

## Rocky Mountain News

### Dahlia Square Set for Cleanup

Long-blighted center sold to nonprofit unit of local company

**By John Rebchook, Rocky Mountain News**  
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The city of Denver and the Denver Urban Renewal Authority on Thursday sold the Dahlia Square Shopping Center to a nonprofit arm of a local environmental cleanup firm, an important step in breathing new life into the long-blighted center.

"Literally, the city has been trying to have this redeveloped for more than two decades," said John Huggins, the city's economic development director.

Parkhill Community Inc., the not-for-profit subsidiary of Denver-based Brownfield Partners, purchased the 8.3-acre site and will oversee the environmental remediation.

"This is a huge first step, but there's still a lot more to do," Huggins said. "It's sort of what Winston Churchill said during the Battle of Britain. 'This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.' "

DURA Executive Director Tracy Huggins (no relation to John Huggins) agreed.

Later this year, DURA expects to put out a request for a proposal (RFP) to find a "vertical developer," which would construct buildings on the 8.3-acre site after Parkhill cleans it up. The entire cleanup, including the land purchase, asbestos removal, demolition of buildings and cleanup of ground that once housed a landfill, is estimated to cost about \$8.5 million.

"The neighborhood, with DURA and the city, met last fall and winter to find out what people would like to see on the site," Tracy Huggins said. "They said they'd like to see a development that would be primarily residential and some type of neighborhood retail. That being said, the RFP would be asking for what would make the most sense. But if there is any expectation that it is going to be primarily commercial . . . it would be shocking."

Mary Hashem, a founder of Brownfield Partners, said they created the nonprofit arm to clean up Dahlia Square.

"One of the things we wanted to do is focus more locally and do more right here in the Denver community," she said. "Most of our work has been on the East and West coast . . . just about every place but here."

She said the cleanup "is very much a public-private partnership."

For example, the city turned over \$3.5 million in funding to DURA, which will be dispersed for the cleanup as needed. Hashem said she is seeking a variety of grants and loans, both public and private, to help fund the project.

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