



Town of New Castle
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Memorandum

To: Mayor and Council
Subject: Council Agenda – BLD Sketch Plan Application
From: David Reynolds
Date: 08/30/22

The purpose of this agenda item is to review and provide feedback on a *Sketch Plan Application* for Castle Valley Ranch Planning Areas 8 and 9 (PA 8 & 9) in Castle Valley Ranch.

Staff has been working with the BLD Group for several months, and along with the Planning and Zoning Commission, has provided comment on BLD's initial development plans. Based on feedback provided, BLD has made adjustments to the plans and is ready to present the latest version for Council's Sketch Plan review. While no approvals are made at this step, constructive feedback is expected, and will be taken under consideration by the applicant.



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Staff Report

**Castle Valley Ranch PA 8 & 9
Sketch Plan
Town Council – September 6th, 2022**

Report Compiled: 9/1/2022

Project Information

Name of Applicant: BLD Group

Applicant's Mailing Address: 1500 Cordova Road, Suite 300
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316

Phone/Email: 954-578-6008/gbaumann@bldgroup.com

Property Owner: CTS Investments, LLC

Owner Mailing Address 343 Dakota Blvd.
Boulder, CO 90304

Legal Description: EXCEPT A TR OF LAND CONT 21.53 AC +/- AS DESC IN PLAT #746709 & SWD REC #746710 Section: 30 Township: 5 Range: 90 PARCEL KNOWN AS OPTION PROPERTY AS PER CVR SUB-DIV EXEMPTION AND ALTA/ACSM LAND SURVEY PLAT

Proposed Use: 136 rental townhomes in 29 buildings with clubhouse/pool

Bulk Density: 2.3 units/acre

Open Space: 53% undisturbed open space; 78% total including common areas;

Underlying Zoning: Residential

Surrounding Zoning: Single family residential homes (N Wild Horse Dr.);
Open Space (VIX Park, LCR Golf Course)
Mixed use zoning (TC Midwest, LLC)
Residential zoning (CVR & LCR)

I Introduction

The sketch plan is the first of three application steps required for new planned unit developments (“PUD”) & subdivisions. The sketch plan review assesses initial compliance with town codes, provisions for utilities and infrastructure, substantial conformance to the comprehensive plan, and adverse impacts to the town. The review provides the applicant preliminary, nonbinding feedback from staff, the Planning Commission (P&Z) and Town Council before significant expenses are incurred. Though no approvals are made at this initial step, constructive feedback can be expected. On April 25th, 2022 the applicant submitted a sketch plan for Castle Valley Ranch (CVR) planning areas 8 and 9 (PA 8 & 9). The plan was reviewed by P&Z on June 8th, 2022.

II. 6/8/22 Planning Commission Comment

The P&Z meeting provide useful feedback from P&Z and discussion with the applicant. Some of the talking points included:

- Trail connectivity and maintenance responsibilities;
- Property management;
- Scope of rent restricted units;
- Right-of-way design and dead-end streets;
- Street design for North Wildhorse Dr;
- Parking for VIX Ranch Park;
- Anticipated use of the mixed-use parcel adjacent to Kathryn Senor;
- Public/private use of the clubhouse, pool, and courts;
- Constraints of topography on building and road layouts;
- Architectural diversification using building styles, articulation, and color;
- Preservation of viewsheds;
- Project phasing;

From these themes the applicant submitted a revised proposal for Council.

III Staff Review:

Throughout the application process, the application will be reviewed pursuant to the criteria outlined in the Municipal Code (MC) for planned unit developments (PUDs) and subdivisions. An application shall demonstrate conformity to the following criteria:

- Consistency with the comprehensive plan;
- Compatibility of proposed zoning, density, and general development plan to neighboring land uses and applicable town code provisions;
- Availability of town services from public works, fire, and police;
- Vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation; and

- Preservation of the natural character of the land.

1) Is the proposal consistent with the comprehensive plan?

According to CVR PUD regulations (MC 17.104.010):

“The purpose and intent of the Castle Valley Ranch PUD zone district regulations are to:

- A. Encourage variety in the physical development pattern of Castle Valley Ranch;
- B. Provide a variety of housing densities greater than would be normally possible;
- C. Encourage the use of a more creative approach to the development of land;
- D. Encourage a more efficient, aesthetic and desirable use of open space;
- E. Encourage a more efficient use of energy through solar orientation, native vegetation, and water conservation;
- F. Provide a variety of dwelling and building designs;
- G. Provide high standards of development and provide amenities appropriate to the densities involved in the project;
- H. Provide an integrated open space system throughout areas as outlined on the Castle Valley Ranch PUD zoning plan as well as throughout individual districts;
- I. Provide for a variety of housing types in order to best meet the housing demands of all age groups;
- J. Maintain and preserve the general alignment of drainage ways for aesthetic, energy and functional purposes;
- K. Provide pedestrian networks throughout the open space districts as well as throughout individual districts thereby providing an integrated network throughout the entire development;
- L. Provide landscape areas and tree plantings throughout the entire development.”

The preceding planning regulations are consistent with the major elements of the currently adopted Comprehensive Plan (“CP”), itself derived from public input such as surveys, stakeholder interviews, meetings, and Steering Committee contributions. Applicants are expected to demonstrate substantial conformity with the comprehensive plan in all applications (**Policy CG-1B, pg. 50**). The checklist below, though not exhaustive, provides a tool for reviewers to assess conformance. The application therefore should:

- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place and quality of life.
- Demonstrate that individual project fits into a fully-balanced community land use structure.
- Ensure a mix of uses that complement the existing New Castle land-use patterns.
- Create walkable communities with non-vehicular interconnection between use areas.
- Guarantee a balance of housing types that support a range of affordability.
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, critical environmental areas, and wildlife habitat.
- Encourage economic development and supporting hard & soft infrastructure.
- Concentrate development in ways which provide efficient and cost-effective services.

According to the packet (**Exhibit A, pg. F**), the proposal aligns with a number of New

Castle goals and values. Key to the development is its focus on place-making (**Policy CG-5A**). It is the intent of the builder to create a space that promotes a quality of life commensurate with community, outdoor recreation, and sustainability. Generous open spaces, interconnected trail systems, and a community/recreation center with sport courts contribute to this quality.

Trails/Open Space/Recreation: On page M of the submittal, the existing trails map demonstrates fidelity with proposed trails shown on page J. With minor realignments and consolidation the application shows three trails starting from the VIX Park leading east to the locally dubbed “Sunset Trail” adjacent to Lakota Canyon Ranch and north towards public lands. The intent is for the new trail experience to be seamless with trails already prized by residents (**Goal RT-1, pg. 55**). Preservation of the Sunset Trail corridor will also support existing wildlife habitat. Other walking trails are dispersed throughout the development’s interior as shown on page J. The new trails and sidewalks will also give residents non-vehicular access to the mixed-use parcel southwest of the development. The hope there is that a future mixed-use development will provide goods and services accessible by alternative means of transportation.

The private clubhouse with pool will function as a community gathering point similar to the Lakota recreation center. The indoor fitness facility and sport courts, an already popular amenity elsewhere New Castle, should be well received by new tenants. The pool at 7,500 gallons is diminutive in scale compared to Lakota’s 120,000 gallon operation. Nevertheless, the pool can function more as a place for therapy and relaxation.

At least two pocket parks are situated within the interior open space areas (**Exhibit A, pg. J**). These amenities are valued, and often underestimated, assets to a neighborhood as gathering places directly adjacent to backyards (**Policy Post-2D, pg. 60**). Young kids can play independently in these areas within a safe distance to their homes, dogs/owners can go for quick walks, or families can recreate together without having to drive. VIX Park is also within walking distance to all units.

Environmental Impact: New Castle is committed to preserving the natural environment and recognizes the potential negative impacts of new development. The town will work with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and the applicant to identify and protect critical environmental resources (**Goal EN-1, pg. 65**). Though CPW defers comment until the preliminary stage, the areas north and east of the outer ring of townhomes are recognized as year-long habitat for various birds and mammals. It will be important to minimize conflicts by prohibiting dogs off-leash, minimizing light trespass, preserving native vegetation, and/or limiting fences in certain areas. In some cases, added landscape buffers in certain locations may offset these impacts with enhanced vegetation and terrain features.

New Castle also endorses “green building” which generally means minimizing resource consumption while maximizing use of renewable energy (**Goal EN-7, pg. 67**). All buildings will be expected to comply with the rigorous demands of the town’s adopted energy code. In addition, solar energy collection, high-efficiency appliances, and electrical vehicle charging capacity are all commonplace measures that should be considered in discussions about sustainability. It will be important for the applicant to discuss how green building measures are included in the proposal as the application progresses.

Raw water has been contemplated by the applicant as the means to irrigate landscaping (**Exhibit A, pg. G**). Raw water is non-potable water which bypasses the town’s treatment

facility thereby reducing the energy for processing. The applicant would also receive a 25% reduction in tap fees as a result of implementation. Opting for raw water is ultimately an economical and sustainability win for all.

Affordability: The rental aspect of the community is another unique attribute. Rental communities provide a fully managed property for tenants who do not have the time nor inclination to fuss with general repairs and upkeep. Rental communities also provide a way for retirees to downsize in communities dominated by larger single-family homes and a way for younger families to participate in communities in which they may otherwise be priced-out. The units include (**Exhibit A, pg. H**) two bedrooms (10 units), three bedrooms (110), and four bedrooms (16) to allow for a wide occupancy demographic. The applicant speculates that the target income demographic for these units are 120% area median income (AMI). From the last census, New Castle's current AMI sits at \$91,659¹. Assuming that "affordable housing" refers to no more than 30% of household income used for housing expenses, this would bring rents to \$2,750/unit maximum. For some context, this is roughly equivalent to a mortgage of \$550,000 at a 5.5% rate. In conversations, the applicant has been hospitable the idea of a limited number of deed restricted units for employees in the community. Reasonably priced units for the property management's staff may be considered as well. The Commission is encouraged to collaborate with the applicant during the review process to help achieve these goals (**Policy HO-2A, pg. 59**).

2) Does the proposal demonstrate compatibility with the proposed zoning, density, and general development plan to neighboring land uses and applicable town code provisions

Land Use: The applicant has elected Castle Valley Ranch MF-1 zoning. According to MC 17.104.080 MF-1 is a "multifamily townhouse and patio home district allowing for creative approaches to development with housing alternatives that are sensitive to existing and surrounding land uses." The following land uses are permitted by right:

- Attached dwelling units in structures containing more than two units;
- Public parks, playgrounds and related accessory structures 5,000 sq. ft. or less;
- Parking facilities;
- Recreation facilities including, but not limited to health facilities, hobby rooms, activity rooms, meeting rooms, pools, gymnasiums, ball fields, tennis or basketball courts, volleyball courts, and any building of fields or play surfaces;
- Pedestrian and bicycle trails;
- Open space and parks

All uses currently proposed for the property are therefore permitted by right.

The Master PUD allows for the following density standards:

- Minimum lot area of 2,200sf;
- Minimum lot area per dwelling unit of 2,200sf;
- Maximum building height of 35';
- Minimum front yard setback 18';
- Minimum side yard setback of 0';
- Minimum rear yard setback of 10';
- Minimum distance between buildings of 10';

¹ 120% and higher AMI was identified by the Greater Roaring Fork Valley Housing Study in 2019 as the housing type needed most by New Castle.

As shown in the submittal packet lot areas will exceed 2,200sf per unit. Setbacks will be provided at the preliminary application.

Parking: The purpose of off-street parking in the PUD “is to ensure that safe and convenient off-street parking is provided to serve the requirements of all land uses in the Castle Valley Ranch PUD and to avoid congestion in the streets” (MC 17.104.100). As shown on page 3 the following town standards apply:

- Duplex, tri-plex or four-plex – Two spaces per dwelling unit;
- Five or more dwelling units in one structure – One and one-half spaces per dwelling unit;
- Places of public assembly (recreation center) – A parking area equal in size to floor area of the building;

Per the municipal code (**Exhibit A, pg. E**), required off-street parking totals 222 spaces. The proposal provides for a mix of one and two car garages with attached driveways. Of the one-car garage units, all but 10 will have two-car driveways to help mitigate concerns with one-car garages. This will increase off-street ‘driveway’ parking to 262 spaces. In addition, 50 perimeter parking spaces are shown at locations along streets for guest or overflow parking. Together, the 488 total off-street parking spaces associated with residential units will exceed the required parking by 266 spaces. There are also 21 bonus spaces for “seasonal and recreational vehicles” as required by the code for buildings with five or more units (MC 17.104.100). The clubhouse parking lot will serve up to 30 vehicles. Less the clubhouse and recreational parking, there are 3.6 off-street parking spaces available per unit.

3) Is there availability of town services from public works, fire, and police?

Police: The application anticipates an increase of approximately 354 new residents at build-out (**Exhibit A, pg. G**). There is no indication at this point that this increase would compromise police service. An additional police FTE would usually only be considered if the population of the entire town was anticipated to increase by 1,000.

Fire: In light of the current multi-year drought and the ongoing expansion of the wildland-urban interface, Colorado River Fire Rescue now stresses improving the resiliency of structures and the defensible space around them (**Goal EN-8C, pg. 67**). Replacing conventional materials with those considered fire resistant, particularly in buildings along the edge of the development, buys time for firefighters during a wildland incident and slows fire spreading outward from its source. Mandating defensible space in the HOA design criteria commensurate with the recommendations of the Colorado State Forest Service could be part of a successful management plan. In discussions with the applicant, the Fire Marshal recommends emergency access roads added to the north of the development. One road should provide access for emergency vehicles adjacent to perimeter lots in the development where feasible. The second road would connect from the first and terminate at the Lakota Links cart path. The unpaved road would be comprised of compacted gravel or road base. The roads would be available as public trails at all times.

Public Works: The CVR PUD is approved for 1,400 residential units and 100,000sf of commercial space. These totals were primarily the result of calculations performed on the basis of water dedicated from Elk Creek. At present (6/2/22) the PUD has 866 units plus

nine additional under construction and no commercial space. With 136 new units the PUD is still well short of the 1,400 units allocated. The current sewer treatment plant can accommodate the full build-out of both CVR and Lakota.

Streets: Per comment from the Public Works Director, the town contemplates maintenance of all future streets once all public improvements are approved. After the P&Z sketch meeting, the applicant re-designed non-through streets as cul-de-sacs rather than dead-ends in response to staff recommendations (**Exhibit A, pg. J**). The original street design at P&Z also showed an initial 50 foot ROW for all streets with attached sidewalks and 16 foot drive lanes. In collaboration with Public Works and the Fire Department, streets were modified slightly to improve the pedestrian experience and snow maintenance. Currently the road section (**Exhibit A, pg. Q**) includes 5 foot landscape buffers, a single parking lane, and 10 foot drive lanes.

Open Space: Per comment from the Public Works Director, all proposed open space and natural trails, proposed as a town wide amenity, should be identified on the plat and maintained by the Town. Interior trails, pocket parks, and courts are intended mainly for the residents and would therefore be maintained by the master association.

Snow Storage: Snow storage locations will mainly include the landscape buffers along streets. This design is in response to the recommendations of the public works director. Snow storage sites, in aggregate, shall have a functional area of at least 15% of the paved area inclusive of driveways and sidewalks. All snow storage areas shall be contiguous to the right-of-way. All designated snow storage locations shall be identified on the plat. Alternative methods for snow maintenance may be considered.

Raw Water: Raw water is available at VIX Park and is expected to irrigate all common areas within the PUD. The raw water infrastructure will need to be extended with the installation of the N Wildhorse road connection.

4) *Is there adequate vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation?*

Vehicular Circulation: Road, sidewalk, and trail design is a critical component to any new development in New Castle. To optimize circulation, the applicant is committed to connecting N Wild Horse Dr. between Alder Ave. to Castle Valley Blvd. This effort will complete the section currently underdeveloped along the east side of VIX Park. Of note, nearly 1/5th of this new road section is outside the applicant's property boundary. However, because of the importance of circulation and public safety, the applicant has agreed to work with the neighboring property owners, particularly CVR Investors, to complete this link. Per (**Exhibit A, pg. S**) connector will match the existing right-of-way design, including detached sidewalks with landscaping. Street designs are discussed in Section 3) above.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Circulation: The applicant has made a point not to disrupt the existing trail between VIX Park and the BLM land. A pedestrian culvert between buildings 13 & 14 (**Exhibit A, pg. J**) will allow uninterrupted passage of bicycle and hiker traffic below the street. Moreover, streets are purposely not connected through the design's interior in order to preserve an idyllic experience for trails users. From the site plan, the applicant has demonstrated a willingness to keep cul-de-sacs from interfering with trails. All interior open space areas will be accessible by trail.

5) Is the natural character of the land preserved?

Topography: The site plan (**Exhibit A, pg. J**) follows the sloping topography downhill from northeast to southwest. Each building block generally steps down with the slope. Since building lengths are significant (120ft to 171ft) vertical terracing of units (vis-à-vis buildings), in addition to horizontal offsets around street curves, is suggested. Vertical displacement between units helps to limit cut-and-fill and reduce the need for retaining walls which are expected in numerous locations. Such designs are also more visually pleasing on rolling terrain. Engineering will consider if the grade challenges for streets necessitates the proposed building lengths.

The ridgeline associated with Sunset Trail to the west of the development is a prominent visual feature for current New Castle residents. Per **Policy EN-6B, pg. 67**, visual access to the ridgeline should be confirmed by the applicant. Viewshed protection is vital, particularly for onlookers off of CVB and North Wildhorse. In **Exhibit A, pg. AE**, the applicant provides a helpful analysis particularly of these perspectives. The view angles demonstrate that some visual obstruction of the ridge bordering the Lakota is to be expected. To compensate for the visual disturbance staff recommends increased landscape buffering near the south end of the development. P&Z also suggests a story pole be erected in a specific location as an onsite visual aid to assist the public's comprehension of the views.

IV Staff Recommendations

1. The public works director recommends that snow storage sites, in aggregate, shall have a functional area of at least 15% of the paved area inclusive of driveways and sidewalks. All snow storage areas shall be contiguous to the right-of-way. All designated snow storage locations shall be identified on the plat.
2. Consider diversifying buildings with varying styles, articulation, and color. Allow buildings to conform more naturally to topography where feasible.
3. Consider green building initiatives per the town comprehensive plan (Goal EN-7).
4. Demonstrate that all street intersections shall meet at right angles.
5. Provide "story-poles" to demonstrate building heights do not obscure viewsheds in the direction of Sunset Trail.
6. Demonstrate that *all* lighting will limit light trespass. Parking lot lighting should be on timers to reduce lighting at night time while maintaining security lighting as needed.
7. Consider a limited number of rent reduced units for local emergency responders, town support personnel, school district employees, or employees in the town.
8. Terminate interior trails at streets rather than parking spaces.
9. Provide fire apparatus road along north and west property boundaries per recommendation of the fire marshal. Consider an additional access road to the Lakota Links golf cart path.

10. Provide fire resistant construction per fire marshal recommendations (pending).
11. The applicant shall comply with all recommendations of the Town Public Works Director and Town Engineer set forth in their letters dated June 1, 2022. The applicant shall comply with all recommendations of the Fire Marshal set forth in the letter dated June 6, 2022.
12. Specify on plat open space to be maintained by the HOA and open space maintained by the Town.
13. Provide a conceptual landscape plan to staff for each phase illustrating size, type and location of plant materials and an irrigation plan, if applicable. Landscaping shall incorporate native grasses and plants that minimize maintenance, moving, and irrigating. The landscaping plan shall be approved by the Parks Department.
14. Provide a water sampling station per the recommendations of the Town Engineer and Public Works Director.
15. Raw water service from CVR Filing 5 shall be extended to the proposed development and terminate with CVR Filing 10.
16. Each townhome unit shall be provided with separate water and sewer service directly from the main. Gas and electric service must run directly to each unit from the building exterior rather than through crawlspaces or attic spaces.

V Next Steps

Comments and recommendations made by staff and the planning commission should inform future revisions made to the application prior to the preliminary application.

After Council review, but prior to the preliminary plan application, the applicant shall conduct a community open house meeting to present the proposal to the public. The applicant has scheduled this meeting for Wednesday, September 7th at 4:30pm to 7:00pm in the Community Center.

The sketch plan review conducted pursuant to this Section 17.100.040 will remain in effect for one (1) year from the date of Council's review. If the applicant does not submit a preliminary PUD plan application within said year, the applicant may be required to submit a new sketch plan application before filing a preliminary plan application. Similarly, if applicant's preliminary PUD plan application includes substantial and material (e.g., proposes new uses, higher density development, new or additional variances, etc.) changes from the original sketch plan, the town administrator may require the applicant to conduct a new sketch plan review.

VI Sketch Plan Exhibits:

- A. Sketch Plan Submittal – August 30, 2022
- B. Comments from Public Works Director – June 1, 2022
- C. Street Design from the Public Works Director – June 1, 2022

- D. Comments from Town Engineer – June 1, 2022
- E. Comments from Fire Marshal – June 6, 2022