

## **To the Erie Town Council members:**

In our regular monthly meeting on February 9, 2026, the Open Space and Trails Advisory Board (OSTAB) reviewed the St. Scholastica pre-application conceptual design for a church and affordable housing on the property adjacent to Old Town, which was formerly the “Page property.” Following discussion, OSTAB members determined it was appropriate to provide our comments to the Town Council.

The pre-application is unique in that St. Scholastica does not own the Page property. The Town of Erie purchased the property in 2023 using approximately half TNAF and half federal ARPA grant funds. The property is not zoned for a church.

Previously, OSTAB reviewed three design options for Village at Coal Creek (VCC) affordable housing on the Page property. OSTAB concluded that all 3 options materially degraded the open space values. Thus, we did not express a preference for any of the three VCC conceptual designs. Instead, OSTAB recommended an expanded conceptual visioning of the property that includes an option for no development.

The conceptual plan provided by St. Scholastica is more expansive than any of the VCC designs.

Based on the scale provided with the plan, almost none of the green-colored areas identified as open space would qualify as dedicated open space, due to width and setback requirements.

- A maximum building height of 47 feet is indicated on the plan. However, it further indicates integral architectural elements would be excluded from this height restriction. The vertical relief from the irrigation ditch road – where a public trail is anticipated – to the lowest elevation on the property abutting Coal Creek is 36 vertical feet. Thus, the viewshed throughout the property would be extremely degraded by the structures.
- The plan includes two entrances on CR 1 ½, with a paved road looping through the 4.8-acre parcel identified as “Open Space or Town Parking.” The road would prevent historic pasture irrigation and grazing in this area and minimize the value of the open space.
- A building is located at the base of the existing pond dam and down-gradient of the unlined irrigation ditch. While the pond dam has been inspected and is considered safe, all unlined ponds and ditches seep. Thus, any construction at the base of the pond would either require trenching and tile drainage or lining / piping of the pond and irrigation ditch.
- The parking lot and detention basin encroach upon the Coal Creek riparian corridor and would eliminate the potential for a natural area in this space.
- The housing, parking lots, roads and detention pond effectively cover the property below the Cottonwood extension ditch, with the exception of the aforementioned 4.8-acre parcel on the north side, which is beneath the high voltage power lines.

In summary, the St. Scholastica development would destroy the attributes of the property for which it was purchased to preserve. The plan does not accommodate open space, natural areas, irrigated agriculture, a healthy riparian area, wildlife and bird habitat, floodplain buffering, viewshed protection, or a tranquil outdoor experience.

That OSTAB meeting was well-attended by citizens from the Northridge neighborhood and elsewhere. Northridge would be most affected by any development at the property, and the residents expressed universal opposition to the St. Scholastica plan. Concerns included traffic, safety, noise, lights, trash, destruction of natural areas and bird habitat, flooding, misalignment of the proposed use with the Town’s Comprehensive Plan and changing the community character in this area of town. Additionally, two letters were received; they are attached. Both letters recommended that this pre-application be rejected.

The Page property represents a unique opportunity for Erie to preserve for current and future generations many unique and valuable open space assets in one parcel. It advances several goals for open space and trails set forth in the town's Unified Development Code (UDC) and the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails (PROST) documents, including:

- Sweeping views of the Flatirons, Front Range and Indian Peaks.
- Adjacency to Coal Creek riparian area and spine trail.
- Adjacency to Reliance Park and existing open space to the east and south.
- Two active irrigation ditches run through the property.
- Historic agricultural irrigation, forage production and grazing.
- A large pond which provides habitats for waterfowl, herons, hawks, owls and aquatic life.
- An ideal trail connection between the Northridge neighborhood and Coal Creek / Old Town using the upper irrigation ditch (Cottonwood Extension) road.
- A floodplain buffer
- A peaceful outdoor setting that provides for a contemplative and renewing experience.

OSTAB has concluded that the unique location and amenities of this site are irreplaceable and cannot be found elsewhere in Erie, particularly close to Old Town. Thus, OSTAB strongly recommends that the St. Scholastica pre-application be rejected and NOT proceed further.

### **What's next?**

1. OSTAB strongly believes that it is impossible to preserve the open space values on the Page property if locations identified in the Digs study as "buildable land" contain several structures. Therefore, we commit to recommending one or more options that would resolve this problem. Our goal is to complete this task during Q2.
2. Additionally, we are aware that one or more parcels on our open space acquisition priority list are likely suitable for multiple uses: open space preservation, Spine Trail extension, and affordable housing. Since this task would encompass activity beyond our traditional role of advising on open space and trails, we await specify guidance whether we should proceed.

Sincerely,

The OSTAB Board

Ken Martin, Chair

Christine Felz, Vice-Chair

Phil Brink

Tim Payne

Bill Rigler

Joe Swanson

Dave Tazik