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« NORTH GREELEY Mercado district gains a little steam



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PERRY'S AUTO IS ONE of the few businesses that remains 17 years after discussions began for developing the Mercado district on North 11th Avenue.

IN DEVELOPMENT

By Sharon Dunn
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Tammy Purcella looks at her north Greeley neighborhood and smiles at the changes.

Years ago as a child, Purcella lived in a mobile home park along A Street and North 11th Avenue. Today, that area is now a parking lot that leads to a newly remodeled county services building.

Across the street, the newly built Sunrise Adelante Clinic bears the old Southwest design standards of stucco and Mexican style roofs in an area that once housed a couple of run-down bars and restaurants.

"This is a great area," said Purcella, 47, as she stopped at Perry's Auto, 200 N. 11th Ave., last week. "It just needs to be developed more."

For the last 17 years, city officials closely watched the corridor, which leads to Island Grove Regional Park, a major



TRIBUNE FILE PHOTOGRAPH

BUSINESSES ALONG THE EAST side of 11th Avenue, shown here in 1998, are no longer there. The city of Greeley has cleared many of the lots to make way for potential development along the corridor.

visitor draw all year long. In 1998, city officials dubbed it El Mercado Del Norte. Today, it's simply the Mercado, and it's a long, slow work in progress. It will ultimately need the interest of private development to grow like officials hope. Much like the city's Creative District, which emphasizes art and culture in a specific geographic area, the Mercado district focuses on Latino culture and style, in and around 11th Avenue north toward Island Grove.

"When the Los Comales tortilla shop went in (almost 10 years ago), we worked with them to develop some building structures," said Becky Sa-

farik, assistant city manager for Greeley. "They're exactly the type of business we wanted to see in that area to feed into the ethnic marketplace concept."

Through the years, there also has been some housing put in the area between 4th Street and Island Grove Park, but the most prolific project has been the Sunrise Community Health campus. The Adelante clinic was just opened in December. Weld County also put a new facade on its Socials Services building to adhere to the voluntary Spanish style design guidelines of the district.

Sunrise CEO Mitzi Moran

said she'd love to see healthy places for people in the district, including walking paths and healthy food choices for the medical campus' 75 employees, a number that continues to grow.

"I think where it can land is an area where families can go to enjoy a restaurant, to get food, health care," Moran said. "I hope that part of the design still continues to focus on safe walking paths. I don't know that 20 years ago, or 15 years ago, people even saw that as a possibility."

"I think by the progress you've seen, people can start envisioning it a little bit better."

The city also has resurfaced the west-side sidewalk, adding landscaping and a blue ribbon into the concrete to make it a more pleasing place to walk. There's also room for bikes in a designated bike lane.

The city, with the help of federal Community Development Block Grant funding, has been working to clear run-down lots and ready them for potential development. All the money that's gone into shaping the area has been from federal funds, Safarik said.

The changes are welcome. "You should have seen it years ago," said Jay Garza,

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A4: Mercado

Making the grade

Pensions, reserve spending ding District 6's credit rating

By Tyler Silvy
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Three-straight years of reserve spending and a hefty pension burden have led Moody's to downgrade the credit rating for Greeley-Evans School District 6.

The downgrade comes on the eve of a district effort to refinance about \$50 million in debt, and it will likely affect the district's negotiations with teachers, who have seen salaries buoyed with \$9.7 million in reserve spending the past three years.

District 6 is looking to re-sell bonds in chunks of \$11 million and \$38 million. The sales are expected mid-May.

The refinance is expected to save the district \$1.8 million, according to a Monday afternoon presentation from Leanne Toler, assistant vice president for Stifel Public Finance, at the board's work session. Stifel was awarded an underwriter contract through a competitive bid process.

Stifel helped District 6 secure ratings from Moody's and Standard & Poor's, marking the first official rating from either agency for the district since 2006.

The Moody's rating came out Friday evening, and it wasn't good news for the district.

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A6: Credit rating

Former Johnstown Board member arrested on charges of racketeering

By Joe Moylan
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A former Johnstown Town Board member has been arrested on suspicion of racketeering, according to a Weld District Attorney's Office news release issued Monday.

Clair Hull, 55, was arrested last Thursday by the Weld County Sheriff's Office and is charged in Weld District Court with 28 felony counts including theft, defrauding a secured creditor and forgery. Taken collectively, the crimes constitute a pattern of racketeering, which is a violation of the Colorado Organized Crime Control Act, the release stated.

The charges against Hull stem from questionable business practices he engaged in after acquiring in January 2007 a loan estimated about \$1 million from the First Bank of Greeley. Hull owned and operated Pioneer Specialty Foods LLC in Johnstown from March 2006 through December 2010.

According to court records, Hull acquired an "assignment of accounts receivable" loan from First National. The arrangement allows a borrower to acquire an advance on a percentage of the money owed by customers. Using third party software, a borrower then assigns those accounts to the bank and, as payments are made by customers, the loan is



Hull

« CONTINUED
A4: Arrest

Fighting for their gun rights

Squabbling between Second Amendment advocates distracts from high-capacity magazine ban repeal efforts

By James Redmond
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Recent political squabbling between Rocky Mountain Gun Owners and the Independence Institute distracted Republican efforts to advance Second Amendment rights and work on Colorado's 15-round ammunition magazine limit, said Sen. John Cooke of Greeley.

Cooke, a Republican and the former Weld County sheriff, recently sponsored a bill to repeal Colorado's two-year-

old law that bans the sale of ammunition magazines that hold more than 15 rounds.

When a discussion of a hypothetical amendment to Colorado's high-capacity magazine ban came up — which would possibly allow 30-round magazines instead of 15 — Denver-based conservative think tank the Independence Institute advocated for the compromise while also supporting a full repeal of the law.

Windsor-based gun lobby Rocky

Mountain Gun Owners strongly opposed the compromise, prompting some criticism that such actions by RMGO has harmed gun rights.

But all the arguing over a hypothetical compromise got gun rights advocates off of their message, Cooke said.

"I think it's a distraction," he said. "I think arguing in the public like this is

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HIGH JUMP
Eaton senior picks up track and field sport in a hurry.
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