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Organization:

Title:

Comments: I'm an 18-year resident of Basalt and 30-year resident of the Roaring Fork Valley. I walk my dogs a few times a week on the USFS El Jebel parcels, and I have written extensively on the subject for both the Aspen Daily News and Roaring Fork Weekly Journal. I also sat in on three of the listening sessions conducted by Eagle County as part of this process.

Regarding the 30-acre upper parcel, there have been some mischaracterizations in the media about what valley residents would prefer. NO ONE in any of the listening sessions was in favor of housing beyond a limited number of units dedicated to senior housing. The Basalt area has hundreds and hundreds of new homes in the development pipeline, and adding more would be hugely detrimental to the overall quality of life in this area.

The 30-acre parcel really should be viewed as three separate parcels. The first is a 9-acre, currently unused lot adjacent to Crown Mountain Park. This plot is often used for overflow parking for CMP events and has been suggested as a site for a recreation center or expanded CMP facilities. These ideas are both fine, but Eagle County should consider holding onto the parcel as a site for a future middle or elementary school, both of which will be necessary in the coming years.

The middle parcel is a 4-acre site with three housing units currently on it. This plot would be ideal for a limited amount (12-16 units) of senior housing.

The final parcel is a 17-acre plot west of CMP. This plot, formerly a USFS tree farm, has numerous apple, apricot and plum trees growing wild around it. This parcel would be best served as a combination of open space and active park. One use that would support the historic uses of this property would be to plant a heritage orchard sourced from the fruit trees currently growing around the property. I've spoken with the local deans of Colorado Mountain College about creating an orchard to support the college's four-year sustainability program, and they were enthusiastic about the idea. This use could also support a conservation easement to ensure the orchard stays as open space.

At the southern end of the parcel, I believe a permaculture orchard park with a beach and a swimming hole would be a tremendous amenity for local residents and could be done easily given the water rights and infrastructure already at the parcel. The western end of the parcel would be an ideal location for an event center/wedding venue, which is sorely needed in this area. I truly feel the venue would be sold out every weekend from May-October for weddings, providing a huge boost to the local economy.

I have attached a diagram of this proposed idea. If you take a look, No. 1 denotes the heritage orchard. No. 3 denotes the event center. No. 4 is a bed & breakfast that would go along with the event center, and No. 6 denotes the permaculture park (Nos. 2 and 5 would be housed in a building that Eagle County might raze). I've spoken to many people - Basalt council members, Eagle County commissioners, the Eagle County manager and numerous others - about this proposal, and it has met with unanimous interest and praise from everyone who hears about it. Please take the time to consider these uses or similar ones, and please, please, please resist the urge to create more high-density housing, which would be a disaster for the Basalt-El Jebel area. Thank you.