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COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER TO CREATE A NEW DAY FOR PARK HILL PROPERTY

Denver--On the one-year anniversary of the Holly Shopping Center fire, the Urban Land Conservancy (ULC), Mayor John Hickenlooper and Councilwoman Carla Madison met community members at the site to thank the community for demanding positive change, to talk about future community involvement in the site, and to announce an interim plan for growing healthy food on the property.

"Today marks a great new beginning for 'the Holly' and gives us reason to celebrate what a community can do when faced with adversity," said Mayor John Hickenlooper. "The work these groups have done, and will continue to do, is a shining example of community spirit."

ULC, a nonprofit organization created to preserve urban real estate assets, purchased the Holly last month. Prior to the purchase, community members gathered 450 signatures against a proposed liquor license application for a property across the street from the Holly. The applicant withdrew the application given the strong community opposition, helping the ULC move forward on purchasing "the Holly".

ULC President Aaron Miripol thanked the community and stated that involvement is still needed.

"Community participation is critical to moving forward with the redevelopment of the Holly as well as other neighboring properties," Miripol said. "This is a new day for the Holly property and our work together has just begun."

A stakeholder group is currently being put together in partnership with the community and neighboring property owners and will be facilitated by The Denver Foundation's Strengthening Neighborhoods Program. The first Stakeholder Group meetings will take place in June.

Discussions are also underway between ULC and two organizations that have interest in developing a charter school on the Holly site. A decision regarding this option will may made in the next 6 to 9 months.

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Miripol stated that although permanent plans for the site are not determined, ULC will be working with the community and with Feed Denver Urban Farms & Markets to develop a garden that will encourage community involvement and increase the availability of fresh food in the community.

“ULC is committed in the long term to having agricultural activity on the site as a complement to the redevelopment efforts,” Miripol said. “We want positive activity on the property now, and Feed Denver is helping make that happen.”

ULC purchased the Holly site on April 8, 2009 with a combination of \$550,000 in ULC assets and loans as well as \$200,000 in funding from the Denver Office of Economic Development. This City financing included a \$100,000 grant from Community Development Block Grant funding that is restricted for use in blighted areas, as well as a \$100,000 loan from the Office of Economic Development’s Business Improvement Fund. “The City’s Office of Economic Development was a critical part of making this deal come together,” stated Miripol. “We are fortunate to have the City as a partner.”

“We are looking forward to working closely with the Urban Land Conservancy and the community to help shape a new future for the Holly property,” said André Pettigrew, executive director of the Denver Office of Economic Development. “Through this unique public-private partnership, we can bring new uses to this site that will help enhance property value, provide needed community amenities, and ultimately help transform the character of the surrounding area.”

The mission of ULC is to acquire, develop and/or preserve community assets in urban areas for a variety of community needs, such as schools, affordable housing and office space for nonprofits. ULC was established in 2003 and is considered a unique model for the preservation of urban assets. Other assets and partners include the Tennyson Center for Children at Colorado Christian Home in northwest Denver, the Phillips Center at the former Tramway Company facility located at 35th and Franklin and currently housing six nonprofit organizations, and the Gateway property at 40th and Colorado, residential apartments in partnership with the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.

Feed Denver Urban Farms & Markets is dedicated to helping transform Denver’s neighborhoods into green, productive communities by building a thriving, urban agricultural industry. Lisa Rogers is the founder of Feed Denver. The web site is www.feeddenver.org.

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