



Town of Erie Open Space and Trails Advisory Board

From: Town of Erie Open Space and Trails Advisory Board (OSTAB)

To: Todd Bjerkaas, Senior Planner, Community Development

Date: January 17, 2017

Subject: Erie Gateway South, Sketch Plan

Document Date: August 19, 2016

**Location: North of Highway 7, between County Line Rd & N. 119th
Street south of Arapahoe**

OSTAB has reviewed the package materials, compared them to Town planning documents, and prepared the following comments, questions, and recommendations for the Town's consideration in evaluating this project.

Open Space and the Natural Areas Inventory (NAI):

Discussion: There is a very important wetlands/marsh in the SE corner of this application; it is immediately west of County Line Road and north of CO Highway 7. Many entities have identified the significance of this natural area:

1. The Erie Comprehensive Plan categorizes it as "POS" (Parks/Public Open Space);
2. It is Site #99, high quality, in the Erie Natural Areas Inventory (NAI). The comments include "its connection to Coal Creek would be very ecologically beneficial";
3. Boulder County has declared it a Critical Wildlife Habitat (CWH); it is identified as "Powers Marsh, CWH #86";
4. In the annual Boulder County 2015 Community Open Space Requests, both Erie and Lafayette have identified it as a high priority for permanent open space protection;
5. In the Boulder County Audubon Society newsletter of Jan-Feb 2007, it is described as:
 - a. "one of the largest marshes along the Front Range";
 - b. "provides habitat for a variety of birds, including nesting habitat for American Bitterns. These reclusive marsh herons are designated as 'rare and declining' by the Boulder County Comprehensive Plan";
 - c. "One of only four recently active nesting sites in Boulder County for Northern Harriers, another 'rare and declining' bird".
6. The Aquatic Resource Delineation report in this application has determined that there are roughly 28.3 acres of wetlands, virtually all of which are jurisdictional (i.e. any modifications would require a permit from the Corps of Engineers).

The Environmental Stewardship section of the Narrative includes the following:

1. Environmental stewardship provides the fundamental concept for the Erie Gateway South Community;
2. This stewardship begins with the preservation of the area's hydrological function and sensitive habitat areas;
3. Environmental stewardship requires an integrated approach.

We are very pleased that these concepts have been incorporated by preserving Powers Marsh as dedicated open space. Sheet 1 identifies it as "min 30 acre open space preserve". Sheet 2 identifies it as OS-7, 39.42 acres. The Town's Unified Development Code (UDC), section 10.6.3, requires 17 acres of dedicated open space for every 1,000 new residents. Using the formula in that section, the required dedicated open space for the proposed 645 dwelling units is roughly 31 acres.

We did notice inconsistencies on Sheet 2 between the drawing and the Land Summary Chart:

1. OS-7:
 - a. Drawing: 39.42 acres;
 - b. Chart: 33.42 acres, use = open space/trail, ownership and maintenance = HOA/District;
 - c. Our evaluation:
 - i. Acreage inconsistent;
 - ii. Usage should be open space, wetland, trail
 - iii. Ownership and maintenance should be Town.
2. OS-8:
 - a. Drawing: potential cluster oil and gas site adjacent to existing County Line Rd;
 - b. Chart: use = open space/well site, ownership and maintenance = Town;
 - c. Our evaluation: the UDC does not permit well sites and associated buffers to be dedicated open space. It appears to us that that area should be owned and maintained by the HOA/District;
3. OS-9:
 - a. Drawing: narrow upland strip between the relocated County Line Rd and housing Tract PA-6;
 - b. Chart: use = open space/wetland, ownership and maintenance = Town;
 - c. Our evaluation:
 - i. Use: there are no wetlands in this Tract. Usage should be non dedicated open space;
 - ii. Ownership and maintenance should be HOA/District.

The proposed relocation of County Line Road to the west side of the wetlands provides an opportunity to "link" this important natural resource to the nearby Coal Creek natural corridor and town open space properties (Messersmith/Boele) to the east. The existing roadway on the east side of the wetlands/marsh cannot be totally abandoned, since it provides access to both a residence and the Town of Lafayette's water treatment facility. However, if the portion north of those 2 properties were abandoned (i.e. access would be exclusively from CO Highway 7), then there would be no vehicular traffic between the wetlands/marsh (OS-7) in this application, the Town open space properties, and the Coal Creek corridor. That would create a large protected natural area.

As described in paragraphs above, this wetlands/marsh is an exceptionally important natural resource. At present, it is reasonably isolated from human activity. On the east side, there is a

berm and single residential lot that shields this resource from the most of the noise and lights on County Line Road. On the southwest, there is a single residential property and barn. On the northwest and north, there are agricultural fields. We are materially concerned by the very close proximity of proposed housing Tract PA-6 to the western edge of the wetlands/marsh. That Tract will contain 47 lots, more than half of which will be on the east/north sides of the residential road i.e. adjacent to the wetlands/marsh. Sheet 1 seems to indicate that the rear of those lots will abut the wetlands. Runoff from pesticides/fertilizer on those lawns will materially degrade the wetlands. Lights and noise from the residences will also significantly impact this resource. That Tract is NOT consistent with an integrated approach to environmental stewardship. We therefore conclude that there should not be any residential lots between the relocated County Line Road and the wetlands. Instead, that area should be uplands open space.

Recommendation:

1. Permanently protect the important natural resource Powers Marsh by retaining Tract OS-7 as dedicated open space;
2. Avoid the risk of substantially degrading Powers Marsh by eliminating the street and residential lots in Tract PA-6;
3. Correct the inconsistencies (as described above) between the drawing and the Land Summary Chart on Sheet 2.

Spine Trail:

Discussion: The present version of the PROST (Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails) Master Plan does not address trails south of Arapahoe Rd; that is a significant omission. There are 645 proposed residences in this application. There is a potential for an even greater number of future new residences between the northern borders of this application and Arapahoe Rd. The existing Coal Creek Spine trail, which connects Erie to Lafayette, Broomfield and other cities to the southwest is nearby; it lies adjacent to Coal Creek, slightly east of the existing County Line Rd. On the west side of N. 119th St, there is the Lafayette dog park and Boulder County open space (which currently is not accessible to the public). Sheet 1 has blue dots which show the existing Coal Creek Spine Trail, and a proposed new east-west trail that would connect the Coal Creek Trail to the dog park area. We are strongly in favor of this new trail, and believe it should be constructed to Spine Trail requirements (details are in the PROST Master Plan).

Recommendations: Build the east-west trail shown on Sheet 1 as a Spine Trail.

Neighborhood Trails:

Discussion: Sheet 2 contains both the above described new Spine Trail and additional neighborhood trails along most perimeters. Since this application has a significant number of proposed residences (645), mobility and safety for pedestrians, bicyclists (particularly children), and other users will be enhanced if there are 8' perimeter trails around the entire property. See the recommendations below for details.

Anticipating future connectivity to the north, there should be an 8' trail in a landscaped buffer to a northern border.

Recommendations:

1. Add an 8' trail at the north side of Tract PA-1;
2. Extend the trail at the east side of Tract PA-2 to Tract OS-3 to the south;
3. Add an 8' trail at the north side of Tract PA-3;
4. Extend the trail on the west side of Tract PA-5 to Tract OS-5;
5. Add an 8' trail at the north side of Tract OS-5;
6. Add an 8' trail at the east side of Tract PA-5;
7. Add an 8' trail in a landscaped buffer in Tracts PA-8 and the adjacent OS-4.

Other Matters:

Discussion: The final section (#9) of the application contains multiple reports from consultants. There are differences between the Index and the documents:

1. Geological Report (9a) – document exists;
2. Native Tree and Vegetation Report (9b) – document missing;
3. Federal and State Listed Threatened and Endangered Species Report – not in Index;
4. Aquatic Resources Delineation Report (9c)– document exists;
5. Drainage Report (9d) – document exists;
6. Environmental Report (9e) – document exists;

Recommendations:

1. Include the Native Tree and Vegetation Report (9b);
2. Update the Index to include the Federal and State Listed Threatened and Endangered Species Report.

Please pass this referral letter to the Applicant, and appropriate town departments, boards, and commissions. Thank you for your attention to these matters. OSTAB is available to discuss any of the above in more detail as needed.

Sincerely,

Open Space and Trails Advisory Board

Phil Brink
Bob Braudes
Dawn Fraser
Monica Kash
Nicole Littmann
Ken Martin (Chair)
Joe Martinez