



Often developers are placed in the same category as lawyers and Wall Street bankers. They're not to be trusted.

The Sterling Ranch developers are not only liked and respected by many residents of the Chatfield Basin but have won initial endorsements for their plan to transform 3100 acres of rural land into a suburban community.

If their vision works, one day Sterling Ranch will include 12,000 homes, scores of commercial properties, parks, open space and recreation areas in seven villages.

A family endeavor, Diane Smethills, her brother Jack Hoagland, and husband Harold Smethills are the principals. Jack and Harold present the plan at informational meetings while the more reserved Diane greets participants, ensures everyone gets a map of the proposed project and makes sure they have a place to sit.

The trio has been working on acquiring land and water rights west of Santa Fe along Titan Road since 2001. Once they purchased what was needed, they went about convincing the locals that their ambitious project is workable.

They sell the Hoagland-Smethills' plan by emphasizing they are not a faceless multi-billion dollar national conglomerate, but a family who traces their Colorado roots back more than 100 years. They promise the \$3-4 billion, 20-year project will be progressive, sustainable and green. They are confident they can provide water by implementing a new concept called "agriburbia"--- which integrates food production directly within the living environment--- and by innovative water management that encourages conservation.

In a mid-October edition, the *Wall Street Journal* penned a Sterling Ranch story that said the developers are required by the county to ensure each single family home can draw 245,000 gallons of water a year. They insist they can get by on far less—91,000 gallons.

Some residents aren't buying that claim. Water, density and traffic issues worry them and they corner local officials to voice their concerns every chance they get.

Despite the criticism, the family is not discouraged. The family's success in developing real estate stretches back for decades. Growing up, Diane and Jack remember sitting around the dinner table listening to conversations about land and ranching.

"My grandmother was one of the first women realtors in Colorado in the 40s." Diane says proudly. Diane spent more than three decades in the real estate, marketing, and finance fields. Jack and Harold also have impressive real estate and development credentials.

As proof of their commitment, they try to be good neighbors. Sterling Ranch purchased the 4H champion steer and donated the beef to Hands Across Roxborough to divide among needy families. They sponsored the Village of Louviers turkey shoot and made financial contributions to the local teen organization and the parent/teachers association. More than 100 Roxborough Women's Network members were treated to dinner and tour of the proposed ranch. In being easily accessible to the residents they've won over many of them.

There's an overall sense the folksy Hoagland/Smethills trio is building a legacy with vision and innovation. They recently submitted their plan to the county but it will take two years to work through the system and win over detractors. Recognizing that conflict and crises lie ahead, Diane says, "Neighbors don't always agree, but we're doing our very best."