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Thornton Veterans Memorial on the move

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 Contributed by: Tony Hake on 12/15/2006

The Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation announced today plans to relocate the memorial to a different park within the city of Thornton. The Foundation had been expecting to put the memorial at a park on 139 h and Colorado Boulevard however recent events have dictated that an alternate site be considered.

On November 11, 2006, the city of Thornton, in conjunction with the Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation, held the city's first annual Veterans Day event. The event was highly successful - in fact, turnout for the event was beyond expectations. Over 250 area residents attended the memorial service at the civic center.

After the event, the city and the foundation discussed concerns about the ability of the proposed memorial location to support such events. While the site the Foundation had chosen was perfect in most every aspect, it did not lend itself to the size of crowds that are expected at veteran related events. Taking into account the available parking in the area and the infrastructure in the area, the memorial had already outgrown its space before ground is even broken. This was a significant issue and the city and the Foundation felt it needed to be addressed.

Unfortunately, changes to the site the foundation had been working with were simply not possible or adequate. Working hand in hand with Thornton city planners, the memorial's design committee, led by architect **Greg Banks**, LEED-PC of Valerian, LLC, worked quickly to identify alternatives. As a result, an in-depth analysis of available sites and the needs and requirements of the memorial was performed. In the end, everything pointed to the same place - the area of the Thornton Recreation Center.

Mr. Banks said, "The old location allowed the memorial to be for an individual. The new location allows for not only individual visitors to appreciate it, but also larger groups and allows ample room for the types of events we will be holding."

The area of the new location is of course very familiar to all area residents as it currently has the Margaret Carpenter Recreation Center as well as the multi-purpose fields. Comprising an expansive area of land of over ¼ square mile, the park is used for the city's 4th of July, Thorntonfest and Winterfest events. The city of Thornton currently has numerous plans to expand and enhance the park including a large lake that will be made in 2008.



Tami William, the Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation Treasurer, was positive about the move.

"Citizens had voiced some concerns over the original site including the fact it was at the northern edge of the city and the fact the hill it was to be located on was very limiting. This gives us the opportunity to address those concerns and in fact improves on the original concept."

In planning for the park three years ago, the city actually had identified a location for a veterans memorial in the southwest corner of the park. Financial realities dictated that the plans for the memorial be shelved but it affords the Thornton Veterans Memorial a location that has already been properly vetted and actually improves upon the original planned site. Enhancements that can now be realized for the Thornton Veterans Memorial at this new site include:

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- A location closer to the current center of the city allowing much easier access for residents living in the southern area.
- Parking is much more readily available and already in place.
- The highest point in the park affording extraordinary views of the mountains, the northern Front Range, and the soon to be constructed lake.
- A large, open area that ensures the intimacy and privacy the memorial requires.
- Due to the open space surrounding the memorial, it allows for much greater flexibility in landscaping surrounding the memorial to further enhance the monuments.
- There will be room to grow after the main memorial is built including the possibility of adding a "first responder" memorial, a 9/11 memorial and various other appropriate extensions of the primary memorial.
- Allows for tie-ins to city events such as the 4 th of July, Harvestfest and Winterfest.
- Improved accessibility for handicapped and less able-bodied visitors.
- As a "destination" area, the visibility of the memorial will be greatly increased thus allowing more residents to easily visit and appreciate the memorial and gain further understanding of the contributions veterans have made to our country and our community.

Tony Hake, Chairman of the Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation said, "In a way, we are victims of our own success. The recent Veterans Day event and the extraordinary turnout and support really brought to our attention that the infrastructure at the old site wasn't going to support the memorial and the types of activities we envision having there. This new location not only allows us plenty of room to hold events like Veterans Day and Memorial Day, it also allows us much greater flexibility in the memorial design, makes us part of a city destination, and puts us much closer to the population center of the city. The decision wasn't easy but in the end we feel the new location serves the memorial's purpose and the community much better."

About the Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation

Founded in 2005, the Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established by citizens of Thornton, Colorado with the sole purpose of building and maintaining a veterans memorial. Our nation's veterans have served and protected the United States for 230 years. They have made sacrifices small and large, all to ensure the freedom of this great nation. A fitting and proper tribute within our city is a small way of showing our appreciation for their service. Privately funded and created, the Foundation endeavors to make this memorial a reality for the city, its citizens and all veterans.

To learn more about the Foundation and the memorial project, please visit our website at <http://www.thorntonveteransmemorial.org>.

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