

CASTLE PINES

2026.3-9

GTK/GenRE

Project facing resistance

Douglas County city's leaders to decide on annexation that would add 3,650 homes



Caroline Domb, Lisa Woods and Donna Cook, residents of Castle Pines, oppose a plan to annex 800 acres into Castle Pines in Douglas County, pictured here on Thursday. PHOTOS BY RJ SANGOSTI — THE DENVER POST

(1)



The project would add nearly 3,650 new homes to Castle Pines.

BY JOHN AGUILAR

JAGUILAR@DENVERPOST.COM

A movement to put the brakes on a proposed 3,650-home mixed-use project near Castle Pines is gaining steam in a suburban county that has been on a growth tear for decades.

Residents in this well-heeled Douglas County city, along with the mayors of nearby Parker and Castle Rock, say the 800-acre Crowsnest annexation request would pave the way for an overly dense development. It's a plan that they don't see as fitting with the area's bucolic character — for an area that isn't even contiguous to Castle Pines.

"The sense of community we have on the east and west side (of Interstate 25) will be fractured," said Donna Cook, a Castle Pines resident for the last 18 months. "I started the opposition to this because I didn't see a benefit to the residents."

Meanwhile, negotiations between the developer and Castle Pines continue in real time. Late last week, VT Crowfoot Valley Landco LLC adjusted the parameters of the project to make it more palatable to the city, reducing the number of homes proposed from nearly 4,000 to 3,646 — all single-family homes. It also nearly doubled the amount of open space it would dedicate on the site.

The developer plans to formally file its newest proposal — its fifth revision thus far — with the city on Tuesday.

Last week, the group People Against Annexing Crowsnest launched a website against the project. It describes the property, which is at the southwest corner of Crowfoot Valley and South Chambers roads in unincorporated Douglas County, as a “remote, disconnected island that would burden existing taxpayers with unsustainable service costs.”

VT Crowfoot Valley Landco, a limited liability company formed in September, shares the Englewood mailing address of Ventana Capital, a company that’s no stranger to development fights in Castle Pines.

The developer is proposing a “flagpole” annexation, using Crowfoot Valley Road as the connecting conduit to physically link Castle Pines and the site where it wants to build — an approach that the company described in a February news release as “a well-established path in Colorado law.”

But flagpole annexation efforts have faced a rough patch in recent months.

Last year, Colorado Springs voters rejected a flagpole annexation for a planned 6,500-home development, dubbed Karman Line, over concerns about an adequate water supply. And last month, a developer pitching a flagpole annexation into Palmer Lake to accommodate the construction of a Buc-ee’s travel center on I-25 — just south of the Douglas County line — withdrew its application following vocal community opposition to the project.

The Castle Pines City Council late last month approved a resolution finding the Crowsnest property eligible for annexation under state law. A vote on the annexation itself isn’t expected until late April.

Until then, opponents vow to fight — including with a possible ballot measure that would attempt to reverse any city approval. Lacy Bradley, a 3-year resident who has been helping spearhead opposition to the annexation, said Castle Pines is a low-density community with an emphasis on the peace and quiet that comes with plentiful open space.

“It all boils down to: It doesn’t meet Castle Pines standards,” Bradley said of Crowsnest. “I think it erodes the character of the city.”

Neighbors in the city of 16,000 also worry about where Crowsnest’s water will come from, the traffic it will generate and the development’s impacts on wildlife.

Ventana Capital was at the heart of a fight in Castle Pines a couple of years ago, when residents pushed the council to turn down the company’s attempt to build a McDonald’s in the upscale town. Ventana sued the city, and last year, a judge upheld Castle Pines’ rejection of the fast-food giant.

The developer says its new project, now at 4.9 dwelling units per acre, would be less dense than Parker’s Looking Glass neighborhood directly to the north.

“Nearby projects like Looking Glass faced public concerns about wildlife, water, traffic and density that closely mirror what’s being raised about Crowsnest today,” Ventana’s Dan Williams wrote in an email response to questions sent by The Denver Post. “Parker worked through those concerns in a thorough public process and ultimately approved Looking Glass.”

Crowsnest, Williams said, wouldn’t be an “isolated subdivision,” since it’s “surrounded on three sides by existing and approved development, with a planned four-lane arterial bisecting the site.”

“In this case, the Crowsnest property lies less than a half mile from the existing Castle Pines boundary at its closest point, so it is already part of the same development corridor as The Canyons,” he said.

The Canyons, a 5,000-home development on the east side of I-25 in Castle Pines that is about half complete, generated similar pushback nearly a decade ago when it was getting underway, with concerns about traffic and

wildlife corridors.

The developer points to an economic modeling report from financial services firm D.A. Davidson that concluded Crowsnest could generate \$650 million in revenue for Castle Pines over the next 40 years. That includes \$263 million in projected sales tax revenue. The project will feature about 120 acres devoted to commercial uses.

It's not clear whether those economic impact numbers would change as a result of alterations made to the plan late last week.

Parker Mayor Joshua Rivero said Crowsnest, by its proximity, will significantly impact his town — and not for the good.

Traffic from Crowsnest's homes will flood Parker's southern street network, he said. Because the project was originally slated to have just 70 acres of open space — less than 10% of the total property acreage — Rivero said Crowsnest residents would inevitably slip over the town line and use Parker's parks and green spaces "without paying their way."

The developer bumped up its open space dedication at the site to 132 acres late last week.

"If this is built, these roads suddenly fail," Rivero said, noting the careful planning Parker undertook in fostering its own growth. "It directly impacts all of us, and we want Castle Pines to understand what they're putting on our back step."

Castle Rock Mayor Jason Gray also weighed in last month with a letter to Castle Pines' elected leaders. Aside from concerns about where Crowsnest would get its water — Parker Water and Sanitation District told Castle Pines last month that it "is not ready and willing to serve the Crowsnest development" without more project details — Gray worries about impacts to his town's "already burdened" Founders Parkway and Colorado 86 interchange.

"This traffic, which will never touch the rest of Castle Pines, will significantly create traffic safety and congestion concerns for Castle Rock," he wrote.

Williams told The Post that the developers envision more roads for the Crowsnest site, including a thoroughfare dubbed Canyonside Boulevard that would connect Crowfoot Valley Road to The Canyons — and eventually to I-25.

"Together, these connections place Crowsnest within a broader network of planned corridors between Castle Pines and Crowfoot Valley," he said.

For Irene Bonham, who lives due east of the proposed development in Parker's Trails at Crowfoot Valley neighborhood, Crowsnest would literally be across the street.

Bonham, who is running for Douglas County commissioner, acknowledges the irony of resistance to new growth from communities that have experienced their own explosive growth in recent decades. Parker, for instance, went from 3,000 residents in the late 1980s to 72,000 today, while Castle Rock's population is fast approaching 100,000, up from fewer than 10,000 in 1990.

But she can't help feeling like something is being lost.

"We have elk herds here, we have bald eagles — what would be the impact to them?" she said. "At some point, we're starting to lose that distinction that made this area intriguing in the first place."