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First Avenue Hotel is set to become affordable micro-apartments on Broadway — with millions in city help

Andrew Kenney / [Follow](#)May 15, 2018 / 4:35 pm / [Denver news](#)

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The First Avenue Hotel in August 1987. (History Colorado. Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation//Denver Public Library/Western History & Genealogy Dept./ 5DV53OAHF)

The old First Avenue Hotel on Broadway could see new life, five years after its last tenants were forced to abandon the historic building.

The future of the building has been up in the air since 2012, when city inspectors ordered everyone out of the building, saying the building was unsafe. Its last major tenants — El Diablo and Sketch Food & Wine — shut their doors in 2012.

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New proposals would have the city give a low-interest loan for \$2.5 million and another \$2.5 million of tax breaks for a redevelopment project to be led by Zocalo Community Development. The plan includes more than 100 below-market apartment units.

FOR YOU: Denver has a housing crisis. Guess who's got 5,000 acres and a moral mission?



The First Avenue Hotel on Sept. 27, 1917. (Denver Public Library/Western History & Genealogy Dept./Denver Public Library)

This building has a long, slightly weird history.

The 34,000-square-foot hotel dates to 1908, according to city records.

“It’s a beautiful historic building that has sat in disrepair, and vacant for way too long,” said Councilman Jolon Clark, noting that Broadway was an ideal location because of its 24-hour bus service and dedicated bus lanes.

The hotel's upper residential floors were shut down for unsafe conditions in 1978. The ground floor was restored in the 1980s before falling back into disrepair.

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between 2012 and 2013.

It was auctioned off in bankruptcy court in 2015 for about \$6.6 million, [as BusinessDen reported](#).

"It's the single most challenging project we've ever worked on," said David Zucker, chief executive of Zocalo. That reflects the challenge of renovating and expanding a historic building, but it's also simply difficult to fund lower-cost units, he said.

"It is a poetic injustice that projects for the community are tougher to do. It is not fair," he said. "But that's the way it is."



A rendering of 101 Broadway, where 106 affordable apartment units are planned by Zocalo Community Development. (John Gagnon/JG Architects)

Here's what they have planned.

“It includes restoration of the four-story Denver historic landmark building — the former

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the west,” said Tracy Huggins, director of the Denver Urban Renewal Authority.

Zocalo plans to build 106 “workforce housing units” — a mix of studios and bedrooms with income restrictions. They’ll also have about 10,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space.

The apartments would be 400 square feet on average, according to Zucker, and they’ll be reserved for people making less than 60 percent of the area median income — about \$38,000 for a single person.

The units could go for around \$900 per month, as Zocalo [previously told Denverite](#).

The city loan for the project would come from the Office of Economic Development. The other \$2.5 million would be through a tax-increment financing district to be created on the site — basically, a refund of the project’s taxes over several years.

All that will have to be approved by the Denver City Council in the months ahead, including a public hearing on June 25.

The project’s total cost is about \$38 million, according to Zucker. The project wouldn’t be possible without the help of DURA, the mayor’s office and city agencies, he added.

This post was updated with Zucker’s comments.

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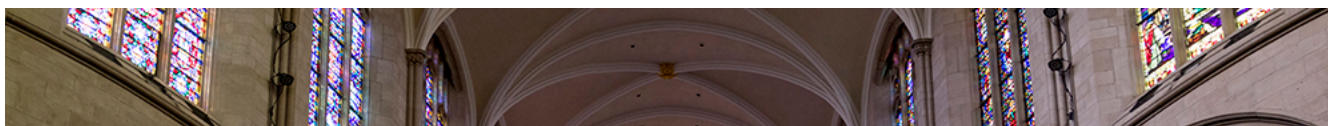
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Denver has a housing crisis. Guess who’s got 5,000 acres and a moral mission?



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May 10, 2018 / 7:00 am / Denver news



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St. John's Cathedral, Capitol Hill, May 9, 2018. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)

St. John's Cathedral in downtown Denver is an impressive space, its stained glass windows stretching high beneath a great arched ceiling.

But the northern section of its property had long been home to something less divine.

Denver will sell land near Union Station, but some wanted affordable housing there



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April 16, 2018 / 7:31 pm / Denver news

Denver's elected leaders voted on Monday to sell a 1.4-acre parking lot near Union Station for \$13.5 million.

The land will go to the Nichols Partnership, which plans to develop it as part of a larger office and retail complex. The council rejected another company's proposal to build affordable housing on the site.

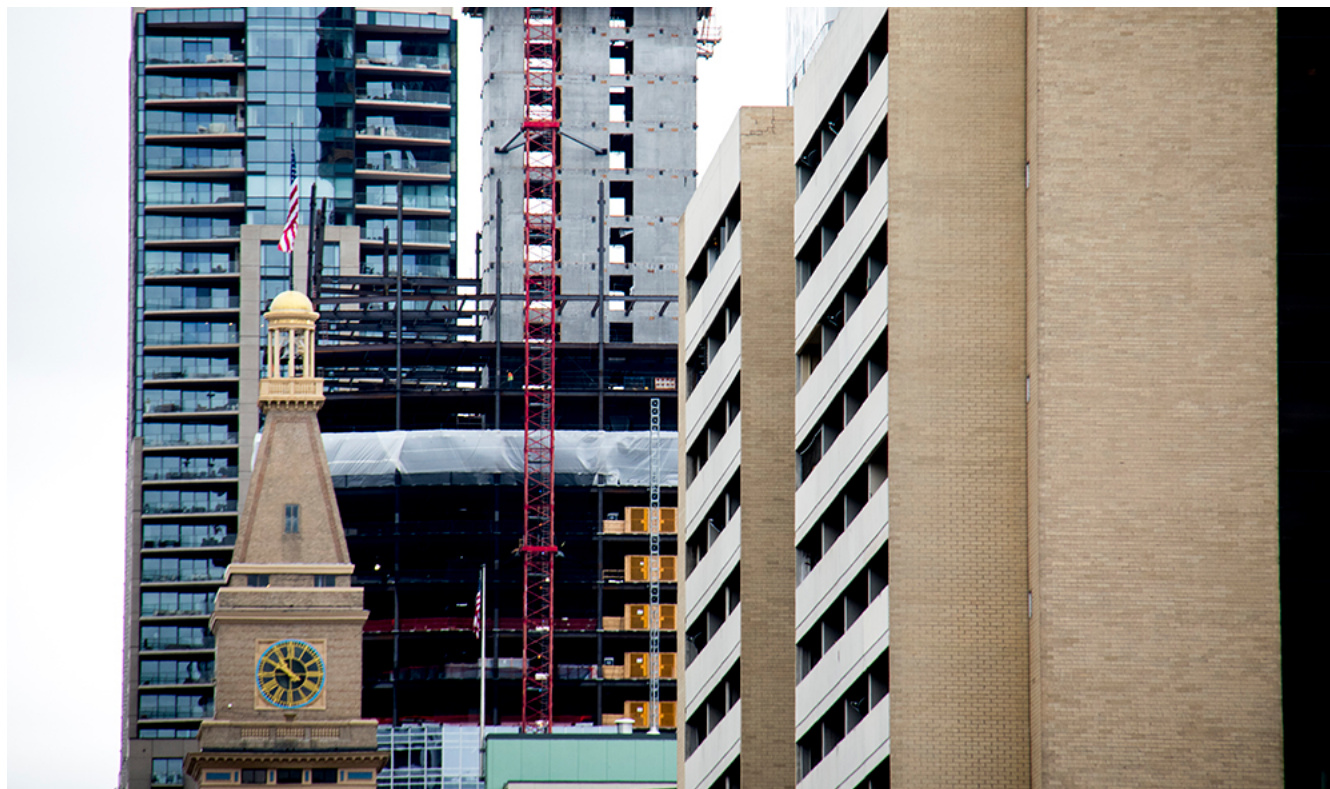
Even as they approved the sale in a 10-2 vote, some Denver City Council members called for changes to how the city sells its land.

The 16th Street Mall bell tower has gone silent, for now

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Downtown Denver. (Kevin J. Beaty/Denverite)

Have you noticed a certain something missing from your holiday shopping season? A hint of mirth, a dollop of tradition, a drop of joy?

Well, there are any number of reasons for that, but we know one thing that is distinctly missing from Denver this December: The chimes of the Daniels & Fisher Tower on the 16th Street Mall have been temporarily silenced.

Path of destruction: See the downtown Denver highway that almost happened

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September 19, 2017 / 10:00 am / Denver news



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A composite image of plans for the Skyline freeway and modern-day satellite imagery. (Courtesy u/Jadebenn, Google Earth)

Denver [demolished nearly 30 blocks of historic buildings downtown](#) in the 1970s — and it almost went much further. At one time, the city's leaders considered building a highway that would have run straight through Lower Downtown.

If the plan had been enacted, the freeway would have swept from Interstate 25 to Interstate 70, charging through Lower Downtown between Blake and Larimer streets. Some of Denver's most recognizable buildings — including the warehouses along Wynkoop — would have been demolished to make way for parking.

Today, the only remnant of this incredible plan is Auraria Parkway, which follows the same general path as part of the highway. This post will review maps of the would-be route and offer some expert explanations of the project's history.

Developers split on RiNo's identity: Mickey Zeppelin says the district is losing itself to bad design



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August 28, 2017 / 4:47 pm / Denver news, Real estate



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Men pose with pick-up trucks near the Blayney-Murphy Company at 48th Avenue and Brighton Boulevard, also known as Gilpin, circa 1923. (Rocky Mountain Photo Company/Western History & Genealogy Dept./Denver Public Library/X-24331)

Mickey Zeppelin, the developer credited with some of the first major modern projects in Lower Downtown and the River North district, wants to keep Brighton Boulevard's name the same.

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