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## Developer preserves owner's legacy

Koelbel bought a quarter of Kimball's Cherokee Ranch; 1st phase is The Keep

**By John Rebchook, Rocky Mountain News  
September 14, 2007**

When Mildred "Tweet" Kimball died, Denver developer Walter "Buz" Koelbel thought her Douglas County ranch would remain in its natural state.

It was well-publicized that Kimball, a wealthy philanthropist who was passionate about protecting wildlife and the environment, had left her Cherokee Ranch, as well as the 10,000- square-foot, hilltop Cherokee Castle, to a nonprofit foundation.

She died in 1999 at age 84.

"I remember reading articles after she died that the land could never be developed," said Silvio DeBartolomeis, vice president of sales at Koelbel and Co.

But Koelbel, who among other things developed the Preserve in Greenwood Village, soon found out otherwise.

He had met Kimball at social events at her Scottish-style castle, which was built by Charles Johnson, the original developer of Park Hill.

The castle was designed by Burnham Hoyt, the architect who designed the Red Rocks Amphitheatre.

"Tweet was very eclectic, eccentric and clever," Koelbel said. "She knew that her castle and ranch would require upkeep and maintenance."

So, with no fanfare, she put in her will that 1,100 acres of her 4,400-acre ranch could be sold for development, with the proceeds from the sale going to her Cherokee Ranch & Castle Foundation.

Soon after she died, Koelbel bought the spread between U.S. 85 and Colorado 105, from the foundation.

"It's a real honor to carry on the legacy of Tweet Kimball in a way that I know would make her proud," Koelbel said. "Considering its history, with Tweet and Charlie Johnson and Burnham Hoyt, I think this is the most storied property along the Front Range."

On Thursday, Koelbel officially kicked off lot sales for the first phase of the community - called The Keep - with helicopter rides for 40 brokers.

The helicopter took off from land that Koelbel owns near Interstate 25 and Orchard Road, to illustrate how close The Keep is to the southeast corridor.

Roger Campbell of the Kentwood Co. was one of the brokers who took the helicopter ride - four minutes one way.

"It's just a fabulous project," said Campbell, who is listing a 500-acre ranch for \$12.5 million across from The Keep. "Buz does everything first-class, but he needs to get the word out to brokers. It is easy for us to fall back on our comfort zone and just show people Cherry Hills."

But if people are willing to drive another 20 minutes, they can get much more land, and probably a much bigger house, for the same price that a 4,000- to 6,000- square-foot home would cost on two acres in Cherry Hills, he said.

Driving through what will be the third phase and most expensive portion of The Keep, Koelbel said: "You could be anywhere in the mountains right now. You could be in Winter Park, not 20 minutes from the Tech Center."

There will be 64 home sites on the land, where 745 acres will remain as open space.

The lots in the first phase, which range from four acres to nine acres, are priced from \$650,000 to \$750,000.

Later phases will include lots up to 11 acres.



George Kochaniec Jr.  
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Cherokee Castle is perched atop a hill on the 4,400-acre Cherokee Ranch in Douglas County. Its late owner, philanthropist Mildred "Tweet" Kimball, arranged for a quarter of the property to be sold for development. The first community in those 1,100 acres is Koelbel & Co.'s The Keep. Lots went on sale Thursday.

## The Keep

- **Developer:** Koelbel & Co.
- **Size:** 1,100 acres, including 745 acres of open space. The 64 sites may take eight years to sell.
- **Location:** Between U.S. 85 and Colorado 105 in Douglas County
- **Price:** First lots will cost from \$650,000 to \$950,000 and range in size from four acres to nine acres. In subsequent phases, lots will be up to 11 acres.
- **Notable:** The Keep has its own water-treatment plant hidden in a building that looks like a barn.
- **Why "The Keep"?** It plays off the castle names in the area, such as Castle Pines and Cherokee Castle. The keep was a secure place in a castle, where jewels were hidden.
- **Web site:** [thekeepcolorado.com](http://thekeepcolorado.com) *Source: Walter "Buz" Koelbel*

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