

## Former mobile home park awaits rebirth as riverside subdivision

Slowly but surely, a long-neglected site along the Poudre River near downtown Fort Collins is being transformed.

Tons of material and dozens of trailers have been moved from the former Bender Mobile Home Park, 912 Wood St., over the past 10 months, and much more rehabilitation work is planned for the property.

But whether the site will become a showpiece residential community as envisioned by developer Bellissimo Inc. remains to be seen. Political and physical hurdles still have to be cleared before the Pateros Creek project can become a reality.

The cleanup work goes on even with the uncertainty, said Gino Campana, owner of Bellissimo and lifelong Fort Collins resident. The project has proved to be the most difficult the company has taken on, Campana said.

"I do like a challenge and I do think we can create something pretty awesome here," he said. "It's going to take a lot of hard work and diligence, but we are going to get there."

"In the end we want to complete a project that people will look at and say, 'Job well done.'"

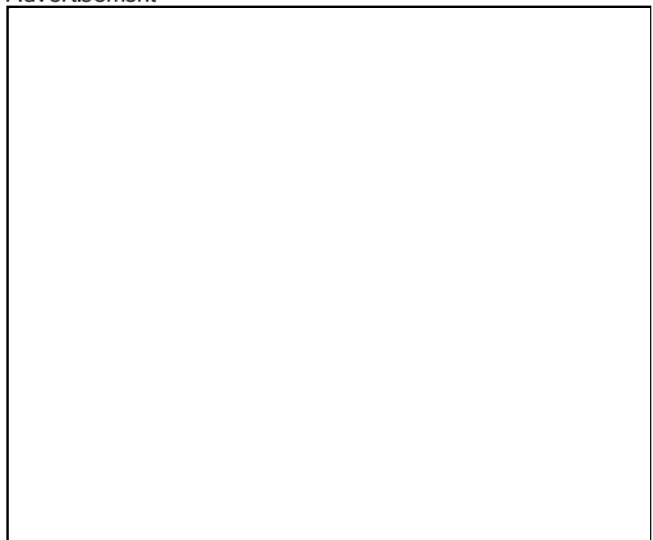
Conceptual plans for Pateros Creek — a name used in the early 1800s for what would become the Cache la Poudre River — call for 41 houses clustered on the southern section of the property. Many of the homes would be built on small lots around a central courtyard.

About half of the roughly 18-acre site would be open space, including a community orchard and gardens. The chain-link fence that separates the site from the popular Poudre River Trail would be removed and two small access trails built to connect with the main trail.

The riparian forest would be restored in an area along the trail that for years has been cluttered with old vehicles, construction materials and massive piles of limbs and branches.

"When it's done, I can visualize people fly-

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fishing on the river in the early morning and then jumping on their bikes to ride downtown,” Campana said. “It would be an active community.”

### Legal limbo

The price range of the houses has not been determined, Campana said. Final design and determining the project’s target market will not be done until its development status is settled with the city of Fort Collins.

In June, city planning officials approved a modification of standards requested by Bellisimo for more housing units than would be allowed for the project under its proposed “urban estate” zoning.

The modification would permit a density of 2.36 dwelling units per acre rather than the 2-units-per-acre limit set for the zone. The decision is being appealed by the environmental group Save the Poudre: Poudre Waterkeeper.

The group claims through executive director Gary Wockner that the increased density would adversely affect the river’s ecological systems and nearby natural areas.

“More houses equals more people, equals more noise, more lights, more barking dogs, more negative impacts to the natural resource,” he said in an interview.

The planning board failed to properly interpret city code in allowing the

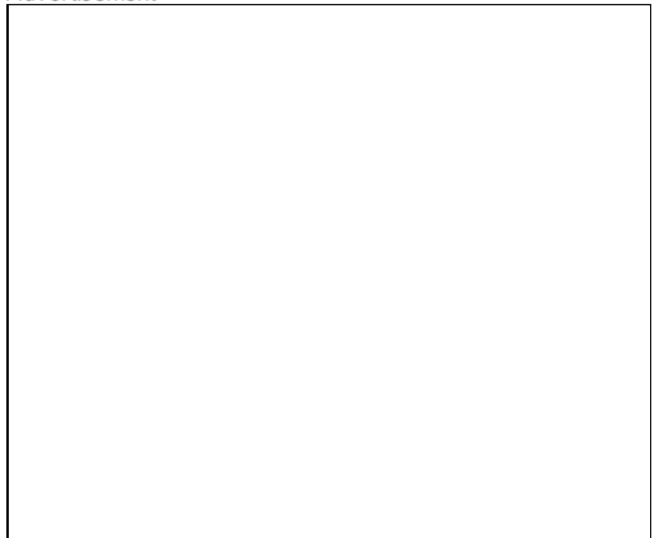
modification, according to the appeal filed by Wockner. It also failed to conduct a fair hearing on the issue by considering evidence that was “substantially false or grossly misleading.”

City planning staff members supported the modification after researching scientific literature on the impact of residential densities on habitat and animal populations.

“The research conducted illustrates development at any density has impacts on species but the increase in density associated with this modification does not negatively impact the Poudre River corridor in a substantial manner given the same development footprint the standard would allow,” according to a report by Lindsay Ex, an environmental planner with the city’s current planning office.

The appeal is scheduled to be heard by the City Council in September. Until the modification issue is decided, planning for the project has been delayed and the

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process of annexing the site from unincorporated Larimer County into the city has been put on hold.

The delay will increase the project's front-end costs, Campana said.

The site could be developed under the county's standards, which would allow for up to 49 residential units, but Campana said he would prefer to have the property under the city's jurisdiction.

Having Fort Collins police respond to emergency calls at the subdivision "makes a lot more sense" than leaving the Larimer County Sheriff's Office responsible for the site, he said.

The six additional houses that would be allowed under the modification are needed to make the project economically feasible, Campana said, and to provide a solid financial base for the homeowners association that will maintain common areas.

"There is not a lot of room for fluff in this project," he said.

Wockner said whether Save the Poudre resists or supports the final proposal depends on the development's density and impact on the river.

"We are going to protect the river and stand up for the land use code," he said.

### Major changes

Evidence of cleanup operations on the property is readily visible from the Poudre River Trail. On a recent sunny morning, cyclists and pedestrians stopped to watch workers pull branches from a large pile and grind them into mulch.

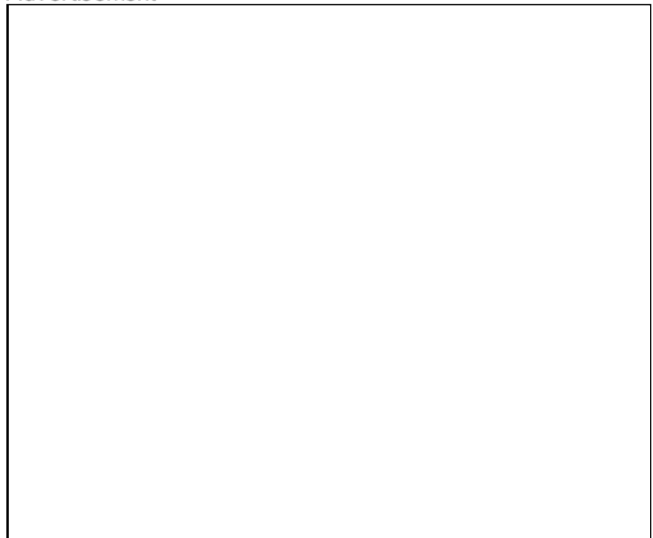
Other signs of change were spread across the property. Pink surveying stakes marked the boundaries of lots that someday might hold houses.

Slabs of concrete from mobile home pads were stacked for eventual recycling into road base.

Heaps of old tires and other debris have been removed as part of the cleanup. Last month, hauling out roll-off containers loaded with trash cost \$13,000, Campana said.

But much more needs to be done. The few structures remaining on the central part of the property are expected to be razed in the coming weeks.

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On the western edge of the site, buildings and equipment owned by longtime local businessman Lynn Parker still have to be relocated.

Parker, who has lived and worked out of the property for 48 years, said he's found a location west of Wellington to move most of his possessions, which include numerous vehicles, metal buildings and fully equipped electronic, hydraulics and woodworking shops.

Parker's business interests include designing, building and repairing facilities for the raw water industry. He's worked on high-country dams, river diversion systems and major local reservoirs, he said.

Moving everything he has could take up to a year, he said. Parker said he has hundreds of thousands of dollars invested in his equipment.

"It's no small project for me to move my business and my home," Parker said. "I can't leave things unattended at either end."

Campana, who acquired the property in September, said he'll work with Parker on getting him moved. The timing of construction of new houses will depend on many factors.

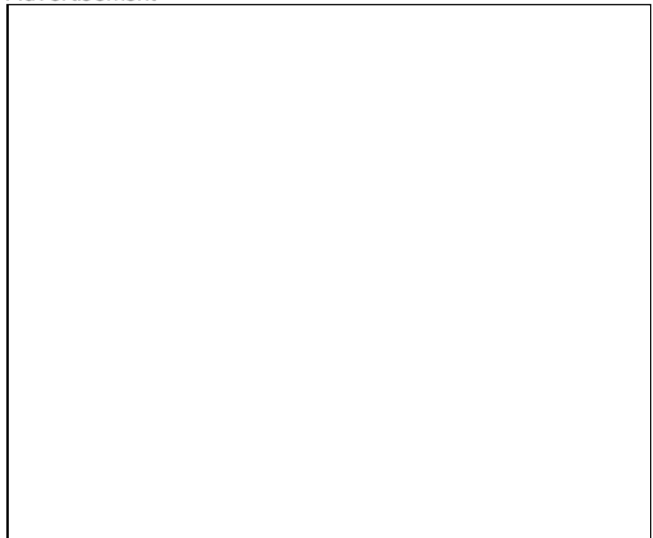
Parker said he doesn't blame Campana for pursuing a business opportunity. But he remains "irritated" by way the property transaction was handled and how it affected the lives of many longtime park residents.

Another buyer was prepared to take on the property and not make a lot of immediate changes, Parker said.

The property needed to be cleaned up and living conditions improved if it were to continue operating as a mobile home park, he said. But now life has to go on.

"I'm not happy with the situation but I'm not going to whine about it," he said.

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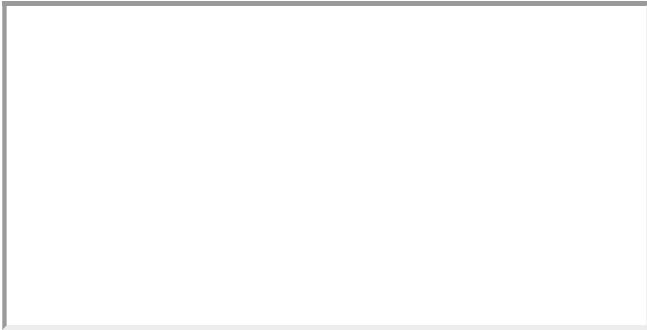






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Lynn Parker stands in his cabinet shop July 16 in the area where he conducts his business on the former Bender Mobile Home Park property along the Poudre River. The property was sold in September and is now under demolition and reclamation for redevelopment under the name Pateros Creek. / Sam Noblett/The Coloradoan



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**By the numbers**

- The proposed Pateros Creek subdivision:
- **Size:** about 18 acres
  - **Open space:** 53 percent
  - **Potential houses:** 41
  - **Houses allowed under proposed zoning:** 35
  - **Houses that would be allowed under county regulations:** 49

**Moving help**

Fort Collins officials are wrapping up the accounting for a program to provide financial assistance to residents displaced by the sale and closure of the former Bender Mobile Home Park. The city earmarked \$50,000 to assist residents with a cap of \$2,000 per household. Thirteen households received a total of \$26,000 in assistance primarily for moving expenses such as transporting trailers, said Ginny Sawyer, neighborhood administrator with the city. The park closed in April. Some residents moved their trailers to the North Star Mobile Home Community, 1616 LaPorte Ave., or the Poudre Valley Mobile Home Park at 2025 N. College Ave. Others found apartments or moved out of state. The relocation support program was administered by the United Way of Larimer County.

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