

Department of Community Services

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January 23, 2023

Kari Parsons
Project Manager
El Paso County Development Services Department

Subject: Autumn Acres Sketch Plan – Preliminary Comments (SKP231)

Kari,

The Community Services Department has reviewed the Autumn Acres Sketch Plan and has the following preliminary comments of behalf of El Paso County Parks. This application and the following comments and recommendations will be presented to the Park Advisory Board for endorsement on February 8, 2023:

This is a request by Terra Nova Engineering on behalf of Meridian Hills, LLC, for endorsement of the Autumn Acres Sketch Plan. The property is currently zoned RR-5. The 160-acre project site lies southwest of the intersection of Stapleton Road and Meridian Road in the Falcon community of El Paso County. Proposed land uses for the site include: a commercial area near the intersection of Stapleton Road and Meridian Road, multifamily units next to commercial, and 4 unit per acre residential for the majority of the site. Larger residential lots of ½ acre are proposed along the south and west property lines to serve as a buffer to existing large lot residential. The Sketch Plan currently proposes: 50 patio homes, 240 townhomes, 300 lots of 7,000 SF each, and 29 lots of ½ acre each.

Approximately 18.5 acres of open space will be provided within the site. Open space and space trails are proposed along the west and south sides of the site. The applicant states that “additional open space may be provided with future submittals as more detailed design is completed and includes elements such as landscape buffers”.

There are several proposed regional trails within one mile of the site. The proposed Woodmen Hills Regional Trail lies to the southwest. The proposed Eastonville Regional Trail is one mile to the southeast along Eastonville Road. The proposed Arroya Lane Regional Trail winds its way through the Paint Brush Hills and Meridian Ranch subdivisions to the north of the subject property.

The El Paso County Parks Master Plan shows two proposed bicycle routes that border the subject property. The proposed Briaragate Parkway Bicycle Route runs east to west along Stapleton Drive on the north side of the property. The proposed Meridian Road Bicycle Route runs north and south along the east side of the property. The new development will not impact the proposed bicycle routes as any future bicycle routes will be accommodated within the public rights-of-way.

The topography of the project site is sloped towards the south and southeast. The average slope across the site is approximately 3%, with localized slopes in the 1%-20% range. There are no major hydrologic features on the site or portions of the site that are within a FEMA floodplain. The existing vegetation is prairie grasses with almost no trees. The site is outside any Candidate Open Space areas as shown in the County Parks Master Plan.

The applicant is reminded that for Planned Unit Development zoning, the minimum open space dedication is 10% of the total site area which does not include storm water infrastructure. The Land Development Code Section also outlines that dedicated open space tracts be large, usable, and contiguous. The proposed narrow tracts of open space, while serving a buffer to adjacent development, do not provide a substantially beneficial to the denser areas of the site. Additionally, for a sketch plan application, the applicant should be providing sufficient detail on proposed land use allocations, to include open space dedications. Staff understands that there are minor refinements to final open space dedications due to site design considerations but is concerned they are referenced in the letter of intent as these small areas should not be the majority of the open space dedication.

Staff encourages the applicant to provide neighborhood and community parks, so as to provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities. Furthermore, staff encourages the applicant to construct internal trail systems that link residents not only to the proposed neighborhood and community parks, but also to adjacent neighborhood trail systems. A crosswalk at the intersection of Meridian Road and Stapleton Drive would provide connections to the Woodmen Hills and Meridian Ranch neighborhoods to the east. Required regional and urban park fees will be finalized at time of the submittal of the forthcoming preliminary plan(s) and required at time of the recording of the forthcoming final plat(s).

Recommended Motion (Sketch Plan):

The Park Advisory Board recommends that the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners include the following conditions when considering and/or approving the Autumn Acres Sketch Plan: (1) provide a detailed land use table outlining open space areas and strongly encourage the applicant to locate open space tracts in usable and convenient areas as outlined in the Land Development Code (2) fees in lieu of land dedication for regional and urban park purposes will be calculated upon review of forthcoming preliminary plans and final plats, and will be required at time of the recording of the forthcoming final plats.

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

Sincerely,

Greg Stachon
Landscape Architect
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