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## Neighbors: Old Spanish Trail threatened

By [Sharon Sullivan](#)  
[Grand Junction CO Colorado](#)  
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Mark Strodman, now under investigation by the Weld County District Attorney, hopes to develop a subdivision on 17 acres in Mesa County on Orchard Mesa near the Old Spanish Trail.

The Orchard Mesa neighbors aren't happy about it.

In Weld County, more than 20 homeowners are suing Strodman, according to a March 18, 2007, Greeley Tribune article. In the suit, they say Strodman defrauded them into buying homes they couldn't afford by falsifying documentation to approve them for loans. Several of the homes have since foreclosed.

The Weld County District Attorney would not comment about Strodman because the investigation is ongoing, said Jennifer Finch, a DA spokeswoman.

According to documents filed with the Colorado Secretary of State, Strodman formed a company called The Shores LLC. The Shores hired Pickett Engineering to begin the development process with the city of Grand Junction for the 17 acres Edlun Road.

Pickett Engineering is preparing to petition the city to annex the property so Strodman can 40 houses on the 17 acres, said Jess Wallace, senior project engineer with Pickett.

Strodman has an unlisted phone number and could not be reached for comment.

Thursday, Lori Bowers, senior planner for the city of Grand Junction, said she hadn't receive petition for annexation of the 17 acres.

"We can honor the existing county zoning or we can honor whatever they request," Bowers

The granting of Strodman's request would be based solely on the application to develop the Bowers said.

"We don't do background checks. If someone submits the paperwork and it's in order, we v

Sonny Sheldon and her horse Echo near the headgate of the Old Spanish Trail on Orchard Mesa. In the background is acreage where a Greeley developer wants to build houses if the city agrees to annex the property.

**Sharon Sullivan**



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process it,” Bowers said.

She said it’s likely the property will be annexed.

Neighbors are concerned about the Old Spanish Trail.

Sonny Shelton rides her horse Echo frequently along the trail from her nearby house on Orc south of B Road.

Her neighbor Earl Heusser has walked the trail almost daily for the past 33 years. Heusser is the local chapter of the Old Spanish Trail Association.

The Old Spanish Trail is designated as a national historic trail that goes north from Santa Fe through Colorado, Utah, Arizona, Nevada and California.

Suzi and Jerry Evans have run along the trail for 20 years and mountain bike there too.

Vicki Felmlee lives three houses away from the Old Spanish Trail and has lived in the neighborhood 30 years.

“This is our character. It’s who we are. It’s why we bought our houses. We can’t imagine not this,” Felmlee said.

A few modular homes sit near the trailhead on private property, but south toward the Gunnison it’s all undulating, wide open landscape.

That could change.

Felmlee and her neighbors don’t plan to allow the annexation petition to go unchallenged.

After meeting with Pickett Engineering’s Kris Pickett and Wallace, several people in the neighborhood started doing their own online research.

The neighborhood group found by checking the Mesa County assessor’s Web site that Strobel owns another 361 acres contiguous with the 17 acres.

The Old Spanish Trail cuts through the middle of the 361 acres.

Wallace said The Shores is looking to build homes on the 17 acres, but the remaining 361 acres are a different animal altogether.”

“We have no idea what would happen with that parcel,” Wallace said.

“It’s a big, natural pristine area. It’s very beautiful out there,” said neighbor Joseph Hayes. “If development is inevitable, we want to see something compatible with the area.”

Shelton said she’s not against development, but she wants to see the Old Spanish Trail protected.

“I’m a proponent of property rights, but this is unusual. We have the Old Spanish Trail going through here. It’s a nonrenewable resource — once it’s gone, it’s gone,” Shelton said.

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