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Windsor Gardens History

The history of Windsor Gardens can be traced back to the late 19th century. Denver businessmen William H. Bush and Willard S. Morse acquired 320 acres of land on the site in 1885 and three years later doubled that acreage. Tax records show that they had horses and cattle on the land at that time, but one can only speculate on what the land was initially used for. In 1890, Bush, Morse and Frank C. Young incorporated the Windsor Land and Investment Company, and sold the property to that corporation. That same year, Windsor Dairy was established, and we can assume it supplied milk to the Windsor Hotel.

By the turn of the century, the Windsor Dairy was the largest dairy business in the city, with a creamery located downtown at 18th and Blake, supplying milk to many Denver hotels businesses and homes. In 1925, Windsor Dairy was purchased by Meadow Gold, though it retained its name and dominance in the Denver market. The dairy thrived for many decades until it was finally, and reluctantly, sold to two men who had a new vision for the land.

Plans for Windsor Gardens were first announced in the fall of 1961 by the Windsor land trust, headed by partners Werner Livingston and Howard Farkas. The project was based on the community of Sun City near Phoenix and the first major condominium community in the country. The initial cost estimate was \$40 million for 2500 apartments on 138.5 acres of land.

The idea of purchasing an apartment was almost unheard of in the 1960s, so the early news articles had to explain that the apartments would be owned by the occupant and that the purchaser would be able to build equity while escaping the drudgery of lawn care, shoveling, snow removal and other chores. The slogan in those early days was: "Windsor Gardens – A playground for the young at heart."



Windsor Gardens was formally dedicated on October 27, 1962. Former Colorado Governor and US Senator Edwin C. Johnson was the featured speaker for the ceremony which was held in the Auditorium. The first apartments were sold for \$10,950-\$16,500. The very first residents of Windsor Gardens were Lt. Col. Richard F. Hurd and his wife, Evelyn. The Hurds arrived in early December, 1962.

Windsor Gardens' first Activities Director was Marion Percy Brandt, who moved to Denver from Lafayette, IN, for the job. In a newspaper article, Mrs. Brandt noted that "This isn't just a place for retired people who want to vegetate," and added that resident interest would be the driving force behind classes and activity offerings.

The Eternal Youth statue that stands at the entrance of Windsor Gardens was dedicated on June 15, 1963. Actor Franchot Tone, who appeared in numerous movies from the 1930s through 1960s and was nominated for an Academy Award for his role in *Mutiny on the Bounty*, attended the dedication. The statue, created by Denver artist Alford M. Terry, was quite controversial at the time – a petition was circulated among Windsor Gardens residents calling the statue "vulgar and suggestive." More than 200 people attended the dedication. Originally, the sculpture was concealed inside the tower except for three times a day, when it would appear and rotate to the sounds of "Some Enchanted Evening."



In 1964, Windsor Gardens' developers considered adding four 32-story towers at the community's entrance. Had they been built, the towers would have been among the tallest buildings in Denver at the time. It's not clear why they were never built, but it may have been due to Federal Aviation Administration restrictions related to Lowry and Stapleton, or perhaps the developers felt there wasn't enough demand for the towers.

1964 also saw preliminary plans for an "International Shopping Center" on the property, which was envisioned to replicate the architectural styles and popular items of 12 different nations. The plans didn't get very far, and the mall never materialized.

The townhomes at Windsor Gardens opened in September of 1966 and originally sold for \$25,950-\$27,950. The idea for the townhomes' interior courtyards came from ancient Roman ruins of similar living quarters.



By 1967 Windsor Gardens had grown to a community of 1,600 people with 33 buildings. The development was declared a huge success and has continued to grow ever since.

In 1970, Windsor Gardens began the process of transitioning from being owned by the development company to an independent homeowners association. Werner Livingston and Howard Farkas worked with residents to elect a board of managers and train them to manage the property. In 1972, the transition was completed and the seven-member Board of Directors has managed Windsor Gardens ever since.



595 S. Clinton • Denver, CO 80247 • Phone: 303 364 7485 • Fax: 303 364 3341

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