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Montbello Organizing Committee Purchases Land for Cultural Hub, Grocery Store, and Affordable Housing Project

Denver, CO – What began five years ago as a goal to secure a simple community amenity—a full-service grocery store—has grown into a community vision for much more. Convened by Montbello Organizing Committee, Montbello residents have organized around the lack of health food, spaces for engagement, and affordable housing. The result—a vetted plan for a grocery store and cultural hub with 96 units of affordable housing, known nationally as the Montbello FreshLo project.

Montbello FreshLo, which has already garnered generous local and national funding by foundations, including the Kresge Foundation, The Colorado Health Foundation, and The Denver Foundation, has now taken the next step toward actualization. **On Monday, February 24, MOC purchased land that was the former Montbello Park and Ride for “the Hub,” clearing the pathway for construction.**

The Montbello team has engaged 2,500 residents to provide input and guide the project. A draft plan was created, and in 2018, 118 stakeholders participated in a week-long process with a national panel of experts through Urban Land Institute to vet and flesh out the plan.

“It feels like it’s been a long journey to this point,” says MOC President, Chris Martinez. “But we are very proud that this project is being envisioned by the community and that it will be owned by the community.”

The property, which was purchased from RTD, is located in the heart of Montbello—on Albroom Dr., near Peoria Street. The acquisition was secured with the support of Colorado Enterprise Fund and Denver’s Office of Economic Development and Opportunity (DEDO). MOC won the bid for the land and has completed two required environmental assessment scans.

“The community will continue to be involved in this process,” says Donna Garnett, Executive Director of MOC and Manager of the FreshLo Initiative. “We will be holding community engagement meetings over the next nine weeks throughout Montbello to gather additional input.”

The Hub, which is estimated at \$40 million, will be funded through grants, investments, and loans through the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit and New Market Tax Credit programs. Groundbreaking is projected for early 2021 with occupancy beginning in 2022.

“For a couple of years, we’ve had potential investors and funders express great interest in this project, each saying ‘let us know when you acquire the land,’” Martinez says. “Well, we are very happy and proud to let them know: we’ve got the land!”

MOC will hold a Site Acquisition Celebration in late March 2020 to mark the milestone with community members, project partners, and officials. More details to follow.

For more information about Montbello Organizing Committee, Montbello FreshLo, or the Hub, please contact Donna Garnett at 720-810-5475 or montbellofreshlo@gmail.com.

Montbello Organizing Committee

Galvanizing Montbello residents and providing them with the tools and resources necessary to develop their leadership skills so that they can proactively address the issues affecting their community and quality of life. For more information, visit montbelloorganizing.org.

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