

A renaissance in Globeville

By The Denver Post Editorial Board

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All too often, the news about Globeville, a hardscrabble neighborhood in North Denver, has been distressing.

A heavy-metals refining plant that operated for more than 100 years polluted the soil and the river. There were lawsuits and concerns about health problems.

But this week, the history of an operation that was long ago an economic engine for Denver has come full circle.

The contaminated site is almost fully cleaned up and will be re-developed into an \$85 million warehouse and light manufacturing district.

It will bring commerce and jobs to North Denver, which may be on the verge of a renaissance.

It is a wonderful turn of events for a part of town that has had more than its share of hard knocks.

Starting in the 1880s, the Globe Plant at East 51st Avenue and Washington Street processed various heavy metals. It produced gold and silver and operated as a lead smelter. It also processed arsenic and cadmium.

Historian Jerome C. Smiley wrote in 1901 that smelters brought economic value to Denver that overshadowed all other industries.

As time went on, it became apparent the operation was causing significant environmental damage and raising health concerns.



Work continues at the 77-acre former Asarco smelting plant site in Denver's Globeville neighborhood. (Helen H. Richardson, The Denver Post)

Thirty years ago, citizens and government sued the plant, which was then owned by Asarco. The result was a large-scale removal of topsoil from parts of an 89-acre area, the remediation of ditches and sediment ponds, and medical monitoring for 1,500 people.

The transformation of the Asarco site gained momentum in 2010 when a Denver land reuse and re-development company acquired the site and promised to clean it up and deliver buildable ground by this year.

And this week came the news that

EnviroFinance Group would sell a 77-acre tract to Trammell Crow Co., which plans 12 warehouses, distribution and light manufacturing facilities, according to a Denver Post story by Steve Raabe.

It would be a major coup for a section of town that is rallying with the planned renovation of the National Western Stock Show, the blossoming of River North as a hip area to live and play, and the redevelopment of Brighton Boulevard.

It has been a long road for Globeville, and it's wonderful to see its fortunes rising again.

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