

Rock Creek Metro District Concerns

While the Fire District supports reasonable and managed growth in our community, this particular project presents significant concerns due to its size and the collateral demands that are anticipated on the District's resources for fire protection and emergency medical services.

This proposed development will require significant upgrades to our existing public safety infrastructure in order to maintain our current level of service, which our existing citizens have invested in for the last 30 years. There are numerous concerns that need to be addressed before any level of approval or endorsement can or should be extended.

Perhaps most significant is the potential for catastrophic fire in the vicinity of the development. As more residents are introduced to the area, the potential for accidental starts of wildland fires increases exponentially. Some 90% of all wildfires are human-caused.

This development is just east of the wildland urban interface (WUI). It has been well documented that our District is in a higher fire load situation than Waldo Canyon was in 2012. Additional factors that impact the risk that additional users of the WUI present are: proximity to high value residences; heavy, 100 hour (with some 1000 hour), timber fuels; much of the timber fuel load is standing and dry providing for potential crowning and extreme fire behavior; erratic weather patterns; rugged terrain; limited access; and, unimproved roads and trails that are not conducive to deployment of resources.

Beyond the impacts and increased risk to the WUI, is the impact on more traditional, day-to-day operations. Currently, we service 640 addresses. Phase one would bring 211 homes. This increases the demand on resources by 33% overall and by 50% in the development's specific response zone. Phase Two's additional impacts can only be imagined.

SW Hwy 115 FPD is one of the smallest fire districts in the county with a mere 10 volunteers, half of which live out of the district. One third of our volunteers run close to 90% of our calls for service. Two of our members have over 20 years in the district and a third has some 45 years in emergency services – we do not have the vigor of a cadre of young personnel to address a dramatically increased volume of calls for service. Any plan for additional development needs to address not only tangible resources; but the development of additional volunteer resources through recruitment and retention and paid 24 hour staffing.

Our current North fire station, The John May fire station, which would be the primary source of response, is inadequate for this new proposal; it's a metal building with 2 bays, that's it. There is no provision for housing of crews, and no facilities. The fire district owns 5 Ft. on three sides of this building. It was the first station in our fire district, built on donated land; our main fire station, the Weller fire station, is significantly further south. This location is ill-suited for expansion and the building would not be able to be re-engineered to permit more demanding use. The District would require a new station to provide services to the development and likely need to go to 24 hour staffing. Any new building would have to accommodate such occupancy. Additionally, equipment would likely need to be

upgraded focusing on an additional engine and an aerial platform of some type. These pieces of essential apparatus would cost between \$500,000 and \$1,000,000.

Currently, our District's daytime response comes from our south fire station 10 miles away with one paid daytime firefighter and volunteer fill in. Again, it is the only facility we have that can properly be occupied by a crew. Structure fires that will surely turn into a wildland fire are always a top concern, new lightweight construction burns hotter and twice as fast as older traditional construction. The proposed density of the residential structures makes a quick response time even more critical! 10 miles away won't cut it.

The District certainly finds the plans to increase water sources as advantageous. Rock Creek Mesa water district has 300,000 gallons in storage in this area. Hence, the expansion for water solely from a fire suppression perspective is not worth the additional risks.

Evacuations are already a problem with HWY 115 being the sole one way in/out. Other roadways in the area are narrow roads from the 40s. With additional residents and users of the WUI, evacuation in a timely and orderly manner, while allowing for incoming resources, is at best unlikely. It has to be remembered in many ways that the District is one large canyon, with wilderness to the west and Fort Carson's training areas to the east.

Also, fire is only 5% of our mission; Medical calls and Traffic accidents are the largest percentage of the District's calls for service. High density entry level housing will bring young families and young military and many more requests for response to an already busy fire district.

Without the imposition of significant impact fees, the District will not be able to meet this added demand. As you know, the District does not see any tax revenue for 18 months to 2 years after houses are built and sold; with no tax revenues associated during the high risk development/construction phase. Further, the revenue generated from the anticipated residential structures is inadequate; this is a District without significant commercial occupancies.

This proposed development will require significant upgrades to our existing public safety infrastructure in order to maintain our current level of service, which our existing citizens have invested in for the last 30 years! Who pays for all of this?

Chief Hart Wright.