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Wetlands mitigation underway along North College Avenue

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More than two acres of wetlands near a future King Soopers site on North College is currently being mitigated to allow for new construction.

The project has been more than a year in the making from planning to execution; the end result will be the relocation of 2.4 acres of wetlands.

On Oct. 1 developers officially broke ground on the 27-acre North College Marketplace on the north-east corner of Wilcox Lane and North College Avenue that will be anchored by a King Soopers grocery store.

In order to construct the center, which will contain restaurants, banks the grocery store and a service station, 6.98 acres of wetlands site had to be worked around.

Dana Leavitt, City of Fort Collins environmental planner community development and neighborhood services, said in early 2008 they started the review process and knew at that point King Soopers would be a primary tenant.

Early plans called for destroying all the wetlands, which Leavitt said was "totally unacceptable." In the end it was agreed that 2.4 acres of wetland would be mitigated. The project began this summer.

Eric Holsapple, principal with Loveland Commercial LLC, developer of the 123,000-square-foot King Soopers, said they hope to have the project completed by November.

The planning commission completed the legwork for the project last winter and anticipates completing the mitigation east of the grocery store this November.

To relocate the wetlands, the existing soil is excavated making a perfect growing medium for new plants and wetland material. The new site is graded to the correct elevation to provide ample ground water to seep into the top layers of the soil.

The excavated soil is spread back onto the new site and seeded with different plantings. The edges of the wetlands are also planted with appropriate trees such as willows or cottonwoods.

"The idea not to copy what is on site there itself, it is actually to improve it," Leavitt said.

For more on this story see Saturday's Coloradoan.