

Campaign Launched to Build 9/11 Memorial Park in Fort Collins



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Practically a generation has passed since the events of Sept. 11, 2001 shocked the world.

I dare say some born since then might consider 9/11 just another date to remember in case it comes up on a quiz in history class. It's like the Fourth of July, only deeply somber rather than celebratory.

The rest of us will never forget where we were or how we felt as we learned terrorists used hijacked airliners to cause unfathomable death and destruction on American soil.

New York City, Washington, D.C., and rural Pennsylvania are far from Fort Collins, but there were many personal and professional connections between our community and the locations of the attacks.

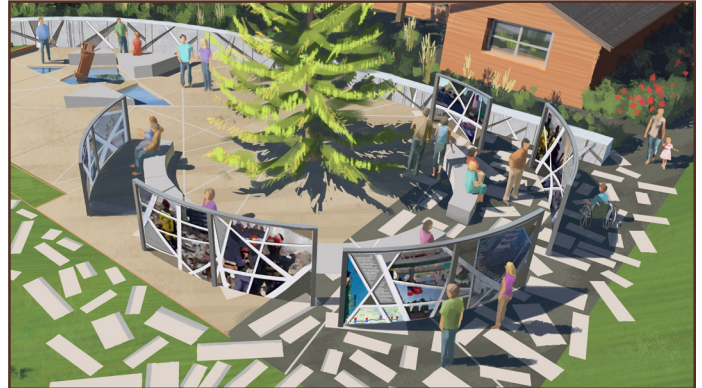
Some residents had come to Colorado from those places: Family members, friends and business colleagues died or were injured in the attacks. Other impacts were less direct. But we all felt the pain of the survivors and the national anguish about what had happened.

As a community and a country, we were awash with grief and anger. But we also were united in our resolve to overcome the disaster and honor those who lost their lives, especially firefighters, police officers and other first responders who died trying to save others.

The City of Fort Collins and Poudre Fire Authority have launched a collaborative campaign to build a permanent reminder of the community's response and connections to that tragic day.

The 9/11 Memorial Park would be built next to PFA Station No. 3 in Spring Park in Midtown Fort Collins. Its centerpiece would be a 5-foot-long, 3,059-pound metal I-beam salvaged from the wreckage of the World Trade Center.

The artifact came to Fort Collins in 2015. Its escort across the country included PFA firefighters who were members of Colorado Task Force 1 - Urban Search and Rescue, a disaster response team sent to New York after the attack to assist with body recovery and debris removal at Ground Zero. The beam is a symbol of their story as well as the community's connections to 9/11. For some years there has been talk about establishing a memorial and a permanent location for the beam.



Now the push is on. Supporters are seeking funds to build the memorial park, but also volunteers to serve on a committee that would collect 9/11 stories from the community to be archived as part of the project.

The design for the park includes a path made of 343 paving stones, in memory of the 343 firefighters killed in the attacks; three pools of cascading water; seating areas; and educational displays. It is meant to be a place for quiet contemplation.

The campaign's goal is to have groundbreaking for the memorial on Sept. 11, 2021, the 20th anniversary of the attacks.

The projected budget for the park is \$650,000. So far, \$100,000 has been pledged or donated. Construction on the park will not begin until the needed funding is in hand.

The 9/11 Memorial Park will be funded through private donations. The city will contribute staff time to the project, but not taxpayer dollars because it is a specialty park not included in the master plan of parks.

The campaign is being coordinated through City Give, a program through which charitable donations may be made to city projects and facilities. To learn more about the project and how to participate, contact Nina Bodenhamer, director of City Give, at 970-481-4884 or NBodenhamer@fcgov.com; or Emily Land, 9/11 Memorial Park fundraising coordinator, at 970-581-9765 or emilyland@citygive.org.

With a strong community effort, perhaps we can come together during these highly divisive times to build a memorial that will last generations.