



The Historic Zuni Steam Plant

An Open Letter to Mayor Johnston and Denver City Council

Sent by Historic Denver on behalf of the following Registered Neighborhood Organizations (RNOs) and other community stakeholders:

Villa Park Neighborhood Association

SUN VALLEY
COMMUNITY COALITION

W. COLFAX
BID

*Central Platte Valley
- Auraria RNO*



FreshStartDenver



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COLUMBIA GROUP



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A Letter to Mayor Johnston and Denver City Council:

How will you work with us to retain and reuse the Zuni Steam Plant as a community asset?

The Zuni Steam Plant has been a continuous presence on the banks of the South Platte River for over 122 years. Conceived with state-of-the-art equipment and electricity production techniques in 1901, it provided Denver with the energy capacity necessary for the city to expand throughout the 20th century. Its smokestacks towered over the communities of La Alma Lincoln Park, Sun Valley, and other west side neighborhoods long before the Colfax Viaduct or Interstate-25 established it as a more recognizable feature for residents across the entire city. The plant's legacy, while widely beneficial to the growth of the city, presents a complicated past for those neighbors that have historically been affected by its environmental impacts. However, these communities, undergoing rapid development, are steadfast in their belief that the building should be retained and reused, flipping the paradigm and breathing new life into a piece of their built heritage as a community-serving asset.

Iconic structures, generational constants that have provided continuity within Denver's changing urban landscape, are disappearing as Sun Valley and other historically industrial neighborhoods are redeveloped. We, the undersigned, are concerned that the Zuni Steam Power Plant could become another example contributing to this pattern.

Decommissioned in 2021, the building finds itself at a crossroads. No longer needed by its owner, Xcel Energy, and subject to environmental remediation to restore the land to an industrial grade, due to be completed at the end of this year, the building will be vacant. As a collective, we are seeking to work cooperatively with the City and County of Denver and Xcel Energy to encourage the reuse of this historic property in a manner that is transparent and that springboards a dynamic partnership to create an exciting and community-focused future for this important piece of Denver's built history.

We envision a bright and vibrant future for the steam power plant. We see it serving local neighborhoods with uses that support adjacent communities through the creation of amenities and employment opportunities, pushing back on displacement and gentrification, and creating the walkable 15-minute neighborhoods Denver aspires to. The buzz of electricity will be replaced by the buzz of activity as the Zuni Station becomes a community heart at the intersection of established and new neighborhoods in this rapidly developing area either side of the South Platte River.

We are concerned that this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity could quickly slip away and call upon Mayor Johnston and Denver City Council to act. We ask that the City and County of Denver exercise its right of first refusal to pursue taking ownership of the Zuni Steam Power Plant under Xcel Energy's Franchise Agreement and work with us to identify a potential development partner to bring the building back to life. We are ready to act as collaborators, advocates, and resources on this journey. We request a meeting with representatives of the City and County of Denver to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,



John Deffenbaugh
CEO, Historic Denver

Registered Neighborhood Organizations

Central Platte Valley - Auraria RNO
Community Coalition of Barnum
Curtis Park Neighborhood Association
Jefferson Park United Neighbors
La Alma Lincoln Park Neighborhood Organization
Lower Downtown Neighborhood Association
Sun Valley Community Coalition
Sloan's Lake Citizens' Group
Valverde Neighborhood Association
Villa Park Neighborhood Association
West Colfax Association of Neighbors
West Colfax Business Improvement District

Community Partners

BOSK
Citiventure Associates
Colorado Preservation, Inc.
Columbia Group
CU Denver - DURP
DoCoMono
EarthLinks

Fresh Start
Gates Family Foundation
Historic Denver
JNS Architecture + Interior Design
Meow Wolf Denver
NEWSSED
Raices Brewery
RE | Solutions

St. Charles Town Company
Sun Valley Community Center
The Greenway Foundation
Tres Birds
Urban Land Conservancy
Urban Ventures
Urban Villages