

## About Save Seven Hills Ranch (SSHR) - What do we want?

While it would be an amazing civic achievement for a public or private entity to purchase the 30-acre Seven Hills Ranch and preserve it as is, it is indeed zoned for development and we recognize that.

Spieker Development has purchased the Ranch property (July '22) and is asking the County to grant a General Plan Amendment (GPA) which would allow an immense compound there as described below<sup>1</sup>. *Save Seven Hills Ranch* asks in our petition, "[Saved and Sensible. Not Supersized](#)", that the County deny the GPA request and call for a less impactful development design. A design that is more harmonious with the site's unique environment and the larger surrounding community.

Following are some specific elements that SSHR believe could and should be incorporated into any development proposal for Seven Hills Ranch:

- **Public access**, in particular to the viewpoint at the top of the ridgeline, a ridgeline we would like to see preserved as a **substantial public open space**.
  - This is a reasonable expectation; City and County ordinances require open space be incorporated into residential developments, along with ridgeline and slope protections.<sup>2</sup> For all intents and purposes this is a residential development.
  - Note: The City of Walnut Creek's own [Bicycle](#) Plan (pg47, Fig 5-1) proposes a viewpoint trail across the property. Trail potential is shut down by the current proposal's walled-off design.
- Areas of **Habitat preservation** (this is a **30 acre** natural site with little to no natural open space incorporated into or protected within the current proposal, with the exception of the federally protected wetlands.) Residential developments are required to provide a ratio of open space to building footprint. This site begs for and can accommodate such requirements, but the developer claims the technicality that the Spieker proposal is "*Not a Residential but a Service Community*" and therefore need not meet established residential requirements.
- **Building heights compatible** with surrounding environs. Specifically, in regard to the current proposal, reduction in the height of the 3 and 4-story massive "IL" building. A building of this height is exceedingly out-of-sync with the surroundings.
- Preservation of space along *the* Walnut Creek to allow for future **creek restoration and naturalization** plans.
- A design that **respects the location next to Heather Farm Park**. Specifically in regard to the current proposal, a reduction or elimination of the Health Care Facility building. The building's proposed location makes it an eyesore and overbearing presence to the adjacent Heather Farm Park users.

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<sup>1</sup> Spieker's proposal calls for several multiple-story buildings, including a massive main building which has a footprint the size of the SF Warriors Chase Center, in addition to an 88,000 sq ft commercial-type health care facility for residents. Consequently, if approved, the construction will involve intense paving-over and landscape reconstruction (hill leveling, tree removal) for a finished design that is incongruous and out of proportion with the current surroundings (Heather Farm Park, low lying homes, a school), does not respect the property's natural features nor respect local policies and ordinances regarding hillsides and slopes..

<sup>2</sup> [CCCo Division 920 - Park Dedications](#); [CCCo Division 82-1.016 Hillside Protection](#); [CCCo General Plan Open Space element, Scenic Resources](#); [WC Hillside/Open Space Protection Ordinance](#)

## **A bit of background on *Save Seven Hills Ranch***

*Save Seven Hills Ranch* (SSHR) came to be when the founder, Michele Sheehan, became aware of the developer's proposal for the 30-acre Ranch, which had been submitted to the County for review in 2020. Seeing the plans and then following up with the developer and County to confirm the details led Michele to believe that the development as designed was "too much" for the currently pristine site. Among other things, the plans called for major landscape reshaping through grading and leveling of most of the hills in addition to the removal of 403 trees.

To gauge whether she was the only one who saw the plans as inappropriate for the site, Michele started a petition, "[\*Saved & Sensible. Not Supersized\*](#)". Figuring if she got 500 signatures she would take the matter further, Michele was overwhelmed with the public response as support grew quickly to beyond 1,000 signatures, and most recently stands at greater than 4,000 signatures (8/2022). A website followed, as did hours of research along with outreach and awareness activities.

With a cadre of skilled volunteers and (after raising funds) a paid, seasoned Greenfire Law attorney, the group responded to the County's Draft Environmental Impact Report on the project, making sure all issues were properly addressed in the document. As of August 2022 the organization awaits the release of the Final Environmental Impact Report.

Extensive research allows SSHR to bring awareness, information, and the issues to the general public and in front of the County and the City of Walnut Creek decision makers. This has been and will continue to be the organization's primary function. *Save Seven Hills Ranch* believes that if the community, the developer, and political decision makers work together a better plan and future than the one currently proposed can be had for Seven Hills Ranch.

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