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WESTMINSTER, COLORADO Improvements Abound

Westminster, Colorado is a community on the move. For starters, the Westminster Economic Development Authority (WEDA) is in the process of redeveloping eight acres within the historic town area, where the first phase of a 50 town-home project is currently under construction, and plans for the second phase involving neighborhood, commercial, and office expansion are underway. Planning is also underway for the transformation of a 150-acre industrial area into a transit-oriented project that will include a large creek-side park and a diverse range of residential housing. In addition, the city is in negotiations with a major homebuilder to redevelop another older industrial area. In part, the city is using EPA Brownfields Assessment funds to focus its efforts on the community of South Westminster. The city determined that the greatest need for redevelopment exists in South Westminster where each of these projects are located.

The South Westminster area, first homesteaded in 1870, was once open rangeland inhabited by buffalo and antelope. Later, with its immediate access and strategic location to Denver, Westminster became a thriving area for commercial, small low-tech-industry, and residential living. Over time, this area eventually went into decline. By the early 1990s, South Westminster comprised of 260 separate commercial parcels including large neglected shopping centers; small, independently owned retail and service centers; vacant manufacturing and warehouse facilities; junkyards; salvage yards; and abandoned water and wastewater treatment plants, all intermingled with residential properties.

The residential population is disproportionately large with minorities and people living on low-incomes. To address this, the city is working with citizens of South Westminster, through community outreach meetings and educational material, to identify and encourage entrepreneurial opportunities in the project area.



Harris Townhome Project Breaks Ground

Restoring Civic Pride

The city's goal is to return the historical area of South Westminster to its former prosperity and restore an overall sense of community and civic pride. The city established WEDA in 1987 to implement its urban renewal plan of revitalizing the South Westminster area. Being the City of Westminster's designated urban renewal agency, WEDA has the authority to acquire abandoned properties for development purposes in accordance with the urban renewal statutes of the State of Colorado and is entitled to a portion of South Westminster's taxes to financially support new development projects.

When WEDA was formed, the stigma of contamination in South Westminster still hindered private investment. Through the efforts of the Brownfields Assessment work and WEDA, the city is removing barriers to redevelopment and addressing potential risks posed by suspected contamination. According to Tony Chacon, South Westminster Revitalization Project Coordinator, "The EPA grants have served as a significant catalyst for raising developers' interest in working on redevelopment projects on

brownfields property. The City of Westminster is several years ahead in its redevelopment efforts, and that is attributable to our partnership with EPA.”

A two-phase environmental assessment plan was conducted to determine the presence of environmental contamination in the South Westminster area. The first phase, completed in October 2000, included a database search for the 260 properties. It was determined that 243 of the 260 properties did not pose a risk of environmental contamination and required no further action. Phase II of the assessment plan consisted of additional investigation activities of the sites that required further action. Once the assessments were completed, WEDA started its plan of cleaning up and revitalizing the area. Great strides have been made to date to ensure that these plan come to fruition.

Westminster completed conceptual plans to convert the 40-acre, vacant, industrial Della Villa/England Water Treatment Facility property into a park and residential project. The area currently includes an



Historic 73rd Avenue Reconstruction Completed

abandoned water treatment plant, debris laden storage yards, and vacant properties. The redevelopment plans will help turn these abandoned properties into a vibrant neighborhood resource. In addition, construction is underway on a 50 town-home project along 73rd Avenue/Lowell Boulevard. The city is working with a developer to redevelopment a 35 acre site near 72nd Avenue and Federal Boulevard in the Northgate neighborhood. The plan calls for a mixed commercial/residential project providing up to 100,000 square feet of commercial space along with 138 residences.

Transit Improvements Connect Westminster

In addition to residential and commercial redevelopment, in June 2002, the Regional Transportation District (RTD) announced that a commuter rail station will be located in South Westminster (Lowell Boulevard) that will be built in conjunction with the Denver FasTracks project. FasTracks is a regional, multi-modal (combination of Commuter Rail and Light Rail) transportation system that will connect regional corridor hubs to Downtown Denver. The planning area also includes 150 acres in the area that will be immediately affected by the construction of a commuter rail. The Lowell Boulevard Gateway project includes a transformation into a mixed-use development area the will include industrial, office, commercial, and residential development. Through its efforts, the city has secured verbal commitments of interest from developers to participate in the planning and design of the Gateway project, and in the development of this area.

The long-established, historic nature of the neighborhoods of South Westminster and the affluence of the supporting Denver area communities will help serve the interests of residents and businesses in the project areas. Westminster is well on its way to reclaiming its place as an important part of the Denver Metro Area through thoughtful planning and a commitment to putting its distressed areas back into productive use.

For the latest information about the Westminster Brownfields project, please contact Tony Chacon, City of Westminster, at (303) 426-5857, or Mary Ahlstrom, EPA Region 8, at (303) 312-6626.

