

11.12.24

Monument Ridge East

Supplemental findings and concerns

The Monument East and the Monument West properties are owned by the same owners and the Town of Monument denied these projects as presented since they did not comply with the Monument Comprehensive Plan. They have since transferred Monument East to El Paso County and are attempting to get this same project approved. In my opinion, Monument Ridge East does not substantially conform with the El Paso County Master Plan either, as this area is considered a Suburban Placetype.

Monument Ridge West has been transferred to the Town of Palmer Lake.

Both locations are heavily treed, adjacent to a 36,000-acre conservation easement, and are both are the gateway to El Paso County. Large strands of trees will be completely eliminated.

The Town of Monument wrote a resolution and is opposed to the development as presented. The Town proposes that the project be designed as a Planned Unit Deveopment (PUD) so that the special features of the area can be preserved, adjacent residents can have public input, parks and trails can be provided, and the project can become compliant with the El Paso County master plan, which is a Suburban Placetype containing minimal attached housing. The resolution is here:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/14HOl0aKi5p5yaAyqvdeTLFp\\_tGRlwJHq/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/14HOl0aKi5p5yaAyqvdeTLFp_tGRlwJHq/view?usp=sharing)

I wrote a letter to the EPC Planning Department, and I am opposed to the project as proposed. Here is that letter:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HWkLlvH0xCH2UBbXAd8bjbuyR-Zj-Ft4/view?usp=sharing>

This summary is an added response to my earlier response. This is solely my opinion and does not necessarily agree with the other Monument Council Members.

I obtained the documents off the county EDARP site, which lists this project in four different folders, so I am unsure if this information is the most current, as finding documents in four different folders is somewhat confusing.

The drainage report is incomplete. No environmental study was performed; however, it abuts a 36,000 acre conservation easement/working ranch to the north. This project has federally mapped wetlands with shallow groundwater within the boundaries.

The drainage study does not reference Douglas County drainage criteria, only El Paso County's, yet the entire site drains into a Dougco conservation easement.

The report states that the drainage study will be presented to El Paso County. No reference is made that the report will be provided to DougCO. Monument Ridge West also drains into this site and as there as there is another proposal for multi acre impervious area coverage "Buc-ees" that drains directly into this site, it should be considered as a drainage package since the culvert runs under I25 and ultimately runs under County Line RD.

Since the same landowner owns both parcels, and since the combined area drains into a conservation easement, calculations for both parcels would be the prudent thing to do, otherwise miscalculations could result, damaging wetlands and a conservation easement.

The Army Corp of engineers has a letter in the packet stating that a 404 permit is required. Drainage plans show modifications being made to the protected wetlands, and yet the developer claims they do not need a 404 permit. There are sheets in the folder requiring "no build areas" identified to protect wetland areas, yet that requirement is not addressed.

The Army Corp letter also states that: Natural Features are considered to include "unique or distinctive topographic features including buttes and rock outcroppings; existing vegetation; drainage; riparian and wetland areas; significant wildlife habitats; identified aquifer recharge areas; and aesthetic features."

This further makes the claim that this area is unique and worthy of a PUD where key features could be protected, as this area contains many natural features.

There were no changes made to this plan since the Town of Monument rejected the proposal. There were no changes made after the community meeting at the Woodmoor barn was held. No community comments from the meeting were implemented.

There is no plan to deal with the existing wildlife, the fact that there are wildlife tunnels in the area under I25, and the fact that wildlife migrates through this property.

The proposed intersection of Misty Acres and County Line Rd does not meet the engineering criteria for intersection spacing. Eliminating Monument Hill Road as the major collector road, and rerouting traffic on Misty acres creates additional issues. Because

there will be RV Trailers using this road to access the campground, and trucks using this road to access storage units, this new route causes safety concerns.

In addition, they are applying for deviation requests to CDOT on a road that has many weather-related issues, as it is on the top of Monument Hill, and the design does not meet the engineering criteria. This is not a good combination given the extreme weather conditions on Monument Hill.

Because of the proposal for a massive travel center across the interstate, this would generate considerably more traffic off the northbound exit and create hazards. The recommendation from CDOT was to shift Misty Acres 575 ft to the east as it does not conform to the design criteria.

They are proposing private interior roads as they do not meet public road design criteria. The Misty Acres and County Line intersection is less than 650ft from the interstate offramp and will need to be signalized, most likely. If a proposed Bucees gets approved, the intersection spacing will not be sufficient as the I25 and County Line exit will also need to be signalized. This distance requirement is not to CDOT's standards.

The newly created Metro districts are projected to propose 65 mils in assessed value to be added on to existing property tax rates, probably the highest in the tri-lakes area, and estimating a starting price of \$500,000 for an attached townhouse, adding approximately \$2000 per year to the existing property taxes on the entry level product, and \$3300 to the upper level product.

The Service Plan is incomplete. Estimates of infrastructure costs appear to be low for the initial proposal. They have a contingency to double the costs if necessary. In addition, they are expecting to fund it with 30yr investment grade bonds offering between 4-5% interest with an uncertain degree of risk.

However, 30 yr federal government Treasury bonds are paying in excess of 4.5% with no risk, so selling these bonds is highly unlikely at current rates, adding to the expense of interest carry.

The state is littered with unhealthy Metro districts that are unable to repay debt, and in many cases, the taxpayer must bail them out. These service plans need to be viable to succeed. In addition, there are other "fees" stated in the service plan yet to be determined.

Note that a metropolitan district is a quasi-governmental agency and that the developer/landowner will be in control of the Metropolitan district until substantial buildout with the power to raise taxes, decided by the board that the landowner controls.

They are proposing 4 Metropolitan districts for this project, and one of them overlaps with the existing Misty Ridge Metropolitan District, which also has an added Mill Levy expense, adding dramatically to the property taxes a new owner will pay.

The response from the Misty Ridge Metropolitan District sums it up: "the proposed development does not fit within the scope of Misty Acre's Metropolitan District's service plan or original development plan of significantly fewer single-family style dwellings."

This project is not ready to be presented to the County for approval. There are too many unknowns yet to be determined, including those stated in the Town of Monument's resolution. Numerous agency comments have not yet been addressed.

The interior road design does not meet the requirements of the Monument Fire District. Adding more impervious areas but adding fire engine turnarounds will also affect drainage.

Douglas County objected to this site, CDOT has not approved it with the current road design, The Town of Monument objects, and there is an online petition on change.org with 1392 signature objecting to this project as proposed.

[https://www.change.org/p/stop-the-monument-ridge-east-building-project?source\\_location=search](https://www.change.org/p/stop-the-monument-ridge-east-building-project?source_location=search)

I can only assume that the property owner is pushing forward with this incomplete proposal as there has been a recent election and county commissioner seats are changing. But a complete package should be required to avoid major alterations being required in the future. There are too many projects that have been approved with unintended consequences.

As stated numerous times in the past, this project needs to be designed as a PUD with community input, conforming to the intent of the El Paso County Master Plan, and respecting the unique features that Northern El Paso County cherishes.

Thank you,

Steve King

Monument Mayor Pro Tem

