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DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

October 14, 2024

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

Subject: Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendment #4 (SKP-24-XXX)

Hello Kari,

The Park Planning Division of the Parks and Community Services Department has reviewed Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendment #4 development application and has the following administrative comments and recommendations on behalf of El Paso County Parks. As stated in the applicant's Letter of Intent, the purpose of this 4th Sketch Plan Amendment is to remove a 10-acre elementary school site and modify residential densities within the southeastern portion of the Sketch Plan to reflect this change. Due to the fact that this Amendment does not impact any El Paso County proposed or existing parks, trails, or open spaces, and therefore does not require additional park land or trail easement requests, these comments are being provided administratively.

As mentioned previously, the 2022 El Paso County Parks Master Plan shows no impacts to proposed or existing parks, trails, or open space. As they relate to the overall Sterling Ranch development, the proposed Arroyo Lane Primary Regional Trail traverses east/west along the development's northern property boundary and will provide connectivity to Meridian Ranch to the east, while the centrally located Sand Creek Primary Regional Trail runs north-south through the community, eventually providing pedestrian access to both the City of Colorado Springs to the south and Black Forest to the north. The proposed Woodmen Hills Secondary Regional Trail runs north/south along the easternmost Sterling Ranch property boundary, making vital connections between the Sand Creek and Arroyo Lane Regional Trails in the north, Briargate Parkway to the south, and ultimately, the Rock Island Primary Regional Trail further south within the Town of Falcon.

Furthermore, the proposed Briargate Parkway Bicycle Route runs east/west adjacent to the northern side of the Sketch Plan Amendment. A dedicated public right-of-way already exists along the aforementioned bicycle route, so no easement requests are necessary at that location; however, the applicant is advised that multi-modal transportation options will be developed within the rights-of-way in the future, especially given the current development of the Briargate Parkway / Stapleton Road Corridor Study.

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. While a large portion of Sterling Ranch falls within the bounds of the updated Black Forest South Candidate Open Space Area, the Amendment #4 area is located outside of the Candidate Open Space Area.

The Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendment #4 includes a 5-acre neighborhood park, as well as 50-foot landscape and trail corridor buffers along the southern and eastern borders of the development. Sketch Plan Amendment #3 did show a north-south internal trail along the proposed Banning Lewis Parkway corridor, but Amendment #4 does not show this trail. If the Banning Lewis Parkway construction includes a 8'-10' wide meandering detached concrete sidewalk on either side of the street, that will suffice as a trail corridor. Please note, however, that this trail is not an El Paso County Parks master planned trail, and these are simply recommendations to improve pedestrian connectivity along this major transportation corridor.

The applicant's 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 foster 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 to the east and north is buffered with open space and trail corridors."*
- *"The 5-acre community park adjacent to the school will be retained and shifted slightly east to better align with proposed filing layouts. This park will serve an 18-acre 5-8 DU/AC residential site, which will replace the former elementary school and cluster higher-density residential uses around this park."*
- *"EL PASO COUNTY PARKS MASTER PLAN - The Trails Master Plan map identifies a proposed Regional Trail adjacent to Sand Creek through Sterling Ranch, as well as a secondary regional trail along the east side of the Sketch Plan, which will connect from Briargate Parkway to Arroya Lane. A regional trail runs east-west along Arroya Lane and connects to the Sand Creek Regional Trail, which runs north-south along Sand Creek located west of the proposed SKP area within the Retreat at TimberRidge. These trails, as well as a 28-acre community park along the Sand Creek Channel, have been accommodated in the Sterling Ranch filings already approved or in progress. These amenities support the El Paso County Parks and Trails Master Plan and provide connectivity to, from and throughout the Sterling Ranch Community."*
- *"There are no proposed regional trails in this portion of Sterling Ranch. However, a 5-acre community park is proposed within the Sketch Plan Amendment area. This park will be owned and maintained by the Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District."*

Staff continues to be pleased with the recreational opportunities found within the overall Sterling Ranch development. The overall Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan contains a large percentage of park and open space areas, including a 28-acre community park situated along Sand Creek, as well as numerous neighborhood parks, passive use areas, open spaces, and public trail corridors. Staff encourages the applicant to continue to develop park, trail, active-use area, and playground plans that provide a wide variety of recreational choices to users of all age groups and abilities. Furthermore, staff encourages the developers to construct internal trail systems that link residents not only to the proposed neighborhood and community parks, schools, and businesses, but also to the County's regional trail system.

As noted previously, these comments are being provided administratively due in part to the lack of impacts on El Paso County master planned park and trail facilities and therefore do not require consideration by the Park Advisory Board.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



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