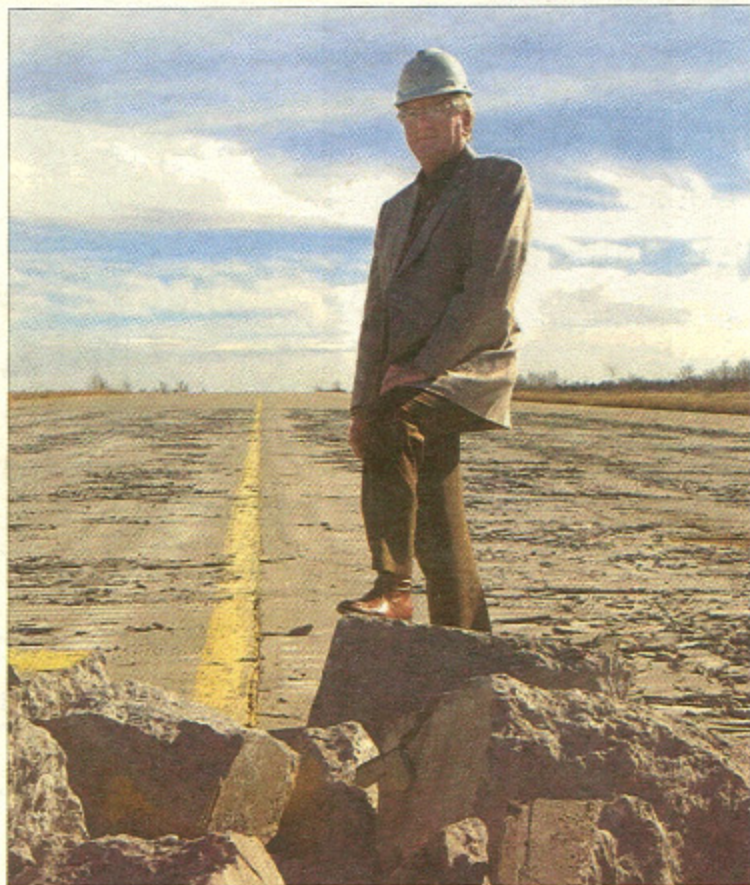


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Mark Wachal stands atop a pile of runway rubble.

KATHLEEN LAVINE | BUSINESS JOURNAL

Stapleton site quickly being reduced to rubble

BY CATHY PROCTOR
DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

On the far side of the old Stapleton International Airport, north of Interstate 70, piles of crushed concrete and old asphalt rise in a kind of moonscape.

Nearby lies a tangled heap of steel bars and poles pulled from the concrete rubble.

Trucks hauling 25 tons of concrete in a single load race down runways once used by giant jetliners. Every 90 seconds they dump a load of concrete chunks into a roaring crusher, where a powerful magnet — capable of pulling a shovel out of your hands — rips steel from its concrete bed.

Over the next 20 years, the old airport's 4,700 acres will be turned into a new neighborhood with 12,000 homes, 13 million square feet of offices and retail space, and 1,100 acres of parks and open space.

But that's the future.

Mark Wachal's job as president of Recycled Materials Co. Inc., based in Arvada, is to clear away and crush the 6 million tons of concrete and asphalt that paved Stapleton. That includes roads, runways and unneeded buildings torn down to make way for the new development.

The size of the project is staggering.

BY THE NUMBERS

"It's the largest recycling project in the world," Wachal said.

The concrete and asphalt at Stapleton averages 24 inches thick spread across 1,000 acres — more than three times the size of City Park.

At its thinnest, it's a few inches. At the thickest point, it's 5.5 feet deep. A "guillotine" rolls across the old runways breaking pavement by dropping a 13,000-pound weight every six seconds 6 inches apart.

SEE RECYCLE, A57

