

## Brief History of *The Ridges*

### Land grant to subdivisions

Our area, south of the Old Las Vegas Highway and I-25, east of US285, and north of Lamy, is in the historical Bishop John Lamy land grant predating New Mexico statehood. Part of this area was later called the Simpson Ranch. Some land purchases and subdivisions in our area proceeded through the ownership of Eldorado at Santa Fe and/or Joe and Alma Miller, d.b.a. the Cow Springs Land and Cattle Company (note nearby settlement Ojo de la Vaca—"Cow Springs").

### The Ridges parcel, lots, and roads

A developer, Ron Sebesta Realty Retirement Plan, purchased the future Ridges parcel designated as Lot 15-A-1 from Eldorado at Santa Fe Inc. before subdividing and obtained county commission approval for the subdivision plan as early as June 12, 1988. The parcel is 323 acres, rectangular in shape, with almost perfect north-south and east-west boundaries. Some 1988 survey markers ("Noonan") can be found on the parcel boundary. The terrain changes distinctively as the parcel rises from relatively open land on the west into gentle ridges with pinon-juniper cover to the east.

Planning for development included an agreement on the road and utility easements from US285 to The Ridges. The easement agreement lets the in-between property owners use this one-mile road but they do not have to maintain it. A water well easement overlaps five lots along our south border.

A plat for The Ridges was filed on June 6, 1990 by the developer. Survey markers placed in 1989 by Gary Dawson, NMPLS #7014, can still be found on the corners of most lots.

The "Declaration of Restrictive Covenants" for The Ridges was filed by the developer on May 17, 1990 and again on August 22, 1990. The re-filing changed only the June 6 plat recording information. Copies of the May 17 (August 22) document have the county clerk's page number stamp starting at 683604 (683617) on the first page.

Ridges lot sizes range from 2.5 to 5.9 acres, including generally half of the area of the road bordering each lot. As of early 2005, only about a dozen of our 85 lots remain without construction. All of the houses are custom-built.

About the time the century rolled over, residents were directed by the Post Office to change from lot numbers to street addresses using the fire department's red marker numbering scheme. These numbers start from

an arterial intersection likely to be used by incoming emergency vehicles and ascend by tenth-mile increments. Lot numbers still show on some driveway markers and appear on an occasional piece of mail.

### Covenants

The Declaration of Restrictive Covenants has the nature of a contract between the landowners association and each landowner, agreed to when the land is purchased. The covenants, similar to others in this area, restrict allowed activities, setbacks, building types, fencing, animals, hunting, signs, storage, lighting, swimming pools, etc. The covenants direct the establishment of an architectural control committee and provide significant detail on permitted styles.

Attachment A to the covenants provides water conservation policy in the form of 8 guidelines.

The covenants include a provision whereby landowners outside of The Ridges but on its perimeter can enforce the covenants.

The covenants can be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members of the landowners association. The covenants were amended in 1995 (to allow driveway pilasters, to require a deposit for architectural review, and to require construction cleanup) and in 2001 (to enable a per-lot assessment for natural gas service). The official copy of each amendment gets stamped and filed in the county clerk's office.

Some county ordinances and development regulations on matters similar to the covenants relate to animal control and lighting.

### Landowners association and bylaws

The Ridges Landowners Association (RLA) was incorporated on November 16, 1990, as a nonprofit corporation. The Declaration of Restrictive Covenants is included into the articles of incorporation by reference and state that authority to enforce and change the covenants and to direct architectural control pass to the landowners association after it is formed and officers duly elected. After that time, the developer has no right to vote in the association or to amend the covenants.

The articles of incorporation constitute in effect the first set of RLA bylaws, which provide for the operation of the Association. The bylaws can be amended by unanimous action by the board of directors or by majority vote of the RLA members. Apparently the bylaws were amended four times, the last in 2002; some confusion over the latest version might be

generated by extant copies of a version marked “sixth” two years earlier. The bylaws become effective when accepted by the Corporation Bureau of the NM Public Regulation Commission, and the official copy is held by the county clerk’s office. Unlike the covenants, the bylaws when amended are filed as a complete new set.

(As of early 2005, a new version of the bylaws is being held back from PRC filing pending possible further modifications.)

The bylaws spell out eligibility for RLA membership and voting rights; the number, power, and duties of RLA directors and architectural committee members; procedures for meetings and elections; and so forth. Such powers and duties include budgeting for the Association; this is also spelled out in the covenants. The bylaws require that the annual budget and per-lot assessment be approved by a majority at an RLA members meeting.

Duties of the directors include providing for road maintenance, oversight of the architectural committee, negotiating utility changes, and providing Ridges representation to community forums—for example, we participated in the Eldorado water district formative studies. Installation of natural gas service throughout The Ridges in 2002 was a major infrastructure enhancement and was negotiated by delegates from the RLA directors.

Since the major continuing expense for the Association is road maintenance, the directors customarily designate one or more RLA members as the “Roads Committee.” This committee attempts to operate with a long-range view toward its responsibilities to minimize the call for special assessments.

For several years, RLA has employed an administrator to help manage our business affairs, including handling the checkbook, financial statements, tax forms, membership records, mailing list, meeting minutes, and legal procedures to update our controlling documents.

RLA has sent a quarterly newsletter to members for many years. This valuable record, not a required function of the Association, depends on effort volunteered by editors and contributors.

### **RLA Presidents**

Robert Margolin	1992
Richard F. Chenault	1994
Dave Kingston	1997
Nigel Walsh	1998
Ray Olson	2000
Dave Kingston	2002
Olin van Dyck	2004

## **Adjacent subdivisions and landowner associations**

Directly to the west of The Ridges parcel is the Cimarron subdivision; north is Los Vaqueros, and south is Cielo Colorado. Some maps also show another subdivision, La Lumbre, on our south side between Cielo Colorado and the Eldorado Community Preserve. (La Lumbre may consist largely of the compound with green metal roofs visible from The Ridges southeast corner).

The Eldorado Preserve borders us on the east and wraps around a bit on the south. The big fish in our pond of course is the Eldorado subdivision with 2776 lots, which runs north of Camino Eldorado and west of US285. The Eldorado Community Preserve is owned by the Eldorado Community Improvement Association (ECIA) representing the property owners of the Eldorado subdivision.

Altogether there are about two dozen subdivisions in “Greater Eldorado.” These communities have more or less active property owners associations. Presently the 285 Coalition offers the only regular forum for contact among Greater Eldorado subdivisions.

### **Cimarron**

Cimarron’s developer of record is Joe and Alma Miller, who registered covenants on May 31 (amended August 30 and again October 25) and the plat on August 1, 1991. The covenants, similar to ours, direct establishment of an architectural control committee and landowners association. The covenants note that maintenance of Alma Road in Cimarron is the responsibility of The Ridges, as agreed to between the developers on May 19, 1989.

On December 1, 1992, The Ridges and the Millers signed an agreement recognizing new covenants for Lot 17 of Cimarron to allow commercial development—what we now see as the Cimarron Office Complex and animal clinic. The agreement, “both a contract and a declaration of restrictive covenants” and enforceable by The Ridges, requires Lot 17 to have its own architectural committee that must include an appointee from The Ridges. The agreement specifies that outside of Lot 17 no commercial use will be allowed or sought in Cimarron.

### **The 285 Vista Grande Commercial Node**

The next subdivision north of Cimarron on the east of US285 is Luz del Mundo; north of that is the “285 Vista Grande Commercial Node,” containing much of the commercial activity in Greater Eldorado. This node, with several parcels and owners, has some individual and mutual covenants and agreements

providing restrictions on architecture and usage. The architectural committee is to include a representative of the 285 Coalition and therefore indirectly can hear from The Ridges.

### Area governance & infrastructure

In 2005, The Ridges is in the 3d congressional district, the 47<sup>th</sup> State House district, the 39th State Senate district, and the 5th county commission district.

The County Commission is our first level of government. The county has five districts with one commissioner elected in each district. Land use policy including zoning evolves through recommendations to the county commission from a number of county organizations including the County Development and Review Committee (CDRC). Public hearings are listed on the county's web site [www.co.santa-fe.nm.us](http://www.co.santa-fe.nm.us).

There are no incorporated towns in Greater Eldorado north of Lamy, although that option surfaces occasionally. The Santa Fe County sheriff's office provides police functions. Santa Fe County provides equipment for the volunteer Eldorado Fire and Rescue Service. The smaller roads are maintained by the county, landowner owner associations (as with ours), or privately. Utility service is provided by private companies. Trash pickup is offered by a private contractor; a county trash drop-off station is also close by. The Ridges customarily makes annual contributions to community facilities available to us, such as the Eldorado fire department and the library.

A community water company, El Dorado Utilities (EDU), was formed by the original Eldorado subdivision developer, AMREP. The system built by EDU provides water to most of Greater Eldorado. To place some authority in citizen hands, a "quasi municipal entity," the Eldorado Area Water and Sanitation District (EAWSD; see [www.eldoradowaterdistrict.com](http://www.eldoradowaterdistrict.com)) was chartered by the state in 1997. As of early 2005, EAWSD is taking over operation and ownership of the water system.

Various citizen's groups or associations of property owners have banded together under titles such as the Simpson Ranch Contemporary Community and the 285 South Coalition to discuss long range planning. About half the subdivisions are active in the latter. The former is presently inactive.

In this loosely governed situation, property owner associations can be a strong unit for neighborhood integrity.

### The future

Most residents find that the quality of life in The Ridges is enhanced by adherence to its covenants and architectural rules. As development of the last few lots occurs and residency stabilizes to normal turnover, oversight of our growth may become easier. Also, it is not clear whether additional significant infrastructure improvements will be become available or desired by the residents. Ridges internal business may become more routine—"maintenance mode"—but changes on a larger scale may become more important.

Our environment was disturbed in 2003 by decimation of our pinon tree cover by drought and the bark beetle. The statewide squeeze on water produces political pressure for more integration of Greater Eldorado and its coordination with the county.

The Ridges residents should stay aware of the bigger picture around us and be active to protect and enhance our community.

### Corrigenda

The author of this history, Olin van Dyck, solicits suggestions and corrections.