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COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PARK OPERATIONS ~ ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES ~ RECREATION/CULTURAL SERVICES

July 29, 2022

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

Subject: Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendments – Preliminary Comments (SKP-22-004)

Hello Kari,

The Park Operations Division of the Community Services Department has reviewed Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendment 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 August 10, 2022:

This is a request by N.E.S., Inc on behalf of Classic SRJ Land, LLC, for approval of the Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendment. The property is currently zoned CS, RR-5, RR-0.5, RS-5000, RS-6000, and PUD, and is located along Vollmer Road, north of Woodmen Road and west of Meridian Road. The original Sketch Plan was approved in May 2009 with an initial amendment approved in early 2019. This current amendment addresses various density modifications of residential areas, the removal of "active adult" communities, the change of commercial properties to mixed use purposes, and the minor relocation of school and park sites.

The 2013 El Paso County Parks Master Plan shows three proposed regional trail connections and one proposed bicycle route impacted by the project. The proposed Sand Creek Regional Trail alignment bisects the western portion of the property, running north/south along Sand Creek, while western branches of the Sand Creek Trail, located along a proposed extensions of Marksheffel Boulevard and Briargate Parkway, will connect the primary alignment of the Sand Creek Trail to proposed City of Colorado Springs trails and sidewalks located to the west of the project site. The proposed Arroyo Lane Primary Regional Trail traverses east/west along the northern property boundary and will provide connectivity to Meridian Ranch to the east. The Woodmen Hills Secondary Regional Trail runs north/south along the eastern portion of the property, which will provide eventual connectivity to the Falcon town center and the Rock Island Regional Trail to the south.

Furthermore, the proposed Briargate Parkway Bicycle Route bisects the project site along an east-west alignment, while the Vollmer Road Bicycle Route borders the western property boundary. Dedicated public rights-of-way already exist along the aforementioned bicycle routes, so no easement requests are necessary at those locations; however, the applicant is advised that multi-model 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. A large percentage of Sterling Ranch falls 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. Conservation efforts along the Sand Creek corridor, as well as a large north/south open space corridor along the eastern boundary of the property, will help to preserve some of the key open space attributes, particularly those associated with Sand Creek.

The Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendment shows 148 acres of open space, dedicated to neighborhood or community parks, greenways, drainages, landscaping buffers, and trails. This constitutes approximately 10.2% of the total project area of 1,444 acres. In addition to the 87 combined acres dedicated to the Sand Creek greenway and community along the Sand Creek corridor, numerous 4- and 5-acre neighborhood parks are shown in the Sketch Plan. Additionally, 57 acres are dedicated to school sites, thus offering additional recreational opportunities. The letter of intent states the following in regard to parks, trails, and open spaces:

- *"An interconnected system of trails, open spaces and neighborhood parks will be provided within the project to allow for a recreation-oriented community. This system of open spaces, trails and parks is intended to provide a comprehensive off-street pedestrian circulation system that would supplement the standard sidewalks along streets. Parks have been located so that residents have a short walk to these facilities. Adjacent developed rural residential is buffered with open space and trail corridors."*

- *"The proposed amendments to the Sketch Plan continue the original intent of the Sketch Plan as described above. Appropriate buffers are still incorporated and parks, open space, and interconnected trails are maintained and expanded."*

- *"The Sketch Plan provides a variety of housing types, with necessary neighborhood commercial, schools, and park space. This combination of uses will provide a vibrant community. This Sketch Plan sets land aside for new schools, encourages a variety of housing types, designs neighborhood focal points, expands the off-street trail system, all of which are recommendations for emerging and future neighborhoods."*

The El Paso County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioner summaries for the approval of the Sterling Ranch Preliminary Plan, endorsed by the Park Advisory Board in April 2015, added requirements for the dedication to El Paso County of a 25-foot wide regional trail corridor along Sand Creek for the construction, maintenance, and public access of the Sand Creek Primary Regional Trail. This trail easement, Instrument #218054786, was dedicated to El Paso County in May 2018. Additional trail easement dedications have taken place along the Sand Creek Regional Trail alignment as more final plats are recorded in the northern portions of the creek corridor, and it is anticipated that additional trail easement dedications will be required with forthcoming final plats.

Staff recommends that the developers designate and provide to El Paso County 25-foot trail easements along the remaining sections of Sand Creek, along the southern side of Arroyo Lane, and along the northeast property boundary for the purpose of construction and maintenance of the Sand Creek Regional Trail, Arroyo Lane Regional Trail, and Woodmen Hills Secondary Regional Trail, respectively. These trail easement dedications must be shown and designated on all applicable forthcoming preliminary plans, final plats, landscape plans, and letters of intent.

Staff also encourages the developers to construct the aforementioned proposed neighborhood and community parks, so as to provide recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of Sterling Ranch of all ages and abilities. Furthermore, staff encourages the developers to construct internal trail systems that link residents not only to the proposed neighborhood and community parks, but also to the County's regional trail system.

Recommended Motion (Sketch Plan Amendment):

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 Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendment: (1) designate and provide to El Paso County a 25-foot trail easement along the Sand Creek corridor and its western extensions, that allows for public access, as well as construction and maintenance by El Paso County of the Sand Creek Regional Trail; (2) designate and provide to El Paso County a 25-foot trail easement along south side of Arroyo Lane, that allows for public access, as well as construction and maintenance by El Paso County of the Arroyo Lane Regional Trail; (3) designate and provide to El Paso County a 25-foot trail easement through the northeastern open space buffer, that allows for public access, as well as construction and maintenance by El Paso County of the Woodmen Hills Secondary Regional Trail; (4) the easements shall be shown on all forthcoming preliminary plans and final plats, and the aforementioned easements shall be dedicated to El Paso County on the forthcoming final plats, (5) 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,

Ross A. Williams
Park Planner
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Community Services Department
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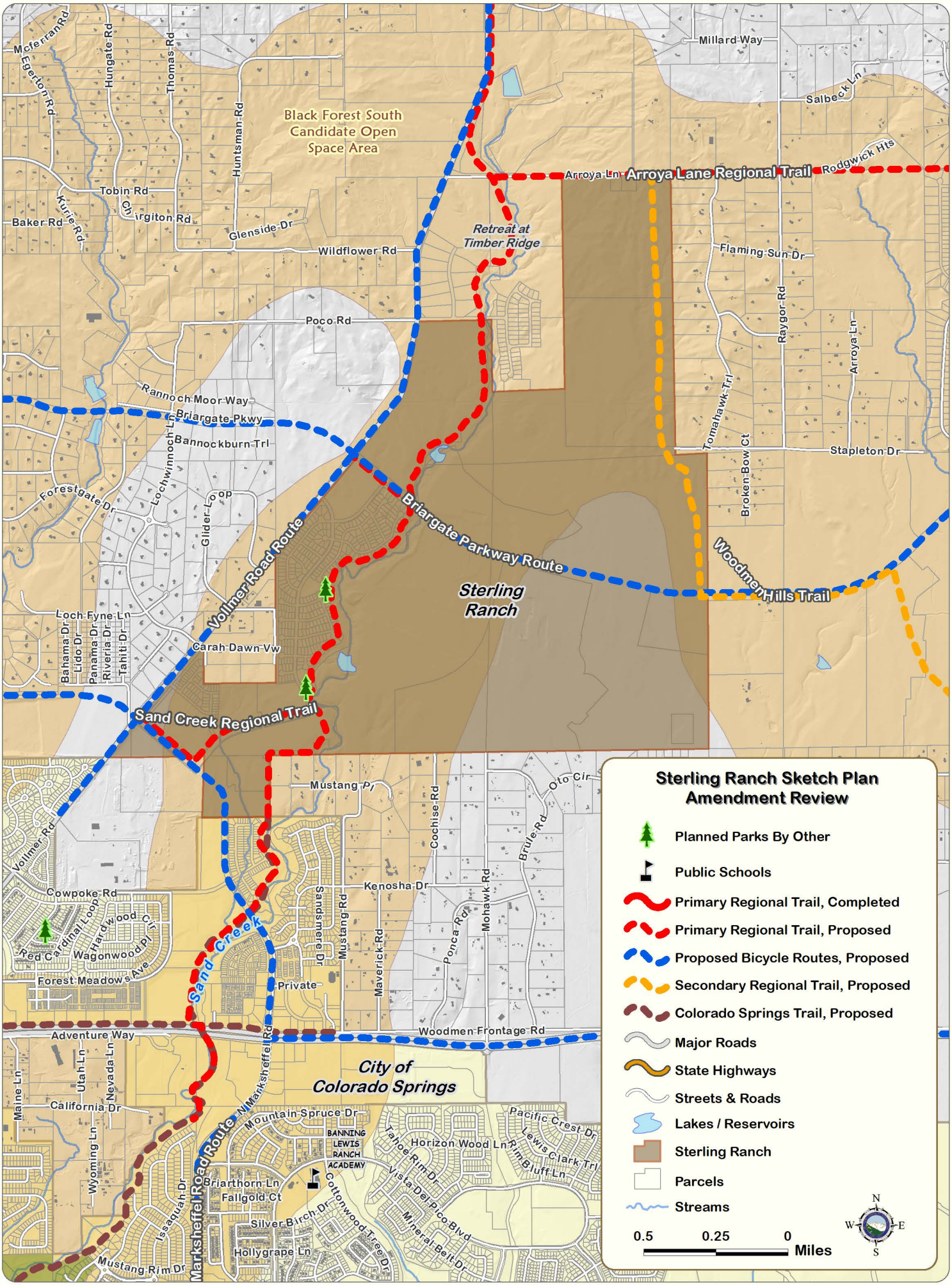
Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendment Review
Planned Parks By Other
Public Schools
Primary Regional Trail, Completed
Primary Regional Trail, Proposed
Proposed Bicycle Routes, Proposed
Secondary Regional Trail, Proposed
Colorado Springs Trail, Proposed
Major Roads
State Highways
Streets & Roads
Lakes / Reservoirs
Sterling Ranch
Parcels
Streams
0.5
0.25
0
Miles
N
S
E
W
Black Forest South Candidate Open Space Area
Arroya Lane Regional Trail
Retreat at Timber Ridge
Sterling Ranch
Briargate Parkway Route
Woodmen Hills Trail
Vollmer Road Route
Sand Creek Regional Trail
Sand Creek
Marksheffel Road Route
City of Colorado Springs
BANNING LEWIS RANCH ACADEMY
Private
Mcferran Rd
Egerton Rd
Hungate Rd
Thomas Rd
Huntsman Rd
Millard Way
Salbeck Ln
Rodgwick Hts
Arroya Ln
Tobin Rd
Kurie Rd
Baker Rd
Glenside Dr
Wildflower Rd
Flaming Sun Dr
Raygor Rd
Poco Rd
Rannoch Moor Way
Briargate Pkwy
Bannockburn Trl
Lochwinnoch Ln
Glider Loop
Forestgate Dr
Tomahawk Trl
Broken Bow Ct
Stapleton Dr
Loch Fyne Ln
Bahama Dr
Lido Dr
Panama Dr
Riveria Dr
Tahiti Dr
Carah Dawn Vw
Mustang Pl
Cochise Rd
Oto Cir
Brule Rd
Vollmer Rd
Cowpoke Rd
Kenosha Dr
Mohawk Rd
Ponca Rd
Sandstone Dr
Mustang Rd
Maverick Rd
Ted Cardinal Loop
Hardwood Cir
Wagonwood Pl
Forest Meadows Ave
Adventure Way
Woodmen Frontage Rd
Utah Ln
Nevada Ln
Maine Ln
California Dr
Mountain Spruce Dr
Pacific Crest Dr
Horizon Wood Ln
Rim Bluff Ln
Lewis Clark Trl
Tahoe Rim Dr
Vista Del Pico Blvd
Wyoming Ln
Briarthorn Ln
Fallgold Ct
Cottonwood Tree Dr
Issaquah Dr
Silver Birch Dr
Mineral Belt Dr
Hollygrape Ln
Mustang Rim Dr