the proposed urban nature of the development, the density transitions and buffering, increases in traffic on adjacent roads, the phasing of Stapleton/Briargate, drainage, and the location of the school site close to existing homes.

In response to concerns expressed in the December 2018, the following changes were made to the Sketch Plan prior to the initial submittal:

- Reduce density on eastern boundary adjacent to the 300-foot electric easement from 3.5-4.99 du/ac to 1-3.49 du/ac
- Change the access onto Falcon Meadows Boulevard to emergency only

In response to concerns expressed by neighbors during the initial review and at the subsequent series of meetings in April 2019, and comments made by reviewing agencies, the following changes were made to the Sketch Plan prior to this second submittal:

- Further reduce density on eastern boundary adjacent to the 300-foot electric easement from 1-3.49 du/ac to 1-2.5 du/ac and add a 100-foot lot width minimum.
- Add a 200-foot lot width minimum to the 1-acre lots proposed on the north and south boundaries.
- Move the school site to the west away from the existing homes and more central to the development as requested by School District 49.
- Add open space in the northeast corner adjacent to provide a buffer to Stapleton/Briargate.
- Move the highest density area from adjacent to church to adjacent to Stapleton/Briargate.
- Change location of regional trail, as discussed with County Parks Department.

These changes are reflected in the remainder of this Letter of Intent as revised in May 2019 for the second Sketch Plan submittal.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Land Use

The request is for a Sketch Plan for The Ranch, consisting of a mix of urban residential densities, together with open space, trails, a community park and a small neighborhood commercial element. The proposed land use breakdown is as follows:

*Figure 3: Land Use Chart*

Land Use	Areas (AC)	Minimum No. of units	Maximum No. of units	Percentage Land Use (%)
Residential				
1 DU/AC	52.1	N/A	52	8.53%
1-2.5 DU/AC	46.8	47	117	7.67%
1-3.5 DU/AC	52.2	52	183	8.55%
3-5 DU/AC	206.3	619	1032	33.79%
4-8 DU/AC	61.7	247	494	10.11%
6-12 DU/AC	22.3	134	268	3.65%
Neighborhood Commercial	1			0.16%
Park	23.1			3.78%
Buffer	16			2.62%
Open Space/Drainage	72.6			11.89%
School	10.2			1.67%
ROW	46.2			7.57%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>610.5</b>	<b>1099</b>	<b>2144</b>	<b>100%</b>

The maximum number of residential units that could be accommodated within the parameters of the proposed Sketch Plan based upon the proposed density ranges is 2,144 units. However, the actual number of dwellings units in The Ranch is likely to be less than the maximum density range due to road, drainage, and open space, and landscape requirements.

The proposed residential development will range in density from 1-acre lots adjacent to the north and south boundaries, with gradual transitions in density up to 6-12 dwelling units per acre as a maximum. The north and south boundaries also include a 100-foot buffer between the 1-acre lots and the adjacent 5-acre lots, totaling 16 acres and, in response to neighborhood input, include a minimum 200' lot width for the 1-acre lots along these boundaries. To the east, the existing electric line provides an approximate 330-foot open space buffer between the existing 5-acre lots, adjacent to which the density has been reduced following neighborhood input to 1-2.5 dwelling units per acre with a 100' lot width minimum.

A network of 73 acres of open space and trails is planned throughout the Sketch Plan area, primarily following the existing drainageways. In accordance with the County Parks Master Plan, a regional trail is



shown running from the southeast corner of the property to the western boundary, along the south side of future Stapleton/Briargate corridor. A 25-foot trail easement will be provided to the County with the Final Plats.

In addition to the 73 acres of open space, 23 acres of formal parks are proposed. A large, 14-acre park is identified as the central focal point of the community, adjacent to Stapleton/Briargate. This will be linked by open space and trails to a number of smaller neighborhood parks throughout The Ranch community.

A 1-acre neighborhood commercial element will be adjacent to the 14-acre community park. The type of the commercial is not known at this stage but it is anticipated that it would be a use that complements the park activities, such as a café or family restaurant. It is also the plan for the community park to host farmers markets, food trucks, concerts, and other community events.

A site for an elementary school is identified in the southeast corner of the property, the location and size of which has been agreed with Falcon School District 49.

### **Access and Traffic**

Access to the site is currently available from Stapleton Drive and Woodmen Hills Road to the east, Falcon Meadows Boulevard to the south, and Stapleton Drive/Raygor Road to the northwest. The 2040 Major Transportation Corridors Plan (MTCP) identifies Woodmen Hills Road, Falcon Meadows Boulevard, and Raygor Road as collector roads, the function of which is to link local roadways to arterial roads. Stapleton Drive is identified as an extension of Briargate Parkway in the City of Colorado Springs, going east from Black Forest Road to Judge Orr Road. The new road will be a 4-lane Principal Arterial.

The Sketch Plan identifies the proposed alignment for the new Stapleton/Briargate principal arterial through the property, which will ultimately serve as the main access to the development. The required right-of-way for an urban 4-lane principal arterial is 130 feet, but the Sketch Plan shows a 150 feet right-of-way to allow for a wider central median and roundabouts at major intersections to create an attractive landscaped entrance and route through the community. A deviation for this alternative cross-section will be processed with subsequent Preliminary Plans, as more detailed design is needed to evaluate and justify the wider median. The route of proposed collector roads connecting to Stapleton/Briargate are also identified on the Sketch Plan, with proposed local road intersections also shown. A deviation request is included for the proposed intersection spacing on Stapleton/Briargate to allow adequate access and circulation for the development.

Woodmen Hills Road will also provide access to the site and will be a necessary secondary point of access for the initial phases. Falcon Meadows Boulevard is proposed as an emergency access only in response to concerns expressed by neighbors regarding through traffic. Access will be controlled by a gate with a Knox lock for fire department access. A letter from the Falcon Fire Chief agreeing to this emergency access arrangement is included in the submittal. A connection to Raygor Road in the northwest corner of the project is also proposed. The use of this connection by residents of The Ranch will be limited as there is no convenient connectivity to major roads. This will primarily benefit residents to the north of this project by providing improved access to the south and west with the completion of Stapleton/Briargate.

The Master Traffic Impact and Access Analysis prepared by LSC assesses the trips generated by the proposed development in the context of 2020 short-term and 2040 long-term background traffic. The TIS provides recommendations for roadway and intersection improvements at various trigger points, which will be evaluated with a more detailed traffic analysis specific to each phase of the development.

### **Drainage**

The Master Development Drainage Report prepared by Classic Consulting analyses the existing drainage characteristics of the site and the future drainage and Full Spectrum detention needs for developing the property. The Ranch is contained within two different drainage basins, Sand Creek and the Falcon Drainage Basin. Adherence to the recommendations within those studies will be incorporated into future detailed drainage analyses. The existing drainage corridors are not well-defined and it is proposed to realign them where appropriate and incorporate the drainage into the open space areas and trail system to enhance the community features and enhance the amenities of the development. The drainage alignments will be defined in future Preliminary Plans/Final Plats. Flows from the drainageways that are to be removed will be incorporated into the development's stormwater drainage system.

### **Utilities**

Water and Wastewater service will be provided by Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District, and is addressed in the Water Resources and Wastewater Report prepared by JDS Hydro. The Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District will serve Sterling Ranch, The Retreat at TimberRidge, and The Ranch. The Sterling Ranch Service Area has a current available supply to serve 2,405 single-family equivalents (SFEs). It also has an additional contingent supply adequate to serve a further 6,458 SFEs. This is sufficient to serve the long-term needs of the proposed developments within the Sterling Ranch Service Area. A Water tank has been constructed and equipped and has been tested for water quality, which is suitable for potable use with appropriate treatment.

Sterling Ranch and The Retreat at TimberRidge will gravity flow to the southwest corner of the Sterling Ranch property, where a Lift Station is currently under construction. A Force Main, also under construction, will traverse from the lift station to the east, along the southern boundary of The Ranch where it will be intercepted by the Meridian Service Metropolitan District. The Ranch will provide an additional lift station that will tie into the Sterling Ranch Force Main. Meridian Ranch Service District is contracted with Sterling Ranch to provide wastewater treatment through its participation in the Cherokee wastewater facility.

Colorado Springs utilities will supply natural gas service and MVEA Inc. will supply electric service.

### **Phasing**

It is intended that the development will be phased generally from the northeast corner to the southwest of the property. The initial phase will be served by Stapleton Drive, which will eventually become the Stapleton/Briargate principal arterial when connected to the west. In the interim, the plan is to construct the 4-lane, median-separated section of the future principal arterial as a temporary solution to provide the required two points of access. This is permitted in Section 8.4.4.(D)(2) of the Land

Development Code, provided the length of the road beyond the divided section does not exceed 750 feet. There is also an opportunity to utilize access through the adjacent Church property to Grace Church View to provide a temporary emergency access if required, which will also benefit the church property.

As development progresses, the capacity of the adjacent roads and the need for road improvements will be assessed by a more detailed traffic impact analyses for each phase of development. Similarly, a more detailed drainage analysis will be submitted with each phase of development, with temporary measures identified as necessary. A specific finding of water sufficiency will also be necessary with each future Preliminary and/or Final Plat.

### **Metropolitan District**

The Ranch Metropolitan District will be formed to provide bonding to fund construction of the roads, stormwater infrastructure, parks and trails and for the ongoing maintenance of those facilities that are not dedicated to the County. The Ranch Metropolitan District will enter into an Inter-Governmental Agreement with Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District for the provision of water and wastewater service. The Metropolitan District will also be responsible for creating and enforcing the Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs) that will control the building architecture/design, uses, and activities within the community.

## **IMPACT IDENTIFICATION**

The process for approving a new Sketch Plan requires an assessment of the possible environmental, social and jurisdictional impacts.

### **1. Identification of potential sources and zones of air, water, and noise pollution**

#### **a. Air Quality**

The proposed residential use itself will not negatively impact air quality. The proposed extension of Stapleton/Briargate will provide a more convenient and shorter travel time to employment and commercial facilities for future residents of The Ranch, as well as for residents of existing surrounding neighborhoods, which will reduce congestion on existing roads and will lessen air pollution. The inclusion of trails and open space focused around a centrally located community park will also help mitigate air pollution by providing opportunities for pedestrian or bike travel.

#### **b. Noise Pollution**

The Land Development Code requires the impacts of noise pollution to residents to be minimized. For residential subdivisions noise mitigation may be required where individually owned single-family and duplex lots are located adjacent to expressways, principal arterials or railroads. A Noise Impact Study is included with the Sketch Plan application to assess the potential noise impact of the proposed principal arterial on the future residential lots adjacent to that road. The report identifies areas where predicted noise levels due to traffic on Stapleton/Briargate would exceed the 67 decibel Leq threshold set out in the El Paso County Engineering Criteria Manual. The report recommends that if residential uses are



located in these areas, noise mitigation, such as berms or sound walls may be needed. The size and location of such measures will be evaluated with future Preliminary Plans.

**c. Water Pollution**

The Sketch Plan proposes residential, open space and trail uses, which are not sources of water pollution.

**2. Relationship of the Sketch Plan to preexisting wildlife habitats and migration routes**

The Impact Identification Report prepared by CORE Consultants indicates that the site does not contain any critical habitat for protected or endangered species. Suitable habitat for Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse (PMJM) does not exist on the site and the property is within the area covered by the Colorado Springs block clearance letter for PMJM habitat. Mule deer and pronghorn deer were observed on the property and the site provides potential habitat for other mammals and reptiles in the wetland areas, much of which will be located in the proposed open space/drainage areas. Further studies will be necessary for nesting raptor and ground-nesting birds to determine presence on site if construction takes place during the nesting season.

**3. Identification of Potential Hazard Areas:**

**a. Floodplains**

The property is within an area determined to be outside the 500-year floodplain on FEMA Floodplain Map No. 08041C0535G, dated March 17, 1997.

**b. Geologic and Soil Hazards:**

The Soils and Geology Report prepared by Entech identifies geologic conditions that occur on the property that could impose some constraints to proposed development and construction. The identified constraints are intermittent, with the most significant being the potential seasonal shallow groundwater. Much of this condition is mitigated by avoidance as it is located within the proposed open space areas. The remainder can be mitigated by regrading, appropriate foundation design and the use of perimeter drains. Other identified geologic constraints include expansive soils, artificial fill, hydrocompaction and collapsible soils, all of which are sporadic and can be mitigated by proper engineering design and construction techniques.

**c. Vegetation and Wildfire:**

The majority of the site is vegetated by native prairie grass, with hydrophytic plants in the wetland areas. There are no federally threatened or endangered plant species on the property. There is the potential to improve the vegetation with the proposed noxious weed management plan. The noxious weeds on the site include common mullein, Russian thistle and diffuse knapweed. The Noxious Weed Management Plan recommends surveying and treating List A and List B weeds. Following construction, the Metro District and/or Home Owners Association will be responsible for weed control in the open space. Within the individual lots, weed control will be the responsibility of the individual home owner and will be enforced through covenants.

The property lies within an area mapped as Low Hazard for wildfire on the El Paso County Wildfire Hazards Based on CVCP Indicators Map, 2007, based upon the mainly grassland vegetation.

**d. Use of, or changes in preexisting waterforms, watercourses or bodies of water:**

The existing drainage corridors are not well-defined and it is proposed to realign them where appropriate and incorporate the drainage and detention as into the open space and trail system as community amenities. The Wetlands Analysis undertaken by CORE Engineering identifies six wetland areas on the property, all of which are considered to be isolated and likely to be non-jurisdictional. Consequently, any project impacts on the wetlands are not likely to require a permit under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. These wetland areas will either be removed or retained within the proposed open space/drainage tracts identified on the Sketch Plan.

**e. Identification and location of sites of historical or archeological interest:**

There are no known sites of historical or archeological interest on the property.

**f. Identification and location of sites of natural or scenic importance:**

There are no known sites of natural or scenic importance on the property.

**4. Social Impacts**

The Sketch Plan includes approximately 2,100 homes at varying densities, which will provide the opportunity for a range of housing product at a variety of price points. This will cater to different housing demands and lifestyle options, which will ensure that the proposed housing is both attractive to and attainable by a variety of purchasers, including first-time buyers, families, and empty-nesters. The proposed open space, parks and trail system will create an active community that will be beneficial to the health and wellbeing of County residents, both within and outside The Ranch subdivision. The proposed community park will be the central focal point of the neighborhood and will provide a venue for recreational activities, social events, and community entertainment. This will help to provide a strong and connected community, which will have a positive social impact on this part of the County.

**5. Jurisdictional Impacts**

The following Districts will serve the property:

- The Ranch Metropolitan District (proposed).
- Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District will provide water and wastewater service to the property. A Will Serve letter is provided with this application.
- Colorado Springs Utilities will provide natural gas service to the property. A Will Serve letter is provided with this application.
- Mountain View Electric Association Inc. will provide electric service to the property. A Will Serve letter is provided with this application.
- Falcon Fire Protection District will provide fire protection and emergency services to the property. A Will Serve letter is provided with this application.
- School District 49 will serve the property and a new elementary school site is provided on the Sketch Plan.
- El Paso County Conservation District
- Upper Black Squirrel Ground Water District
- Pikes Peak Library District.

## **6. Relationship of the Sketch Plan to adopted County Master Plans**

The Master Plan for the County comprises the County Policy Plan (adopted 1998) and the relevant small area plans. The Ranch Sketch Plan area is in both the Falcon/Peyton Small Area Plan (adopted 2006) and the Black Forest Preservation Plan (adopted 1987). The Master Plan also includes the 2040 Major Transportation Corridors Plan, the County Parks Master Plan, the Master Plan for Mineral Extraction, and the recently adopted Water Master Plan.

### **a. County Policy Plan**

The following County Policies are relevant to the requested rezoning:

*Policy 6.1.3: Encourage new development which is contiguous and compatible with previously developed areas in terms of factors such as density, land use and access.*

*Policy 6.1.6: Direct development toward areas where the necessary urban-level supporting facilities and services are available or will be developed concurrently.*

*Policy 6.1.8: Encourage incorporating buffers or transitions between areas of varying use or density where possible.*

*Policy 6.2.2: Promote the unique identity of neighborhoods through the use of focal points, parks, trails and open spaces, preservation of significant natural features, compatible location and design of mixed uses, and promotion of pedestrian and other non-motorized means of travel.*

*Goal 6.3: Continue to support existing and carefully planned future urban density development in the unincorporated County, provided the requisite level of urban services is available or will be available in a timely fashion.*

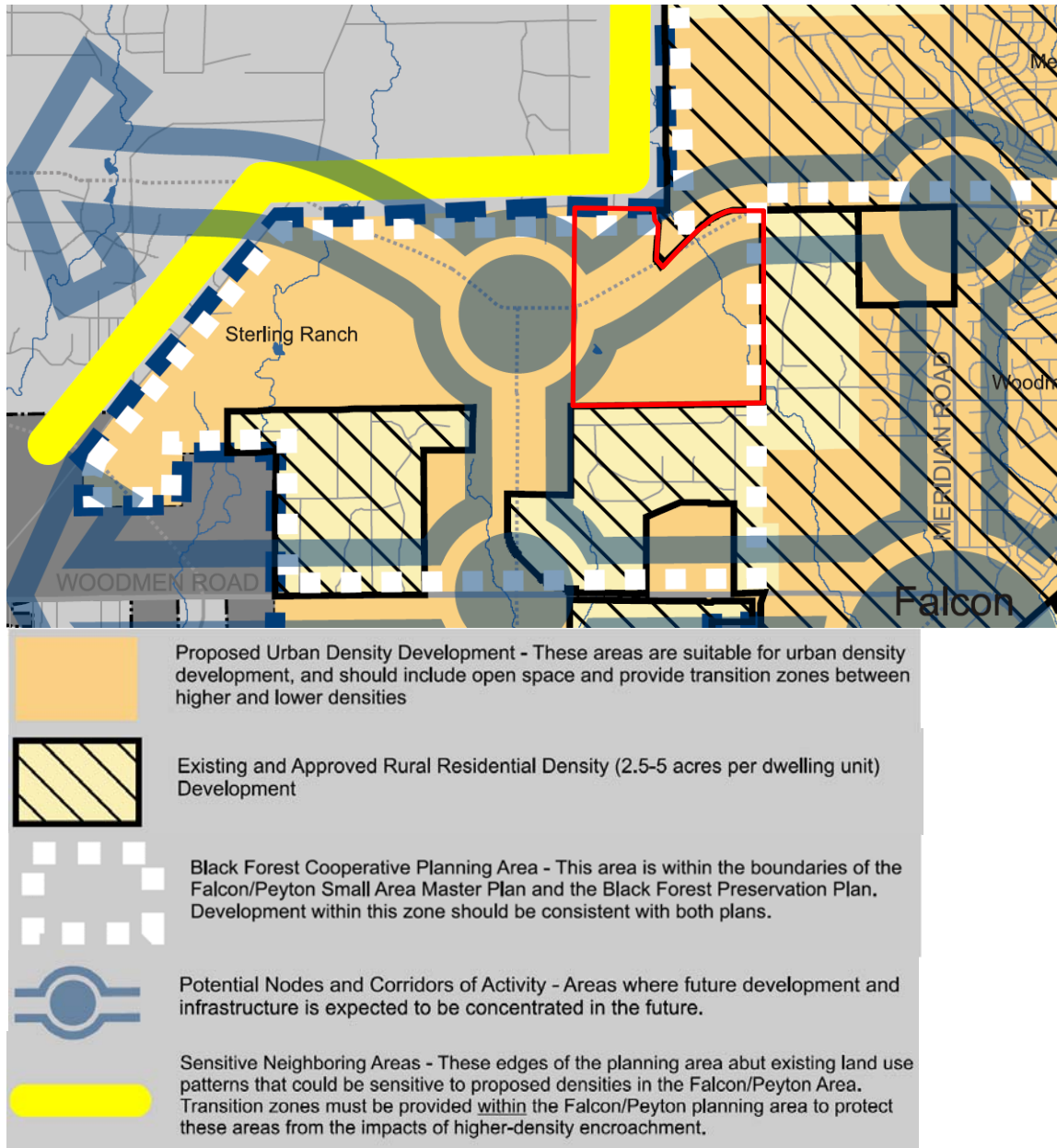
*Policy 6.3.2: Rely on the Small Area Planning process to define the sub-area specific boundaries for urban density development.*

The Ranch Sketch Plan is adjacent to developed or developing areas of the County that can support urban density development and where the necessary urban-level supporting services can be provided. The Sketch Plan provides buffers and transitions between areas of varying density both within the project and with adjacent lower-density residential neighborhoods (described further below).

The Plan includes a community park as a focal point for the development and includes parks, trails and open spaces to promote recreation and pedestrian access through the community. The sub-area specific boundaries for urban density development are identified in the Falcon/Peyton Small Area Plan and the Black Forest Preservation Plan (BFPP). The Ranch is located in areas defined for urban density development in both these plans.

## b. Falcon/Peyton Small Area Plan (FPSAP)

Figure 4: Extracts from the Falcon/Peyton Small Area Plan Recommendations Map



The 2006 update of this plan included a change to the boundary lines of the planning area to add the land along the Woodmen Road corridor, generally bounded by the City of Colorado Springs on the West and South, Vollmer Road on the Northwest, and an extension of Stapleton Road to the north. This area was originally addressed in the 1987 Black Forest Preservation Plan, but was included in the FPSAP because the Woodmen Road corridor was rapidly developing, and is logically related to the growth occurring in the City of Colorado Springs to the West and the Falcon Area growth to the East. However,

the FPSAP notes that due to its close ties to the 1987 Black Forest Preservation Plan, this newly included area is to be addressed cooperatively between both plans.

The Ranch is located within the area added to the FPSAP in 2006. It is identified as an area for proposed urban density development and a location for concentrated development and infrastructure. Urban density is defined in the Plan as parcel sizes of less than 2.5 acres, typically less than 1 acre, and being served by urban-level infrastructure, including roadways, water distribution, and wastewater treatment. These areas are considered generally acceptable for urban development because they are logical extensions of urban density growth from the existing urbanized areas and because Woodmen Road and Stapleton Drive are expected to be improved and provide good access to the future development.

The FPSAP shows the extension of Stapleton/Briargate through The Ranch property and identifies this as a potential corridor of activity, where future development and infrastructure is to be concerted in the future. There is also a node of activity immediately to the west of The Ranch, at the future intersection of Stapleton/Briargate and Banning Lewis Parkway, which signify the location of future town centers, which should include primary employers, commercial services, and public spaces.

The proposed Sketch Plan focuses the urban density along the future Stapleton/Briargate corridor and transitions to lower density on the perimeter of the site. There is also a small parcel of proposed commercial development that is consistent with the designation of the future Stapleton/Briargate as an activity corridor. The proposed 330-foot open space buffer alongside the existing 5-acre lots within Elkhorn Estates, to the east of the Sketch Plan area, is consistent with the FPSAP recommendation to provide open space and transition zones between higher and lower density. This provides a much greater transition and buffer to the existing 5-acre residential lots in Elkhorn Estates than the RS-5000 and RS-6000 zoning in Paint Brush Hills to the north of Stapleton Drive or the 1-acre Woodmen Hills development abutting the eastern boundary.

The area adjacent to the north-west corner of The Ranch is identified as an area that could be sensitive to the proposed densities in The FPSAP and where transition zones should be provided. The proposed 100-foot open space buffer, 1-acre lots and 200-foot minimum lot width will provide this transition. This compares more favorably to the relationship of this sensitive area to the Paint Brush Hills subdivision to its east, where existing and proposed 1-acre lots immediately abut the existing 5-acre and larger lots, without any intervening buffer.

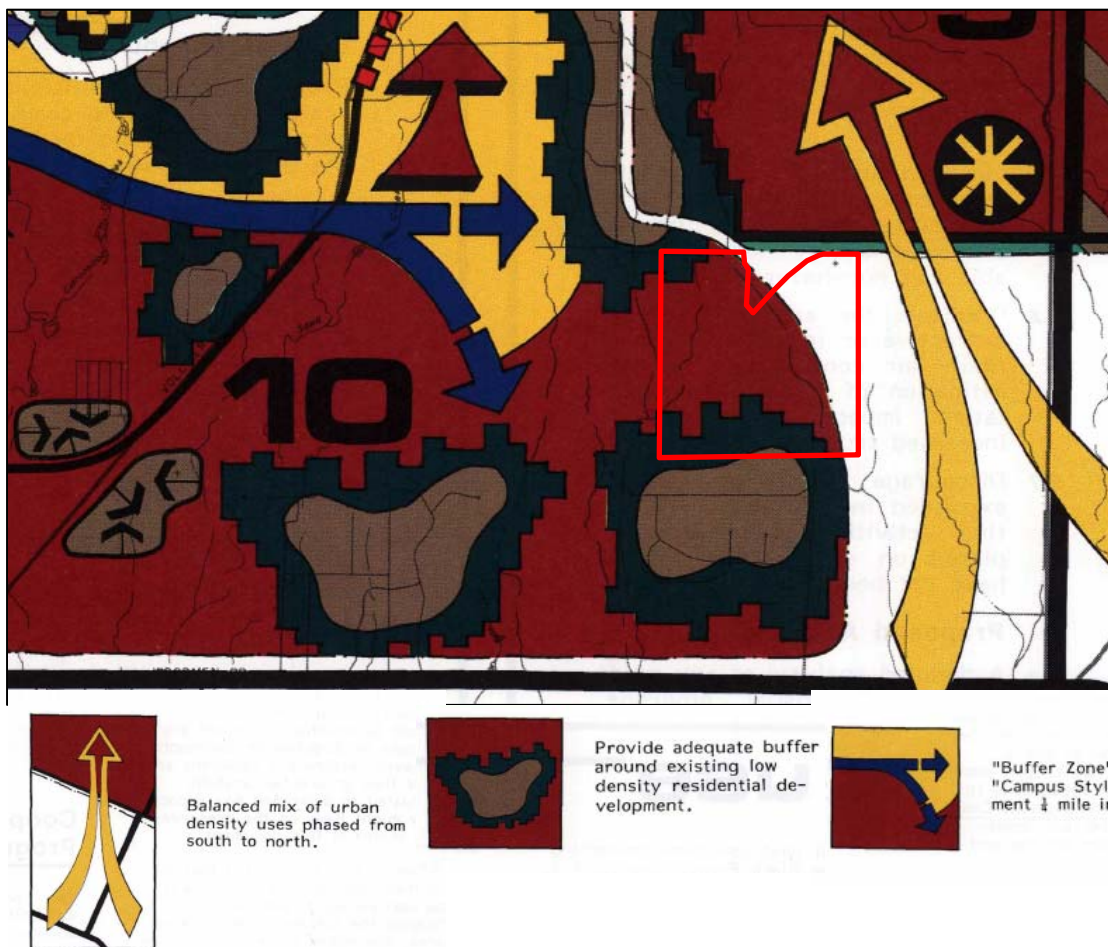
To the north-west, is the approximately half-acre lot Paint Brush Hills Filing No. 11 development, and to the east is the approximately 8,000 square foot lot Paint Brush Hills Filing No. 10 development. These areas are higher density urban level developments that will be separated from development in the Ranch by the existing church property, which will provide an appropriate transition.

### **c. Black Forest Preservation Plan (BFPP)**

The western three-quarters of The Ranch Sketch Plan area is within the Southern Transitional area of the BFPP (Area 10). The key consideration for this Planning Unit is the proposed extension of Stapleton/Briargate via the Stapleton Drive alignment to Meridian Road. The BFPP recognizes that this new east-west expressway will result in the urbanization of this area and appropriate uses in the vicinity of the expressway corridor would include office, industrial and multi-family uses. The Plan

identifies the need for a low-density residential buffer originating ¼ mile north of the corridor alignment and a need for adequate buffering around existing low-density development to the northeast and south.

*Figure 5: Extracts from the Black Forest Preservation Plan*



The “adequate buffer” between the development in The Ranch and the existing lower density residential to the northeast is discussed above, as this boundary is identified as “sensitive” in the FPSAP. This buffering commences ¼ mile north of the proposed Stapleton/Briargate corridor in accordance with the recommendation in the BFPP.

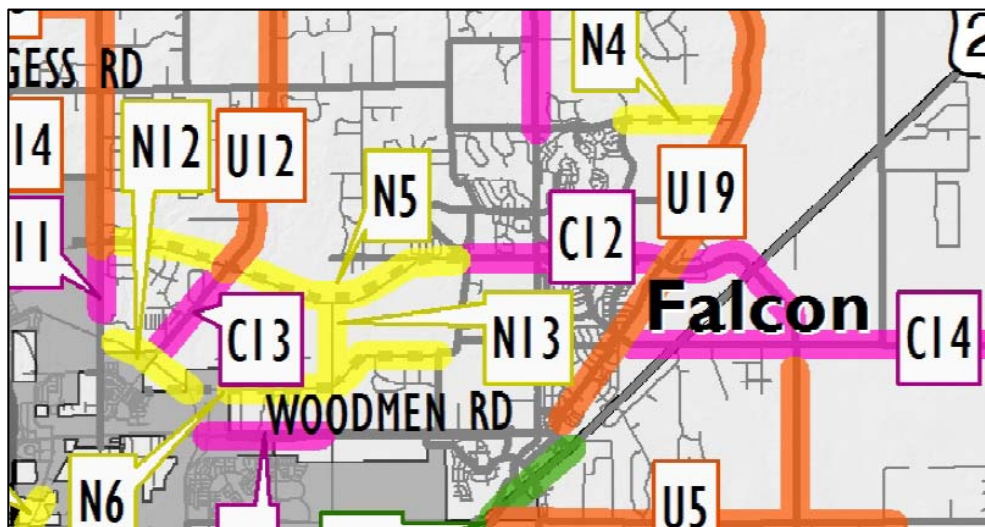
The “adequate buffer” around the existing 5-acre lots to the south comprises a 100-foot buffer and 1-acre lot density with a minimum of a 200-foot width, similar to the buffer proposed along the northern boundary. Again, this compares favorably with the transition/buffer proposed in other nearby developments lying within the BFPP: Paint Brush Hills to the northeast includes existing and proposed 1-acre lots immediately abutting existing 5-acre lots without any intervening buffer; Sterling Ranch to the west includes a 50-foot buffer and a density of 2 dwelling units per acre adjacent to the existing 5-acre lots to the south.



#### d. 2040 Major Transportation Corridor Plan

The 2040 Major Transportation Corridors Plan (MTCP) identifies Stapleton Drive as an extension of Briargate Parkway in the City of Colorado Springs, going east from Black Forest Road to Judge Orr Road. This includes road improvements to increase capacity from Judge Orr Road to the eastern boundary of The Ranch (MTCP Project C12), and a new section of road through The Ranch, adjacent Sterling Ranch and other properties, to connect to Briargate Parkway to the west (MTCP Project N5). The new road will be a 4-lane Principal Arterial. The MTCP shows this alignment following existing Stapleton Drive along the northern boundary of The Ranch. This alignment is amended in The Ranch Sketch Plan to more closely reflect the route shown in the FPSAP, which goes through the center of The Ranch property. This alignment also more closely matches the proposed route of this road connection through Sterling Ranch to the west. Stapleton/Briargate will also connect to proposed Banning Lewis Parkway (MTCP Project N13) to provide improved connectivity to Woodmen Road.

Figure 6: Extracts from 2040 Major Transportation Corridors Plan



Project ID	Road Segment	Segment		PPRTA Project	Urban vs. Rural	Existing Conditions		Future Conditions	
		Beginning	End			Lanes	Functional Class	Lanes	Functional Class
C12	Stapleton Dr	Towner	Judge Orr Rd.	B	Urban	2	Principal Arterial	4	Principal Arterial
N5	Stapleton Dr	Towner Rd	Black Forest Rd		Urban			4	Principal Arterial
N6	Woodmen Hills Rd	Stapleton Dr	Raygor Rd		Urban			2	Collector
N13	Banning Lewis	Woodmen Rd	Stapleton		Urban			4	Principal Arterial

The MTCP identifies Woodmen Hills Road, Falcon Meadows Boulevard, and Raygor Road as collector roads, the function of which is to link local roadways to arterial roads. The Ranch Sketch Plan incorporates extensions of these roads at the classification identified in the MTCP. In place of Woodmen Hills Road connecting south and west to Raygor Road and beyond (MTCP Project N6), the Sketch Plan shows this road connecting northwest to Stapleton/Briargate.



#### **e. County Parks Master Plan**

The County Parks Master Plan shows a proposed secondary regional trail running from Woodmen Road to the south, through The Ranch property along the alignment to the eastern drainageway, ultimately connecting to the proposed primary regional trail on Arroya Lane to the north (No.8). An alignment for this regional trail is included on the Sketch Plan.

*Figure 7: Extract from the County Parks Master Plan*



#### **f. Master Plan for Mineral Extraction**

The Master Plan for Mineral Extraction identifies the property as an area of Upland Deposits with sand, gravel with silt and clay, remnants of older streams deposited on topographic highs or bench like features. This type of aggregate, together with Eolian Deposits (windblown sands) cover most to eastern El Paso County. The development of this property will not materially impact the availability of this aggregate. There are no mineral estate owners on this property.

#### **g. Water Master Plan**

Section 6 of the Water Master Plan sets out goals and policies for stewarding the future use of water. Goal 6.0 requires adequate water availability for proposed development and Policy 6.07 specifically encourages the submission of a water supply plan documenting an adequate supply of water to serve a proposed development at the earliest stage of the development process, in collaboration with the water provider. The Water Master Plan encourages development patterns and higher density, mixed use developments in appropriate locations that propose to incorporate meaningful water conservation measures (Policy 6.0.8) and indicates that the County should continue to limit urban level development to those areas served by centralized utilities (Policy 6.0.11).

The Ranch is consistent with these policies of the Water Master Plan as it is within an area identified as an Expected Growth Area within Region 3 (Falcon Area) and proposes urban density in an appropriate location that can be served by centralized facilities. Water service for The Ranch will be provided by

Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District. The Sterling Ranch Service Area includes Sterling Ranch, The Retreat at TimberRidge, and The Ranch and the District has a sufficient available and contingent supply to serve the long-term needs of these proposed developments. This is addressed in the Water Resources and Wastewater Report prepared by JDS Hydro, who are the water engineers for Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District.

## **VISUAL ANALYSIS**

The purpose of the Visual Analysis is to help define opportunities and constraints of a site and understand relationships to surrounding areas. Areas of visibility from adjacent roads, the visual content of short-range and long-range views from the site, and areas where views are blocked by natural or man-made features are important considerations in determine the focal points of a development, the location of streets and community elements, the massing of development and, ultimately, the creation of a quality development.

*Appendix A* to this Letter of Intent provides a graphic representation of the visual analysis with photographic context. The Ranch site is relatively flat with little undulation. This provides uninterrupted views of the Pikes Peak, Cheyenne Mountain and Rampart Range, which are evident throughout the site. The proposed alignment of Stapleton/Briargate has been adjusted from the originally intended route to create a visual corridor through the center of the development toward the front range. The road will incorporate a wider median and landscape setbacks to maintain the continuity of this view corridor. The proposed community park will provide a focal point for the development along this arterial street, which will help to maintain the open views toward the mountains.

Internal view opportunities are associated with the proposed network of trails and open space along the existing and proposed drainageways. These are interspersed by small neighborhood parks which will provide a physical and visual connectivity through the community. While the drainageways currently have minimal visual resource value, its value as active open space presents an opportunity to provide positive visual impacts within the project.

With regard to the visual relationship to the adjacent 5-acre single-family lot subdivisions, care has been taken to provide visual and physical buffers to avoid impact from development massing. A 100-foot buffer is provided along the north and south boundaries. In addition to these buffers, the proposed development will transition in density from 1-acre lots adjacent to the north and south boundaries, increasing gradually to a maximum density of 8-11.99 dwelling units per acre south of the church property and adjacent to the proposed arterial road. A 300-foot buffer is provided along the east boundary, along the existing overhead electric line easement. This is considered sufficient in itself to provide a visual transition from the adjacent subdivision, without the additional need for a 1-acre lot transition.

Open space and detention will provide visual break to the 40-acre parcel to the southwest. A buffer or density transition is not provided adjacent to the two 40-acre parcels to the west, as it is anticipated that these will redevelop for urban uses in the future as they lie between Sterling Ranch, Banning Lewis Ranch and this project, with the Stapleton/Briargate corridor bisecting them.

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## PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

The review criteria for approving a Sketch Plan are set out in Chapter 7.2.1(D)(1)(c) of the Land Development. The proposed Sketch Plan for The Ranch meets these criteria as follows:

**1. The proposed subdivision is in general conformance with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Master Plan;**

As described in (6) of the Impact Identification, The Ranch Sketch Plan is in compliance with goals, objectives, and policies of the County Policy Plan, the Falcon/Peyton Small Area Plan, the Black Forest Preservation Plan, the 2040 Major Transportation Corridors Plan, the County Parks Master Plan and the Master Plan for Mineral Extraction.

**2. The proposed subdivision is in conformance with the requirements of this Code;**

The Land Development Code indicates that a Sketch Plan should address the feasibility of the division of land including review of the schematic design, ability to obtain water and sanitation, location of geologic hazards, identification of environmentally sensitive areas and wildlife habitat areas, source of required services, vehicular and pedestrian circulation, relationship to surrounding land uses, evaluation of wildfire hazards and conformance with the requirements of the Code and Master Plan. This Letter of Intent and the supporting reports demonstrates that The Ranch Sketch Plan satisfies these requirements.

**3. The proposed subdivision is compatible with existing and proposed land uses within and adjacent to the sketch plan area;**

As detailed above, the surrounding neighborhoods comprise single-family residential and a church. The question of compatibility in this case relates to the juxtaposition of rural densities to urban densities. As previously identified, urban density development has either been approved or is proposed to the west, southwest, northeast and southeast of the site, in accordance with the recommendations of the FPSAP and BFPP. The Ranch is similarly located within an area identified in both these small area plans for future urban density development, including commercial areas. Adjacent new developments at Paint Brush Hills, Sterling Ranch, Banning Lewis Ranch and Bent Grass have densities ranging from 1.6 to 4.6 dwelling units per acre, and all include a variety of lot sizes, some level of commercial/industrial development, new school sites, parks and open space. The table below provides a comparison between these urban density developments and shows that The Ranch proposes a similar density but with less commercial development.

	Units (#du)	Gross Area (ac)	Net Residential* (ac)	Net Density (du/ac)
<i>The Ranch</i>	2144	610	599	3.6
<i>Paint Brush Hills</i>	1400	950	864	1.6
<i>Sterling Ranch</i>	5525	144	1337	4.1
<i>Bent Grass</i>	576	211	158	3.6
<i>Banning Lewis North**</i>	2600	813	735	3.5

\* Excludes commercial, industrial, school sites. Includes parks, open space and ROW

\*\* All data for Banning Lewis Ranch North is subject to change until plans are approved.

The Ranch Sketch Plan also includes the buffers and density transitions recommended by the small area plans. The proposed residential development will range in density from 1-acre lots adjacent to

the north and south boundaries, with gradual transitions in density up to 8-11.99 dwelling units per acre as a maximum, which is located adjacent to the proposed principal arterial road. The north and south boundaries also include a 100-foot buffer between the 1-acre lots and the adjacent 5-acre lots and the developer has also committed to providing a minimum 200-foot lot width for these 1-acre lots. To the east the existing 300-foot overhead electric line easement provides a substantial buffer between the existing 5-acre lots and the proposed urban residential densities. In addition, a 100-foot minimum lot width is proposed adjacent to the buffer. These buffers and transitions compare favorably with those provided by adjacent approved and proposed developments that lie within the small area plan context.

**4. The water supply report provides sufficient information to identify probable compliance with the water supply standards and identifies any need for additional water supplies;**

Water service will be provided by Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District, and is addressed in the Water Resources and Wastewater Report prepared by JDS Hydro. The Sterling Ranch Service Area includes Sterling Ranch, The Retreat at TimberRidge, and The Ranch and the District has a sufficient available and contingent supply to serve the long-term needs of the proposed developments within the Service Area.

**5. Services are or will be available to meet the needs of the subdivision including, roads, police and fire protection, schools, recreation facilities, and utility service facilities;**

All services required to support the proposed urban density residential development are or will be available. The Ranch Metropolitan District will be formed to provide bonding to fund construction of the roads, stormwater infrastructure, parks and trails and for the ongoing maintenance of those facilities that are not dedicated to the County. The Ranch Metropolitan District will enter into an Inter-Governmental Agreement with Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District for the provision of water and wastewater service. Gas service will be provided by Colorado Springs Utilities and electric service will be provided by MVEA. Fire protection services will be provided by Falcon Fire Protection District. A site for a new elementary school is included per School District 49 requirements.

**6. The soil is suitable for the subdivision;**

The Soils and Geology Report prepared by Entech indicates that the soils are generally suitable for development. While there are some expansive and collapsible soils, these are sporadic and can be mitigated by proper engineering design and construction techniques.

**7. The geologic hazards do not prohibit the subdivision, or can be mitigated;**

The Soils and Geology Report prepared by Entech identifies geologic conditions that occur on the property that could impose some constraints to proposed development and construction. The identified constraints are intermittent, with the most significant being the seasonal and potentially seasonal shallow groundwater. Much of this condition is mitigated by avoidance as it is located within the proposed open space areas. The remainder can be mitigated by regrading, appropriate foundation design and the use of perimeter drains. Other identified geologic constraints include areas of ponded water, expansive soils, artificial fill, hydrocompaction and collapsible soils. These conditions are all sporadic and can be mitigated by proper engineering design and construction techniques.

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**8. The subdivision will not interfere with the extraction of any known commercial mining deposit [C.R.S. §§ 34-1-302(1), et seq.];**

The El Paso County Master Plan for Mineral Extraction shows Upland Deposits of sand and gravel, with silt and clay. The Soils and Geology Report prepared by Entech identifies the soils as generally consisting of Blakeland loamy sand, Columbine gravelly sandy loam, and Pring course gravelly sandy loam, all of which are considered by the Soils Conservation Service as having good potential for urban development. Research of the County Assessor's records undertaken by N.E.S. Inc. on October 9, 2018 indicated that there are no mineral estate owners on the property. Accordingly, this project will not interfere with the extraction of mineral deposits.

**9. The design of the subdivision protects the natural resources or unique landforms;**

The property is relatively featureless, with little undulation. The site lies outside the 500-year FEMA floodplain. Two minor drainageways traverse the site with a small stock pond in the southwest portion of the property. These drainage ways will be retained or redirected and will be preserved within open space tracts. There are six wetland areas on the property, all of which are considered to be isolated and likely to be non-jurisdictional. These wetland areas will either be removed or retained within the proposed open space/drainage tracts identified on the Sketch Plan.

The majority of the site is vegetated by native prairie grass. There are no federally threatened or endangered plant species on the property. There is the potential to improve the vegetation with the proposed noxious weed management plan. The site does not contain any critical habitat for protected or endangered species and potential wildlife habitat for other mammals and reptiles in the wetland areas will be located in the proposed open space/drainage areas. Suitable habitat for Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse (PMJM) does not exist on the site and the property is within the area covered by the Colorado Springs block clearance letter for PMJM habitat. Further studies of nesting birds and raptors may be required if construction occurs during nesting season.

**10. The proposed methods for fire protection are adequate to serve the subdivision; and**

The site lies within the jurisdiction of Falcon Fire Protection District, which provided a Will Serve letter on July 31, 2018 to provide fire and emergency services to the property. The Ranch lies within District 1, which is served by Fire Station No. 1 at 7030 Old Meridian Road, approximately 2 miles to the southeast. The apparatus at Station 1 includes an engine, an AMR ambulance, a water truck, a brush truck, a utility truck, and a command vehicle. The average response time for Station 1 is 6 minutes 38 seconds.

**11. The subdivision is appropriate and the design is based on mitigating the constraints of topography, soil types, geologic hazards, aggregate resources, environmental resources, floodplain, airplane flight overlays, or other constraints.**

As noted above, there are few physical or environmental constraints to the development of the property and those that have been identified will be mitigated during construction. The impact identification analysis demonstrates that the site is suitable for the proposed development.



VIEWSHED 1



VIEWSHED 2



VIEWSHED 3












VIEWSHED 4



VIEWSHED 5





Viewshed

Pikes Peak Viewshed

View Direction

Property Line

Land Use Boundary

Open Space (OS) & Drainage

Urban Local Roads (50' ROW)

Interim Emergency Access

Neighborhood Commercial/Community Facility

Park

Regional County Trail

Internal Trail

