

2010 ICMA Community Partnership Nomination: Creation of the Broomfield-Westminster Open Space Foundation and subsequent acquisition of the 152-acre Metzger Farm

The City and County of Broomfield and the City of Westminster sit adjacent to each other within the north Denver metro area. Among neighboring governments, competition often exists for quality development and infrastructure. In the case of Metzger Farm, a shared desire to acquire the property for open space made it possible to achieve a goal that would have otherwise been very difficult to achieve by one community on its own. While it is a reality that adjacent communities some times have differing views on how to solve civic problems, Broomfield and Westminster also have a lot in common. Both communities have a commitment to outstanding development as well as exemplary park, trail, recreation, and open space programs. Westminster first created an open space program in 1985 and has preserved approximately 13.2% of the City's land area as open space. Broomfield began preserving property in 1987 and has protected nearly 5,200 acres of open space or about 22% of the City/County planning area. Residents from both communities continue to show strong support for preserving open space for wildlife habitat and to provide residents with passive recreational uses.

The 152-acre Metzger Farm sits within the City of Westminster on the border with the City and County of Broomfield at 120th Avenue and Lowell Boulevard. City Council members, staff and citizens from Broomfield and Westminster had been interested in protecting Metzger Farm for many years as the property was under intense development pressure. Because of the expense associated with acquiring the property, neither community was able to purchase the property on its own to preserve it as open space. In May of 2002, citizen representatives from the Open Space Advisory Boards in each community begin discussing the idea of partnering together to protect the farm. Both communities felt that protecting Metzger Farm was important since it was one of the last remaining intact farms in Broomfield and Westminster.

2010 ICMA Community Partnership Nomination: Creation of the Broomfield-Westminster Open Space Foundation and subsequent acquisition of the 152-acre Metzger Farm

While both communities wanted to see Metzger Farm protected, it took time to develop a plan that would allow for the joint acquisition of the property. The challenge was finding a way to finance and acquire the property that would ensure that both parties were equally invested in the property. Staff members discussed many ways to structure the acquisition but finally settled on the idea of creating a Foundation that would be jointly managed by Broomfield and Westminster. The Foundation could then issue Certificates of Participation to finance the acquisition of the property with each entity paying towards this debt on an annual basis. Creating this financing mechanism through the Foundation would ensure a fair way to acquire the property through an equal partnership. The creation of the Foundation would also provide a way to facilitate joint management of the property into the future with equal representation from both communities.

After working together for three years, the two neighboring communities approved an Intergovernmental Agreement in 2005 to create a foundation for the acquisition, financing, management and maintenance of Metzger Farm. On December 15, 2005, the Broomfield-Westminster Open Space Foundation approved the agreement with the Metzger family for the purchase of Metzger Farm as community open space.

Interest in preserving Metzger Farm brought the two communities together towards a common goal. Both communities showed leadership in coming together to pursue preservation of the site rather than work towards the goal individually. The idea of creating the Foundation to manage the process was an innovative way to solve ownership and management issues and to ensure a true partnership to guide decisions about the acquisition and management of the Farm. Pursuit of a common goal to preserve the Farm allowed each community to develop a better understanding of the other and has helped to foster a stronger working relationship between the two communities.

2010 ICMA Community Partnership Nomination: Creation of the Broomfield-Westminster Open Space Foundation and subsequent acquisition of the 152-acre Metzger Farm

The Foundation is made up of the two Mayors and two City Council members from each community, both City Managers, and one at-large member who is not affiliated with either community. Members from each community's legal, finance, and open space staffs organize Foundation meetings and provide support to the Foundation members. The Foundation allows each community to provide input on all matters related to the acquisition and management of the farm. The total acquisition cost for the property was \$11 million, with each community contributing approximately \$4.5 million. \$2 million was paid for through grants from Adams County and Great Outdoors Colorado, both of whom identified this as an exciting opportunity to preserve open space and part of Colorado's farming history. Both communities sold Certificates of Participation ("COP") to cover the purchase price and will pay down the COPs using their sales tax supported Open Space funds. The Foundation operates as a separate entity and has a separate budget. The Foundation budget is supported by an annual appropriation of \$30,000 from each community. These funds cover the cost to maintain the property.

The partnership between the two communities and the subsequent creation of the Foundation facilitated the acquisition of the Metzger Farm. This 152-acre property encompasses two parcels that were originally settled in the late 1800's by members of the Gay family. John Metzger, a former Colorado Attorney General, purchased the property in 1943 and it functioned as a working farm through the 1950's. The farmstead includes the family home and nine outbuildings, oriented in two east-west lines. The buildings and their spatial arrangement are significantly intact and represent what has been characterized as a "model farm" of the mid-twentieth century. The two man-made ponds, which were originally used for irrigation, stock-watering and firefighting, have matured into a nature preserve and are among the property's most distinctive natural features. The City of Westminster's 925-acre Big Dry Creek open space

2010 ICMA Community Partnership Nomination: Creation of the Broomfield-Westminster Open Space Foundation and subsequent acquisition of the 152-acre Metzger Farm

corridor and trail also run through a portion of this property. Broomfield has also planned the Southeast Community Trail and open space corridor that will connect into the west side of Metzger Farm.

The two communities continue to participate in the Foundation and make decisions related to management of the property. The members of the Foundation and each community's City Council and Open Space Advisory Boards have also been working on creating a master plan for the property. The master plan improvements will provide citizens from both communities with access to over two miles of trails, a picnic area, fishing, parking, wildlife viewing, and access to historically significant farm buildings. The cost to construct the improvements recommended in the master plan is estimated at \$780,000. The Foundation held an open house for the public to provide input on the draft master plan in March 2009. The attendees were very supportive of the ideas in the master plan and have expressed excitement in the opening of Metzger Farm to the public. The City of Westminster recently submitted a grant request to Adams County to help fund the plan. If the grant is awarded, the Foundation hopes to start construction during the summer/fall of 2010 and open the farm to the citizens in the spring of 2011.

Residents from both communities, along with the entire north metro Denver area, benefit from the preservation of the Farm. The farm preserves an important piece of local history and provides a unique open space that adds intrinsic value to both communities. Once the rehabilitated farm is open to the public, residents will be able to enjoy the site by bicycling or walking along the trails. Residents will also be able to enjoy the riparian areas associated with the wetlands and two ponds preserved on the Farm. This site will improve the quality of life for residents in both communities by providing a significant section of land preserved as open space, as well as providing history lessons on the area's agricultural past. City Council members and staff have received very positive feedback from residents for preserving the property.

2010 ICMA Community Partnership Nomination: Creation of the Broomfield-Westminster Open Space Foundation and subsequent acquisition of the 152-acre Metzger Farm

Each community has learned much from the process of creating the Foundation and working so closely with a neighboring jurisdiction. The learning curve to navigate the decision-making process of each community has been significant. Also, both communities have had to make decisions together and have successfully compromised on many issues to achieve these joint decisions. The partnership between both communities did not terminate with the creation of the Foundation and acquisition of the Farm. The two communities continue to work together to successfully manage the Farm. The process to create the master plan involved working together to develop a shared vision and budget regarding the future uses of the farm, along with the amount and type of improvements proposed in the master plan. By working through each issue and finding a way to reach agreement, the communities have been able to come together and support a master plan that protects the historic nature of the site and its natural resources while also providing appropriate access to residents. This partnership has helped to build a positive long-term relationship between City Council and staff members of both communities.

Through the creation of the Foundation and the financing mechanism, both communities have benefited from cost savings by sharing the expenses associated with the purchase and management of the farm. Resources such as staff and equipment are shared between the two communities. Creating a foundation to acquire and manage open space can be replicated in other communities. This type of partnership can be beneficial for many communities, as it provides a vehicle to share financing, ensures joint management of a project, and improves grant funding opportunities. Funding partners also encourage leveraging, which allows open space dollars to be used more efficiently. Because of the cost savings and the ability to combine resources, partnering with neighboring communities can be essential to accomplishing significant goals.