

Letter of Intent Revised 8/27/26

Owner/Applicant

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Site Information

10755 Howells Rd, 10655 Howells Rd,
3820 Old Ranch Rd, 3890 Old Ranch Rd.
Black Forest, CO, 80908
Site Size: 20 Acres
Current Zoning: RR-5

The Shire at Old Ranch Project File Number: PPR2410

The Vision

The Shire at Old Ranch is a 20-acre site development in northern El Paso County designed as a multi-use agrotourism and ecological community destination. It includes demonstration growing facilities, innovative building types, cultural and health amenities, and public green space. The Shire blends educational, commercial, and hospitality uses to create an interactive landscape experience. This submission seeks approval of a Site Development Plan.

Overview

Comprising four 5-acre parcels (each zoned RR-5), the 20-acre site is ideally located to serve as a transition from suburban Cordera and Northfork, to rural Black Forest neighborhoods. The property is bordered on three sides by Old Ranch (south), Howells (west), and Ridgeway (north). There is currently one residence and an out-building/detached garage on each of the 5-acre parcels. The Board of County Commissioners in El Paso County approved the variance of use for **The Shire at Old Ranch** on June 22, 2021.

The Site

Access will be provided exclusively via Old Ranch Road, coordinated with the City of Colorado Springs. A new TIS has been completed and submitted under separate cover. No access is proposed or required from Howells Rd. The site utilizes two one-way loop drives: a public loop drive (Resilient Way) and a gated service drive (Habitat Way). Each loop ensures two-directional circulation throughout the site, supporting emergency movement and reducing congestion. Parking is distributed along the drives to avoid large impervious lots, reduce visual impact, and facilitate stormwater infiltration.

The property will also feature a network of trails, open to neighbors and guests by day, offering a scenic alternative for pedestrians using surrounding roadways. Through intensively planted (30' wide) buffers, a moderate slope downhill to the west, and thoughtful siting of structures, our Black Forest neighbors to the east and north will have enhanced peak/foothill views with the transition to Northfork and Cordera softened. The following areas are all proposed structures.

Staffing/Job Creation

The Shire at Old Ranch will create approximately 50 jobs across retail, agriculture, healthcare, education, and hospitality sectors. This figure is subject to seasonal fluctuation, **and we anticipate a portion of workers will reside onsite either in the existing residences**, Energy Independent Habitations, or in Yurts, thereby decreasing the traffic load on-site.

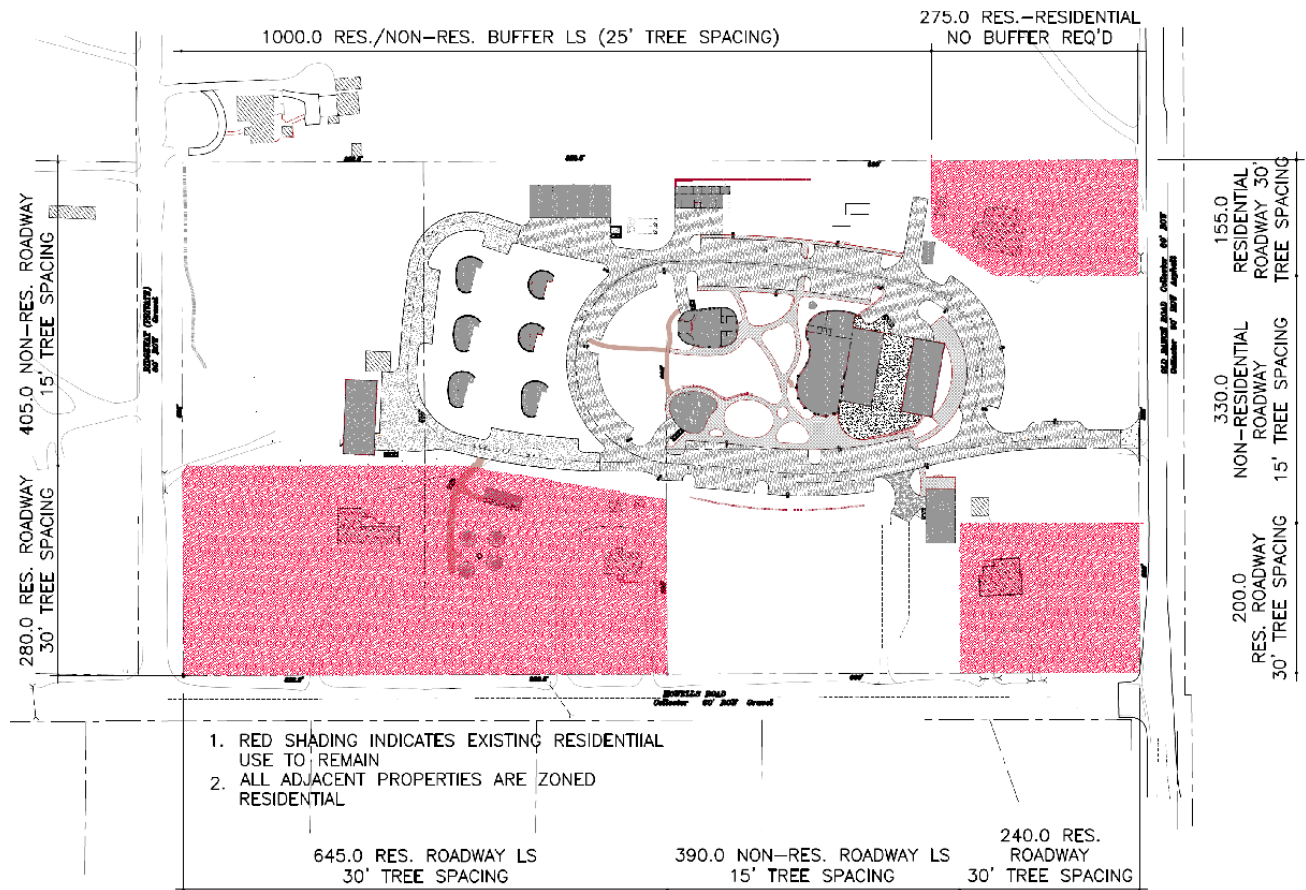
The Alternative Landscape Plan

More than 7 acres will be maintained as landscaped open space, accessible by pathway, for educational and recreational use. The landscape plan will feature small sitting areas, educational signage, and featured garden vignettes including local art. The landscape will emphasize native and drought-tolerant plants and be designed to minimize supplemental irrigation.

The landscape design seeks to foster meaningful connections between people and nature. The developer/owners have decades of combined experience designing, building, and enhancing landscapes around the Pikes Peak Region that integrate suburban, rural, and wild design to establish Natural Transition Zones. This project location will stand as a bastion of natural beauty, bridging the ambiance of suburban Cordera and Northfork with the rustic charm of Black Forest. Carefully selected plant palettes speak to biome areas that demonstrate healthy and resilient land stewardship - "naturescaping." The project includes an animal barn. Grazing by sheep, goats, and chickens is considered as part of the project's landscape aesthetic while enriching soil, controlling vegetative growth, providing wildlife habitat, and reducing pest populations. Edible Landscapes are promoted with the inclusion of a produce and permaculture garden. The public will eat this up, literally, in the Café.

The practical elements of our project haven't been overlooked. We are committed to Beautification & Screening. Re: EPCO landscape criteria, the alternative landscape plan consists of two basic asks:

- 1) consider existing trees, shrubs, and ground covers to contribute toward meeting EPCO landscape criteria.
- 2) consider the mixed use nature of the project, residential and non-residential, when calculating roadway and buffer tree requirements. See graphic below:



Four existing residences will remain as is - including their existing landscaping. Additional landscaping has been augmented where necessary at both residential and non-residential use of frontages and buffers. The calculations shown on drawing LS1 use this strategy to meet and exceed all EPCO criteria.

The Structures on The Shire at Old Ranch

The **Animal Barn** provides safe, functional spaces for livestock, offering opportunities to learn.

The **Bath House** offers restroom and shower facilities to support overnight guests.

The **Cafe** provides comfort, food, and beverage.

The **Co-Op** offers regionally appropriate plants, products, and knowledge.

The **Education Barn** hosts classes, demos, lectures, hands-on learning, workshops & crafting

The **Energy Independent Habitations (EIH)** exhibits alternative building styles and houses both permanent and temporary residents.

The **Health and Wellness Space** provides holistic health products and services.

The **Indoor Gathering Space** hosts events and classes to support community education.

The **Propagation and Wholesale Greenhouses** support plant production, seasonal growing, research, and wholesale distribution while showcasing innovative greenhouse practices.

The **Equipment Barn** provides space for housing site equipment and for repair of equipment.

The **Yurts** provide seasonal lodging for visitors participating in educational programs, workshops, retreats, and agritourism experiences.

Hours of Operation

The Shire at Old Ranch will be a year-round, seasonal business. We anticipate peak use of the site to occur from 9am to 5pm. The seasonal nature of the business will generate higher traffic between May and August when school is not in session.

Animal Barn: 9:00 AM–6:00 PM daily

Bath House: Open 24 hours only to residents

Cafe: Mon–Fri 6:00 AM–8:00 PM; Sat 7:00 AM–8:00 PM; Sun 9:00 AM–8:00 PM

Co-Op: 9:00 AM–6:00 PM daily

Education Barn: Mon–Fri 8:00 AM–5:00 PM; Sat 8:00 AM–12:00 PM

Energy Independent Habitation Exhibit: 9:00 AM–6:00 PM daily

Health & Wellness Space: Mon–Fri 6:00 AM–8:00 PM; Sat–Sun 8:00 AM–8:00 PM

Indoor Gathering Space: 8:00 AM–10:00 PM daily

Propagation and Wholesale Greenhouses: 8:00 AM–6:00 PM daily

Equipment Barn: Mon–Fri 8:00 AM–5:00 PM; Sat 8:00 AM–8:00 PM

Yurts: Accessible 24 hours for registered overnight guests

Projected Buildout

Development of The Shire at Old Ranch will proceed as follows:

Phase 1 (Estimated 2 Years)

Initial site infrastructure and the primary retail destination.

Infrastructure

- Water supply and distribution improvements, including fire suppression.
- Fire suppression cistern.
- Construction of the primary loop road and parking areas.
- Utilities will be installed under paved roads and the commercial core.
- Electrical service, including the main electrical vault, Garden Center CO-OP, and site lighting.
- Landscaping associated with completed Phase 1 improvements.
- All stormwater management elements (silt fences, swales, culverts, detention and infiltration ponds) will be installed, many of these elements would be installed very early and serve as stormwater management during and after construction.

Garden Center CO-OP & Retail Greenhouse

The Garden Center CO-OP and attached Retail Greenhouse will serve as the primary visitor destination, offering regionally appropriate plants, gardening supplies, gifts, and related products in a year-round retail environment.

Phase 2 (Estimated 3-4 Years)

Expansion of educational facilities and plant production.

Animal Barn

A demonstration facility showcasing the care, housing, and role of small livestock in sustainable agriculture.

Propagation Greenhouse 2

Located south of the CO-OP, this greenhouse will support the CO-OP and plant production. Building placement takes advantage of the site's natural topography to minimize visual impacts.

Indoor Gathering Space

A flexible venue for community events, workshops, presentations, and organizational meetings, and weddings.

Education Barn

A dedicated space for hands-on classes, demonstrations, artistic activities, and educational programming for visitors of all ages.

Phase 3 (Estimated 4-6 Years)

Visitor amenities and agritourism facilities.

Cafe

A small café offering locally inspired food and beverages with an emphasis on seasonal ingredients and grab-and-go service.

Yurt Village

Four seasonal yurts (one 16-foot, two 24-foot, and one 30-foot diameter) will provide unique overnight accommodations in a camp-style setting. Stays will range from one night to one month during the warmer months of the year.

Bath House

A shared restroom, shower, and laundry facility serving overnight yurt guests.

Health & Wellness Building

A wellness-focused space featuring an apothecary and private offices for practitioners such as massage therapists, acupuncturists, and counselors.

Equipment Barn

Storage and maintenance facility for equipment required to operate and maintain the property.

Propagation Greenhouse 1

A production greenhouse located on the north side of the property supporting wholesale growing operations.

Phase 4 (Estimated 7 years)

Sustainable demonstration lodging.

Energy Independent Habitations (EIH)

Six small-scale sustainable dwellings ranging from approximately 300 to 1,200 square feet. These structures will demonstrate alternative building methods while providing year-round lodging for residents and guests.

Water Stewardship and Plan

All structures and landscape features are designed to operate within existing water rights, with an emphasis on reuse, efficient irrigation, and infiltration. High efficiency plant watering systems (such as dripper systems) will be the norm. Swales, culverts and overland flow will convey stormwater to infiltration and detention ponds for slow release. It is our desire to employ a wastewater treatment system that will allow secondary use as would be allowed under CDPHE regulations and water rights determinations.

Traffic Plan

Access will be provided exclusively via Old Ranch Road, coordinated with the City of Colorado Springs. A new Traffic Impact Study has been completed and submitted under separate cover. No access is proposed or required from Howells Rd.

The site utilizes two one-way loop drives: a public loop drive (Resilient Way) and a gated service drive (Habitat Way). Each loop ensures two-directional circulation throughout the site, supporting emergency movement and reducing congestion. Parking is distributed along the drives to avoid large impervious lots, reduce visual impact, and facilitate stormwater infiltration.

Parking will be oriented nose-in along the main drive and service drive to eliminate parking lots. Dense plantings will be utilized to screen vehicles from offsite observers. The semi-permeable, crowned, compacted aggregate roadways and drives will direct stormwater runoff to bioswales where it will be slowed and sunk into the earth to recharge local aquifers.

There will be no vehicular connection between the drives of existing residences and the Main drive or Service drives serving The Shire at Old Ranch.

Road Impact Fees

A Traffic Impact Study has been completed and submitted separately. The applicant will comply with all applicable El Paso County Road Impact Fee requirements, and any fees determined to be due as part of the development approval process will be paid as required. The Road Impact Fee Acknowledgement form has also been signed and submitted.

Compliance with Variance of Use Criteria

Serving as a “green buffer,” The Shire at Old Ranch is a transition from the City of Colorado Springs to the rural flavor of Black Forest. The support of Phelan Gardens in designing a naturescaped buffer with native, xeric, and adapted plants will enhance local biodiversity and habitat, and offer an exceptional demonstration of beautiful xeriscape in Black Forest at 7000 feet. Since nearly 7 acres (35% of the whole site) will be maintained as naturescape, buildings are single story, and minimal earthwork will be required, the site would be easy to reclaim for future development’s sake. Through careful consideration of the land and the local impact of the project, this development would serve nearby and distant inhabitants as an environmentally conscious, conservation-oriented space emphasizing educational and environmental aims.

The proposed use is compatible with the surrounding area and harmonious with the character of the neighborhood.

By designing to minimize negative externalities from the outset, we have crafted a proposed use that naturally results in a supremely healthful environment at completion and throughout the construction process. By contracting with both an ecologically and environmentally savvy architect and engineer throughout site design and phased buildout, we strive to make the construction as unobtrusive as possible for neighbors and passersby. The proposed use will operate in compliance with applicable county, state, and federal regulations as well as applicable development guidelines.

Our educational efforts around conservation and preservation make us a community resource on the topics of habitat, suburban encroachment, and the intersection between people and nature. Minimal generation and careful management of stormwater will mitigate negative offsite impacts to wetlands and watershed. Our development of the site will improve habitat for not only wildlife, but also beneficial insects such as bees and butterflies, and people.

The applicant has addressed all off-site impacts.

When designing The Shire at Old Ranch we considered impacts relating to: water, traffic, noise, light, view to Pikes Peak, view to the foothills, stormwater, fire danger, dust, and public safety.

With a conservation mindset and progressive water reclamation and treatment techniques, an augmented well in the Denver aquifer serving the site with approximately six acre-feet of water will not threaten water security outside of normally accepted tolerances.

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Sound will be attenuated onsite by locating the density of activity in the center of the site and creating heavily planted buffers.

Lighting on the site will adopt a dark-skies approach through removal of bright/unshrouded power pole mounted lights, implementation of downlighting and motion lighting, and thickly planted buffers dense with evergreens.

Neighbor's views of Pikes Peak and the foothills will remain open by design with downward sloping topography and modest single-story structures.

Systems of swales, check dams, and catchment basins will slow and sink water into the highly porous sandy soil onsite.

Fire danger is a serious concern we share with our neighbors. By breaking up wooded areas with meadows and implementing good cultural practices with respect to landscape management, we will mitigate wildfire danger. These cultural practices, especially pruning, will be showcased for public education and implementation via pedestal signs along pathways.

Dust caused by construction and traffic will be managed through phased construction, BMPs for dust control during construction, and maintenance of a rock wearing surface atop a compacted aggregate road-base.

By implementing a system of security cameras, motion lights, stringent guidelines for use of the site, and rigorous vetting of residents, we expect to maintain a safe, respectful environment for visitors, neighbors, and residents.

The site plan will provide adequate parking, traffic circulation, open space, fencing, screening, and landscaping.

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Parking is distributed along the drives to avoid large impervious lots, reduce visual impact, and facilitate stormwater infiltration. Parking will be nose in along the main drive to spread vehicles along the drive rather than clustering them into hard to screen parking lots. The main drive is intentionally set far away from neighbor's homes to maintain peace and quiet.

Sewer, water, storm water drainage, fire protection, police protection, and roads will be available and adequate to serve the needs of the site development as designed and proposed.

The facility is designed so that it can operate in a manner which will allow for adequate service by fire and police protection. Water and septic resources will be adequate to serve the needs of the proposed site plan as designed and proposed. The site is designed to slow, stop, and sink all stormwater that falls onsite.

Conclusion

The Shire at Old Ranch is a forward-thinking, low-impact development aligned with County planning goals around water conservation, sustainable growth, and community enrichment. We appreciate your review and consideration of this Site Development Plan.