

Vet memorial inches toward realization

By Brady Delander

Staff Writer

Tony Hake understands that the current economic climate is not conducive to fund raising, but that has only motivated him further to find any and all routes available to make the planned Thornton Veterans Memorial a reality.

One of the city's oldest veteran service organizations, Thornton Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7945, pushed the process ahead with a recent \$5,000 contribution to sponsor the memorial's American flagpole.

"We are pretty low down on the fund-raising thermometer, but 2008 was by far the best year in the three that we've been working on it," said Hake, chairman for the Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation. "The VFW members at Post 7945 wanted to make a notable contribution and set an example. These are the types of people that do extraordinary work and don't ask for any recognition."

The approximately 150-foot diameter memorial will be positioned on a small hill near 108th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard, near the Carpenter Recreation Center. A central obelisk will stand at a height of 9 feet 11

inches between a set of flagpoles to commemorate the events of Sept. 11, 2001.

Hake, a Navy veteran and chairman of the TVMF said the price tag stands at an estimated \$800,000, though that assumes no in-kind donations. He didn't want to say how much had been raised for the project yet other than the ultimate goal was still a ways off.

The initial design, by registered landscape architect Greg Banks, is complete but some tweaks and adjustments could still be made. Banks and Hake said the public is welcome to monthly meetings to find out more about the foundation and the design of the memorial.

"Whatever has been portrayed to the public at this point will remain," said Banks, chairman of the memorial's design committee.

Banks, a veteran of the Army and Colorado National Guard, said the TVMF imagines the memorial as a place for all veterans, from every branch, along with their friends and family. It will offer an opportunity for quiet reflection and as a gathering place for larger city events.

"It wasn't my intent to create a wall of names of those who have not made it home. It does allow for donors to honor those that

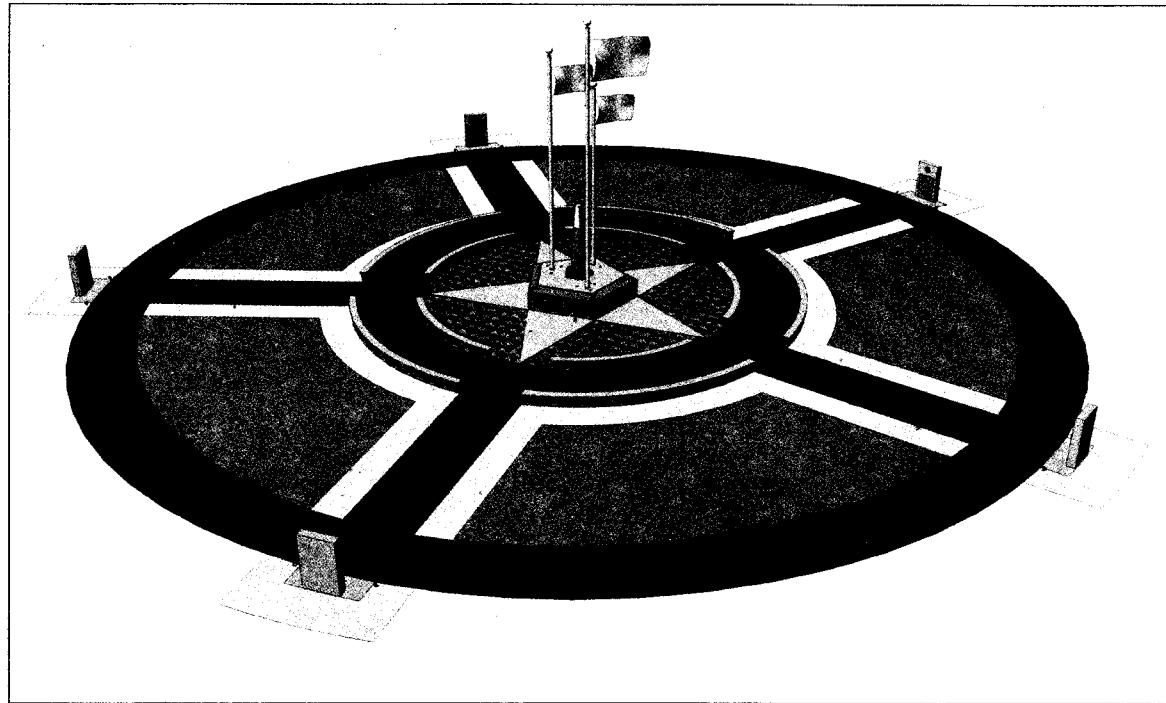


Image courtesy of Thornton Veterans Memorial Foundation and Greg Banks

A rendering of the proposed Thornton Veterans Memorial shows the basic design plans for the project, which is slated to be erected near Carpenter Recreation Center at 108th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard. Funds are currently being raised for the memorial.

have passed, but that's not the sole purpose," Banks said. "It is also a celebration of freedom and life, as well as a place for education. My hope is that teachers and boy scouts and girls scouts and those types of organizations will come out and learn from it."

Leroy Chavez, commander of VFW Post 7945, said there was a

lot of discussion among his membership about contributing \$5,000 to the project, but the final decision proved easy.

"I think it's very appropriate to recognize that there have been sacrifices made for the freedoms that we enjoy today," Chavez said. "We need to honor these selfless service veterans. Whether

the memorial gets built this year, in five years or 10 years doesn't really matter, it's just important that it happens some time."

Chavez, Banks and Hake, among many others, are donating their time to see the project through. Banks has contributed about \$40,000 worth of time, Hake estimated, and grant money and donations from various civic groups are actively being sought. The public can also buy bricks that can be engraved with a veteran's name or simple words of appreciation.

If all goes according to plan, groundbreaking could happen as soon as Memorial Day, which is May 25 this year.

"The design lends itself to phases," Hake said. "So we could break up into two phases quite easily, and that would allow us to put something in the ground sooner rather than later."

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