

### OLD AIRPORT FINDS NEW LIFE

Runway & Terminal Demolition Underway; Development Parcels Designated



Above: An aerial view looking west toward down-town Denver shows the dramatic changes in the for-mer airport. Most of the terminal complex has been removed, as well as the rental car facilities and eighty acres of runway in preparation for construction later this year that will include new housing, retail and offices scheduled for completion in early 2002.

#### DEVELOPMENT

- 1. Neighborhood Retail Center with residential/civic/office
- Parking structure/RTD transfer station (to be preserved)
   Control Tower (to be preserved)
- 4. Urban Core/Office Uses/
- High Density Housing
  5. Major urban park about the size of Washington Park
  6. Regional Retail Site

any of the neighbors living in the immediate

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Denver, CO

Sand Creek Greenway completes regional loop. Pages 4 & 5

vicinity of the former Stapleton International Airport are unaware that one of the largest demolition projects in the nation is well underway a short distance from their neighborhoods.

Demolition has cleared the way for a pedestrian-scale, neighborhood retail center with a grocery store, rental and for-sale housing, offices (continued on page 3)

#### **Profiles**

Colorado Studios and RK Mechanical, Inc. Page 8

## **Q&A** with Denver's Planning Director **Jennifer Moulton**

This interview is the first in a two-part series.

To what degree are Denver taxpayers financially liable for the development of Stapleton?

Very little, if any. Our agreement was structured to ensure that Forest City, as the Master Developer, assumes the risk. They will only get reimbursed through the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) mechanism if the increment of taxes is generated by new tax base at Stapleton. At some point in the future. Denver residents may

be asked to support the new park system, particularly the big Prairie Park, but that park system will benefit the whole city. Washington Park, City Park, Sloans Lake Park are comparable examples. Those parks are accessible to, and heavily used by, the surrounding neighborhoods but people also come from throughout the city to use them. They have a citywide draw. Prairie Park will be used by people from throughout the metro area as well. We may end up asking Denver residents to consider a special bond issue. We may support the new parks with general fund money, although there will be aggressive fundraising activities initiated by the private sector but the fact is that Prairie Park will need the support of Denver residents. There may be other infrastructure improvements that we haven't foreseen that may require voter approved general obligation bonds. But there's nothing we know of now that calls for expenditures from the general fund. Denver residents would be asked to vote for anything that comes up down the road. Under this scenario, improvements would only get done if the community supports those improvements at the polls.



You talk about the proposed Prairie Park. Where is it located and how big is it? Prairie Park will be roughly 800 acres. Just to put it into perspective, City Park is about 300 acres, so Prairie Park will be more than double the size of City Park. While the design of the park has not been finalized, it will most likely be a linear park that will serve a couple of purposes. First, the park will connect various other parks, trails and open spaces including Sand Creek Regional Greenway, Westerly Creek, a major new urban park (as yet unnamed), and the Rocky Mountain National Wildlife Refuge. Second, Prairie Park will serve as a drainage system,



Jennifer Moulton, Denver Planning Director

particularly for the northern half of the Stapleton site. We have to create a substantial drainage system up there. We could either put big pipes in the ground or we could create a park to serve the same function. So the park is as large as it is in part, because it's got double duty as a water drainage system as well as a recreational park. The development plan calls for a large golf course up there too. It's going to connect the center of the site all the way up to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge.

Speaking of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (RMANWR), what kind of synergy do you see between the new Stapleton and the RMANWR?

Well first it is important to understand the geographic relationship between Stapleton and the RMANWR. The refuge is immediately north of Stapleton. Where Stapleton is roughly 4,700 hundred acres or 7.5 square miles, the wildlife refuge is roughly 17,000 acres or twenty-seven square miles - it's essentially three and a half times the size of Stapleton. Other cities have bays and harbors that help define the physical character of those communities. The proximity of the Wildlife Refuge to Stapleton is a defining feature of this community. With its diversity of native habitat and wildlife, the refuge will over time become one of the greatest public amenities in the region. In many ways it already is. Most people don't know it but the refuge is already home to an astounding number and diversity of animals and birds. Roughly 600 mule deer and 250 white-tailed deer live on the refuge as well as everything from badgers, great blue herons, pheasants, red foxes, turkey vultures, and coyotes to a spectacular collection of raptors including many different owl species, hawks, and falcons. The refuge is already nationally recognized for its impressive numbers of both bald eagles and golden eagles. The option to live, work, and recreate within walking distance of such vast prairie habitat and wildlife makes the Stapleton development unique. While the trail system and permanent access points between

Stapleton and the RMANWR are not yet defined, it will be possible to ride from the arsenal through Prairie Park, down to Sand Creek, Westerly Creek, down to Lowry, down to the Highline Canal, over to Cherry Creek, up to the South Platte River, back up to Sand Creek and back up to Stapleton. I don't think there's a city in the country that has quite

that kind of trail system. So by the time we connect all of these things, we will have also given a legacy to the future generations of Denver that they will thank us for, just like we thank the leaders of Denver a hundred years ago for giving us the park system we have today.

Aside from the size of Stapleton and its proximity to the RMANWR what else makes the Stapleton development unique?

First, it's an inner city site. The opportu-

to develop such a large parcel in the center of an urban area is virtually unprecedented. Second, instead of selling individual parcels and waiting several years to see what kind of development



we end up with, we worked with the community to develop a master plan and select a master developer. We committed ourselves from the outset to work with a developer that would develop Stapleton based on an integrated and wholistic vision. We have deep pockets in Forest City. As the Master Developer they are committed to organizing the development of Stapleton based on the traditions of Denver: large front porches, a predominance of the grid system of streets, and sidewalks that are separated from street with tree-lined lawns. They'll be planting lots of trees. Cul-de-sacs will only be constructed in places where the land form absolutely requires it. Stapleton is specifically designed as a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly community from day one. I think that's incredibly exciting. A number of people have said to me about Lowry that they

like the fact they can live in a new home within the City and County of Denver. It's been a very long time since we've been able to produce a quantity of housing units to make that option available on a large scale.

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## Recycling an old airport



Above: Rubble still showing the runway markings undergoes recycling on North Stapleton. Below left: The terminal demolition underway around the

FAA control tower, which will be preserved. Lower right: The bridge at 56th Avenue, made of recycled runway concrete.



(continued from page 1)

and civic facilities east of 29th and Quebec in the area once occupied by the rental car companies. To the north, a regional retail center complete with special pedestrian-friendly features will soon be under construction north of the United Air Lines Flight Training Center. Both retail centers are scheduled for completion in early 2002.

A nearly constant stream of heavy trucks moves up and down the site as the first of millions of tons of concrete rubble are broken up and transported to the northern portion of Stapleton utilizing the old runways as haul routes to prevent the operation from impacting local traffic. There the rubble is reprocessed and offered for sale by Recycled Materials, Inc., the Arvada company that is removing approximately 1000 acres of the former airport pavement at no cost to the City of Denver in exchange for the right to sell that material on the recycled market. To date, 650,000 tons of paving material have been removed from the site.

One of the little known facts about the demolition at Stapleton is that the former runways are being "resurrected" in the form of reprocessed material being utilized by contractors working at Denver International Airport, Buckley Air National Guard Base, E-470, and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge.

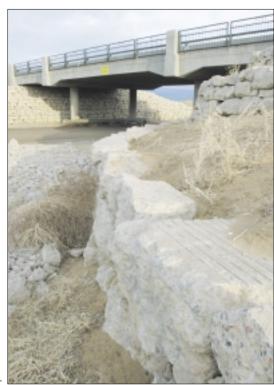
Demolition of the unusable buildings is also proceeding rapidly. On the day Stapleton closed in February 1995, the airport listed approximately 4.5 million square feet of building space spread over nearly 150 structures on the properties 4,700 acres. Half of that space was accounted for by the terminal and its five concourses. Those concourses were removed more than a year ago and the demolition of the terminal itself is well on its way to completion.

Elsewhere on the property hangars that have proven to be too costly or too dilapidated for re-use have either been demolished or scheduled for demolition. Others, however, have already been successfully converted to new uses. Those "recycled" buildings include the former Combs Gates Terminal Complex,

already the home of Colorado Studios for the past five years, a hangar that houses the popular Bladium Sports Club of Denver, and another hangar that is being purchased by the City of Denver for The Denver Police Training Academy. Along Smith Road, a former air cargo building now houses R. K. Mechanical, Inc., Colorado's largest mechanical contractor and an employer of nearly 700 employees.

The former FAA control tower is also being preserved in its location that will be part of the new urban center featuring office buildings that will use the same parking structure that once served the terminal building. That structure is currently part of the popular RTD Transfer Station that will continue to provide public transit as a convenient alternative to the automobile.

Recycling and reuse will continue to be building blocks for the transformation of Stapleton.



#### HIDDEN RICHES OF THE SHORTGRASS PRAIRIE

The wildlife photographs on this page were taken on the shortgrass prairies of Stapleton and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge (RMANWR) by Wendy Shattil and Bob Rozinski. Both are longtime residents of the Hutchison Hills Neighborhood in SE Denver. These photographs represent a small fraction of area wildlife. From the upper left corner moving counterclockwise: Early autumn sunrise at Lake Ladora, the largest of the lakes at the RMANWR. A red-tailed hawk settles down to breakfast at the arsenal. Red-tailed hawks thrive on prairie dogs and a variety of other rodents. A clutch of baby burrowing owls gathered at the entrance to their burrow at Stapleton while mom and dad are away hunting. Full grown, burrowing owls typically reach a height of about 9" and weigh less than a pound. An American badger emerges from his burrow - a pleasant surprise due to their nocturnal nature.



badgers feed on the abundant prairie dog population in the area. Dueling mule deer does settle a dispute in the herd.

American

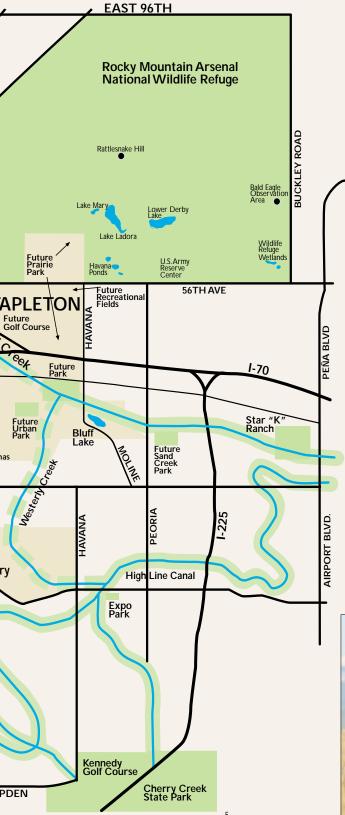
There are some 20 mule deer living at Stapleton and about 600 living at the arsenal. There are an additional 250 white-tailed deer at the RMANWR. For more information contact Suzanne O'Neill at the Rocky Mountain Wildlife Society (303-289-0820 or www.RMAwildlifesociety.org)



# SAN COMPLETING DEN



# D CREEK VER'S REGIONAL GREENWAYS





Amy Pulver, Executive Director of the Sand Creek Regional Greenway, stands on the bridge over Sand Creek where visitors access the trail.

### SAND CREEK JAMBOREE AT STAR "K" RANCH — AUG. 27<sup>TH</sup>

Are you looking for good, old-fashioned family fun for people of all ages? Don't miss the 2000 Sand Creek Jamboree on August 27<sup>th</sup> at beautiful Star "K" Ranch in Aurora! Tickets and information are available by calling Amy Pulver at 303-393-7700.

#### **ACCESSING THE TRAIL**

Sand Creek Regional Greenway is currently under construction, so access points are limited. Please bear with us while we create this wonderful new amenity.

The best place to access the trail is the trailhead at Smith Road. To get there from I-70, exit on Havana and proceed south to Smith Road. Turn west on Smith Road and continue until you see a gate on the south side of the road, about 100 yards before Smith Road dead-ends at the former Stapleton Airport runways. Pull through this gate and park in the gravel parking lot. Enter the trail via the pedestrian bridge across Sand Creek. You will be able to go about four miles east to Sable Boulevard in Aurora on this trail segment.

As additional trail segments and access points become available, we'll let you know. Thanks for your patience while the construction is in progress.

Amy Pulver, Executive Director Sand Creek Regional Greenway 303-393-7700



#### THE DENVER POST

Wednesday, February 16, 2000

#### EDITORIAL WEBB THROWS DEEP

Denver Mayor Wellington Webb buried any notions of a "third-term malaise" Tuesday by unveiling the largest urban-renewal plan for "infill" development in the nation's history. When and if completed, the plan would transform the former Stapleton Airport into a blend of 12,000 homes and apartments - plus 13 million square feet of new commercial space hosting 35,000 jobs surrounded by 1,100 acres of parks and

The plan has been understandably slow in coming to fruition. Preliminary work began more than 10 years ago in former Mayor Federico Peña's last term and continued through Webb's first two terms. No "brownfield" redevelopment of such scope has ever been carried out within a major city before and recycling the former airport posed a host of legal and environmental problems.

The most difficult issue of all may have been how to pay for the massive public-infrastructure needs of this city within the city. Constraints include not only the 1992 Taxpayer's Bill of Rights but a growing insistence by voters that growth pay for itself.

Given those ground rules, the plan unveiled Tuesday is both ambitious and ingenious. Unlike major Downtown projects where taxpayers underwrote a large share of private development costs, public investment at Stapleton will basically be limited to environmental cleanup costs and building those public infrastructure items traditionally assumed by taxpayers - streets, sewers, drainage, schools, open space, public recreational facilities, and fire and police stations. Additionally, except for environmental cleanup, most of the actual on-site infrastructure improvements will be paid for initially by the master developer, Forest City Enterprises Inc. Forest City will eventually be repaid for those costs under a tax-increment financing plan in which the increased sales and property taxes will be dedicated to repaying those costs.

This system not only goes a long way toward making growth pay its own way, it means the developer assumes the primary financial risk for making the project succeed. In short, if the redevelopment flops, there will be no surge in revenues with which to repay the developer, meaning Forest City would have to eat its losses.

For our part, we wish Forest City Godspeed and strong profits. After a long period in which private companies have asked massive public subsidies for downtown developments such as Coors Field, the new Broncos stadium and the Adams Mark and Pavilions complex, we're delighted to see the specter of risk-taking capitalism reappear in Denver.

The ultimate test of the "new urbanism," after all, is to prove that high-quality urban villages such as planned for Stapleton can actually compete economically with far-flung exurban developments.

Judged by this standard, the Stapleton redevelopment plan may have been a long time coming, but it appears to have been well worth

## Denver Rocky Mountain News Wednesday, February 16, 2000

#### STAPLETON TAKES OFF AGAIN

THE ISSUE: Denver finalizes deal to develop old airport OUR VIEW: It's an attractive, even exciting plan

Growth-weary metro residents may not be eager to applaud yet another major housing and commercial development, but surely they've learned over the years that not all projects are created equal. Some new developments worth a shudder, others a shrug, while a few actually make us sit up and take notice.

The agreement announced Tuesday to develop the Stapleton airport site qualifies for the third category.

The Stapleton project is noteworthy in the first place simply because of its size. It is, Denver officials say, the largest urban "infill" project in any U.S. city. But such a large site - 4,700 acres - is only an opportunity. What's fascinating is the plan itself, which envisions neighborhoods in which 30,000 people ultimately would be able to live, work, shop and locate recreation all within a short distance from their front porches. Walking distance, in fact.

When we say front porches, we mean them literally. Architects and town planners who indict suburban life as overly isolated can take heart: Their ideas haven't just been given lip service at Stapleton; they've been embraced. Garages will be set back from homes; sidewalks will be separated from the street in the old-fashioned style, and "generous" porches (so the development literature boasts) will "encourage mingling among neighbors."

We'll see. Suburbia-bashers have a tendency to deal sometimes in caricature. In any event, Stapleton residents not quite so keen on mingling will have somewhere else to go - namely, lots and lots of open space. Indeed, surrounding communities who might be wondering "What's in the Stapleton project for me?" should brighten at the following answer: "1,116 acres." That's how much of the former airport's land will be dedicated to a system of regional parks and interconnected open space.

All this involves a huge price tag, of course, not all of which will be borne by the developer, Forest City Enterprises. The city will recycle about two-thirds of the new property and sales tax generated on the site to pay for arterial roads, drainage, parks, police and fire stations, and schools.

In a perfect world, perhaps, a developer would bear all of these costs. But the plain fact is that no developer would be willing to build the kind of mixed-use development Denver understandably demands, with a full range of housing prices, from extremely low to high, and release so much of the site to open space, and commit to a schedule of steady, incremental progress over a period of years without some form of participation by the city.

Denver owns the land, after all. If its officials want the site developed - as they clearly should, given Stapleton's prime location and the current torrid market - they must do what any other landowner does: put together an attractive deal.

Even with tax-increment financing, the project essentially pays for itself, since not a dime of general fund money will be diverted to it.

Give Mayor Wellington Webb credit. In some cities, abandoned industrial or commercial sites remain vacant for decades. But thanks to Webb's unflagging interest over the years (and a robust economy, of course), Stapleton is poised for major redevelopment less than 10 years after the airport ceased operations. Future historians describing Webb's legacy may well begin their assessment there.

## The Denver Business Journal

#### Stapleton project investment in future

If the city of Denver did not have a track record of pulling off massive public and private development projects, the truth is, we would be much more skeptical of current plans to redevelop Stapleton International Airport land into an urban village.

But considering the successful completion of Coors Field, the Pepsi Center, Denver International Airport, the central Denver Public Library and the Colorado Convention Center, it's clear given the right conditions of a strong economy and a strong public will, the artists' renderings can and do become reality.

We hope the Stapleton project eventually will be added to the list.

City officials and representatives of Forest City Development are set to unveil more details about the massive, 4,700-acre project this week. In today's Denver Business Journal, reporter Paula Moore gives readers a sneak peek at the latest plans and the important financing elements of the project that clear the way for

There will undoubtedly be debate - as there should be - about the wisdom of tax increment financing to get this project started. There are strong arguments for and against this technique. On one hand, the city maintains a measure of control over the build-out of the project. It also gives up sizable amounts of tax revenue that might be realized if the land were parceled out to the highest bidder.

In the case of Stapleton, however, the potential tax revenue would not immediately benefit the city's General Fund because it is earmarked to payoff airport bond funds.

The sheer size of Stapleton, which is the largest infill project in the United States, is hard to grasp. Imagine an essentially vacant piece of land the size of east Denver, from Colorado Boulevard to Downing Street and Louisiana Avenue to 26th Avenue.

It is encouraging that Forest City has its own successful track record of bringing together divergent visions. And the company signed by the Stapleton Development Corp. has thankfully resisted temptation to push a cul-de-sac maze of streets. Instead, plans call for streets and avenues to be blended into the existing grid layout like the rest of Denver.

The Stapleton project is an opportunity to reinvigorate a quadrant of Denver that has missed out in many ways on the boom times. And by controlling design and development, the city can ensure the logical buildout of Stapleton to the advantage of the entire city.

If for no other reason, Stapleton development should be supported by the entire metro area because it can handle demand that otherwise would put further pressure on sprawl.

The marketers of Stapleton have a perfect opportunity. Imagine the appeal of undeveloped land 15 minutes from DIA and 15 minutes from downtown and you don't have to get on I-25.

The Denver Business Journal email: denver@amcity.com



## Your neighbors providing community input

By Phil Dietrich, Community Relations Committee of the Stapleton Citizens Advisory Board

The redevelopment of the former Stapleton International Airport will take at least 30 years to complete and involve decisions that will influence the Denver area for many generations to come. My colleagues on The Stapleton Development Corporation's Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) and I are part of that on-going process.

The world is desperately searching for better examples of how urban communities can



adapt and renew themselves. Stapleton can address important local needs and provide a model for smart growth if there continues to be the public participation that was instrumental in creating

the vision of The Stapleton Plan. The CAB includes representatives of a



Top: A meeting of the Citizens Advisory Board. Above: Landri Taylor of Forest City with Terry Whitney, CAB Co-Chair, and Bettie Shaw of Park Hill. Left: Phil Dietrich. Right: Alice Kelly.

variety of perspectives and constituencies, including business, neighborhoods, and professional associations. Board members have devoted hundreds of hours to address such critical issues as new zoning to create pedestrian-scale urban neighborhoods, the need for a diverse range of housing types and prices affordable to a variety of different incomes,

and the planning for parks and open space, recreation, schools, churches, neighborhood retail centers, public transit and other amenities that will enhance the quality of life for our community for generations to come.

We invite you to join us to learn more about the transformation of Stapleton into the "next great neighborhoods in Denver." In future editions of The Front Porch, we'll give you more information about becoming involved in that effort. Our

meetings are held at 7:30 a.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Due to the scheduled demolition of our normal meeting place, the Stapleton Events Center, we will be changing our meeting



place. Stay tuned for information about a new location. www.stapletoncorp.com



Above: Odyssey students enjoying a wet but educational field trip. Lower right: An Odyssey student receives a close-up lesson on nature at a field trip at Stapleton.

Odyssey is an Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound School, which enrolls 170 students from kindergarten through sixth grade. The school will add a grade each of the next two years, and by fall 2001 will enroll 216 children from kindergarten through eighth grade. Odyssey draws its direction and strength from educational principles that "provide a powerful framework for personal growth through physical challenge and service," according to Van Schoales, Odyssey's director since the school opened in September 1998.

Odyssey students do much of their learning through hands-on, experiential activities. These "learning expeditions" utilize multidisciplinary themes, include goals for student work, and feature both individual and group projects that celebrate individual strengths and talents. Fieldwork and service dimensions foster a

#### ODYSSEY SCHOOL AT STAPLETON

deep level of engagement along with a strong and purposeful In two short years. Odyssey has established itself as an innovative and exciting school that sets high standards for its staff and students and then meets them. It's precisely the kind of school a thriving new community like

Stapleton would want

in its midst.

connection with the community. The school also bases its curriculum on Denver Public Schools content standards and continually assesses the progress of its students.Overall, Odyssey students have performed better on standardized tests than their peers attending Denver Public Schools. Fifth graders ranked 14th out of 80 schools in DPS in the fall 1999 math CSAP test. If only returning students were counted, students scored much better (60 percent proficient or advanced) than the state or DPS average. Because of demolition in the area of its current, temporary loca-

tion at Stapleton, the Odyssey Charter School will leave its home for a while this fall and occupy the former Machebeuf School site in Park Hill. Within three short years, however, Odyssey will be back at Stapleton, sharing a one-of-a-kind campus with a new, 300-student DPS elementary school. The two schools would be entirely separate and architecturally distinct, but share common areas including a

cafeteria, gym, library space, playing fields and perhaps an early childhood education center. A partnership of this type between a charter school and a public school district would be unprecedented, but what better place to innovate than Stapleton?



www.odysseydenver.org

## STAPLETON PROFILES

## Colorado Studios



Phil Garvin, President of Colorado Studios, has great vision. When the decision was made to close Stapleton International Airport and turn it into mixed-use neighborhoods offering new jobs and housing, Phil knew that's where he wanted his studios to be.

This year, Colorado Studios will celebrate its fifth anniversary at Stapleton. Located in the former Combs Gates general aviation terminal and complex, Colorado Studios is the most sophisticated facility for film and video production in the Rocky Mountain Region. Colorado Studios offers three soundstages and state-of-the-art production facilities that include state-of-the-art mobile units for the coverage of the Colorado Rockies, the Denver Nuggets, and the Colorado Avalanche. The Colorado Studios complex is also the location of KDTV 8, the official cable



Above: Camera operators Lenny Young (left) and Kevin Sanchez prepare for a production on a soundstage at Colorado Studios. Left: Phil Garvin, President of Colorado Studios and Brenda Pisciotta, Director of Sales at Colorado Studios.

channel of the City and County of Denver.

When he is not working on FOX and PBS productions or the development of a new situation comedy series to be produced in Colorado, Phil Garvin brings his savvy business knowledge to the deliberations of the Stapleton Development Corporation's Citizens Advisory Board (CAB). Phil's perspective as a tenant, employer, and future landowner is particularly valuable to CAB discussions related to zoning and the integration of business and residential development that will provide jobs within walking distance of housing. "I'm a strong believer in the vision for Stapleton as a place where people can live within walking distance of their jobs in a community that has quality schools, public transit and open space," Phil says. "We will be part of that community."

## RK Mechanical, Inc.



Above: RKMI employees undergoing classroom instruction. Right: RKMI owner Ron Kinning displays his company's plant technology.

Take a tour through the Stapleton plant of RK Mechanical, Inc. (RKMI), Colorado's largest mechanical contractor, and it quickly becomes apparent that its quality workforce

of 700 employees is the secret of its success. At a time when many employers say it is difficult to find good employees, RKMI has made a major investment in training and retaining the best possible workforce, much of which comes from the neighborhoods around the former airport.

Ron Kinning of RKMI says it is an expensive but necessary effort that has paid dividends. Graduates of the company's four-year training programs in sheet metal installation, plumbing, and pipefitting, which are certified by the U.S. Department of Labor, become journeymen mechanics who are in high demand after



they complete 8000 hours of on-the-job training and 776 hours of classroom, lab, and shop training.

Among the newest landowners at the former airport, Ron and his son Rick Kinning decided to locate at Stapleton because of its convenient location and access to all of the major highways in the region "We believe our investment in Stapleton was a sound business decision that will be made by more and more business people from all sectors of our economy," Ron Kinning said.

www.rkmi.com