

High River rebounds with new business park

It may be months before many High River businesses displaced by the floods are able to reopen in their original locations. But their owners still need to generate revenue and keep people employed.

On Sept. 27, a temporary business park officially opens next to Rotary Park downtown, offering facilities for stores, restaurants and offices to continue to provide their services.

"The key thing is getting people back to work," says Wayne Sellers, owner of Alta Vita Ristorante, which was flooded out in June but will now reopen temporarily in the High River Business Park nearby. "We're targeting (reopening the original restaurant) on Dec. 1, but we haven't begun the rebuilding process. It's a camp kitchen, but the Town has been super in getting this (facility) together.

"This brings a bit of life to downtown High River and brings some hope back."

Between 20 and 25 businesses will locate in the temporary facility — built by the town and the province — which includes several buildings by Aldersyde-based



— Courtesy Kananaskis Outfitters

Angela Groenveld, Town of High River business renewal officer stands outside the temporary business park at Rotary Park. Below, Wayne Sellers has relocated his Alta Vita Ristorante to the nearby Highwood River Business Park.

Sprung Structures, says Todd Williams, property manager for the High River Business Park.

"We're housing a number of stores, predominately looking at retail space — people need traffic to do business, and we've included kitchens for restaurants that are still displaced and several office-type units," he says.

"We've got to get them up and running so they can generate revenue ... many (business owners) not only had their businesses devastated, but their homes affected as

well. For the town of High River, this will be an eye-catching centerpiece for a downtown community that's still under some stress to rebuild."

Williams says, as far as he knows, this is the first time a town of this size has established a temporary business park like this, adding it may be "precedent-setting" for communities hit by similar disasters.

Keeping the businesses downtown was key, says Town Business Renewal Officer Angela Groenveld.

"They told us they wanted to be as close



to their location as (possible) ... we want to get people going downtown," she says, noting the grand opening of the business park coincides with the town's Alberta Culture Days festival on



Sept. 28, which is going ahead as scheduled with live music and arts displays in the downtown.

"We have a beautiful park and CP Rail allowed us to go on there (to erect the temporary facility)," says Groenveld. "Getting the traffic flowing downtown is a big sign of hope that we're coming back."

Williams says the aim is for the facility to be in place for a year, and for businesses to stay only as long as they need to before their rebuilding is finished.

Also up and running in a temporary location is Rexall Drugs, which has set up an Atco trailer so it can continue filling prescriptions.

"We were up by July 19, and we hope to have the pharmacy back up and running (in the store) by Oct. 14," says store manager Kathy Kundert, adding the trailer is serv-

ing about 100 pharmacy customers daily.

"It's really vital — we have a lot of seniors we deliver to, and some lost their vehicles and can't get down here, so we've offered delivery service."

Meanwhile, Bow Valley College's High River campus is setting up a Business Resource Office providing access to Internet, office supplies, and even a mail drop for businesses that have been displaced.

"Even the basic things like having reliable Internet or a printer is important ... (for) reconnecting to customers or figuring out marketing strategies," says Corinne Finnie with BVC education business development for the Foothills region. "If they need meeting space to meet with clients, we can schedule that for them; our admin assistant is their admin assistant."



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