

November 26, 2024

Austin Cooper
Senior Planner
Community Planning - City of Colorado Springs

RE: Initial Review – Response to Public Comments Cottages at Kettle Creek Land Use Plan Amendment and Development Plan
File No.: LUPL-24-0014
DEPN-24-0186

Dear Mr. Cooper:

Thank you for forwarding the public comments received during the initial review of the Cottages at Kettle Creek Land Use Plan Amendment and Development Plan applications. We have given consideration to these comments and would like to supply more details to address some of the concerns and misconceptions about the proposed project. We would be grateful if you could send this letter to the individuals who commented on the application. These public comments focus on the following concerns:

Land Use and Density

Some commenters are of the opinion that the proposed density is too high and not contextual with surrounding land use. Some commenters feel there is enough housing in the area at the expense of park/open space. One commenter assumed the zoning in place when the property was in the county would continue in perpetuity. One commenter indicated that single-family housing would be more palatable.

The property was annexed into the City of Colorado Springs based on an approved Concept Plan for multi-family residential apartments at a density of 14 dwelling units per acre and a religious institution up to 20,000 square feet. The proposal in the current application is for multi-family twin homes at a density of 15 dwelling units per acre over the entire property and elimination of the religious institution development. While the Development Plan does propose multi-family residential development, the buildings will be two units each in a two-story format, with maximum heights of 25'. So, while the residential density is slightly higher, the overall impact will be less.

The site is in a growing area of Colorado Springs and El Paso County. To the east are developed residential neighborhoods and open space areas within the City of Colorado Springs, and to the west, beyond the immediately adjacent large-lot residential use in the County, is a growing and developing Office/Industrial area. Further, while much of the area to the south is vacant or large lot residentially zoned land in the County, there are areas of annexed land within the City that include a religious institution, and other

property that will soon be developed with urban style development. Twinhome style development serves as a transition between industrial land on the north side of Old Ranch Road to the west of the project and single-family detached development on both sides of Old Ranch Road south and east of the development area. Homes will be designed to be compatible with architecture in the surrounding area, to be harmonious with surrounding neighborhood aesthetics and character, and heights are not anticipated to be taller than the trees on site. Extensive open space in the area of the creek is provided between the development and existing land uses to the south and east. Areas adjacent to the creek are zoned Streamside Overlay and must be preserved to protect the creek, including retention of quality mature trees.

In the Vibrant Neighborhoods chapter of Plan COS, the subject property and immediate area around it is shown as outside of the City, and the neighborhoods surrounding this area is shown as Newer Developing Neighborhood (north and east) and Established Neighborhood (south). The Newer Developing Neighborhoods are part of the Future Neighborhoods typology, which are defined as those areas that “have yet to be developed” and that “provide an opportunity to create new, diverse, and ‘smart’ connected neighborhoods “that reflect the Plan COS Vibrant Neighborhoods visions and goals, while addressing emerging demographic and market considerations”. The Established Neighborhood typology indicates that such neighborhoods are predominantly built-out and do not anticipate high levels of land use changes, it also recognizes that they should expect some degree of infill and redevelopment.

Your El Paso County Master Plan designates this property and the area around it as an area of Minimal Change: Developed. While in title this designation may not seem to fit, the Plan indicates that while these areas are largely built out, they may include isolated pockets of vacant or underutilized land, and that “these key sites are likely to see more intense development with a mix of uses”. Your El Paso County Master Plan designates the property and surrounding area as Suburban Residential land use, which provides for single-family detached, single-family attached, and multi-family residential development.

Environmental Concerns

Some commenters are concerned about runoff into Kettle Creek, a lack of parks and/or open space in the area, light pollution, impact to the Prebble’s meadow jumping mouse and other wildlife, increased noise, and obstruction of views.

The proposed development follows the City of Colorado Springs Engineering Criteria Manual related to stormwater runoff. A water quality and full-spectrum detention pond is proposed in the southwest corner of the site. This pond will treat and manage runoff before discharging into Kettle Creek. Further, as required by the City, channel improvements will be made to stabilize the creek channel. The City has strict regulations related to streamside areas such as those adjacent to Kettle creek. Disturbance in the creek buffer areas must be minimized and restored.

There is habitat for the Prebble’s meadow jumping mouse on the east side of the property. A study and plan for minimizing impact to the habitat has been conducted and approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The habitat area will be protected and left undisturbed except for a pipe outfall from the

drainage pond. The disturbance related to the pipe outfall area must be minimized and restored to minimize habitat impacts long-term. This area will be planted with native vegetation; however, the required streamside trees will be located outside of the western boundary of the habitat area to further minimize impact to habitat.

A large portion of the property will remain in its natural undeveloped space due to Prebble's meadow jumping mouse and streamside buffers. Further, there is a large natural open space immediately to the east of the development which will remain and complement the current natural area on the east side of the subject property. The City of Colorado Springs Parks and Open Space Department was consulted early in the development planning process for the property. Parks and Open Space staff indicated no interest in acquiring and maintaining the eastern portion of the site as public park or open space. The department has requested fees in lieu of land dedication for parks.

The development is not expected to generate any more noise than any other residential development. Views are not protected by Colorado Springs regulations.

Traffic and Old Ranch Road

Some commenters were concerned that growth in the north portion of Colorado Springs is causing excessive traffic on Old Ranch Road, making it difficult to get onto and dangerous for vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians, and that the new development will make traffic worse. Some commenters suggested that Old Ranch Rd is not designed to accommodate existing or additional traffic and needs upgrading/widening, including turn lanes or a stop light to minimize backups. Some commenters suggested closing or opening roads to prevent passthrough traffic or allow passthrough traffic. One commenter indicated they could not find adequate information on the City's website including a traffic study. Some commenters expressed concern about drivers speeding on Old Ranch Road.

Old Ranch Road is classified as a Minor Arterial. The function of a Minor Arterial is to serve rapid and relatively unimpeded traffic movement between major land use elements. This section of Old Ranch Road is now under the jurisdiction of the City of Colorado Springs. Pikes Peak Regional Transportation Authority has plans to upgrade Old Ranch Rd. The Developer will be required to dedication 13' of additional right of way abutting their property.

A Traffic Impact Study (TIS) has been prepared for the development. The TIS addresses capacity, geometry, and control requirements associated with the new development, as well as projected future growth. The TIS analyzes existing traffic conditions, proposed project traffic, future traffic conditions with and without the project, and identifies project impacts. The TIS makes the following findings and recommendations:

- The proposed development has the potential to generate approximately 1,224 daily vehicle trips with 82 of those occurring during the morning peak hour and 97 during the afternoon peak hour.*
- Analysis of future traffic conditions indicates that the addition of site-generated traffic is expected to create no negative impact to traffic operations for the existing and surrounding roadway system*

upon consideration of the various roadway and intersection control movements assumed within the analysis.

- *The study intersections are projected to operate at future levels of service comparable to Year 2044 background traffic conditions.*
- *Pursuant to performed queue analysis, although some delays are anticipated, vehicle queues can be accommodated on-site without negatively impacting the adjacent roadway network.*
- *Proposed site access has long-term operations at LOS D (considered acceptable) during peak traffic periods and upon build-out.*
 - *Exceptions include the southbound turning movement which has operations at LOS F during the morning peak traffic hour.*
 - *It is not uncommon for signalized intersections to or from an arterial roadway, in urban areas, to operate with noticeable delays during peak traffic hours.*
 - *It is, however, likely that turning movement will operate better than the results obtained.*
- *An eastbound left turn deceleration lane at the Site Access along Old Ranch Road is required since the development's peak hour left turn ingress volumes exceed the City's threshold of 25 VPH.*
- *A westbound right turn deceleration at Site Access along Old Ranch Road is not required since the development's peak hour right turn ingress volume does not exceed the City's threshold of 50 VPH.*
- *Turn Lane Queue and Storage Recommendations:*
 - *Old Ranch Road/Voyager Parkway westbound left and right should be increased and southbound left should be increased.*
 - *Old Ranch Road/Otero Avenue/Site Access eastbound and westbound should be 155'.*

Opening additional roads in the area to Old Ranch Road will be part of future development plans in the areas of such roads. Closing of Otero Avenue is not under the control of the developer. Speeding is an enforcement issue outside of the Developer's control.

Infrastructure And Services

Some commenters expressed concern that there is not enough water to serve the development and a concern that the schools in the area are overpopulated.

Colorado Spring Utilities (CSU) has indicated support for approval of the Development Plan. Existing wells in the area should not be affected as the new development will be served by CSU, which has a water main in Old Ranch Road that will serve the development.

Academy School District 20 was provided with an opportunity to comment on the application. Don Smith, D20 Planning Consultant responded as follows "The District is requesting fees in lieu of land dedication per the existing City Code for all residential units within this development. The District is experiencing ongoing residential development. The District gained approximately 12,000 new residential units between 2018 and 2024 which included 5,278 Single Family, 1,156 Single Family Attached, and 5,576 Apartments as reported to the District by local developers. During that same timeframe, the District only experienced a total membership increase of 138 students. This information is updated annually in October. A drop in

the birth rate plus the significant increase in the cost of housing has contributed to the slowed student growth in the District. The District is able to serve each student who is a resident of District 20”.

Growth

Some comments focused on the level of growth in the north part of Colorado Springs, and that development of additional multi-family housing is not warranted. One commenter expressed frustration with the public notification process related to the application. These are issues that must be addressed by the City of Colorado Springs through long-range planning and policy development. The proposed development is consistent with current growth and development policies of the City. The City of Colorado Spring Unified Development Code regulates public notification of development applications.

Please let me know if there is any additional information we can provide to alleviate the neighbors' concerns about this project. We are confident this development will be a compatible neighbor and have a positive impact on the community.

Regards,



Kimberly Johnson, AICP
Project Manager