

# THE DENVER POST

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## First step on South Table

**R**esidents throughout the Denver area should be rejoicing since 473 acres atop South Table Mountain — the urban gateway to the Rockies — have been preserved as open space.

Thanks to a passel of poets prohibiting development, from land purchases and exchanges to conservation easements, Jefferson County has procured for posterity land atop a mesa that once appeared fated to become the site of a rock quarry or a huge Nike corporate complex.

The county is spending \$950,000 to save the chunk of land on the 2,100-acre mesa.

It's money well spent. Threats to develop the mesa had spurred public outrage over the years, and some dedicated conservationists worked diligently to spare the site.

Among them was Carl Eiberger, who fought for 25 years and provided free legal help to fend off would-be developers. *450,000 is free*

At the base of the mesa, a mere 20 acres will be developed into athletic fields; the rest will become a home for trails.

The 473 acres saved are linked to 80 acres already owned by the Jefferson County Open Space Program plus another 80 acres owned by the Denver Parks and Recreation Department, creating a total of 633

acres of wild mesa land.

Meanwhile, another 1,400 acres or so on the mesa's western section — the site once eyed by Nike — is owned by developer Leo Bradley's family and Coors Brewing Co. The county has until the end of this year to propose an offer on that land, which could cost millions of dollars.

Open-space proponents are hoping that county residents will approve a November ballot question that would let the Jefferson County Open Space Department make such huge purchases by issuing up to \$160 million in bonds.

Others suggest that a land exchange could occur with Bradley, who has agreed to inspect some land in northern Jefferson County but is making no promises.

The move to secure the rest of the mesa is certainly a worthwhile endeavor, and we urge Coors, Bradley and the county to press hard to reach agreement on that critical section.

In the meantime, though, the successful procurement of the eastern 473 acres is doubtlessly cause for celebration.

North and South Table Mountains, the two mesas in the western section of the metro area, are indeed the gateway to the Rockies, and it is essential that we preserve as much of their unique geologic features as possible.

*1450 Total Acres So Table into Open Space when Done*

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