

2007 BASALT MASTER PLAN



Section 1: Background and Planning Process

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This master plan for the Town of Basalt is the principal guiding document in the development review process for the Town. This document updates and supersedes the *1999 Basalt Master Plan* and the *Basalt Three Mile Plan* that was adopted in 1996. The *Roaring Fork River Stewardship Master Plan* was adopted in 2002 as part of the Town of Basalt Master Plan and is referenced in this Plan as being an element of the *2007 Basalt Master Plan*. This Plan references a number of other documents which are also important for guiding future land use and development. These references are found in the Goals and Objectives Section and in other elements of this document.

1.2 PURPOSE OF MASTER PLAN UPDATE

This document is a mid-term update of the comprehensive master plan adopted by the Town of Basalt in 1999 (*1999 Basalt Master Plan*). The term of the *1999 Basalt Master Plan* was intended to be approximately 10 years with an evaluation and update to be conducted roughly midway through the life of the plan. The purpose of this update is to review changes in demographics and key growth statistics and to evaluate whether the policies and implementation measures contained in the original *1999 Basalt Master Plan* are on course and achieving the goals and objectives of the Plan. One tool used to measure the success of the *1999 Basalt Master Plan* was a community profile survey (2005 Community Profile Survey). This survey, conducted by Northwest Colorado Council of Governments (NWCCOG), gave the Town's decision makers a sense of the citizenry's impression of the Town as a place to live and work and the important issues to be addressed in future planning



efforts. The 2005 Community Profile Survey was used in the process of developing this master plan update. The key results of the 2005 Community Profile Survey are summarized later in this document.

The results of the Baseline Inventory contained in this master plan update show that development and growth within the Town and its surrounding Three Mile Planning Area are occurring approximately as projected in the *1999 Basalt Master Plan*. In addition, a thorough review of the goals and objectives contained in the *1999 Basalt Master Plan*, considered in the context of the results of the 2005 Community Profile Survey, revealed that the policies and implementation measures contained in the *1999 Basalt Master Plan* remain pertinent to the current conditions. As a result, the *2007 Basalt Master Plan* maintains the basic growth and land use strategy outlined in the 1999 Plan. There have been a number of refinements to the goals and objectives in this master plan update and a few changes to the Future Land Use Plan and the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). There have also been a number of refinements to other elements of the Master Plan.

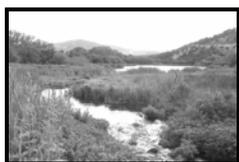
1.3 THE MASTER PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

The master plan update process incorporated an array of opportunities for citizen participation, including a 2005 Community Profile Survey, a series of meetings with the Basalt Planning and Zoning Commission (Planning Commission) and the Basalt Town Council, advertised public input meetings, land owner interviews, a field survey to explore public perceptions regarding “small-town character”, meetings with the Roaring Fork Valley Regional Planning Commission, an issue survey designed to gather public input specifically on growth and the Urban Growth Boundary, referrals to adjacent county jurisdictions and the noticed public hearing required by state statutes for the adoption of the plan. The information gathered through these avenues was used to guide decisions throughout the planning process. A brief summary of key aspects of the public input process is provided in the following paragraphs.

COMMUNITY PROFILE SURVEYS

A public opinion survey was utilized to kick off the master plan update process. The Town of Basalt contracted with NWCCOG to conduct the survey in order to create a statistically valid way of measuring community opinion and values. Many people feel more comfortable expressing themselves anonymously and input can be gathered on a broader range of topics than from most other methods. Additionally, it is easier to reach population segments that do not have the time or inclination to attend a public meeting.

The 2005 Community Profile Survey used many of the questions from the 1999 Community Profile Survey and questions from Pitkin County’s NWCCOG survey so that comparisons could be made between the results of these surveys to provide a better understanding of trends and differences. For the 2005 survey NWCCOG surveyed three segments of the community: voters, businesses, and homeowners. In addition, many questions were directed at second homeowners to find out more about their future plans and how they felt about key issues.



Survey participants were selected randomly and given the opportunity to complete the survey via the internet or by mail. The response rates were good for all three samples, indicating a high level of interest in town government. The survey questionnaire and the resulting tables and charts are part of the background data for this Plan. The results are available for review at Basalt Town Hall and can be accessed through the Town's webpage.

Shortly after the 2005 Community Profile Survey was completed, Town Staff also conducted a small-scale survey to gather data on the public's perception of the meaning of "small-town character," the preservation of which was identified as a priority in the broader 2005 Community Profile Survey.

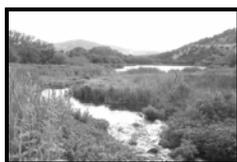
To complete the update of the future land use portion of the Plan, an issue-specific internet survey was conducted in 2007. The survey was limited to persons registered to vote in the Town of Basalt. That survey asked questions about potential changes to the Town's growth boundary and asked for additional comments and suggestions regarding future growth and development. More information on that survey can be found in Section 5 of this Plan.

PUBLIC MEETINGS AND OPEN HOUSES

A number of public meetings and open houses were held during the process of updating the Town's Master Plan to present findings and information and obtain public input. The key meetings are summarized here. The Town of Basalt hosted two open meetings closely following the 2005 Community Profile Survey effort. The first meeting was devoted to reviewing the results of the 2005 Community Profile Survey. At the second meeting, the initial results from the baseline inventory were discussed, and the process of making revisions to the goals and objectives for the Master Plan was initiated. Comments and questions from these meetings were utilized by the Planning Commission during the process of updating the goals and objectives contained in this Plan. In December 2005, the Town held a third public meeting at which the Staff and Planning Consultant presented the Planning Commission's revised goals and objectives, additional growth data and projections, and the results of an effort to gather data on the public's perception of the meaning of "small-town character," the preservation of which was identified as a priority in the 2005 Community Profile Survey.

In 2007 there were three key Master Plan meetings to obtain citizen input that were held prior to the official public hearings. Two of these meetings were focused on obtaining comments from the general public regarding five alternatives for changing the Town's growth boundary and Future Land Use Map. The other meeting focused on obtaining input from the business community regarding these same alternatives. TG Malloy Consulting and Staff also met with the Roaring Fork Valley Regional Planning Commission to obtain input regarding the growth/future land use map alternatives.

On July 11, 2007, the Town Council met to review a draft of the *2007 Basalt Master Plan* forwarded to them by the Planning Commission. The Town Council expressed support for the draft plan at that meeting with a few minor suggested revisions. The Planning Commission opened the formal noticed public hearing for the Master Plan on July 31, 2007. After taking public comment and



giving direction on several items, the Planning Commission continued the public hearing. The Planning Commission held the final public hearing regarding the *2007 Basalt Master Plan* on August 30, 2007 and voted to adopt the Plan and forward it to the Town Council for Council adoption as required pursuant to the Town of Basalt's Home Rule Charter. The Town Council reviewed and adopted the Master Plan at a public hearing held on October 23, 2007. ♦

Community input was also obtained via letters and e-mails received from citizens and businesses and via interviews with the owners of property located within the Three Mile Planning Area.

It is anticipated that, after the adoption of the *2007 Basalt Master Plan*, the Town would prepare an Action Plan to ensure the implementation on this master plan. The purpose of the Action Plan would be to provide a clear set of actions to be taken by the Town to implement the Plan.

1.4 THREE MILE PLANNING AREA

The study area for this plan includes the existing town limits and the area within three miles of the existing town boundaries (see Figure 1), referred to in this master plan as the Three Mile Planning Area. The area within three miles of the current town limits was included in the study area in order to fulfill requirements of the State Statutes related to annexation (§31-12-105, C.R.S). The inclusion of the Three Mile Planning Area in this master plan does not mean that the Town is intending to annex these areas. The intent is to gather the appropriate information with respect to the land, roads and facilities to create a more thorough understanding of the issues and opportunities affecting the land surrounding the Town. The information obtained for the Three Mile Planning Area will also aid the Town in its role as a referral agency when providing comments and recommendations for development proposals being reviewed by adjacent county governments.

The resulting planning area incorporates land in four jurisdictions: the Town of Basalt, and Eagle, Pitkin and Garfield Counties. The acreage of the planning area is broken down in the following table:

**TABLE 1.4.1
THREE MILE PLANNING AREA Breakdown by Jurisdiction**

	Acres	% of Total
Pitkin County	19,873.0	45.3%
Eagle County	18,760.3	42.8%
Garfield County	3,967.8	9.0%
Basalt	1,263.2	2.9%
Total	43,864.3	100.0%

Source: Basalt Planning Staff

♦ There are a couple areas where the Town Council's Plan differs from the Plan adopted by the Planning Commission. These differences are noted in footnotes on pages 94, 116, and 122 of this document (see Town Council Resolution No. 14, Series of 2007 in the Appendix of this document).



The Town of Basalt annexed approximately 32 acres of the Two Rivers Road right-of-way into the town boundary when it took over Two Rivers Road from CDOT. This annexation physically connected West and East Basalt and slightly changed the boundaries of the Three Mile Planning Area. That action along with refinements to the GIS database resulted in a small increase (215 acres or less than half of one percent of the total study area) in the size of the 2007 Three Mile Planning Area boundary, as compared to the boundary used in the *1999 Basalt Master Plan*. Figure 1 shows the study area and reflects the change in the three-mile area boundary.

The Three Mile Planning Area presents several unusual challenges. First, due to the shape of the current town limits, the three-mile area is quite large. The planning area is 10.2 miles long (east/west) and 9.6 miles wide (north/south). In addition, the Town is divided into two parts, East Basalt and West Basalt, with distinctly different characteristics and issues. These factors influenced many of the decisions that were made in the preparation of the *1999 Basalt Master Plan* and continue to influence policies and recommendations in the *2007 Basalt Master Plan*.

Basalt’s town boundaries encompass two separate areas: the eastern area surrounding and including the original Basalt townsite (East Basalt); and West Basalt, which includes City Market, Aspen Junction, the Willits development, and several other adjacent properties. In this document, the term “East Basalt” includes only those areas within the town limits for the eastern portion of Town, while “East Basalt Planning Area” includes the area within the town limits and the immediately adjacent unincorporated areas. Likewise, “West Basalt” includes only that area within town limits for the western portion of Town, while the “West Basalt Planning Area” also includes the adjacent unincorporated areas such as Dakota, Blue Lake, El Jebel, Sopris Village and the Crown Mountain Park.

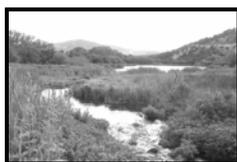
There remains substantial development that has been approved and is yet to be built within the Town of Basalt and the surrounding Three Mile Planning Area. Table 1.4.2 shows the number of units that have either been approved and are yet to be built, or which are expected to occur as “infill” within existing developed areas. Even without any new development approvals, an additional 849 dwelling units could be built within the Three Mile Planning Area. As shown on Table 1.4.2, this could translate to an additional 2,173 persons within the study area. Additional information on the build-out potential of the Three Mile Planning Area can be found in Section 2.7, Build-out Potential, and Section 5, Future Land Use.

TABLE 1.4.2
Approved and Infill Development Potential
Entire Three Mile Planning Area

	Unbuilt Units	New Population*
In-Town	593	1,518
Balance of Study Area	256	655
Total Study Area	849	2,173

Source: Numbers provided by Basalt Planning Staff and TG Malloy Consulting.

** Based on average household size of 2.56 persons.*



1.5 REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Town of Basalt and its Three Mile Planning Area are located roughly midway between Aspen and Glenwood Springs in the Roaring Fork Valley. The Valley is divided by three county jurisdictions and includes five incorporated municipalities (Aspen, Snowmass Village, Basalt, Carbondale, and Glenwood Springs) and several small, unincorporated population centers. Figure 2 shows the Town's Three Mile Planning Area within the Roaring Fork Valley and the larger regional context.

Table 1.5.1 provides a comparison of Basalt's population with the populations of other jurisdictions in the region, including Eagle, Pitkin and Garfield Counties and the incorporated municipalities within the region. Between 1997 and 2005, Basalt's population grew by approximately 51%, while the population of the entire region grew at a rate of 28% over the same time period. This illustrates that the Roaring Fork Valley and Basalt in particular, continue to be a popular area for people to locate. The trend of local professionals migrating down-valley from Aspen has accelerated since the completion of the Highway 82 expansion. Basalt's population grew at a much greater rate than other Roaring Fork Valley communities, including Aspen, Carbondale and Glenwood Springs (see Table 1.5.1). However, most of the growth in the region is occurring in central Garfield County (New Castle, Silt, Rifle and Parachute) as was the case when the *1999 Basalt Master Plan* was being prepared.

TABLE 1.5.1
Regional Population Estimates by Jurisdiction

	1997 Pop	2000 Pop	% Change	2005 Pop	% Change
Basalt*	2,093	2,681	28.1%	3,169	18.2%
Eagle County					
Unincorporated Areas Surrounding Basalt**	4,844	7,252	49.7%	7,716	6.4%
Garfield County					
Carbondale	4,413	5,196	17.7%	5,881	13.2%
Glenwood Springs	7,492	7,736	3.3%	8,603	11.2%
New Castle	1,563	1,984	26.9%	3,148	58.7%
Parachute	1,004	1,006	0.2%	1,360	35.2%
Rifle	6,017	6,784	12.7%	8,118	19.7%
Silt	1,418	1,740	22.7%	2,319	33.3%
Unincorporated Areas	16,987	19,345	13.9%	21,244	9.8%
Pitkin County					
Aspen	5,650	5,914	4.7%	6,399	8.2%
Snowmass Village	1,706	1,822	6.8%	2,278	25.0%
Unincorporated Areas	6,933	6,407	-7.6%	6,902	7.7%
Total Region	60,120	67,867	12.9%	77,137	13.7%

Source: Colorado Demography Office

* Source: Basalt Planning Staff

**Source: Eagle County and Basalt Planning Staff.

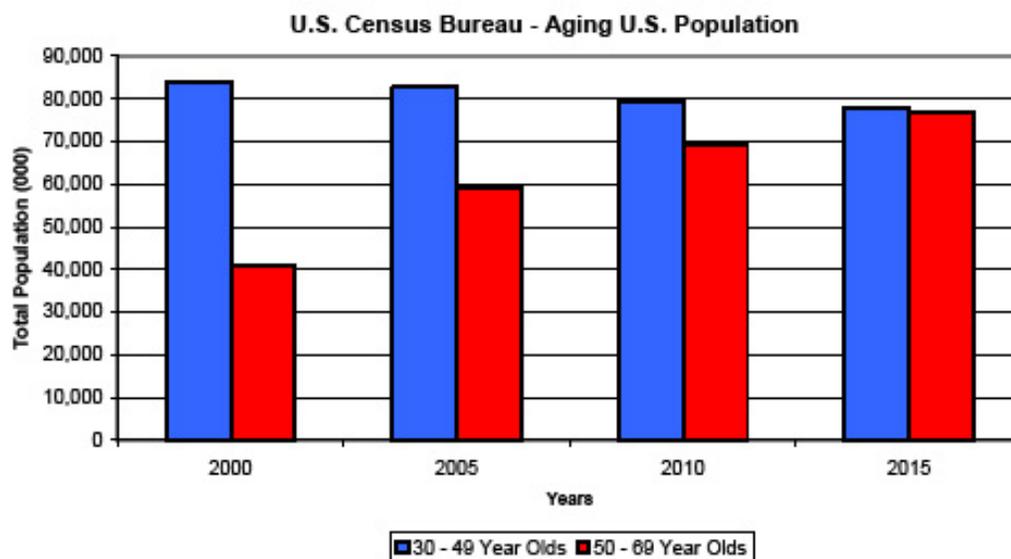
*** Excludes population estimate for area within Town of Basalt municipal boundaries.



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National statistics suggest that the trend of retirees relocating to the west will continue and perhaps increase in the coming years. The results of a recent national survey¹ involving 44-56 year olds (baby boomers) show that relocation in retirement is on the horizon for many baby boomers with nearly six out of ten likely to move to a new home for retirement. Of those planning to move, 31% plan to move more than three hours away from their current location (measured in driving time). These numbers are significant considering the sheer number of baby boomers entering the retirement phase of their lives. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the number of individuals between the ages of 50 and 69 is expected to leap approximately 87% over the next 15 years. In 2000, they estimated this population to be about 41 million strong with the number jumping 44% to 59.3 million by the year 2005 (see Chart 1.5A).

CHART 1.5A



Colorado is expected to be among the most popular destinations for the next wave of retirees. Chart 1.5B is a map of the United States showing preferred retirement locations. The percentages on this map reflect the percentage of persons who selected that state as the one they are most likely to move to for their retirement years. This chart also shows the most popular retirement states. Colorado is tied with Texas and Virginia as the sixth most popular retirement destination among those who participated in the survey. This data hints at an additional challenge to the Town's goals of maintaining a balanced community.

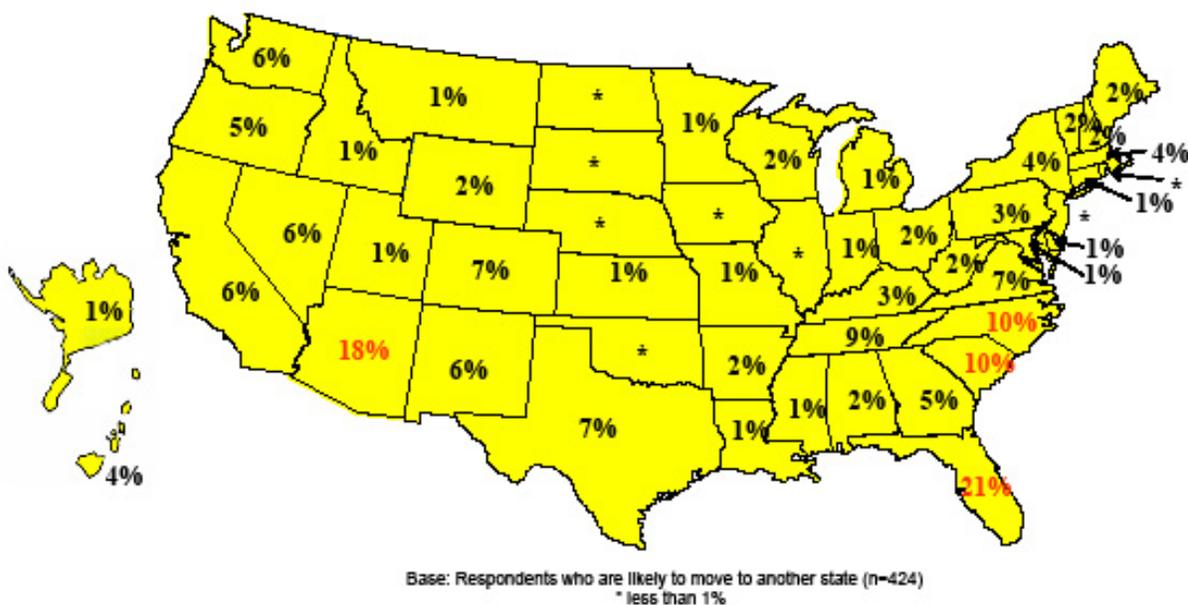
¹ *Baby Boomer Report, Annual Opinion Survey, 2003 Survey Results Summary.* Survey conducted by Harris Interactive on behalf of Del Webb Corporation.



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CHART 1.5B

State Boomers Most Likely to Consider Moving to

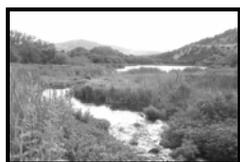


Most Popular States

1. Florida (21%)
2. Arizona (18%)
3. South Carolina (10%)
4. North Carolina (10%)
5. Tennessee (9%)
6. Colorado, Virginia, Texas (7%)
7. New Mexico, California (6%)

The Roaring Fork Valley is a rural resort area and one of the nation’s most famous and beautiful tourist destinations, well-known not only for its excellent ski areas, but also for a variety of outdoor activities providing year-round recreational opportunities. Tourism, the service industry that supports it, and the construction industry are the region’s primary economic engines. Tourism in the valley occurs throughout the year with alpine winter sports, plus fishing, hiking, and bicycling as the dominant sporting activities.

The nature of the primary tourism attraction in the valley (outdoor activities) has, in the past, resulted in spring and fall off-seasons. The beginning of the spring off-season, or “mud season”, corresponds with the closing of the ski areas in early April and extends through May. The fall off-season begins after the leaves have changed in October and ends a week or two before Christmas. These times are marked by a significant drop in activity and retail sales. Local residents often use these times to take vacations. Historically, this kind of cyclical economy created a unique job market, but those impacts are seen less and less as tourism employment becomes a lower



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percentage of the job market. The cyclical economy also creates interesting challenges with respect to the housing market.

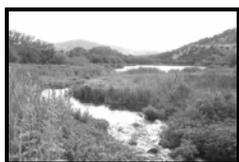
The Roaring Fork Valley is approximately 39 miles long from Glenwood to Aspen and is relatively narrow. There is one main highway (Highway 82) that runs from Glenwood Springs to Aspen and over Independence Pass to Leadville and Buena Vista (via Highway 24). However, Independence Pass is closed during winter months, creating a dead-end valley from November to May. Highway 82 has been improved to a four-lane, divided highway from Glenwood Springs to the Buttermilk Ski Area. Construction on this project was completed in autumn of 2004. Highway 133 (a two-lane roadway) enters Highway 82 in Carbondale and provides access over McClure Pass to the Paonia, Hotchkiss, and Delta areas.

There is also a railroad right-of-way that runs through the valley from Glenwood Springs to Aspen. The Denver & Rio Grande Western railroad company (D&RGW) used to operate freight service and passenger service along this corridor. The Roaring Fork Railroad Holding Authority (RFRHA) purchased the right-of-way in June 1997 with the intent to utilize it as a transit, trail, and recreation corridor between Glenwood Springs and Aspen. In addition to a recreation/commuter trail, the corridor has been studied as part of an alignment for a possible valley-wide transit corridor. The purchase of the railroad right-of-way and the planning that has been conducted to evaluate a valley-wide transit system along this corridor has created an increased awareness regarding regional planning and issues that cross jurisdictional lines.

The region currently has a mass transit bus system operated by the Roaring Fork Transit Agency (RFTA) that has been in operation since 1983. RFTA provides commuter bus service from Aspen to Glenwood Springs (Roaring Fork Valley), Glenwood Springs to Rifle (Hogback), intra city service in Aspen and Glenwood Springs, skier shuttle service to the four Aspen Skiing Company ski areas, and a variety of other seasonal services. The current system includes a number of park and ride lots along the highway corridor. In 2003, RFTA was awarded three of the top honors by the Colorado Association of Transit Agencies (CASTA), including the award for "Large Transit Agency of the Year." In 2006, they were once again awarded the distinction of "Large Transit Agency of the Year."

1.6 PHYSICAL SETTING / CLIMATE

Basalt is located at the confluence of the Roaring Fork and Fryingpan Rivers and is about midway between Aspen and Glenwood Springs. Basalt is also at the entrance to the Fryingpan Valley (known for its gold medal trout fishery), which attracts a significant amount of tourism. A dam was constructed on the Fryingpan River between 1964 and 1968, forming the Ruedi Reservoir. At almost 1,000 acres, Ruedi Reservoir is the largest reservoir in the Roaring Fork Valley and is an important part of supplying water to the western slope. Prior to the dam being built the Fryingpan River flooded almost every year, making living along its banks a virtual impossibility. The Fryingpan River, in addition to forming its own watershed, is part of the greater Roaring Fork Watershed that empties into the Colorado River in Glenwood Springs. The Basalt Three Mile Planning Area encompasses an extremely small portion of the approximately 1,451 square-mile



Roaring Fork River Watershed. The Roaring Fork Watershed includes the Sawatch, Collegiate and Elk Mountain Ranges and eight 14,000 foot peaks.

The Town is surrounded by public lands including the Basalt State Wildlife Area controlled by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), and land under the jurisdiction of the United States Forest Service (USFS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Basalt is nestled in the foothills of Basalt Mountain and receives ample sunshine due to the orientation and width of the valley in this area. At an elevation of 6,610 feet, mild winters, relatively low humidity, and comfortable summer temperatures characterize Basalt's climate. The nearest officially recognized weather station is located at a lower elevation near Glenwood Springs, where the monthly average temperature varies from 24.2° F in January to 70.8° F in July. Precipitation can vary greatly from year to year. Average snowfall in the Glenwood Springs area is approximately 69 inches per year.

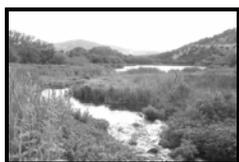
Basalt is divided by Highway 82 and the Roaring Fork and Fryingpan Rivers and, thus, has distinct, well-defined neighborhoods. Highway 82 creates a formidable barrier for pedestrian travel and, until recent years, the south side of the Highway was developed almost exclusively for commercial/light industrial use.

1.7 A BRIEF HISTORY OF BASALT AND THE SURROUNDING AREA²

In order to retain its integrity, the planning and development of a community must reflect its physical and historical context. This is one of the most fundamental building blocks of community planning. Much of what makes a town unique can be attributed to the preservation of the significant artifacts of its past history. The unique qualities of a place create enduring memories for its residents. Basalt is fortunate that some of its historical artifacts have been preserved. Since the adoption of the *1999 Basalt Master Plan*, the Town of Basalt has paid greater attention to its past heritage and historic resources. The Town has taken additional steps toward preserving those resources by creating an inventory of important structures, by adopting the Landmark Protection Ordinance and by giving many historic buildings a Landmark Designation. By ensuring that history is acknowledged and retained in the development and preservation of public and private places, we strengthen our connection to the past and show our respect for the events and people that helped create and shape the Town.

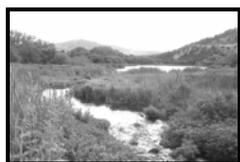
Residents of the Town have expressed a desire to focus more attention on the preservation of the Town's heritage and its significant physical characteristics. It is the intent of this master plan update to acknowledge the Town's history in the future planning for the community. The history of Basalt and El Jebel are two distinctly different stories. Basalt began as a railroad town and was known as Aspen Junction until 1895 when the name was changed to Basalt. This

² Much of the historic information provided in this section was obtained from *Roaring Fork Valley, an Illustrated Chronicle* by Len Shoemaker, published by Sundance Publications, Second Printing - 1979.



name was taken from the basaltic rock formation of Black Mountain (now known as Basalt Mountain) located to the north of the Town. The original settlement was actually called Fryingpan Town and was located on the south side of the Fryingpan River, near the old charcoal kilns, portions of which are still visible. However, in 1887 the railroad established a new townsite on the north side of the Fryingpan River and the residents of the old town relocated to it, leaving the original townsite that eventually disappeared. Basalt was officially incorporated during the summer of 1901. Since that time, the Town has gone through numerous changes and expansions. The history of the Town's physical growth through its annexations is discussed in greater detail in the Existing Land Use Section of this document (see Section 2.5).

El Jebel's history goes back to the late 1800s when one of the original homesteaders, Lee Willits, started a ranch operation in the area. He eventually sold the land to his wealthy brother-in-law, Henry Gillespie, who acquired several adjoining parcels and named the ranch El Jebel (which means "The Temple of the Mountain" in Arabic). The land supported an abundance of crops including orchards of apple, pear, and plum trees. Eventually acquired by Floyd Crawford in 1961, El Jebel transformed into a small residential and commercial community when the area was selected to house workers for the Ruedi Dam project. The mobile home park, built during that time, still exists in El Jebel today.



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“Community planning begins with learning how to care for your town, its people, and those generations yet to be born.”



The Small Town Planning Handbook (Second Addition); Thomas L. Daniels,
John W. Keller and Mark B, Lapping, (1995).



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