

# Homes doomed by landslides leveled

By Tom Ragan  
The Gazette

Like some sort of mechanical dinosaur, a backhoe on Tuesday finished the destruction that a landslide started by leveling three duplexes in the Pleasant Valley neighborhood on the city's westside.

And the dirty work is not done. City-hired TR Demolition Inc. was to demolish a fourth duplex today — on Friendship Lane East, where the other three were destroyed.

The four houses, built in the late 1970s on a bluff overlooking King Street and Old Colorado City, were acquired by the city last summer as part of a \$4.1 million federal buyout.

Homeowners who were forced out about a year ago received 75 percent of the appraised value of their properties from disaster funds made available by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The money was obtained by the city after heavy rain in April 1999 triggered numerous landslides in the foothills along the Springs westside.

Significant damage was reported to dozens of houses from Rockrimmon on the north to Broadmoor Bluffs on the south.

In the case of the duplexes on Friendship Lane East, decks were beginning to fall off the back ends of the houses just before the city decided to buy the houses with FEMA money, said Donna Fair, director of the Colorado Springs Office of Emergency Management.

**COMING SUNDAY:** It's been one year since the city obtained federal money to buy landslide-damaged homes across Colorado Springs. We will examine the progress made on the problem, and changes in people's lives.

"It was only a matter of time before they slid down the hill," Fair said. "A couple more heavy rains and they would have been goners."

The city has acquired 23 houses across the city with the federal money.

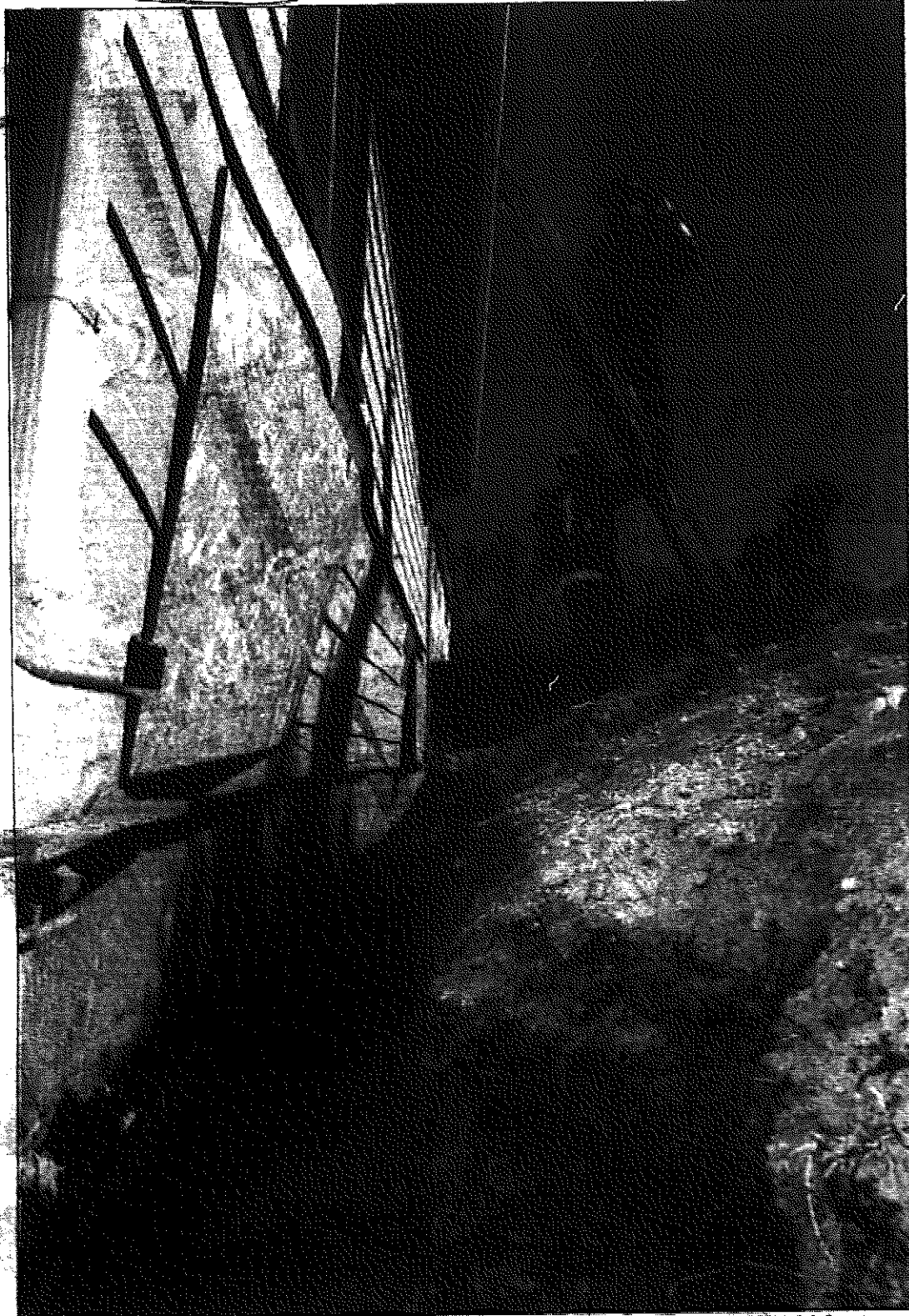
But whether all the houses will be destroyed is still a matter of discussion, Fair said, adding some of the structures may be turned into affordable housing at new locations, depending on what kind of condition they are in.

Still, the city needs at least \$30 million more if it is to buy about 70 houses that have been damaged by slow-moving landslides, which are caused by weak bedrock, called Pierre shale. The shale has a tendency to liquify when it rains, which causes it to move, Fair said.

The next set of houses scheduled for demolition by the end of the week will be in the 4200 block of Regency Drive, in the Broadmoor Bluffs area, Fair said.

After that, several houses along Hofstead Court and Hofstead Terrace in Holland Park, about two miles northeast of Friendship Lane, are next on the list, Fair said. Hof-

See LANDSLIDE, METRO2



Colorado Springs Fire Department paramedic David Broch climbs to the roof of an abandoned home on Hofstead Court in Holland Park on Tuesday. The home is one of several in the neighborhood that were damaged by landslides resulting from heavy rain in 1999. The homes were acquired by the city with federal disaster money and are scheduled to be demolished. The Fire Department is using the abandoned homes for fire-fighting training.

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land Park is north of Fillmore Street near Centennial Boulevard.

But the homes are not total wastes. Recruits with the Colorado Springs Fire Department used several of the Holland Park houses along Hofstead Terrace as makeshift training grounds.

Using chain saws, firefighters cut small holes into some of the roofs. Colorado Springs fire Lt. Tommy Smith said the holes help release the hot air and gasses that accumulate when a house catches fire.

"That way, firefighters can see once they break down the door and enter the house," said Lt. Michael Dalton, who

was on hand to instruct the recruits.

Blaise Bailey, a neighbor who lives across the street from some of the abandoned and boarded up houses, said she was happy to see that the houses served some sort of final purpose before being torn down next week.

"It's been a very, very sad

affair," she said, as she watched the firefighters from her deck. "Nobody really knew anybody before the landslides started causing problems. We all just went about our daily routines.

"But, then, before we knew it, we were helping everybody move out once the city started buying the houses."