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Sterling Ranch rezoning official today

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It's official.

Today, the Douglas County Board of Commissioners formally approved the \$4.4 billion Sterling Ranch development that is expected to create thousands of jobs and generate an economic impact of \$425 million annually at build-out. The board on May 11 had initially voted to approve the Sterling Ranch rezoning and water appeal application, following a nine-hour hearing, but only gave its final approval that spelled out all of the necessary agreement details on Tuesday.

It's an important milestone.

"Today was the final approval and we are thrilled," Harold Smethills, director of the family owned Sterling Ranch said. "Now, the real work begins. We move from a public process to an economic reality. Now, we have several

months of engineering and site planning ahead of us to make sure that this happens. The Douglas County Board of County Commissioners wanted a water-efficient, sustainable community for the 21st century, and that is what they are getting with Sterling Ranch."

The plan has sparked controversy.

Smethills said some critics and opponents are misinformed. An earlier plan to annex the

property to Littleton didn't gain traction, as opposition mounted from people who feared it would be tax city services, would increase congestion, and despite claims by the developer, would end up sucking up water resources, not conserving them.

"Opponent can say what they want," Smethills said. "The people in the know, the people who studied our proposal - the county water engineers, the state agencies, the Douglas Planning Commission, and now the Douglas County Board of Commissioners - agree with us. That is why the board unanimously supported it. What is really important is that the first time in Colorado's history, to the best of our knowledge, water conservation is embedded in our land-use application. That has never been done before in Colorado. It is revolutionary."

Some opponents said that they could support the 3,400-acre development

in northwestern Douglas County, if it was developed into smaller, ranchettes that could be used as horse property. They find that to be preferable to constructing thousands of new homes.



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