

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PARK OPERATIONS ~ ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES ~ RECREATION/CULTURAL SERVICES

July 22, 2022

Kari Parsons
Project Manager
El Paso County Development Services Department
2880 International Circle
Colorado Springs, CO 80910

Subject: Sterling Ranch East RR-0.5 Map Amendment / Rezone – Administrative Comments (P-22-013)

Hello Kari,

The Park Operations Division of the Community Services Department has reviewed Sterling Ranch East RR-0.5 Map Amendment / Rezone application and has the following administrative comments of behalf of El Paso County Parks. The application requests the rezone of approximately 29.86 acres from the RR-5, rural residential zoning designation to the RR-0.5 rural residential designation. The site is located east of Vollmer Road and Sand Creek near the intersection of Briargate Parkway and Sterling Ranch Road.

The site is located at the southern end of the Sterling Ranch East Phase I Preliminary Plan, which will be presented to the Park Advisory Board for endorsement on August 10, 2022, and for which preliminary administrative comments were submitted on July 21, 2022. For the purposes of this application, the following comments also apply to the rezoning application, although park fees will only be assessed at the time of the recording of the forthcoming final plats. The comments and recommendations are as follows:

“This is a request by N.E.S., Inc. on behalf of Classic SRJ Land, LLC, for approval of Sterling Ranch East Phase I Preliminary Plan, which includes 761 single-family residential lots on 321.37 acres. The property is currently zoned RR-5 with a concurrent rezone to RS-5000 and is located east of Vollmer Road along the eastern banks of Sand Creek, near the intersection of Sterling Ranch Road and the future extension of Briargate Parkway.

The 2013 and 2022 update of the El Paso County Parks Master Plan shows no parks, trails, or open space impacted by this project. The Sand Creek Regional Trail is located immediately west and adjacent the property on the western banks of Sand Creek. As part of the recording of numerous final plats along the western side of Sand Creek, SR Land, LLC, is in the process of dedicating or has already dedicated to El Paso County numerous trail easements along this section of the regional trail. The Preliminary Plan does show a 15’ County trail and maintenance road on the east side of Sand Creek, however as noted above, this is not the planned location for the Sand Creek Regional Trail. El Paso County appreciates the increased connectivity this additional creekside trail will provide, but construction and on-going maintenance will be the responsibility of the homeowner’s association or Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District.

Furthermore, the proposed Briargate Parkway Bicycle Route bisects the project site along an east-west alignment. A dedicated public right-of-way already exists along the aforementioned bicycle route, so no easement requests are necessary at that location; however, the applicant is advised that multi-modal transportation options will be developed within the rights-of-way in the future.

The 2022 El Paso County Parks Master Plan includes an update to the Candidate Open Space Areas, utilizing a weighted overlay of numerous natural and man-made attributes which contribute to strong candidate open space areas. The Sterling Ranch East Preliminary Plan falls completely within the bounds of the updated Black Forest South Candidate Open Space Area. Open space attribute values here include the Sand Creek corridor, surface water and wetland areas, floodplains,



moderate wildlife impacts, and open high prairie grasslands along the southern boundary of Black Forest. Various aspects of the Preliminary Plan address these attributes and contribute in some degree to their conservation.

The current application shows 97.3 acres, or 30.3%, of open space, dedicated to public and private open space, parks, trail corridors, landscaping tracts, utilities, and drainage infrastructure. An additional 50+ acres are dedicated to future school sites. The project area includes an interconnected trail and sidewalk system that affords the residents easy access to the surrounding neighborhood, proposed school sites, neighborhood and community parks, as well as the Sand Creek Regional Trail. The letter of intent states the following in regard to parks, trails, and open spaces:

- *“The Sterling Ranch East Preliminary Plan No. 1 includes a future community park, neighborhood parks, and open spaces, which are served by an interconnected system of trails to create a recreation-oriented community. This 147.7-acre system of parks, open spaces and trails is intended to provide a comprehensive off-street pedestrian circulation system to supplement the standard sidewalks along streets. Parks have been located so that residents have a ten-minute walk or less to these facilities. These parks and trails will be owned and maintained by the Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District.”*
- *“The primary natural physical feature on the site is the Sand Creek channel, which is preserved and incorporated into the overall design for Sterling Ranch and this Preliminary Plan. This area will have an adjacent trail network, a community park and sufficient open space in the 27 tracts.”*
- *“5-foot sidewalks are included throughout the project and connect to the proposed Sterling Ranch community trails and the Sand Creek Regional Trail, which provide opportunities for pedestrian and bicycle transportation.”*
- *“The adjacent Sand Creek is retained as a natural feature and a primary recreational focus for Sterling Ranch. The east side of the channel is incorporated within the Sterling Ranch East Preliminary Plan No. 1 as part of the open space and trail system for Sterling Ranch. The Sand Creek drainageway includes jurisdictional wetlands and a Section 404 permit is already in process for impacts to this area with the US Army Corps of Engineers. This phase of development will not impact the main Sand Creek Channel or existing wetlands.”*

Staff is pleased the Preliminary Plan contains a large percentage of park and open space areas, including the aforementioned 29-acre community park situated along Sand Creek, as well as numerous neighborhood parks, passive use areas, and open spaces. Staff encourages the applicant to develop park, trail, active-use area, and playground plans that provide a wide variety of recreational choices to users of all age groups and abilities. Lastly, staff recommends fees in lieu of land dedication for regional and urban park purposes, to be paid upon the recording of the forthcoming final plats.

Recommended Motion (Preliminary Plan):

Recommend to the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners that approval of the Sterling Ranch East Phase I Preliminary Plan include the following conditions: (1) recommend the developer explore a wide variety of park, trail, and open space amenities to strengthen recreational opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities; (2) fees in lieu of land dedication for regional park purposes in the amount of \$350,060 and urban park purposes in the amount of \$220,690 will be required at time of the recording of the forthcoming final plat(s).”

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Ross A. Williams
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Black Forest South
Candidate Open
Space Area

Retreat at
Timber Ridge

Sterling
Ranch

Sterling Ranch East
Phase I

City of
Colorado Springs

Sterling Ranch East Phase I Preliminary Plan Review

-  Planned Parks By Other
-  Public Schools
-  Primary Regional Trail, Completed
-  Primary Regional Trail, Proposed
-  Proposed Bicycle Routes, Proposed
-  Secondary Regional Trail, Proposed
-  Colorado Springs Trail, Proposed
-  Major Roads
-  State Highways
-  Streets & Roads
-  Sterling Ranch East Phase I
-  Sterling Ranch
-  Parcels
-  Lakes / Reservoirs
-  Streams

0.5 0.25 0
Miles

