

El Paso County Park Advisory Board

Agenda Item Summary Form

Agenda Item Title: Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendment #3 and Rezones

Agenda Date: September 13, 2023

Agenda Item Number:

Presenter: Ross Williams, Park Planner

Information: **Endorsement:** X

Background Information:

This is a request for endorsement by N.E.S., Inc., on behalf of Classic SRJ Land, LLC, for Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendment #3, which adjusts residential density calculations over 214 acres and concurrent rezoning of approximately 400 acres from the RR-5, rural residential zoning designation to the RS-5000, RR-2.5, and RR-0.5 urban and rural residential classifications. The property is located east of Vollmer Road and north of Woodmen Road, situated between the northern boundary of the Sterling Ranch development at Arroyo Lane and the future extension of Briargate Parkway.

The 2022 El Paso County Parks Master Plan shows two proposed regional trail connections and one proposed bicycle route impacted by the project. The proposed Arroyo Lane Primary Regional Trail traverses east/west along the northern property boundary and will provide connectivity to Meridian Ranch to the east and the Sand Creek Regional Trail to the immediate west near the intersection of Arroyo Lane and Vollmer Road. 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 southern 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. The Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendment and the three rezoning areas fall primarily within the bounds of the updated Black Forest South Candidate Open Space Area. Open space attribute values here include the Sand Creek corridor, surface water and wetland areas, floodplains, moderate wildlife impacts, and open high prairie grasslands along the southern boundary of Black Forest.

The Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendment shows 148 acres of open space, dedicated to neighborhood or community parks, greenways, drainages, landscaping buffers, and trails. This constitutes approximately 10.2% of the total project area of 1,444 acres. In addition to the 57-acre open space along the Sand Creek corridor and the 40-acre open space buffer along the eastern boundary of Sterling Ranch, numerous 4- and 5-acre neighborhood parks are shown in the Sketch Plan, as well as a centrally-located 28-acre community park located alongside Sand Creek, within easy walking distance of the Sand Creek Primary Regional Trail.

The Sketch Plan Amendment Letter of Intent highlights the 40-acre open space buffer along the eastern boundary of Sterling Ranch. The Woodmen Hills Secondary Regional Trail is located within this north-south trending open space area, which varies in width from 50' at its northern end to 250' near its intersection with Briargate Parkway. This open space buffer continues to the southeasternmost corner of Sterling Ranch as a location for a neighborhood trail and utilities. Additionally, the Sketch Plan includes a 25' trail corridor along Arroyo Lane to accommodate the Arroyo Lane Primary Regional Trail.

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.”*
- *“In addition, the approved Sketch Plan includes a 50-250 feet wide open space and trail corridor along the northeastern boundary to provide a buffer to the 5-acre lots to the northeast of the Sketch Plan area.”*
- *“A secondary regional county trail is now proposed along the eastern boundary. This will connect the proposed regional trail along Arroya Lane to the secondary regional trail proposed adjacent to Briargate Parkway connecting to The Ranch to the east.”*
- *“The Sketch Plan encourages a variety of housing types, supports neighborhood focal points, and expands the off-street trail system, all of which are recommendations for emerging and future neighborhoods.”*
- *“EL PASO COUNTY PARKS MASTER PLAN - The Parks Master Plan shows a proposed 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. These three trails support the El Paso County Parks and Trails Master Plan and provide connectivity to, from and throughout the Sterling Ranch Community.”*
- *“A community park and several neighborhood parks are planned to serve the residents within Sterling Ranch. These parks will be owned and maintained by the Sterling Ranch Metropolitan District.”*

- *“With regard to the rural residential development to the east, the originally proposed open space and trail corridor will remain in place to provide a buffer to the rural 5-acre lot density to the east. This buffer varies in width based on the adjacent density within Sterling Ranch. The buffer is proposed to be between 200-250 feet wide immediately adjacent to the 3-5 du/ac density (RS-5000 zoning) and approximately 150 feet wide adjacent to the 0.5-acre lot density (RR-0.5 zoning). The 0.5-acre lot density also extends south along the eastern edge of the Sketch Plan to aide in the density transition. The buffer reduces to 50 feet wide adjacent to the larger 2.5-acre lots (RR-2.5 zoning) on the north end of the Sketch Plan. There are no changes to the width or overall acreage of this buffer from the originally approved Sketch Plan.”*

Staff is pleased the Sketch Plan Amendment contains a large percentage of park and open space areas, including the aforementioned 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.

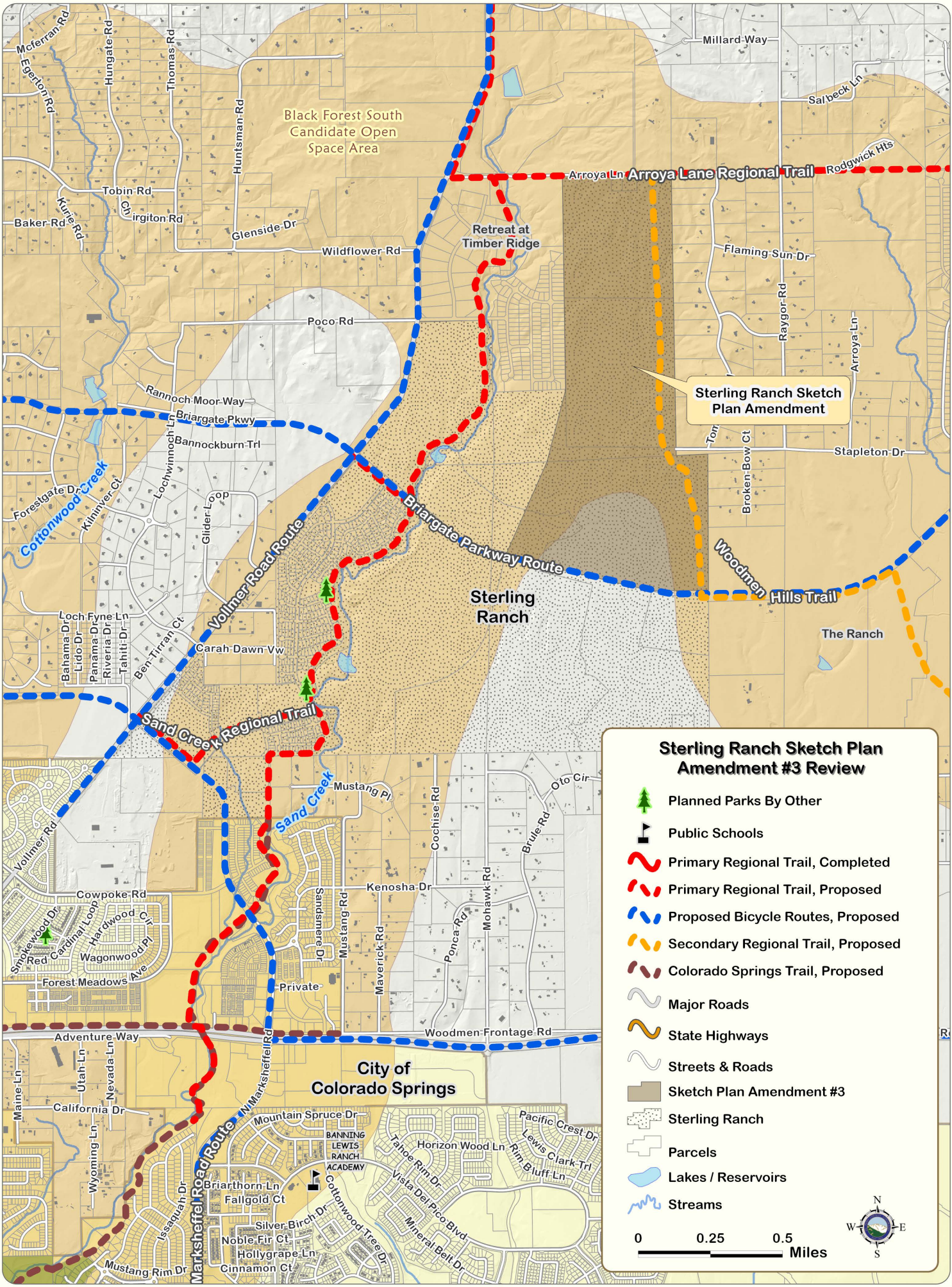
Furthermore, staff encourages the developers to construct internal trail systems that link residents not only to the proposed neighborhood and community parks, schools, and businesses, but also to the County’s regional trail system. Lastly, staff recommends that the developers designate and provide to El Paso County 25-foot trail easements along the southern side of Arroyo Lane and through the eastern open space buffer for the purpose of public access, construction, and maintenance of the Arroyo Lane Primary Regional Trail and Woodmen Hills Secondary Regional Trail, respectively.

Recommended Motion (Sketch Plan Amendment):

The Park Advisory Board recommends that the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners include the following conditions when considering and/or approving Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan Amendment #3: (1) designate and provide to El Paso County a 25-foot trail easement along the south side of Arroyo Lane and adjacent water tanks that allows for public access, as well as construction and maintenance by El Paso County of the Arroyo Lane Primary Regional Trail, (2) designate and provide to El Paso County a 25-foot trail easement through the eastern open space buffer that allows for public access, as well as construction and maintenance by El Paso County of the Woodmen Hills Secondary Regional Trail, (3) the easements shall be shown on all forthcoming preliminary plans and final plats, and the aforementioned easements shall be dedicated to El Paso County on the forthcoming final plat(s), (4) fees in lieu of land dedication for regional and urban park purposes will be calculated upon review of forthcoming preliminary plans and final plats, and will be required at time of the recording of the forthcoming final plats. Park Lands Agreements may be an acceptable alternative to regional and urban park fees provided the agreements are approved by the County and executed prior to recording the forthcoming final plat(s).”

Black Forest South
Candidate Open
Space Area

Millard-Way
Salbeck Ln
Rogwick Hts



**Sterling Ranch Sketch
Plan Amendment**

**Sterling Ranch Sketch Plan
Amendment #3 Review**

-  Planned Parks By Other
-  Public Schools
-  Primary Regional Trail, Completed
-  Primary Regional Trail, Proposed
-  Proposed Bicycle Routes, Proposed
-  Secondary Regional Trail, Proposed
-  Colorado Springs Trail, Proposed
-  Major Roads
-  State Highways
-  Streets & Roads
-  Sketch Plan Amendment #3
-  Sterling Ranch
-  Parcels
-  Lakes / Reservoirs
-  Streams

