



Graphic supplied

The design for the Thornton Veterans Memorial is based on the concept of a five-point star, with each outer point commemorating different branches of the military. The center star will hold the American, Colorado and POW/MIA flags. Members of the Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation recently decide to move the site for the memorial from Hilltop Park to the city's recreation center property, largely based on accessibility concerns. The memorial is scheduled to open on Memorial Day, 2008.

Memorial moves south

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Staff Writer

THORNTON

The location of the future Thornton Veterans Memorial has been switched from Hilltop Park on 139th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard to the Margaret Carpenter Recreation Center site between 108th and 112th avenues, also on Colorado Boulevard.

"Accessibility is what initially brought on the thoughts of this (change)," said Tony Hake, chairman of the Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation.

Hake said that between 250 and 300 people attended Thornton's first annual Veterans Day celebration at City Hall on Nov. 11. With the anticipation that the memorial location would host similar events in the future, that number is already too large for Hilltop Park to accommodate.

"We've outgrown the site before we even break ground," Hake said.

At a recent City Council study session, Councilwoman Rebecca Cavanaugh-Miller said the turnout for future Veterans Day events will only grow.

"Parking is really the issue," Cavanaugh-Miller said. "(People) would be parking in the neighborhood (at Hilltop)."

Mayor Pro Tem Martin Wisniewski said the rec center location offers multiple parking area options and is also more handicap-accessible.

Both Hake and Cavanaugh-Miller said another reason to change locations is the potential for expansion at the rec center site. Memorials honoring police and firefighters or Sept. 11 heroes, for example, could be added to the rec cen-

ter location if desired, but there is no room at Hilltop Park for additions.

A veteran's memorial was actually originally considered at the rec center, Hake said, when the city was developing a master plan for the area in 2003. When the memorial design's \$4 million price tag brought the city's plans to a halt, "the city started looking for community leaders to start up a private memorial," Hake said.

That effort led to the formation of the Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation, which initially chose the Hilltop location largely because of its view — Hilltop is the city's highest point — and more remote atmosphere.

But the accessibility and expansion concerns were sufficient to spark the move to the southwest corner of the rec center site, and Hake said he hopes trees and landscaping around the memorial will still provide a "secluded and private feeling."

The move south has gotten some positive feedback from southern Thornton residents, who like the idea of the memorial being closer to "Old Thornton," Hake added.

While the memorial's location is changing, its design remains the same. Developed by architect Greg Banks of Valerian, LLC, the memorial is designed in the shape of a five-point star, with each point directed to structures commemorating the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps and Navy military branches.

A star in the center of the memorial will hold the American, Colorado and POW/MIA flags.

'We've outgrown the site before we even break ground.'

— Tony Hake
Chairman of the Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation.

Foundation members originally hoped to open the memorial on Memorial Day, 2007, but are now looking at Memorial Day 2008 for the event.

Hake said the later date isn't due to the location change, but a longer-than-anticipated delay in the foundation receiving non-profit status from the IRS.

"We didn't get official determination until August," Hake said, adding that the IRS had been giving priority to organizations helping Hurricane Katrina victims, resulting in the delay.

It's hard to get donations when donors aren't sure they will receive tax-exempt status, so the foundation wasn't able to do significant fundraising until it received official non-profit determination, Hake said.

"We're really going to kick off our capital campaign (next week)," Hake said, adding that the election and holiday seasons further delayed fund-raising efforts.

Donations can be made and more information found at www.thorntonveteransmemorial.org.