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I am Steve King, Mayor Pro tem of the Town of Monument.

Monument Ridge applied for annexation into the town of Monument with the plan that they are proposing to El Paso County. There were discussions on what a suitable zone district might look like for this property and the property owner was not willing to adjust the densities, product type, nor were they willing to protect the natural features, or willing to change the zoning into a PUD zone district, so it was declined at the Monument Council public hearing.

This property would be a natural fit into the town of Monument through annexation as it is at the extreme northern county line and is difficult for El Paso County to service this area, and the Town has this property in our Three Mile Plan.

Because of the large number of homes proposed, the Town of Monument would have to hire additional police due to of the MOU that we have with El Paso County, which would become a negative economic burden to the Town, so annexation would be the only way we could reasonably provide services. El Paso County does not currently have sufficient resources to provide police services or otherwise. It's a natural fit to annex.

But the Town would not annex this property under these conditions. This project does not meet the intent of our Comprehensive Plan or the future land use map.

In my opinion, Monument Ridge should become a PUD zone district. This property is the gateway to El Paso County and special attention needs to be paid to the natural beauty that is the Palmer Divide. The El Paso County Master Plan as well as the Monument Comprehensive Plan speak clearly as to the protection of natural areas, which include dense tree strands of old growth conifers.

When asked for agency comments, and because this project abuts Douglas County, The Douglas County Planning department stated: *"As mentioned previously, Douglas County Planning has concerns with isolated urban-level multifamily development adjacent to rural and open space areas. The proposed zoning would allow approximately 500 multifamily dwellings in an area that is better suited to less intense development such as the proposed adjacent suburban residential zoning."*

The Town of Monument comments included: *"The development as currently proposed will be incompatible with the adjacent properties and will be detrimental to the preservation of the natural and rural character of the area."*

And: *"The Town Council continues to oppose proposed development densities, whether built within or outside of the Town boundaries. The Town Police Department continues to be the first responders to the subject properties given the proximity and adjacency to the Town. The Town's Police Department serves the property when County services are not immediately available. The proposed residential densities will*

*quantity of police requests without providing that additional tax income needed to support such services.*“

Clearly, Monument Ridge East does not warrant the procedure for a straight zoned property. According to the applicant during the Monument Town council public hearing, Nina Ruiz, a former Monument Town Planning Director and current consultant for this project, directed the applicant to rezone the property under a straight zoned district in Monument, while the Planning Director for Monument.

Her original proposal was not what Town Council considered a viable choice because of the uniqueness of this area. It should be noted that Ms. Ruiz left the Town of Monument before this project was presented to Town Council.

The property owners purchased this property zoned as it is currently. The surrounding property owners also purchased their property knowing what the current zoning is, and the likelihood that it could be built under those circumstances.

That is the reason when a zoning change is requested, it should generally become a PUD zone district with community input. Property rights are the rights currently allowed on the property; not future rights requested. Otherwise, it would be granting rights an owner does not currently possess. Surrounding property owners also have property rights, among them, the right to peaceful enjoyment.

The criterion for rezoning also demands that there is a need not being served. That is unsure as there are many parcels of land in Monument that are approved, but not yet developed, which contain higher and high density uses. Normally those areas would be permitted to be built out before we make premature decisions on more of the same.

These are requirements the El Paso County master plan, as well as Monument's Comprehensive Plan, put in place when it comes to rezoning parcels. There are several natural features and topography, including dense tree strands, a protected wetlands area, rural zoning to the east and also to the west, a 36,000 acre protected conservation easement adjacent to the north, and the issue of water service as we explore long term planning.

This project is what PUDs were invented for. While it is warranted to have transitional zoning between the interstate frontage and these rural properties that dominate the area, simply zoning this entire area into one or two straight zoned districts of higher density properties throughout does not respect the rights of adjacent homeowners invested in the community, and not in spirit with the characteristics of the area or the El Paso County Master Plan, or the Monument Comprehensive Plan. Another reason a PUD is the clear choice.

Because this property is changing zoning and altering the character of the community, impacting property values of those who live adjacent, the residents should be afforded the right to address their grievances with the property owner, allowing everyone come together to be heard. This promotes goodwill and avoids unnecessary conflict.

Clearcutting trees for development is not allowed anywhere along the front range, and the Palmer Divide region is no different. Castle Pines, Larkspur, Castle Rock, Parker, Elizabeth, Colorado Springs, and EL Paso County have no areas where existing trees, and especially old growth trees are permitted to be completely eliminated.

Those areas are considered an asset to the community and an asset to the projects built in those areas, many of which are parks or open space. Douglas County has consistently promoted open space areas and parks, something El Paso County has been negligent in. This is apparent again due to the 36,000-acre conservation easement adjacent to County Line Rd and north to Larkspur.

In the case of the Monument Ridge East, with the straight zoned districts proposed, there is a very real possibility that every single tree could be removed. They have stated a plan to relocate trees, but any arborist will tell you that the survival rate for transplanting established trees is very low.

The adjacent neighbors on the east side purchased their property realizing that this area would be developed at some point, however, the El Paso County zoning adjacent to them only permits 20,000SF lots, more closely resembling the existing uses, and the El Paso County master plan reinforces those uses setting aside this area for suburban use. Suburban uses consist of R20000 and that is exactly what is in place currently.

In addition, Suburban uses on the El Paso County master plan list attached housing only as support uses, requiring that the vast majority are single family uses. Keep in mind that this is the gateway to El Paso County, and while exiting a 36,000-acre conservation easement, the welcome sign to El Paso County would become multi-family units right next to the interstate, on newly cleared land where a forest once stood. Our Comprehensive Plan speaks about preserving natural amenities, as does the El Paso County master plan.

In Monument, every area in the perimeter of the town has lower density uses. Only high-density uses are included in the heart of the town, Jackson Creek Parkway and Old Denver Highway. Willow Springs Ranch is about 1 unit per acre, Jackson Creek is about 3 per acre. Sanctuary Pointe is less still, about 1.6 per acre. The densest sections of Village Center are slightly over 4 per acre. The adjacent Woodmoor area is .5 per acre on average. On the West side, all the parcels adjacent to the interstate are on larger acreage parcels, some 5 acres.

Again, the combination of proposing higher density uses in combination with eliminating the natural features, whether it be terrain or dense strands of forest, is not compatible with the character of the area, or the standards in the Monument Comprehensive Plan that calls for maintaining a small-town feel, protecting the view corridors and natural features.

El Paso County's Master Plan rates this area as a Suburban Placetype. According to the master plan, Suburban Residential is characterized by predominantly residential areas with predominately single-family detached housing.

The areas of change designation is: Minimal change.

The R20000 zoning is consistent with the El Paso County Master plan future land use which classifies this area as Suburban and in an area of minimal change. This would also permit saving many of the existing old growth trees that make this part of the county a desirable feature. Again, since they want a mix of uses, this entire area should be zoned as a PUD with community input afforded to the people this project negatively affects.

The current zoning does not permit the uses and densities proposed, nor does the proposed rezoning provide public hearings throughout the process. There is one public hearing for a zoning change, and

then it becomes an administrative process. This is why the applicant wants a straight zoned district, to minimize public input as the merit of the project can't stand on its own.

This property needs to become a PUD, with the protections that a PUD offers. The purpose of the PUD is to custom fit the zoning to conform with unusual properties and allows flexibility in the existing code in exchange for amenities to the community.

- This project does not meet the criteria in the El Paso Master Plan or the Monument Comprehensive Plan as proposed.
- This project should be a PUD with community input as it does not meet the criteria for a straight zoned district.
- This project is a good fit to become annexed into the Monument Town limits in order to provide emergency services that won't negatively impact the town's budget.
- Natural features should be saved as this is the gateway to El Paso County and abuts a 36000-acre conservation easement.
- Property rights are only existing rights, and that is what was purchased by this applicant. Newly granted rights should have adjacent community input throughout the entire process with public hearings as a PUD.
- Higher density projects in this area create impervious surfaces that will impact existing fragile wetlands.
- This area is a migration path for numerous large animal species and should have sufficient open space and shelter with existing large tree strands.
- When notified of Monument's Planning Department review, dozens of affected residents signed an opposition petition.
- Douglas County does not approve of this project as proposed.
- The Town of Monument does not approve of this project as proposed.

El Paso County, as well as Monument, have procedures and criteria in place to allow for responsible development and to prevent the general overall plan from being compromised. That is the intension of zoning, future land use maps, community input and master plans. The intention is to promote a community in such a way that it creates or maintains desirability and protects the property values of all who are impacted.

There is only so much undeveloped land remaining in the Trilakes area and it will be developed at some point. As elected officials, our main job is to make sure it is developed responsibly with the upmost respect to our residents and the El Paso County Master Plan. This plan isn't close to accomplishing those goals.

Please reject this project as proposed, due to the incompatibility with the El Paso Master Plan and the Monument Comprehensive Plan and respect the rights of those who chose this area as their home. Please also respect the governmental agencies that also oppose this plan.

This letter of opposition is on my behalf and other Council Members may have differing viewpoints, although this project was rejected by Monument Town Council as proposed.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve King  
Monument Mayor Pro Tem