

Statement from Paul Roberts, a former Lago Vista council member, emailed to Lago Vista Watchdog on Oct. 5, 2026, at 4:54 p.m., in reply to our Oct. 2 request for comment. He asked that it be published in full, and it is reproduced here as he sent it. His email address removed by Lago Vista Watchdog.

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Jack,

Please publish the following statement in full:

A developer's business risk should not become the community's obligation. Residents' homes, neighborhoods and quality of life deserve at least as much consideration as a developer's preferred return on investment.

Council was right to advance a map that preserves established rural areas and expands lower-density planning into additional areas around Lago Vista. Our advocacy on Oct 1, 2026, wasn't limited to Shoreline Ranch. It was also about the broader community: compatible neighborhoods, responsible infrastructure planning, open space and the character that makes people want to live here.

Housing choice includes larger lots and rural neighborhoods. Kevin Sullivan recognized that during the August 3, 2023 Shoreline Ranch FLUM amendment discussion, warning that moving from estate lots toward more intensive development meant "reducing the diversity of choice that we have here."

Keeping that planning direction does not cancel valid existing development rights.

Mr. Sullivan explained this himself on January 19, 2023, when advocating for passage of the FLUM amendment ordinance:

"But if you already have the zoning that you want, you can develop according to it even if it does not comport with the future land use map."

Asked specifically about planned development districts, Kevin added:

"Whatever the PDD says, that's what you have the ability to develop."

He also called the proposed ordinance "strong enough" and seconded the motion adopting the amendment process, which established a requirement for six of seven Council votes to approve a separate FLUM amendment under that ordinance.

That is the distinction residents continue to make. Honor valid existing approvals and comply with applicable state law. Where Council has discretion to approve a requested change, the decision should be justified by its benefit to the community. A developer's preference does not settle that question. Council also called for a prominent disclosure on the map explaining the distinction between its planning vision and existing entitlements. Buyers deserve that information.

Shoreline Ranch's history exemplifies a broader concern: more entitlements on paper are not the

same as completed development. I do not want the City repeatedly rewriting its plans to support a cycle of acquiring land, seeking additional density and marketing it to the next buyer, who then asks for still more.

In Shoreline's case, the record shows 203 residences described in its 2003 agreement, up to 568 permitted under its 2007 PDD, and later proposals for 1,250 to 1,350 homes. Those larger proposals were not approved, but they show why residents opposed a designation that would make substantially more intensive development easier to pursue.

During the August 3, 2023 Shoreline Ranch FLUM amendment hearing, Mr. Sullivan called Shoreline Ranch's requested map change "a naked attempt to increase the density on that parcel." He moved to deny it. Council agreed, 6-1.

In that meeting, he also addressed the suggestion that more approvals / density would finally produce development when he said:

"We've had multiple [developers] that have come to us, and we've approved what they asked for, and they still haven't delivered."

Addressing the Shoreline Ranch applicant, Kevin added: "You're no different than any other developer."

More density does not guarantee delivery. Nor does a developer's desire for a different product establish that it belongs in that location.

Purchasers should evaluate existing approvals, restrictions and infrastructure costs before buying. If they miscalculate, overpay or depend on obtaining more favorable approvals afterward, those are business risks they assumed. It is not the City's responsibility to bail out poor business decisions by changing the community's plan. A request should stand on its benefit to Lago Vista, not merely its benefit to the investment.

Mr. Sullivan now represents the developer whose requested map change he moved to deny in 2023. He says his earlier decision was a mistake. He is entitled to change his position. Residents are entitled to continue disagreeing.

Calling those residents "followers" is condescending. Mr. Sullivan speaks for his client. These residents are speaking for their own homes, families and community. They include neighboring property owners and citizens with their own judgment, investments and reasons to participate. Agreement does not erase their independence. If he expects respect for his client's interests, he should extend that same respect to residents defending theirs.

I thank Mayor Shane Saum and Council Members Norma Owen, Jess Hall, Karen Van Ness and Paul Prince for standing up for residents and keeping the community's planning priorities ahead of a developer's preferred redesign.

The developer has the right to ask. Residents have the right to oppose, and their investments deserve consideration, too. There is nothing “un-American” about citizens insisting that their community’s future serve more than one owner’s business interests. Purchasing land buys the rights attached to it. It does not buy the community’s obligation to grant more.

Paul Roberts

Lago Vista Resident