

## **STERLING RANCH SKETCH PLAN AMENDMENT**

### **IMPACT IDENTIFICATION STATEMENT**

**OCTOBER 2023**

**OWNERS:**

**CLASSIC SRJ LAND, LLC**

2138 FLYING HORSE CLUB DR  
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80921

**ARTESIA LOT HOLDINGS LLC**

4400 STATE HWY 121, STE 410  
THE COLONY, TX 75056

**VANTAGE HOMES CORP**

9540 FEDERAL DR, STE 100  
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO, 80921

**APPLICANT:**

CLASSIC SRJ LAND, LLC

2138 FLYING HORSE CLUB DRIVE  
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80921

**CONSULTANT:**

N.E.S. INC.

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### **REQUEST**

N.E.S. Inc. on behalf of Classic SRJ Land LLC requests approval of an amendment to the approved Sketch Plan for Sterling Ranch to revise densities in the northern portion of the Sketch Plan area and minor corrections to reflect more accurate acreages.

This document provides the Impact Identification Statement required as part of the submittal requirements for a new Sketch Plan or major amendment to an existing Sketch Plan.

### **PROJECT CONTEXT**

The Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan consists of approximately 1,444 acres located east of Vollmer Road, south of Arroya Lane and west of Raygor Road. The Sketch Plan amendment proposes to change the densities in this northeastern section of the Sketch Plan.

## **IMPACT IDENTIFICATION**

### **IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL SOURCES AND ZONES OF AIR, WATER, AND NOISE POLLUTION**

#### **AIR QUALITY:**

The proposed residential use will not negatively impact air quality. The proposed development is located within a developing area with convenient access to Briargate Parkway, providing shorter travel time to employment and commercial facilities.

#### **WATER:**

The proposed residential development is not a source of water pollution. FAWWA can provide a sufficient supply of water in terms of quantity, quality, and dependability.

#### **NOISE:**

No noise impacts are anticipated with residential uses in this location. Chapter 8.4.2(B)(2)(b)(ii) of the Land Development Code states that noise mitigation shall be required for single-family and duplex residential subdivisions, which contain lots that will be individually owned, and are located adjacent to expressways, principal arterials, or railroads. There are no proposed expressways, principal arterials, or railroads within the Sketch Plan amendment area.

### **IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL HAZARD AREAS**

#### **FLOODPLAINS:**

This site is shown as Zone X, an area determined to be outside the 0.2% annual chance of floodplain, on FEMA FIRM Map number 08041C0535G, dated December 7, 2018. The Sketch Plan amendment will have no impact on the floodplain.

#### **GEOLOGIC & SOIL HAZARDS:**

The report prepared by Entech Engineering for the Sketch Plan Amendment found this site was suitable for the proposed development. Areas were encountered where the geologic conditions will impose some constraints on development and land use. These include areas of artificial fill, expansive soils, shallow bedrock, and seasonally shallow groundwater, potential seasonally shallow groundwater, and areas flowing water. Seasonal shallow groundwater will be mitigated with site grading and the installation of sewer underdrains in areas below grade. Specific recommendations should be made after additional investigation and site grading has been completed.

#### **VEGETATION:**

The Natural Features and Wetlands Report prepared by Bristlecone Ecology in July 2023 indicates that no sensitive vegetation communities were found, and no state-sensitive vegetation communities are present. The project site is on the fringe of the Ponderosa Pine Woodlands, a globally and state stable vegetation community, but the site contains no pine trees and impacts are not expected. The site may

have historically been primarily Shortgrass Prairie, a State Imperiled (S2) community, but the site is now classified as disturbed grassland, a common community.

Vegetation will be unavoidably disturbed through development of the Project site. The vast majority of the site is classified as Foothill Grasslands, which is the primary ecosystem type that will be impacted. The site is generally of moderate quality and impacts are not expected to imperil or substantially harm this ecosystem. No globally sensitive vegetation communities are present, and no state-sensitive vegetation communities are present according to CNHP data for sensitive vegetation communities and the site reconnaissance (CNHP 2022).

Development of the site will likely increase and improve arboreal habitat through the planting of trees in yards and in open spaces. There are wetland areas (presumed non-jurisdictional) present on the site that support wetland vegetation, which would be impacted by development and result in the loss of these wetlands. There are jurisdictional riparian and wetland areas along Sand Creek to the west, and these areas are high-quality habitats, but this corridor is not a part of the Project site.

Noxious weeds are present on the project site in several areas but in generally limited quantities. A noxious weed impact management plan has been included with this submittal. A few sensitive species were present onsite and only in small numbers. Noxious weeds will be removed through site grading and will be controlled with the incorporation of new landscaping.

Noxious weeds are present on the Project site in several areas but in generally limited quantities. There were some moderate concentrations of noxious weeds in disturbed areas, and scattered noxious weeds were found throughout various portions of the site, primarily where disturbance from construction has already occurred. List B and List C species were identified on the site. List B Species require either eradication, containment, or suppression; List C Species require control through either public education or chemical control.

A Noxious Weed Management Plan has been prepared for the Project detailing recommendations for identifying and controlling the spread of noxious weeds prior to, during, and/or post-construction. Noxious weed management protocols during construction include prevention, treatment, and management. This shall occur through surveys of construction easements, followed by primary chemical treatment. Initial inventory surveys shall occur separately from treatment, but both will be completed prior to initial ground disturbance activities. Management shall occur through the use of clean construction equipment and the treatment of any salvaged topsoil to be used in site landscaping.

Post-construction Noxious weed management protocols shall be limited to maintenance and treatment. Landscape areas, including within private lots, will require ongoing treatment for noxious weeds. This ongoing management of noxious weeds will be managed by Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District.

#### **WILDLIFE:**

Some impacts to wildlife will inevitably occur during the development of the site. The amphibians observed in the marshy area will likely be lost when these ponds are removed and filled. Since grasslands are the most dominant habitat type, grassland species are expected to experience the greatest adverse impacts, such as deer, foxes, bears, raccoons, and skunks

State sensitive black-tailed prairie dogs were present in a 11.17-acre colony. This colony will be removed through development of the Site. State threatened burrowing owls may also be present at this colony. A burrowing owl survey would be necessary to confirm their presence/absence and, if present, any construction/removal of the colony should occur outside nesting season.

Any vegetation clearing/grubbing on the site should take place outside the nesting season to avoid disturbing any nesting migratory birds. If timing is not possible, the Natural Features and Wetlands Report recommends conducting a migratory bird nesting survey during the nesting season to ensure impacts to nesting birds do not occur.

Federally listed T&E species are not expected to occur on the Project site. Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat is not present on the site because the entire site is within the Colorado Springs Block Clearance Zone.

To counter the impacts to wildlife, some species that prefer suburban habitats are expected to benefit from an increase in planted trees throughout the project area. Designated open spaces will also conserve some of the open grassland habitats that are currently available. Implementation of a stormwater management plan will assist in protecting water quality in downstream reaches, which will provide additional benefits to aquatic species including invertebrates. Detention facilities may add seasonal water features that could support additional wildlife such as waterfowl and amphibians. Negligible impacts to forest species are expected as no trees will be cleared for construction.

#### **WILDFIRE:**

Roughly 85% of the Project area is mapped as "High" wildfire risk while the remaining 15% is mapped as "Moderate" risk. The moderate-risk areas of the site include the areas where the site has been previously disturbed, construction materials are stored, and a water tank exists. The high wildfire risk areas include the disturbed and undisturbed grasslands. The site is rated low in terms of values and assets present that could be lost to wildfire.

Development of the site would result in a reduction of the available fuels for wildfires, while simultaneously increasing the values and assets present on the site. Home construction on the site will be required to utilize fire retardant materials per Pikes Peak Regional Building Code. Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District will control new landscaping on the property to ensure that it does not pose a fire risk. Water supply to the project will be provided by FAWWA and fire hydrant locations will meet County and International Fire Code standards. The nearest fire response is Station 1 in the Black Forest FPD, which is located 3.46 miles from the site; the second closest station is Station 2 in the Black Forest FPD, which is 8.88 miles away.

#### **USE OF, OR CHANGES IN PREEXISTING WATERFORMS, WATERCOURSES OR BODIES OF WATER:**

There are aquatic resources on the site, presumed to be non-jurisdictional due to their lack of surface water connection to Sand Creek to the west or any other downstream WOTUS. Mapped wetlands were generally confirmed to be present in the locations shown during the site reconnaissance, however they may or may not be jurisdictional. A formal wetland delineation was not performed and may be needed to determine the boundaries of aquatic resources on the site. In addition, an approved jurisdictional determination may be needed to confirm the regulatory status of the wetlands present. If these wetlands are determined to be jurisdictional, a Section 404 permit from the USACE would be required. Regardless of regulatory status, the wetlands on the site will be impacted by development through fill and regrading. Wetland areas within the open space buffer on the eastern boundary will remain largely undisturbed. Surveys around the ponded areas following CPW's guidance for identifying leopard frogs and their habitats are recommended during the appropriate season.

#### **IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION OF SITES OF HISTORICAL OR ARCHEOLOGICAL INTEREST**

There are no sites of historical or architectural interest and, therefore, the Sketch Plan amendment will have no impact on these interests. The site has been used for agricultural grazing and sand and gravel extraction, neither of which are identified as historically significant. More recently the parcel has been vacant with development occurring immediately adjacent to it.

#### **IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION OF SITES OF NATURAL OR SCENIC IMPORTANCE**

There are no recognized sites of natural or scenic importance within the Sketch Plan amendment area. There wetland areas on the site are presumed to be non-jurisdictional due to their lack of surface water connection to Sand Creek or any other downstream WOTUS. If these wetlands are determined to be jurisdictional, a Section 404 permit from the USACE would be required. Regardless of regulatory status, the wetlands on the site will be impacted by development through fill and regrading.

#### **SOCIAL IMPACTS**

The proposed Sketch Plan Amendment encourages a variety of housing types, supports neighborhood focal points, and expands the off-street trail system. This is consistent with Your El Paso County Master Plan goals and objectives to “preserve and develop neighborhoods with a mix of housing types” and to “locate attainable housing that provides convenient access to goods, services, and employment”.

#### **JURISDICTIONAL IMPACTS**

The following districts/entities will serve the property:

#### **Black Hills Energy:**

The Sketch Plan amendment area is within the service area of both Black Hills Energy and Colorado Springs Utilities for natural gas supply. It is understood that Black Hills Energy will provide gas service to areas north of Briargate Parkway.

**Mountain View Electric:**

The site is within the service area of Mountain View Electric Association, Inc. for electric supply and the association is, therefore, required to provide the property with electric service.

**Falcon Area Water and Wastewater Authority (FAWWA):**

Water and wastewater will be provided by FAWWA. The Authority can provide for the water supply needs of the full buildout of the Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan as proposed to be amended by this submittal.

**Black Forest Fire Protection District:**

The Sketch Plan amendment area is within the service area of Black Forest Fire Protection District and the District, therefore, required to provide the property with fire protection service. The ultimate development of the property will be required to adhere to Chapter 6.3.3. of the County's Land Development Code relating to Fire Protection and Wildfire Mitigation, as well as the requirement of the applicable International Fire Code (IFC). Development within the Sketch Plan amendment area is intended to be standard rural and suburban development accessed by public streets that meet County criteria. As such, development within the Sketch Plan amendment area will not adversely impact the Fire District.

**El Paso County School District No. 49:**

Sterling Ranch is bisected by the boundary line between School District 20 and School District 49. The Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan approved in 2008 identified school sites in both School Districts, including a 10-acre elementary school site within District 49. The developer is currently having ongoing discussions with the School District administration, in conjunction with developers of adjacent properties, to discuss the School District's current needs for school sites.

**RELATIONSHIP TO THE ADOPTED COUNTY MASTER PLANS**

The relevant County master plan documents for the Sketch Plan Amendment are Your El Paso County Master Plan, the El Paso County Water Master Plan, the El Paso County Major Transportation Corridor Plan, and the El Paso County Parks Master Plan. The Sketch Plan Amendment is in general conformity with these plans as described in the Letter of Intent.

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