

# Basalt advances to next stage at former Pan and Fork site



Scott Condon/The Aspen Times |

Heavy equipment is working at the former Pan and Fork Mobile Home Park site in Basalt to raise the elevation out of the flood plain closes to Two Rivers Road.

Basalt's efforts to transform the Pan and Fork site took a giant step forward Thursday when the last remnants of the former mobile home park were trucked away.

The contractor on the job, American Civil Contractors, now can focus on the massive amount of earthwork necessary to construct a park alongside the Roaring Fork River and prepare the half of the property closest to Two Rivers Road for possible development.

Roughly half of the 5.3-acre site will be raised about 7 feet to get it out of the flood plain. The contractor is using rock and dirt scrapped from the Roaring Fork River and other fill trucked in from other construction sites to create a base layer. Dirt from extensive trenches dug on the perimeter of the site to control water has been stockpiled for use as topsoil.

That rock and dirt will be used to raise the elevation of the site so that it is even with Two Rivers Road, Basalt Town Manager Mike Scanlon said while on a site visit with a reporter Thursday. The site has to be raised out of the flood plain per town code before it can be redeveloped.

The town government and nonprofit Roaring Fork Community Development Corp. teamed to buy the mobile home park in August 2011. The town chipped in \$1.2 million in open space funds to buy 2.9 acres closest to the Roaring Fork River. The portion of that property from the Midland Avenue Bridge to existing wetlands between the former mobile home park and former Taqueria el Nopal restaurant building will be an active park, with uses still to be determined, Scanlon said.

A passive portion of the park with trails and little else will go through the wetlands. The new park will connect to the existing Old Pond Park.

Roaring Fork Community Development Corp. has no definitive plan for its 2.4 acres. Officials have said they are awaiting results of a community planning process to determine how to proceed. Their options include selling the property to Basalt for public uses or selling their land to a developer.

The site was swamped with groundwater this spring. A significant amount of water flows in from the Hill District that looms above. The high river level also has made a spring on the Pan and Fork site more active.

A significant amount of that water will be directed by pipe to replenish and expand the existing wetlands, Scanlon said.

Several pieces of heavy equipment were clawing away at the ground Thursday at the site. A massive track hoe was loading the last of the debris from trailer homes and sheds into trucks to be hauled off site. Two bulldozers were spreading fill in areas already cleared of debris.

Scanlon said all of the Community Development Corp. property will be raised about 7 feet with the fill. The ground will be tapered down to the river on the half owned by the town.

A permit from the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers prohibits any work on the river until mid-August. At that point, an old levee cobbled together over the past four decades to protect the mobile home park will be torn down, Scanlon said. Huge concrete blocks will be hauled away. Rock gabions will be dismantled. The river will be allowed to bow into the Pan and Fork site.

The site appeared confined when it had 38 mobile homes on it. The trailers were removed, as were most of the willows and other trees. Scanlon said raising the elevation of the site would require putting up to 7 feet of dirt around the trunks, killing the trees.

“The site always seems to get bigger as it gets cleaned out,” Scanlon said.

The timeline calls for the earthwork to be completed by Nov. 1. It’s on schedule and budget, he said.

The riverside park will be planted with trees and shrubs under the direction of town horticulturist Lisa DiNardo.

A separate but connected project will reach a milestone on today, according to Scanlon. The former Taqueria el Nopal building is scheduled to be torn down. That site also must be

elevated out of the floodplain. It will be the future home of Rocky Mountain Institute's office and innovation center, demonstrating energy-efficient design and construction.

[scondon@aspentimes.com](mailto:scondon@aspentimes.com)

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