

Land purchase is prudent decision for city, citizens

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Deal allows city to develop water storage, enhance gateway

The city of Fort Collins has entered into a beneficial deal to purchase about half the land where the Riverwalk project eventually could be located.

The city will purchase 128 acres of the land near Harmony Road and Interstate 25 intersection for \$5.8 million. The city of Fort Collins will use about 80 acres for a gravel pit reservoir for water storage — a prudent land-management and growth-management decision. The reservoir will store up to 2,000 acre feet of water (an acre foot of water can serve the needs of two to three single-family homes for a year).

The purchase also allows the city a greater role in determining the aesthetics and future of one of its primary gateways — an enhancement that extends well beyond the intersection.

The parcel at the southwest corner of the intersection has been the subject of much controversy. At one point, Riverwalk developer Jay Stoner took the project to Timnath when he believed his plan would not receive fair consideration in Fort Collins.

Eventually, after some legal maneuvering, an agreement between the town of Timnath and city of Fort Collins saw the project return to Fort Collins' jurisdiction.

Negotiations for the city to purchase the land for the reservoir had begun before the conflict arose and were put on hold until the intergovernmental agreement was reached.

The development project on the remaining land, about 138 acres, is now likely to be a scaled-back version of the original plan for Riverwalk, which was a high-density, transit-oriented development. If this project continues, such transit-oriented development should be encouraged.

In the meantime, Fort Collins has improved its water storage and secured a key gateway to the community. This is a prudent deal for the city of Fort Collins and its taxpayers.