

Memorial a tribute to military veterans

By Noelle Leavitt

Staff Writer

A 17,000-square-foot veterans memorial is slated for a highly visible spot in Thornton.

For the past eight months, the Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation has worked to bring a new memorial to the city.

A groundbreaking for the memorial won't take place until a park at 138th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard is complete and the Internal Revenue Service assigns a tax ID number for the memorial, expected later this month. Once the ID is secured, the foundation will start selling bricks to raise funds for the memorial construction.

The idea for a memorial circulated in Thornton for years, but it wasn't until the United States invaded Iraq that people started pushing the effort, said Terry Cooper, the foundation spokesperson.

Cooper's son, Thomas Slocum, was the first Coloradan to die in the war on terror in Iraq. He was from Thornton and died at the age of 22.

"All the stuff I've been involved with since I've lost my son is a way of healing," Cooper said. "Now

that I've lost him, I want to make sure he isn't forgotten."

When the memorial committee formed in March, the members created a wish list for the memorial.

"It was a tremendously long wish list," Cooper said.

The committee narrowed it down a bit and created subcommittees to work on different tasks.

"We had a committee that went around and looked at locations," Cooper said.

The committee chose an 18-acre vacant site in the Homestead Hills subdivision between 138th and 140th avenues next to Colorado Boulevard as the site for the memorial.

"It's the highest location in the city, and we wanted it to be visible," said Ward 3 Councilmember Rebecca Cavanaugh-Miller, who is helping with the memorial.

The city must install a water tank and finish the park before breaking ground for the memorial, but it's not known when it will be completed, said Cavanaugh-Miller, whose father was a Marine.

Land has not yet been cleared for the park.

Councilmember Martin Wisniewski from Ward 3 is also helping with the memorial.

"To me (the memorial) recognizes people who sacrifice everything for the country," he said.

Wisniewski's son, Justin, is currently stationed at Camp Pendleton, and served in Iraq.

"People who want to have a veterans' event will have a place to do it," Wisniewski said.

The memorial itself was designed by Greg Banks, a senior landscape architect for Valerian LLC. He designed the memorial based on a wish list from the committee.

The memorial will have five sides representing the five areas of service in the military. It's designed to look like a star and will take about three months to construct.

Banks was assigned to the project because he's a veteran of the U.S. Army and the Colorado National Guard.

The memorial will occupy 1,700 square-feet on the 18-acre park.

The completion date of the park and the memorial, along with a projected cost of the memorial, should be announced in January after all the plans are finalized.

For more information on the memorial visit www.thorntonvetronsmemorial.org.