

Rooney Valley Ready for Wave of Sustainable Development

By Amy Sherman, president and CEO, West Chamber

Water is fundamental to sustainable development.

So is fun.

In 2008, water for sustainable development was piped into west metro Denver's Rooney Valley for the first time. A wave of new construction has followed.

The fun started a long time ago.

"It's like a hidden jewel," says valley veteran John Bandimere, Jr. Back in 1958, his family, under the leadership of his father, started world-famous Bandimere Speedway in the valley. "The idea is to have fun," sums up Bandimere, whose family, according to him, has sustained its business by building relationships not just a business.

Over the generations that it took to bring water to Rooney Valley, a comprehensive joint master plan took root and was approved jointly by Jefferson County, The City of Lakewood and the Historic Town of Morrison.

"Rooney Valley is one of the most sensational pieces of real estate anywhere," said Lakewood Mayor Bob Murphy who has steered the area toward sustainability for 17 years.

For 100 years, the metro region and state have invested in this regional crown jewel, valued greatly for its rare topography. The valley once was part of the Rooney family ranch. Alameda Parkway, which rings the northern edge of the valley is "*the grand parkway*" envisioned by the City of Denver in the 1930s as a gateway to the mountains for automobile drivers.

Generations later, the world-class community envisioned for Rooney Valley seems attainable in the foreseeable future, now that water is available for development. Water has long been available in the valley for fishing, swimming and other fun.

Rooney Valley Ringed With Attractions

Think of the Rooney Valley as a large bowl with its developable land in the center.

- To the north is round-topped Green Mountain, which features a 2,000-acre Lakewood city park.
- To the west is world-famous Red Rocks Park, behind which towers Mount Morrison. Between Rooney Valley and Red Rocks are rugged Dinosaur Ridge and its world-famous fossils.
- At the base of Dinosaur Ridge along the western edge of the valley, is the burgeoning C-470 corridor, Thunder Valley Motocross and Bandimere Speedway.
- To the south is Morrison Rd. featuring two City of Lakewood golf courses, Fox Hollow and The Homestead, along with the city's 2,400-acre Bear Creek Lake Park.

Morrison Rd. and the Bear Creek Trail head west into Bear Creek Canyon, through the Historic Town of Morrison and connect with the Lariat Loop National Scenic Byway and its 40 miles of Western adventure, open space and parks.

Valley a Showcase of Sustainability

The recently added Alameda Parkway interchange at C-470 has created a much-needed transportation loop around massive Green Mountain. Solterra, a 230-acre residential community along Alameda Parkway on the south slopes of Green Mountain is a showcase of sustainable development for the Rooney Valley region.

Carma Developers piped in water from 13 miles away for its homeowners, as well as to fill a two-tiered infinity pool that is often full of young children, says Tom Morton, president, Carma Developers U.S. Seventy percent of Solterra's 200 home buyers are young families; median sales prices top \$700,000.

Those young families recently added a playground to one of Solterra's parks. The families built the park themselves with help from Carma.

Tom Morton also has reached out to John Bandimere, Jr. and the two founded the Rooney Valley Association, managed by West Chamber, to help steer the area toward economic balance.

West Metro Adopting Sustainable Practices

Newly appointed Jefferson Economic Council, JEC, President and CEO Kevin McCasky forsees a renaissance of sensible, sustainable development for the county. McCasky was a county commissioner for six years before taking his new position with JEC.

He sees an enviable urban transit network developing in Jefferson County. He points to a new RTD hub at the Federal Center, the coming of west corridor light rail service and the metro beltway helping to complete the picture. McCasky and others stress that they support long-lasting investments to produce jobs for the county, which a short time ago was mostly residential suburbs and shopping centers.

Rooney Valley's last remaining developable acres afford Jefferson County an opportunity to create a hub of sensible corporate job centers and other sustainable development to serve the region for many generations to come.

Fun was built into the Rooney Valley equation a long time ago; now, with water added, the outcome could be a world-class future for the Rooney Valley community.

Rooney Valley Association members are commissioning a regional economic study to assess the future potential of the valley.

Learn the latest at RooneyValleyColorado.Org.