



# J. VOLK CONSULTING, INC.

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June 8, 2011

Abra Nusser  
Planning Department  
City of McKinney  
221 N. Tennessee Street  
McKinney, Texas 75070

This document was received by the Planning Department on June 8, 2011.

## RE: Letter of Intent - Preliminary-Final Plat - Stone Hollow

Dear Abra,

As per the requirements of your Plat Application Guidelines, we are submitting this Letter of Intent for Stone Hollow (formerly Silverado Estates). We offer the following information for your consideration:

### Site Data

Subject Property Area: 83.28 acres  
Current Zoning: REC Residential District - Single Family Detached Standard Lot  
Project Location: Northeast quadrant of the intersection of Alma Road and Silverado Trail  
Proposed Use: Single-family residential and open space  
Single-family Lots: 354  
Common Area Lots: 11  
Purpose of Common Areas: Amenity Center, recreation, open space, landscaping and screening

### Right-of-way Variance

The preliminary-final plat reflects a variance on the right-of-way widths for type A and B streets. The reduced width is applied to the parkway only; the pavement width conforms to the Street Design Manual. The proposed cross-sections are shown on the Pedestrian and Amenity exhibit included with the preliminary-final plat submittal. Our justification of this request based on a number of factors.

1. Conformance to REC Guidelines. The plan we have presented conforms to, and in some instances, exceeds REC guidelines in a number of important areas including:

REC Criteria	Provision Made
10% of streets shall be Type A	Approximately 15% of streets are Type A, based on linear footage
90% of homes shall be within 1,320 feet of interior open space	94% of homes are within 1,320 feet of the amenity center area
Streets and blocks promote pedestrian activity	Street layout includes traffic circles, enhanced concrete cross-walks at key intersections, sidewalks and street trees provided on both sides of all streets
Minimum 5% of the land area should be devoted to interior open space	5.4% interior open space provided
Minimum 5-ft wide sidewalks along Type A streets	6-ft sidewalks provided along Type A streets and around community green
Smaller lots should be located nearer to the community green	Complied

Conformance to REC Guidelines (continued)

REC Criteria	Provision Made
Developers should confer with the appropriate school district to locate schools within walking distance of neighborhoods	From the project's inception, we have worked closely with Fisd to integrate their proposed school into Stone Hollow and provide for improved access and circulation
Schools should be located within 1/2 mile of the majority of dwelling units	98% of lots are within <u>1/4</u> mile of the Fisd school site
Pedestrian paths shaded with trees	Street Trees will be provided on all streets
Plan should promote energy conservation	Majority of lots oriented north-south to help reduce cooling costs
Curb return radii should be 10 to 15 feet to reduce walking distance across streets	Our plan currently reflects curb return radii per the street design manual; however, we are willing to reduce these to 15 to conform to the REC if staff prefers
Crosswalks	Enhanced colored concrete shall be provided at key intersections along Type A streets
Amenities	A neighborhood pool/amenity center is planned in the central open space area

2. Pedestrian Oriented Elements: Stone Hollow has been designed to be a pedestrian friendly environment and includes:
- a. 6-ft wide sidewalks along Type A Streets, at connections to 10-ft wide City hike and bike trail, and around community green
  - b. Shaded sitting area at Entry Plaza adjacent to Alma and within community green
  - c. Street trees

It is also worth noting that the provision of 6-ft sidewalks along our Type A streets will create an appealing alternative route for users of the 10-ft hike and bike trail along Silverado Trail and Alma Road. Pedestrians will prefer the route through the neighborhood and away from the higher traffic thoroughfares.

3. REC Street Design Principles: The orderly and efficient movement of vehicular traffic has traditionally been the primary emphasis in roadway and transportation design. Many of the accepted design standards relating to elements such as street widths, horizontal curvature and design speed reflect this focus. However, with recent trends towards multi-modal transportation design, some of these standards are being reevaluated to give greater consideration to pedestrian safety and comfort. The REC guidelines reflect some of these principals. For example:
- a. Page 38, Item 2.a.ii indicates that Type A streets shall be "narrow streets with narrow curb turning radii."
  - b. Page 44, Item 3.a.v indicates that curb return radii for minor collectors and local streets shall be 10 to 15 feet. This is in contrast to the Street Design Manual minimum radius of 25 feet.
  - c. Page 48, Item c.i indicates that major local two-way streets should have a maximum right-of-way of 60 feet. The clear implication of this provision is that a lesser right-of-way width is permissible, otherwise it would be stated as a minimum or defined number.
  - d. Item c.i also provides for maximum pavement and lane widths.
  - e. The horizontal alignment of roadways in the REC also differs from City standards. For example, Collin-McKinney Parkway is identified on the City's Master Thoroughfare Plan as a Greenway Arterial. The minimum centerline radius for this roadway classification per the Street Design Manual is 1,050, which is based on a design speed of 45 mph. However, the portion of this

street that is within Craig Ranch, has a centerline radius of less than 50 feet. This dramatic departure from the standard reflects REC's emphasis on slower vehicle speeds and pedestrian safety and comfort.

4. Traffic Calming. Central to creating a pedestrian oriented environment is the reduction of vehicle speeds. Studies have shown that the posted speed limit has little effect on the 80th percentile speeds. Therefore, reducing traffic speeds must be accomplished through other "traffic calming" elements. Our plan provides several such measures:
  - a. Traffic circles - These force motorists to slow down through the intersection. In particular, the traffic circle at the northwest corner of the school site will reduce the through-movement speeds and discourage speeding along Stone Hollow Parkway adjacent to the school.
  - b. Intersection spacing - The number of intersecting streets along a given roadway effect average speeds. Where intersections are more closely spaced, drivers tend to reduce speeds as they become more aware of potential cross-traffic. The Stone Hollow street network, which is characterized by intersections generally spaced between 250 and 500 feet accomplishes this.
  - c. Parkway Design - It has been documented that narrower streets calm traffic. But this principle applies not only to the paved width, but the parkways as well. Structures, trees and other improvements in closer proximity to the traveled way tend to cause motorists to drive more slowly.
  - d. Neck-downs - reducing the paved width at intersections at intersections is a commonly used traffic calming measure. However, neck-downs may adversely affect orderly traffic movements around the school during peak traffic periods. While not currently shown on our plan, we are willing to include neck-downs at all or some intersections. We will defer to staff as to the appropriate application of this concept.
  - e. Cross-walks - we are proposing enhanced patterned concrete crosswalks at key intersections. The visual contrast created by this element alerts motorists to the possible presence of pedestrians.
5. School Safety. Peak traffic volumes in Stone Hollow will be concurrent with school drop-off and pick-up times. During those periods, reducing traffic speeds and providing for safe pedestrian movements is most critical. Our proposed street cross-sections will contribute to these needs.
6. Prior Precedent. Because portions of the REC guidelines are a "form-based" code, the application of some of its principles can be subjective. For that reason, there is value in looking at how these principles have been applied to other projects within the REC. The street and right-of-way widths we are proposing are the same as what was constructed in Craig Ranch North. Because of the many similarities between Craig Ranch North and Stone Hollow, we believe it is entirely appropriate to evaluate how the REC guidelines were applied. The common elements between the two projects include:
  - a. Both are within the REC overlay
  - b. Uses are exclusively single-family detached and open space
  - c. Communities are adjacent to each other, being separated only by Alma Road
  - d. Residential homes are primarily front an swing entry (83% of Craig Ranch North homes; 100% of Stone Hollow)

Our selection of these street widths is due in part to these similarities.

Furthermore, Craig Ranch North was master planned through a design charrette process conducted by Andres Duany, who is recognized as the foremost authority on new urbanism. The Craig Ranch North plan is the result of careful deliberations, planning and design. As such, we feel that it is prudent to study the plan and, where appropriate, draw upon its example. It is important to note that, with respect to gross density, pedestrian facilities, open space areas, lot size, home values, and amenities, Stone Hollow exceeds what is provided in Craig Ranch North. For those reasons, we believe that the same street variance is warranted.

7. Other Jurisdictions. A parkway width of 10 feet measured from face of curb, as we propose for Type B streets, is not unusual in public roadway design. Allen, Keller, Flower Mound and Grapevine are just a few of the cities that use 10 foot parkways on residential streets, so what we are requesting is not out of the ordinary. Required paving, drainage improvements, and utilities can be accommodated within the proposed right-of-way.

### **STORMWATER DETENTION**

We have conducted a study of Waters Branch to evaluate the impact of development and potentially erosive conditions that may result. We are currently in the process of revising the study to address engineering department comments. We acknowledge that the results of that exercise may reflect the need to mitigate the impact of increased runoff and velocities in the creek. Such mitigation could take the form of on-site detention. However, since there are multiple undeveloped properties in the Waters Branch basin all facing the same issue, it may also make sense to explore the possibility of addressing the issue on a "basin-wide" basis. Such an approach would be far more cost effective and equitable for all properties and, more importantly, would yield a more predictable result.

Such a coordinated effort, while appropriate, will take time. Unfortunately, due to the need to complete roads around the FISD elementary school on schedule, it is critical that we proceed with design of Phase I of Stone Hollow immediately. Therefore, we are requesting that the preliminary-final plat be approved conditionally, with the understand that if it is determined during final engineering that on-site detention is required, the plan would be modified to incorporate those measures.

Per your planning application submittal calendar, we are requesting that this case be heard before the Planning & Zoning Commission on June 28, 2011. We appreciate your assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,

**J. VOLK CONSULTING, INC.**



Jay Volk, P.E.  
President

cc: Chris Matzke, Division President, Standard Pacific Homes