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FoCo breaks ground on green community

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City officials broke ground on a new eco-friendly community in Fort Collins Wednesday as part of the city's ongoing urban renewal plan.

The community, Union Place, will be built on a 10.31-acre plot of land and will be made up of 80 housing units all of which will be powered by geothermal energy. It will also include drought tolerant landscaping in order to conserve water.

"We truly shocked Excel at our utility meeting. They kinda looked at us, threw their card on the table, and left," said Donna Martian, owner of Merten Inc. -- the company tasked with building the community.

The project will be Leadership in Energy and Environmental Designed, LEED, certified, and 85 percent of all the construction debris will be recycled.

Fort Collin's Urban Renewal Authority, which is a governing board for the city and is intended to correct deficiencies such as poor infrastructure or blight in the city, is providing \$2.2 million in the



Media Credit: Sam Noblett
Darin Atteberry, Fort Collins City Manager, left, and Mayor Doug Hutchinson break ground at a ceremony for the new housing development, Union Place, near Willox and College in north Fort Collins.

form of tax-increment financing for the building of Union Place, which will fund road improvements, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, landscaping and a geothermal component.

Tax-increment financing is when the tax generated by a piece of property is used for the improvement of that particular property and not used elsewhere in the city.

"The whole purpose is to revitalize an area that would not otherwise revitalize itself," Christina Vincent, urban renewal planner said.

Martian said her company is trying to be responsible and focus on preserving natural resources and sustainability.

" ... That's the future of developing and we want to be a big part of it," she said. "Union place is an example of what's possible and should be used as a template for future developing. "

State Rep. John Kefalas, D-52, who attended the groundbreaking, said he is pleased about the manner in which the city is attempting to revitalize north Fort Collins.

"I am terribly excited that this place is going to be situated in North Fort Collins," Kefalas said. "It will serve as an anchor ... to help revitalize the north end of town. It's providing affordable housing as well as eco-friendly and sustainability, and I think that's a wonderful thing."

Mayor Doug Hutchinson echoed Kefalas' opinion, adding that he feels like Union Place is a perfect fit for Fort Collins because every aspect of the project has an element of sustainability.

"Hands down, it is one of the biggest steps we've taken for this kind of innovation. It's not paste-ons or Band-Aids that are green, but (the project is) fundamentally green," he said.

"I think it's a giant step. In so many ways, it does fit Fort Collins, and I think it is very exciting."

The groundbreaking of Union Place only represents the beginning of a long-term project, Hutchinson said, adding that the first step of the "thousand-mile journey" is the ceremony.

Union Place will be just west of North College Avenue on Willox Street not far from campus.

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