

HISTORIC DENVER NEWS

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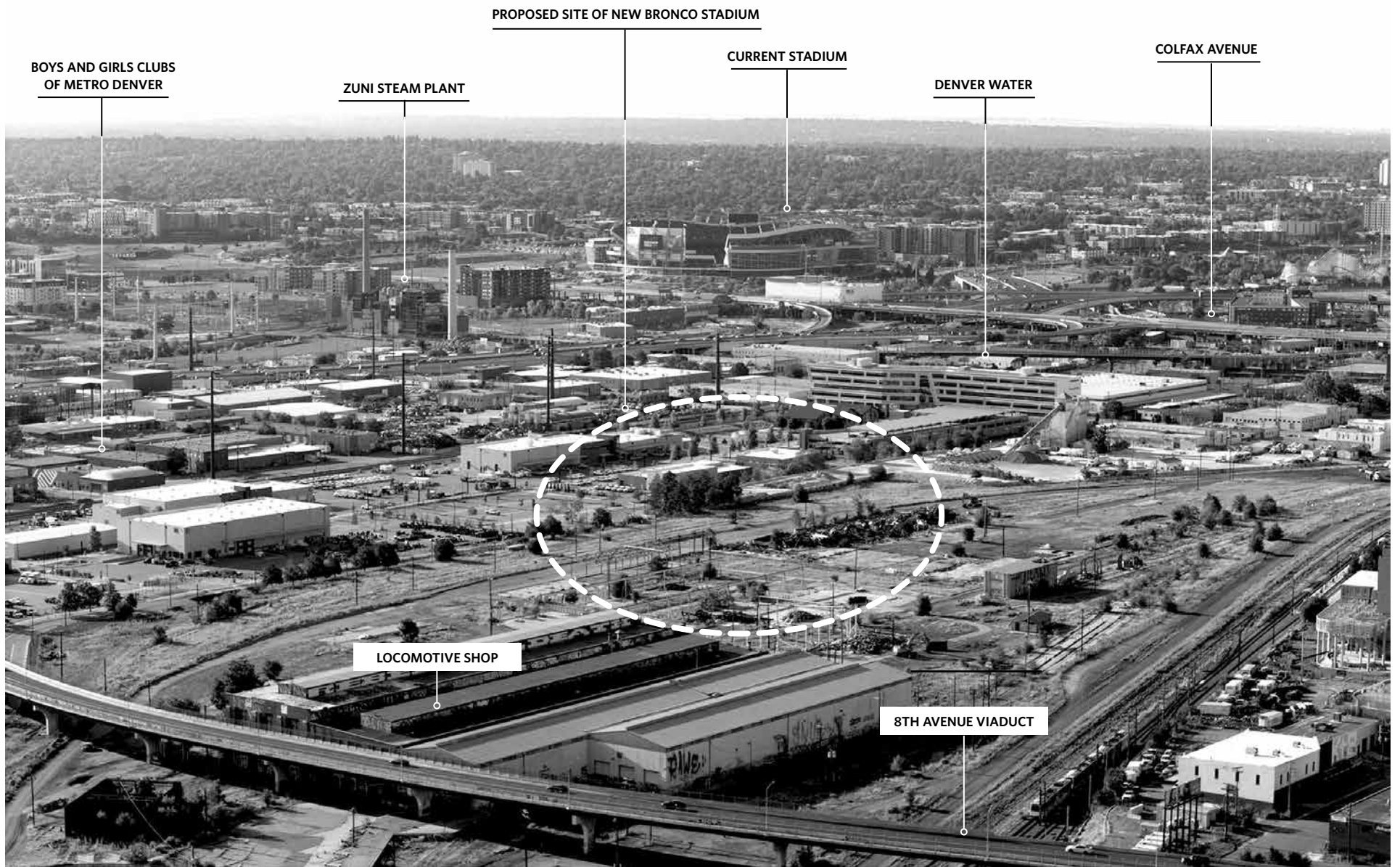


Photo by Gabriel Christus, Denver Broncos, 2025, Locations noted by Historic Denver

WHAT IS BUILT AT BURNHAM YARD WILL ECHO FAR BEYOND GAME DAY

The rumors gained momentum over the summer, when city officials told a Denver City Council committee they wanted to prioritize infrastructure on the 6th and 8th Avenue viaducts in the then-upcoming bond package. Whispers began as early as January and some had already noticed that certain properties on the west side of the La Alma Lincoln Park neighborhood were quietly changing hands. At the end of July, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) demolished five historic buildings across a 58-acre crescent-shaped parcel whose eastern boundary lopes southward from about 13th and Osage streets before finally terminating near 4th and Lipan.

In September, Denver Broncos ownership released an official statement confirming the rumors were true: Burnham Yard is the preferred site for a new stadium and surrounding mixed-use district.

Burnham Yard began taking shape in 1871 to service seven Baldwin Locomotive Works steam engines acquired by General William Palmer for his nascent Denver & Rio Grande Railroad company. The site was named not for a Coloradoan, but for George Burnham, Baldwin's chief financial officer. The reasons for the namesake are lost to time — Burnham had no known involvement in the company or its operations — but the yard named for him bustled over the next 145 years as the company expanded to become Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad. Over the years, the company merged first into Southern Pacific and then into Union Pacific. Burnham Yard closed in 2016 and was acquired by CDOT in 2021.

The recently destroyed buildings include a Prairie School-influenced roundhouse foreman's office that later became the segregated locker room for African American men who were encouraged to work at the yards beginning in World War II, and a passenger coach shop last updated in 1901 but which may have dated back as far as 1874. The lone surviving building is the Locomotive Shop, which, along with the remains of the turntable pit, are just about all that remains to make visible 155 years of the site's history.

During the 14 decades Burnham Yard was operational, thousands worked at the yards, including those from its closest neighborhoods: La Alma Lincoln Park, Baker and Sun Valley. Just as Burnham Yard's influence on these areas was outsized during those years, the area's suggested next chapter will impact the same neighborhoods for the decades to come.

Current stadium proposals include a natural grass field and a retractable roof. The Broncos hope to take the field in five and a half years for the 2031 season, when the lease on the current stadium ends. This new stadium would abut existing freight rail lines to the west, plus a station for the proposed Front Range Passenger Rail that may one day stretch from Fort Collins to Pueblo. The surrounding parcels would be platted for restaurants, hotels, housing, offices, retail, and greenspace, with the existing 10th & Osage RTD light rail station sitting just about in the center of the eastern side of the site.

Though the land sale on this largest tract is not finalized yet, neighbors have raised concerns about neighborhood identity, the loss of the historic buildings, and displacement. Hundreds of curious Denverites showed up to the Burnham Yard Small Area Plan kickoff open house in November. Historic Denver President & CEO John Deffenbaugh said "The main takeaway for me was how excited and interested people were. It shows me that community grassroots needs and large infrastructure needs can go hand-in-hand."

Additionally, a 26-member Community Advisory Committee, including a seat held by Historic Denver, will help to guide the planning. Per the city's project website, this process ensures community members have a voice, especially to address "how investment can be leveraged to support community needs and how to minimize displacement of residents and homes."

Other sports facilities around the globe, including Coors Field a mere two miles

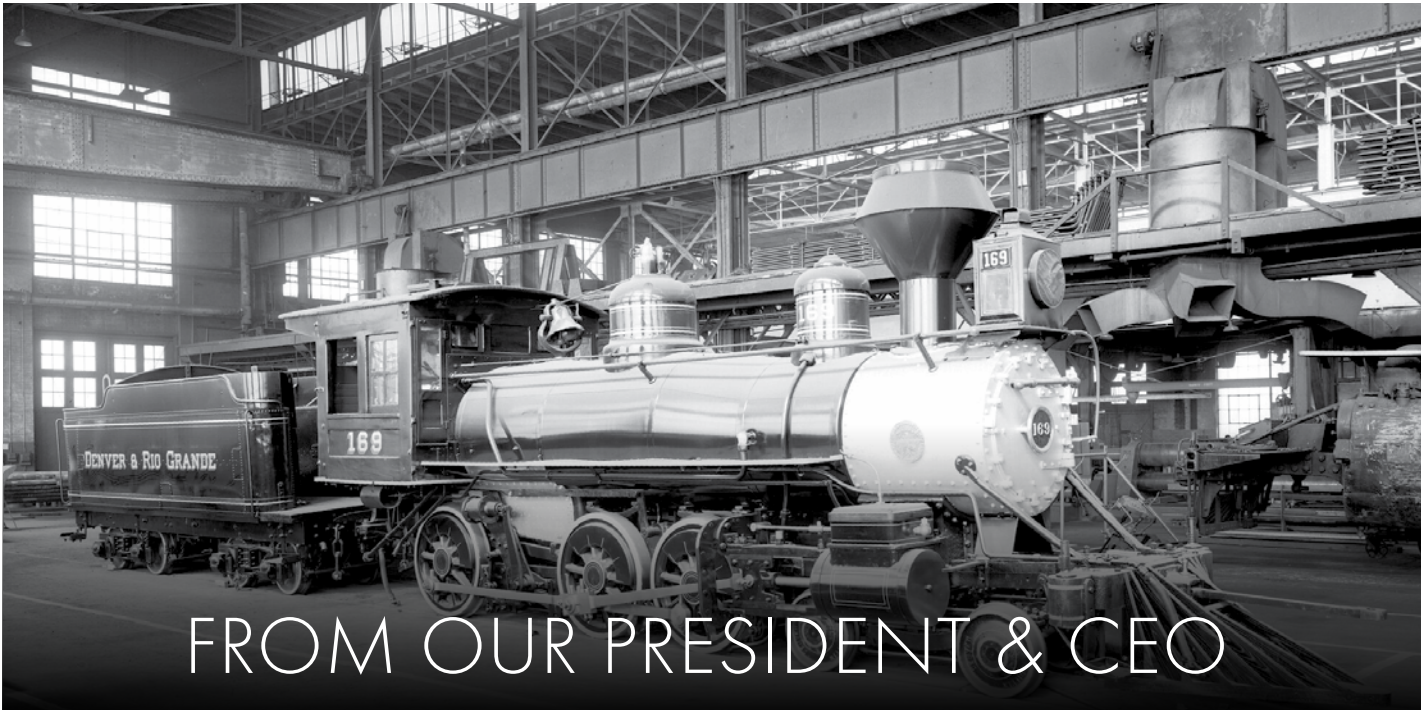
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FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

Inside the Locomotive Shop, the last remaining building at Burnham Yard. Photo: Denver Public Library Special Collections, GB-7365.



By the time you all read this, we will be several weeks into 2026. But as I wrote this just before the Christmas holiday, a Facebook memory popped up reminding me that just one year before, two mansions on the corner of Colfax Avenue and Franklin Street went to the Landmark Preservation Commission for demolition review. These two former single-family homes are most known to Denverites for their commercial additions and businesses like Bourbon Chicken and Fanny's Flowers. Both 1600 and 1618 E. Colfax Ave. were previously considered contributing structures to the Wyman Historic District but on that day were wrongly granted demolition permissions — essentially de-landmarked. The developer who enabled them to fall further into disrepair is now allowed to demolish them.

And yet, they remain standing and remain nuisance buildings for nearby neighbors and an open heartache to the greater preservation community. One year later, those buildings really are the least of Colfax's worries as it undergoes a massive transit construction project. It's ironic that if they were still landmark designated, the city would have more tools in place that it could use to compel the owner to maintain the buildings as opposed to the reality of continuously deteriorating conditions. Denver City Council began working over the summer to embolden action on the city's Neglected and Derelict Buildings and encourage enforcement of existing laws and ordinances. We hope this can make a difference in these issues in the future.

Compare this to Cathedral High School, another beautiful building that is also falling apart under the watch of its present owner. Historic Denver is working with the city, the police department, and many interested parties (including neighbors and former school alumni) to support the long-term future of that building. We cannot allow it to follow the same path as the Colfax properties, especially as this one is not yet Landmark designated; we cannot stand for a precedent of demolition by neglect. The Landmark Preservation Commission opened this door with their decision on the previously protected Colfax properties and we must close that door quickly.

In positive news, I am now serving on the Community Advisory Committee for the Burnham Yard Small Area Plan. Historic Denver is excited about the possibility of the development that is in the early planning stages for that location and pleased to be part of the ongoing discussions. Neighbors have also mentioned another nearby asset they would like to see incorporated: Zuni Steam Plant. The Committee already has begun discussing Zuni as a building of importance, especially as it's within the boundaries of the Small Area Plan, the Sun Valley community deeply cares about its future, and it's been specifically singled out — along with the Locomotive Shop at Burnham Yard — as a hugely important piece of community history that needs to be maintained in the near future and adaptively re-used in the long term.

John Deffenbaugh
President & CEO, Historic Denver and the Molly Brown House Museum



Historic Denver's Board of Trustees,
Photo: Historic Denver file photo



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WHAT IS BUILT AT BURNHAM YARD WILL ECHO FAR BEYOND GAME DAY

northeast, have shown that sports teams and historic sites can be integrated in a meaningful way. Or, as Broncos co-owner CEO Greg Penner said in the September statement, "It's an opportunity for us to activate a number of those old historic buildings and features on the site as part of what we're building."

The idea of mixed-use developments centered around sports arenas isn't new. And, given the cultural significance of both this particular area and this beloved sports team, it's imperative that fans and neighbors alike get the stadium district they deserve.

Consider what can be gleaned — desirable or otherwise — from the following examples as the land purchase, site planning, and the preservation of what remains of historic Burnham Yard unfolds.

NATIONWIDE ARENA AND THE ARENA DISTRICT — COLUMBUS, OH



Similar to Coors Field, Nationwide Arena in Columbus features a brick facade reflective of many of the buildings, new and old, that surround it. by Photo: Nationwide Realty Investors

The 25-year-old Arena District is northwest of downtown Columbus and adjacent to the Short North Arts District. It contains parks, trails, dining, entertainment, and 1100 residential units. In the years since main attraction Nationwide Arena opened to house the Columbus Blue Jackets hockey team, the district expanded from its initial 75 acres to more than 200 acres and added two more sports venues — one for AAA baseball's Columbus Clippers and another for Major League Soccer's Columbus Crew.

Like Burnham Yard, the area was mainly an industrial and transportation corridor. Nationwide Arena was partially built on the site of the former Ohio Penitentiary, which operated from 1834 to 1984, and next to three Columbus Union Station sites. The very first union station in the world was built in Columbus in 1851. Famed architect Daniel Burnham (no relation) designed the third and final iteration, which opened in 1897. In the late 1970s, passenger train service ended and the station was fully demolished except for a Beaux Arts-style arch that was moved to Marconi Boulevard for more than 20 years but now anchors the Arena District's 3-acre McFerson Commons park.



These stones showcase the distinctive vermiculate (worm-like) masonry of the Ohio Penitentiary, demolished 1997. These limestone quoin pieces remained in various outdoor locations until 2019, when they were rescued from the site of the Columbus Crew soccer stadium. Photo: Courtesy of Columbus Landmarks

Other reclamation and adaptive re-use in the district is varied in scale. All buildings on the 22-acres of the penitentiary site were demolished to make way for the arena. Limestone blocks were used to build retaining walls at North Bank

Park, with a few incorporated into a condominium service building as well as a now-defunct movie theater. (The rest were infamously stored in a pile outside until Nationwide donated them to Columbus Landmarks when the MLS stadium broke ground in 2019.) Two iron cell doors were added to the west exterior of the Ohio Moline Plow Building, an early 20th century warehouse that is now office and restaurant space next door to the arena. Most surrounding new construction is reminiscent of Denver's Lower Downtown and Ballpark neighborhoods, with brickwork, arches, and other common themes echoing the warehouses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The project was not without controversy: Efforts to incorporate an ornate four-story penitentiary building failed and voters declined to pass an arena tax five times across the 20 years leading up to Nationwide's construction. The final vote in 1997 forced Nationwide to finance the arena themselves and industrialist billionaire John H. McConnell, a manufacturer of steel and other products, to pay the \$80 million needed to secure an expansion team from the National Hockey League. Contrast this to the current proposal for Burnham Yard's funding, where city and state funding would provide public improvements to surrounding roads and infrastructure but the Walton-Penner Family Ownership Group will privately fund the stadium and mixed-use district construction.

UBER ARENA AND UBER PLATZ — BERLIN, GERMANY

The 17,000-seat Uber Arena opened in 2008 as O2 World on the site of a former freight railway terminal. Located in the Friedrichshain quarter of Berlin, it is home to the Eisbären Berlin ice hockey club, the Alba Berlin basketball team, and is a popular venue for concerts and MMA. A second venue, Uber Eats Music Hall, opened in 2018. The full Uber Platz (literally translated to "Uber Place"), also includes nearly 33,000



Uber Arena peeks out from behind the East Side Gallery, a 0.8-mile long section of the Berlin Wall. The arena is less than 1,000 feet from the former manifestation of the Iron Curtain. Photo: TUI Group

square feet of office space, a 2,500-seat movie theater, 20 food and beverage outlets, two hotels, and a bowling alley.

As with Burnham Yard, industry, trade, and transportation dominated this part of Berlin throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Cargo rails once criss-crossed the vast East Freight Depot carrying goods to and from Europe and Asia. But in 1961, the Berlin Wall was erected and Friedrichshain became part of Soviet-controlled East Berlin. By the early-1990s, the future arena site had been reduced to a few storage sheds, the rubble of former freight structures, and tracks overgrown by weeds, alongside a gas station, a car paint shop, and a concrete factory. Aside from a 0.8-mile-long section of the Berlin Wall, little opportunity for adaptive reuse was seen at the time.

Following reunification, this side of the Spree River was identified as an opportunity to grow the city center eastward. An urban renewal plan dubbed Mediaspree kicked off in 2006, aiming to flood the riverfront with ambitious architectural concepts, mainly multi-story buildings and the gleaming new arena. When Uber Arena opened, Der Spiegel reported that the surrounding area was widely considered "largely undeveloped, post-industrial space."

Even so, protests were nearly immediate as gentrification and rent increases were seen as most of the project's overt goals. The fact that the new arena looks directly onto the East Side Gallery — the longest remaining stretch of the Berlin Wall and the longest open-air gallery in the world — struck a particularly sour note. Today the gallery stands as the district's only attempt to fold in the historic elements surrounding the site.

The lack of public input ahead of the Mediaspree district and arena construction pushed Berliners to take the issue to a referendum and vote to dissolve the scheme. Citizens also successfully demanded the cancellation or re-working of several other planned projects, including swapping an automobile road bridge for a bicycle and footbridge built over the Spree. Still, more than a decade later, the shimmering towers that dominate the area more closely resemble those found in Denver's modern neighborhoods. The legacy of Mediaspree illustrates the necessity of public engagement; Denverites must hold Broncos ownership and the City of Denver to their pledges and push these entities to continue engaging throughout the process.

ROGERS PLACE AND ICE DISTRICT — EDMONTON, ALBERTA



Rogers Place sits just across the street from the Mercer Warehouse building in downtown Edmonton. Photo: Jody Bailey for Gather Co.

The ICE District is a 25-acre mixed-use sports and entertainment district that opened in downtown Edmonton in 2016. It is anchored by Rogers Place, where the NHL's Edmonton Oilers play. Additional amenities include a casino, a public plaza with skating rink, and an indoor walkway that connects multiple buildings, including condos and a hotel, with the Edmonton Light Rail Transit system. One example of adaptive reuse within the footprint of the ICE District site is Mercer Warehouse directly across the street from Rogers Place. This four-story brick and beam building from 1911 now houses food, hospitality, retail, and office space across 42,000 square feet.

Surrounded mainly by warehouses like Mercer, ICE District's western and southern boundaries are similar to our own LoDo, where many extant buildings in Edmonton's Warehouse District saw conversion to lofts beginning in the 1980s. Comparatively, the empty lots created by demolition during Edmonton's 1966 Downtown Master

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Rogers Place is bordered by a residential neighborhood to the north, a warehouse district to the west and south, and downtown Edmonton to the east. Photo: Courtesy ICE District

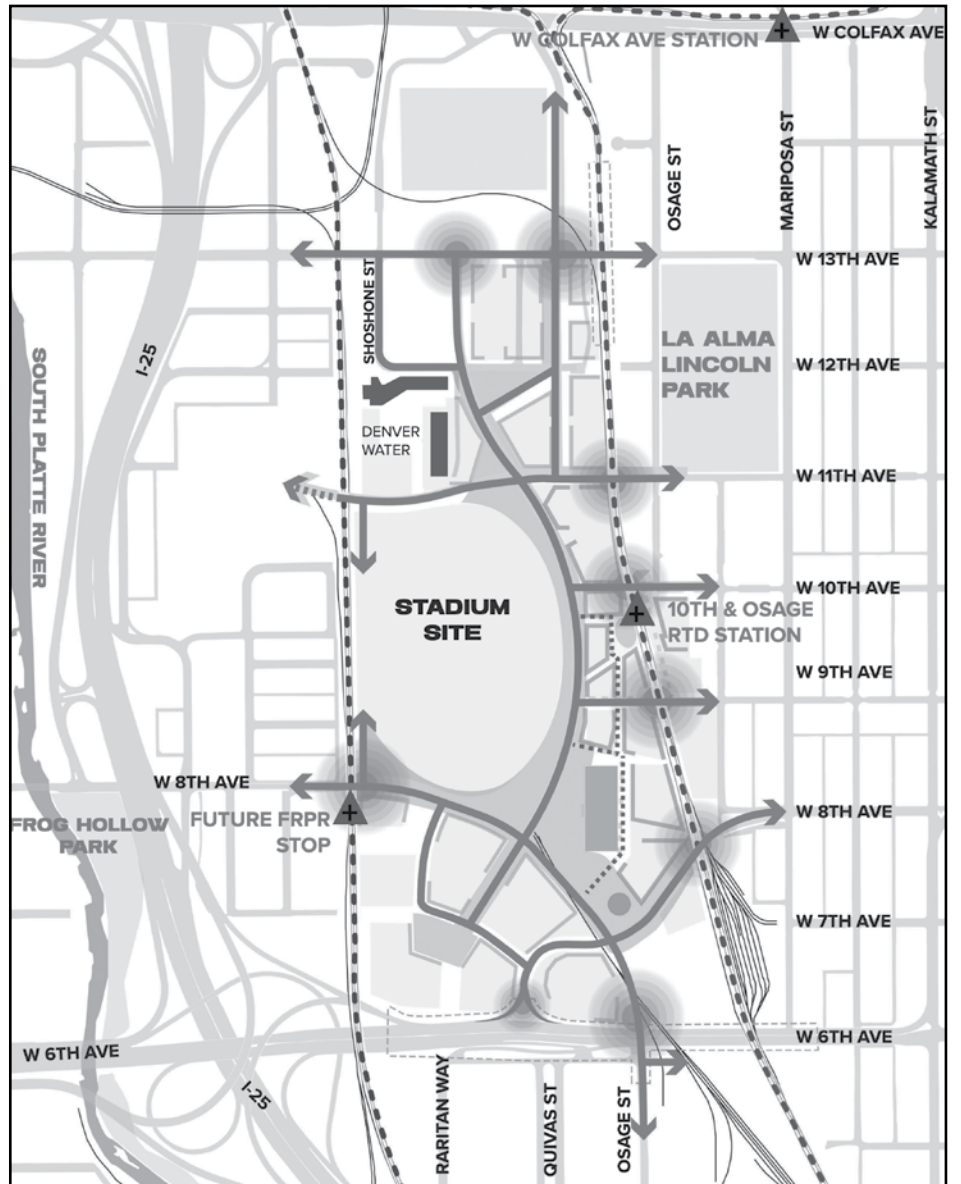
Plan — an example of the North America-wide urban renewal movement of the 1960s — remained undeveloped for another 50 years. Beyond its commercial core, the ICE District is bordered to the north by the largely residential and historically working-class neighborhood of Central McDougall. Similar to the La Alma Lincoln Park and Sun Valley neighborhoods, the average household income in Central McDougall is less than in Edmonton at large.

Rogers Place and the ICE District began when billionaire Daryl Katz and his eponymous Katz Group began quietly acquiring former parking lots and vacant land, ultimately spending \$300 million Canadian. As sports writer Eric Fisher noted in 2023, “Some of these transactions even predated his 2008 purchase of the Oilers.” The arena construction announcement kicked off a buying frenzy. Similar to what has already been reported with Burnham Yard in the past few months with the recent sale of Denver’s Prism Art Studios and The Junkyard venue, Edmonton artists who had previously secured affordable studio space were being priced out even before construction began.

Edmonton facilitated the creation of a community-based advisory committee, but little community benefit was specifically inked into the final Arena Master Agreement aside from the City of Edmonton’s ability to use the arena and/or the 22,450-square-foot Ford Hall atrium and event space for 28 days per year. The Broncos’ initial presentation for the large development pre-application indicates that a stronger community benefit agreement is already intended for the Burnham Yard site, a commitment it is imperative be honored.

Each of these examples offers learning lessons alongside inspiring ideas. Historic Denver continues to partner with La Alma Lincoln Park neighbors and other communities adjacent to the site to support neighborhood concerns regarding a redevelopment of this scale. Additionally, the Broncos’ initial announcement stated their aspiration to retain the existing historic Locomotive Shop; Historic Denver looks forward to seeing how this critical building is integrated into the site to tell the unique story of Burnham Yard.

The importance of genuine community engagement, consideration of those who will be impacted — including artists who are part of the area’s history — and of getting the good intentions into written agreements are key to preserving what makes Burnham Yard interesting, while also forecasting its future. ■



The Burnham Yard Large Development Review Pre-application, submitted November 2025, is a preliminary concept plan. This proposed site map shows potential transportation routes that may come out of the redevelopment, including the extension of West 11th Avenue, which currently ends at the Burnham Yard boundary. Photo: Denver Broncos Football Club



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POLICY UPDATES



Buildings in the updated Downtown Area Plan range in era and style from the 1870s to the modern era, including the 1968 brutalist style Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Denver Branch building and the 1911 Daniels & Fisher Clock Tower. The plan covers nearly 2.5 square miles, including Upper Downtown and the 22-story 1560 Broadway building, pictured below, which was constructed at the gateway to downtown Denver in 1983. Photos: Jay Homstad

NEW DOWNTOWN AREA PLAN APPROVED: WHAT IT MEANS FOR PRESERVATION

by Jay Homstad, Sr. Director of Preservation Advocacy

In November 2025, Denver City Council unanimously approved the updated Downtown Area Plan, marking the first comprehensive vision for downtown’s future since 2007. The plan arrives at a pivotal moment: Downtown is facing record office vacancies, shifting work patterns, and changing expectations about how people live, work, and spend time in the city center. At the same time, downtown remains one of Denver’s most historically layered places — home to landmark buildings, longtime cultural institutions, and stories that continue to shape the city’s identity.

While planning documents of this scale are necessarily broad by design, the final adopted plan includes several clear preservation wins that will matter as implementation begins.

The new Downtown Area Plan highlights the existing historic fabric of downtown and acknowledges downtown’s significance in the cultural histories of many people, past and present. It notes the area as a place of gathering, trade, and connection for Tribal Nations long before European settlement; calls out specific landmarks and districts and the social movements they are associated with; and recognizes the history of the preservation movement itself and its impact on shaping downtown over time. Together, these inclusions reinforce how the built environment downtown directly illustrates Denver’s layered history and likely sets the stage for future designs and redevelopment to incorporate historic buildings and their inherent cultural value.

Aside from acknowledging the past, the Downtown Area Plan also explicitly recognizes historic buildings as assets in shaping downtown’s future. Significantly, the plan repeatedly emphasizes adaptive reuse. Downtown contains more than 11 million square feet of vacant office space, much of it in older buildings that no longer meet modern office demands but remain structurally sound (and often historically significant). Rather than framing these buildings as obstacles, the plan consistently positions reuse as a strategy to support housing, cultural uses, small businesses, mixed-use redevelopment, and

other forms of economic vitality, while reducing waste and conserving materials.

A particularly important preservation win is the plan’s recommendation to work with the State of Colorado to increase the allocation for existing Historic Preservation Tax Credits. The plan explicitly calls for expanding these allocations and other local tax rebate tools to support adaptive reuse at the volume downtown needs, especially in office-to-residential conversions. This emphasis elevates preservation incentives as essential economic development tools. With construction costs remaining high, these incentives are critical to making adaptive reuse financially feasible.

Historic Denver participated as an advising consultant during the planning process. Our involvement is perhaps most clearly reflected in Appendix A, which outlines concepts for placemaking and storytelling — tools that can help bring downtown’s layered histories to life through signage, interpretation, and public engagement. While these ideas are not yet funded or implemented, their inclusion in the plan creates potential for future partnerships and projects that connect people more deeply to downtown’s past.

The adopted Downtown Area Plan establishes a framework that recognizes the value of existing buildings, encourages reuse over replacement, and integrates preservation into broader goals around housing, culture, and economic resilience. While no plan is perfect, this one includes meaningful tools and language that can support preservation outcomes — if used intentionally.

Since City Council approval concludes the planning phase, the real work now shifts to implementation, where many of the most consequential preservation conversations will occur. As city planning resources continue to face constraints, Historic Denver will continue to monitor how the Downtown Area Plan is applied — through rezonings, redevelopment proposals, and project-specific reviews — and we will engage thoughtfully when projects raise preservation concerns or opportunities, ensuring that Denver’s future growth remains grounded in the places and stories that make the city one-of-a-kind. ■



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The former Denver Tramway Company powerhouse in the early 1900s (above) and from the same angle today (below). Photos: Denver Public Library Special Collections, X-18339, and Discover Denver Survey

FROM POWERHOUSE TO POWERFUL EXAMPLE OF ADAPTIVE REUSE

by Kerry Baldwin, Discover Denver Research & Evaluation Coordinator

Most Denverites would recognize the building which houses the REI flagship store at the confluence of the South Platte and Cherry Creek. Since 2000, the outdoor gear retailer has inhabited a former Denver Tramway Company (DTC) powerhouse. The 90,000-square-foot structure, built in 1901, is an outstanding example of the power of adaptive reuse. Lesser known is its predecessor, a DTC powerhouse built in 1892 at 3225 Blake St.: It was converted in 2000 into Fire Clay Lofts — one of the first industrial-to-residential projects in the RiNo portion of Five Points.

Denver Tramway Company (DTC) was formed in 1885 and grew quickly, competing against Denver’s first public transit company, the Denver City Cable Railway, which had dominated for years with horse cars. These companies provided an important service by transporting people around fast-growing Denver. In the early 1890s, DTC began converting lines from underground cable to overhead electric wires and built the Blake Street powerhouse. In 1901, after continued growth, DTC constructed the larger powerhouse at the confluence of the Platte River and Cherry Creek now home to REI.

Architect John W. Roberts designed the 1892 building and J.D. McGilvray was the builder. Roberts’ projects include Denver’s first skyscraper (15th & Larimer, demolished), and the McNamara Dry Goods building at 1460 Larimer St., a contributing structure in the Larimer Square Historic District. John Duff McGilvray moved to Denver from Scotland around 1880 and began quarrying stone near Boulder and working as a stone contractor. Roberts and McGilvray also partnered on the Windsor Hotel (now demolished). The Blake Street powerhouse was one of McGilvray’s last Denver projects before he moved to California in 1893 and built San Francisco’s first skyscraper.

The Jackson-Richter Iron Works leased the building in 1913, producing structural and ornamental ironworks such as railings and elevator cars. The Tramway building provided access to a Union Pacific Railroad switch, an important feature for a company that received raw material and shipped finished products throughout the west. In 1919, at the start of World War I, the company changed its name to Midwest Steel & Iron Works. The company contributed parts to the Royal Gorge Suspension Bridge, the Moffat Tunnel, the Denver City and County Building, and many other projects.

In 1926, DTC sold the old powerhouse to the Denver Fire Clay Company, who appeared to have used the building as storage for clay products. Formed in 1876 by Joab Otis Bosworth, the company initially supplied chemicals and crucibles to miners and assayers so they could determine the quality of ore. After he discovered clay veins near Golden, Bosworth focused on making clay products. Around 1880, the company built a factory at 31st and Blake Street; historic photographs show that the plant had many large kilns. The company specialized in manufacturing clay products that required high resistance to heat, such as smelters and crucibles as well as fine china and porcelain.

Joab Bosworth died in a chemical explosion accident at work in 1890. Denver Fire Clay Company had several less deadly accidents over the years. In 1904, a fire in the chemical room burned several barrels of acid. In 1920, a fire at the factory burned a frame warehouse and came close to igniting a chemical store. In 1930, chlorine gas leaked from a railroad car into the plant, with fumes overcoming ten employees and thirteen firemen before they were saved. In 1937, a cave-in at the company mine near Golden trapped workers who were eventually rescued.

From the 1950s to the 1990s, the powerhouse had a handful of owners and uses, including aluminum production, a sheepskin supplier, and graphic arts services. The Denver Fire Clay Company kilns appear to have been demolished between 1962 and 1978 and the fabrication plant buildings were demolished around 1999. In 2000, Urban

Ventures converted the former clay storage and 1892 Denver Tramway Company powerhouse building into the Fire Clay Lofts, with a focus on creating units affordable to middle-income families who may have been priced out of earlier loft projects closer to downtown. At that time, Fire Clay Lofts’ neighbors were mostly by other warehouses. Now surrounded by new development, the Fire Clay Lofts are a powerful connection to the area’s early industrial history. ■



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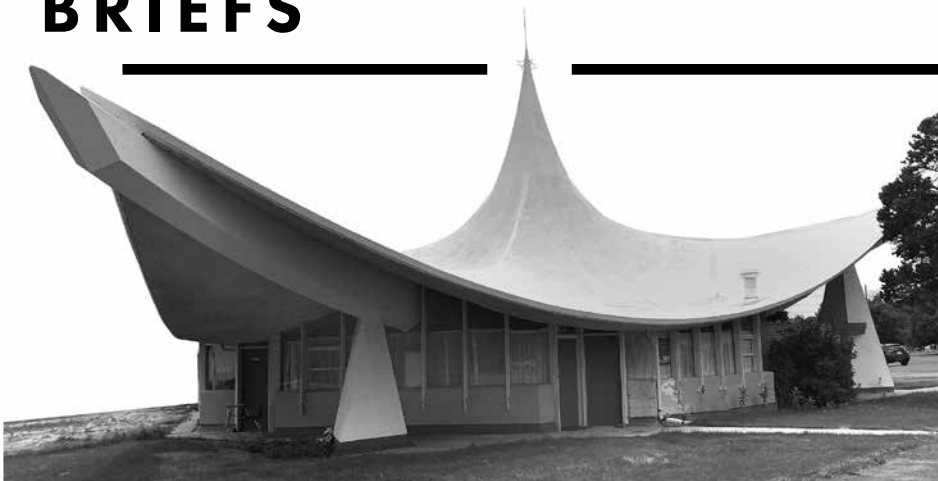
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PRESERVATION BRIEFS



The unique swooping roof of St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, located in Northglenn, is an excellent example of the eclectic Neo-Expressionist architecture. Photo: Mike Owen



Perched atop a hill overlooking Interstate 70, The Sculptured House in Genesee showcases the organic and asymmetrical forms often associated with Expressionism. Photo: Mike Owen

EXPRESSIONISM OR NEO-EXPRESSIONISM, THAT IS THE QUESTION

by Mike Owen, Manager of Preservation Services

Historic Denver's newest easement is St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, a Neo-Expressionist gem located in Northglenn. Located in Adams County, Northglenn is an inner-ring suburb within the Denver metropolitan area. After receiving multiple grants from the State Historical Fund, they contacted us about holding the easement for St. Stephen's.

Completed in 1964, the building evokes a strong connection with the mid-century design work of Boulder-based master architect Charles A. Haertling. As a young architect in the 1950s, he was mentored by prominent Boulder architect James Hunter, who specialized in Modernist design. Haertling has become known and celebrated for his Modernist and Neo-Expressionist sculptural buildings dating from the late 1950s to the 1980s. After establishing a solo practice in the early 1960s, Haertling explored the possibilities of Neo-Expressionist architecture, seeking inspiration from the natural world, and pushing the boundaries of modern architecture.

Designed with a diamond-shaped plan and capped by a soaring roofline featuring catenary arches projecting upward and outward, St. Stephen's swooping lily-like shape was made possible through the use of thin-shell concrete. Largely an engineered building constructed of concrete and glass, the project required custom fabrication of many of its parts, along with calculation of tolerances to realize the dream of its designer and to ensure it would remain standing for years to come. While the building's design originated in the visionary mind of architect Charles Haertling, it could not be erected using standard techniques for masonry construction. Consequently, engineering skills provided by Ib Falk Jorgensen — known in local construction circles as “an engineer's engineer” — became central to the project and were applied before construction could commence on the site. This church is the first of Haertling's projects to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places and was added in July 2019.

Historic Denver already holds an easement on a similar building, the Deaton Sculptured House. The Sculptured House, considered an Expressionist exemplar, was built 1963-66 and was listed in the National Register in 2004. Like Haertling, Denver architect Charles Deaton was also inspired by the curvilinear shapes found in nature among plants, rocks, and living creatures and these forms made their way into his buildings. The clam-shaped residence rises from the forest on a mountaintop above Interstate 70 west of Denver. Deaton and Haertling, perhaps amongst all Expressionist architects at that time, shared the most in common as they pushed architectural design to the edges of creativity.

The Sculptured House has been discussed and illustrated in the national and international architectural, art and design press, both when it was new in the 1960s and '70s, and since it was restored and completed in the 1990s. It is rare for a Colorado building to have received the level of serious attention afforded the Sculptured House.

Aside from attention within the professional design community, the house also played an important role in mass culture as a widely known example of the mid-20th century ‘House of the Future’ building type. It is often referred to as “The Sleeper House,” as it was featured in Woody Allen's futuristic film *Sleeper*.

Both buildings were built within two years of each other. So why is one considered Expressionism and the other Neo-Expressionism?

According to Docomomo Colorado board member Brie Samyn, Expressionism was a movement that emerged in Europe in the early 20th century. Neo-Expressionism, on the other hand, emerged in the United States, occurred mostly in the 1970s-80s, and is considered a revival of the Expressionist movement. Also, Neo-Expressionism is often more eclectic, as evidenced by the exaggerated roofline of St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, and less strictly defined than Expressionism — see the precise geometry of The Sculptured House.

Both St. Stephen's and the Sculptured House exemplify the Expressionist style, though St. Stephen's showcases more eclecticism and that earns it the “Neo” modifier. Historic Denver is proud to hold the easements of both of these stunning mid-century marvels.



Mercury Cafe founder and longtime owner Marilyn Megenity installed solar panels and windmills on the roof of 2199 California St. in 2007. Photo: Donated to the Denver Public Library by the Rocky Mountain News / Steven R. Nickerson.

SPIRIT OF LEGENDARY GATHERING PLACE LIVES ON

by Alison Salutz, Director of Education & Community Impact

When Marilyn Megenity founded The Mercury Cafe, she ensured from the beginning that this venue would be different than others. She wanted there to be healthy, organic foods, music, and a home for “poets, punks, rebels and artists from all walks of life.”

The café got its start in 1975 and moved through a few locations, including 1308 Pearl St. near Wax Tracks. Seeking a long-time home for the restaurant, Megenity purchased 2199 California St. for \$157,000 in 1990. This location became a gathering place for the last 30 plus years, known affectionately by locals as “The Merc.” It was added to Historic Denver's 50 Actions for 50 Places campaign in 2021. And now, this beloved third space lives on even as it transforms again.

Before becoming a local institution, the two-story building on the corner of 22nd and California streets had a 30-year history with the printing business. It was built in 1949 by developer Henry Replin with the wholesale periodical industry in mind. Shortly after construction was completed on 2199 California, Replin sold it to Sam Rollnick, who then leased the building until 1957 to the Colorado News Company, a distributor of magazines, newspapers, and other printed materials. After Rollnick's death, the building was purchased in 1960 by Samuel and Pauline Schlesinger, who founded the Mutual Multigraphing Company (later Mutual Graphics), which occupied the second floor of the building into the early 1980s. A multigraph was a machine used to make printed materials, like letterheads and advertisements. After that, the building appears to have been mostly vacant until it was sold to Megenity.

In addition to serving good food, the Cafe's permanent home allowed Megenity to realize her dream of creating a gathering space. The events The Merc hosted were varied, including theater, dance, music and more throughout the years. The devoted community of regulars, who were as likely to stop by for poetry readings as swing dance lessons. It also welcomed the greater Queer community with wide open arms. A smaller venue than some in town, The Merc's two performing spaces afforded up-and-coming performers the opportunity to hone their craft and gain popularity. Denverites saw many future household names perform there prior to their “big break,” like Alanis Morissette and Blink-182. Its musicians, open-mic nights, and dance lessons launched careers, friendships, and a loyal following.

The driving force behind the operation for so many years, by 2020, Megenity was ready to take a step back from day-to-day operations. She listed the property for sale in March 2021 and told *Westword* a few days later that while interest was strong, she only wanted to sell to someone interested in continuing the ethos of the Mercury Café. Danny Newman — known for purchasing other historic buildings and businesses in Denver, including My Brother’s Bar — and selected business partners ended up being the buyers that Megenity felt confident would continue to retain the spirit of what she built, while ushering it into a new era.

As Newman explains, “I wanted to make sure the building wouldn’t be torn down, so I purchased it in 2021 to protect it.” This desire to not lose a local gem speaks to what Megenity also seemed eager to avoid.

While many of the events and staff remained, Newman and his team quickly realized that much of the magic in “The Merc” was driven by Megenity herself. Her long history in the community allowed her to skirt policies that the new owners were unable to, such as avoiding payroll taxes by paying staff in cash. Then, the longtime chef made the choice to retire. By late 2024, Newman was considering what should come next to keep the third space active, while also making changes that are nearly impossible after more than 40 years of creating other expectations.

Finding a new home for Denver’s only lesbian bar, and folding it into the legendary Mercury Cafe, proved to be the next bold move. Ashlee Cassity and Dom Garcia, owners of the speakeasy, The Pearl Diver, closed their Capitol Hill location and moved into the space in April 2025. This new team took on the challenge of keeping The Merc’s warm atmosphere and reputation for events intact, while also ensuring a guaranteed safe space for the LGBTQ community.

According to Newman, “The choice was about more than finding a tenant — it was about ensuring that the building remained a gathering place for creativity, music, and connection.” [Editor’s Note: Newman joined the Historic Denver Board of Trustees in 2022.]

The Pearl is committed to preserving the strong sense of community, a welcoming attitude, and continuing the many events that made The Merc unique. Lindy Hop lessons, Poetry Open Mics, and Jazz Jam nights still bolster the weekly events list, joined by new events, like dance nights that support the local trans community, trivia, karaoke and more.



The main entrance to The Mercury Cafe has welcomed Denverites for more than 35 years. Photo: Historic Denver file photo



The Gables at 11th and Lafayette were originally two single-family homes that were reconfigured and added onto in the 1910s to create 14 residential units. Photo: Denver Public Library Special Collections, X- 25266

DENVER’S NEWEST LANDMARK: THE GABLES APARTMENTS

by: Jay Homstad, Senior Director of Preservation Advocacy

Nestled along East 11th Avenue in Denver’s Capitol Hill neighborhood, The Gables Apartments at 1407 E. 11th Ave. offers a compelling window into the city’s early 20th century transition from single-family residences to multi-unit living. Constructed between 1914 and 1915, The Gables is notable not only for its architectural presence, but for the forward-thinking design approach that shaped it.

At a time when many large homes in Capitol Hill were either subdivided internally or demolished entirely to make way for purpose-built apartment buildings, The Gables followed a different path. Rather than starting from scratch, renowned architect Montana S. Fallis combined two existing single-family houses into a single, cohesive 14-unit apartment building — an intentional and relatively rare example of early adaptive reuse in Denver. This approach reflected a moment of experimentation in the city’s development patterns, when density was increasing but the tools and typologies for accommodating growth were still evolving.

Fallis, a prolific Denver architect whose work spans a wide range of styles and building types, is perhaps best known today for iconic projects such as the Mayan Theatre, the Buerger Bros. Building, and the Oxford Hotel Annex. Yet, The Gables stands apart within his body of work. Unlike many of his better-known Art Deco and Commercial designs, The Gables embraces the Tudor Revival style, while also incorporating Craftsman influences that were popular in residential architecture during the 1910s.

The three-story brick building features distinctive half-timbering with stucco infill, prominent cross gables, a corner tower, and a masonry arch entry that anchors the façade. Craftsman elements — including overhanging eaves, exposed rafters, triangular knee braces, and original multi-pane windows — add texture and visual depth while reinforcing the building’s residential scale.

Construction of The Gables was carried out by Adam M. Stein, a master builder and charter member of Denver’s Master Builders Association. Stein’s role in executing Fallis’s design is significant, particularly given the complexity of merging two separate structures into a unified apartment building with a consistent exterior expression. Denver building permits list Stein as the builder on dozens of projects, underscoring his reputation and experience during a formative era of the city’s growth.

Beyond its architectural qualities, The Gables is deeply tied to the broader history of Capitol Hill. Originally developed as one of Denver’s most prestigious residential neighborhoods, Capitol Hill began to shift in the early 20th century as population growth, changing household sizes, and proximity to downtown increased demand for multifamily housing. The Gables reflects this transition, illustrating how existing buildings were adapted to meet new needs while remaining embedded in the neighborhood’s fabric.

Importantly, the property retains a high degree of historic integrity. Its location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, and continued use as a multifamily residence all contribute to its ability to convey its significance more than a century after construction. That continuity of use — housing people in a walkable, centrally located neighborhood — remains one of the building’s most compelling attributes.

Today, The Gables serves as a tangible reminder that reuse and reinvestment are not new concepts in Denver, but longstanding strategies that have shaped the city’s most enduring neighborhoods. As conversations around housing, sustainability, and growth continue, buildings like The Gables offer valuable lessons about accommodating change without erasing history. On December 16, 2025, the Landmark Preservation Commission recommended approval of landmark designation for The Gables; the designation passed unanimously at the Denver City Council meeting on January 5. ■

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This portrait of the Brown Family from the early 1890s was taken when they lived in Leadville. Margaret and J.J. were married in Leadville in 1886. Photo: HCC-89.451.1735

THE BROWNS AND “THE LITTLE IRELAND OF COLORADO”

by Andrea Malcomb, Historic Denver Vice President & Museum Director, and Leah Charney, Historic Denver News Managing Editor

Unsinkable socialite. Activist. Proud Irish woman. Margaret Brown’s story is remarkable and unique, yet it also serves as an entry point to the history of the Irish in the West. The 4.7 million Irish who settled in America between 1820 and 1975 shaped our state and country in innumerable ways. Before Colorado was even a state, Irish-born made up 25% of its foreign-born population.

The immigrants arriving in this land of liberty were largely Catholic, and often unskilled workers from impoverished rural areas of Ireland. Margaret Brown was the daughter of two such Irish immigrants, John and Johanna Tobin, as was James Joseph “J.J.” Brown, whose mother, Cecilia, was an American schoolteacher and whose Irish immigrant father, John, worked in the Pittston mine to provide for his family.

When Margaret was 18, she received a letter with a train ticket from her older brother Daniel, telling her of all the opportunities available in Leadville, Colorado. Between 1877 and 1900, Leadville experienced one of the greatest silver rushes in American history. And by 1880, it was also one of the most Irish places in the United States. According to Dr. James Walsh of the University of Colorado Denver, the Irish community represented about 20% of the total population of Lake County with Leadville considered one of the largest Irish enclaves in the West.

J.J. Brown’s story follows mining migration patterns typical for many Irish: Born in Pennsylvania, he was surrounded by the “terrible struggle” of coal mining. By the 1870s, powerful financial syndicates controlled the coalfields; coal companies had begun to recruit immigrants from overseas who were willing to work for less than the prevailing local wages paid to American-born employees. These mostly Irish workers faced constant hazards from violation of safety precautions, with frequent injuries and deaths in mining disasters.

Lured by tales of gold in the Black Hills of South Dakota, in 1877 J.J. took a job at the famous Homestake Mine — the largest and deepest mine in this hemisphere — quickly moving up in the ranks to foreman. Within a few years he moved on to Colorado, where it was still possible to pick up a mine claim for a reasonable amount. He settled in Leadville in the early 1880s, where he took control of several mines, including the Maid of Erin. In his spare time, J.J. studied geology, ore deposits, and mining techniques. On September 1, 1886, he and Margaret married, and the rest was indeed history.

At the same time the Browns were making their fortunes, Leadville miners twice led massive strikes for higher wages and better working conditions. They walked out of the mines in 1880 and again in 1896, bringing the Colorado mining economy to a halt. The Colorado National Guard was brought in each time to stop the strike and arrest the



The Leadville Irish Miners’ Memorial features a sculpture of a miner holding a pickaxe and a harp, the national symbol of Ireland. Panels that surround the memorial show the names of Irish dead who are buried in Evergreen Cemetery. A bronze sculpture of a mother and child were recently added to the Memorial to honor the large number of infants and children buried nearby. Photo: Andrea Malcomb

miners. In the later strike, an undercurrent of violence and retribution by the Guard led to the deaths of at least eight and perhaps as many as two dozen Irishmen.

The legacy of the emigre miner settling the West from such places as Ireland or Wales and resisting the forces of industrialized labor to indeed reach the American Dream, underpins the history of mountain towns like Leadville. For nearly a decade now, an international effort has been underway to memorialize the brave Irish community who once inhabited Leadville.

Spearheaded by the Rocky Mountain Irish Roots Collective and Irish Network Colorado, the Leadville Irish Miners’ Memorial was unveiled on September 16th, 2023, in Leadville’s Evergreen Cemetery. More than 500 people gathered for the event, including Irish Ambassador to the U.S. Geraldine Byrne Nason and U.S. Senator Michael Bennet. The Memorial is a symbol of recognition of the humanity, lives, dreams, and names of the Irish who lived and died in Leadville, in hopes that their stories will inspire us today.

The location is a poignant one: Records show that over 1,300 Irish and other immigrants are buried in unmarked, sunken graves in the “Pauper or Catholic Free” section of the Evergreen cemetery. Work begun by Dr. Walsh set out to find and name those buried in the unmarked graves, and, while not all the names of the buried dead were discovered, those that were are now part of the Memorial. The second phase of the Memorial project is nearing completion, with the figures of a woman and child added to the plinth alongside the original miner with his harp, to reflect that over 50% of those buried there are women and children, who succumbed to malnutrition, disease, and violence.

As first-generation Irish Americans, Margaret and J.J. Brown are a reflection of the hard work of the Irish immigrants who came to America, and later came West, to make better lives for themselves and their children. The Brown name is known to us not only because of Margaret and J.J.’s accomplishments, but also because their historic home and the collection housed there at what is now the Molly Brown House Museum connects the public to essential stories of the past, including those whose names we don’t yet know. ■

NEW IRISH HISTORY EXHIBIT OPENS FRIDAY, JANUARY 23

The Unearthed: Voices of Leadville’s Shanty Irish exhibit comes down the hill from Leadville to the Molly Brown House Museum beginning Friday, January 23. First opened in September 2023, to coincide with the unveiling of the Leadville Irish Miners’ Memorial, *Unearthed* explores the history of the Irish in Colorado and the lasting impacts they left behind, especially in the mining industry — the eight-hour workday, stronger safety, and livable wages, among others. The exhibit is designed to spark conversations about labor rights, discrimination, systemic poverty, and what life is like for immigrants — then and now. *Unearthed* was created by local students based on decades of research conducted by Dr. James Walsh and in collaboration with History Colorado and Molly Brown House Museum Director Andrea Malcomb.



PROFILE

**STAFF SPOTLIGHT:
MEAGAN THIBODEAUX**

Originally from New Orleans and raised in South Louisiana, Meagan Thibodeaux grew up in a region where history, culture, and tradition are deeply embedded in daily life. That upbringing shaped her long-standing appreciation for historic places and cultural institutions, as well as an understanding of their role in reflecting and sustaining community identity. She earned her BFA in performing arts with a concentration in dance from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Over the past seven years, Meagan has built a career in development across a range of arts and cultural organizations, including Smuin Contemporary Ballet, Utah Arts Festival, Acadiana Center for the Arts, and Eugene Ballet. Her experience spans individual giving, major gifts, corporate partnerships, grants, membership programs, and fundraising events. Across these roles, she has focused on building strong donor relationships, strengthening fundraising infrastructure, and aligning philanthropic efforts with organizational priorities.

In 2025, Meagan relocated to Denver to join Historic Denver as Director of Philanthropy. In this role, she leads the organization's individual giving and fundraising strategy with an emphasis on clarity, consistency, and donor trust. She works closely with staff and board leadership to ensure fundraising efforts are well coordinated, transparent, and aligned with Historic Denver's mission and long-term goals.

A key component of Meagan's work is developing inclusive and accessible giving programs that invite participation at a range of levels. She is committed to responsible fundraising practices and to strengthening systems that support meaningful donor engagement, from first-time supporters to long-time contributors. Her focus is on ensuring Historic Denver's philanthropic efforts are positioned for thoughtful growth while remaining aligned with best practices and donor expectations.

Meagan's strategic vision for philanthropy at Historic Denver is centered on building a sustainable and donor-focused fundraising program that supports the organization's preservation, advocacy, and education work. Her approach emphasizes thoughtful engagement, strong stewardship, and clear communication that helps donors understand how their support advances Historic Denver's work. She prioritizes long-term relationships over transactional giving and seeks to create fundraising strategies that are ethical, resilient, and mission-aligned.

Through strategic planning, collaboration, and relationship-driven fundraising, Meagan is focused on building a philanthropy program that supports Historic Denver's mission today while positioning the organization for long-term success. ■

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Historic Denver and the Molly Brown House Museum work alongside businesses and community partners to protect historic places, support preservation advocacy, and share the stories that shape Denver.

Corporate and community partnerships play a vital role in advancing this work through sponsorships, in-kind support, and collaborative programming.

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TO LEARN MORE, contact Meagan Thibodeaux Director of Philanthropy at mthibodeaux@historicdenver.org

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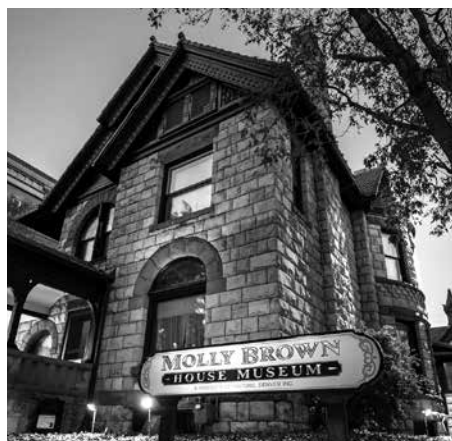


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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

To purchase tickets to upcoming events visit:
historicdenver.org

Make sure your membership is up to date to get member pricing.



LATE THURSDAYS

Did you know the museum is open late on Thursdays? The Molly Brown House Museum is open until 7 p.m. (last entry 6 p.m.) every Thursday — great for locals but open to all!

Also, the first Thursday of each month we offer free entry from 4-7 p.m. No reservations required; admission is first-come, first-served for those who live in the eligible SCFD Counties: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson.



UNEARTHED: VOICES OF LEADVILLE'S SHANTY IRISH

Friday, January 23 through Sunday, September 13 ❖ Molly Brown House Museum Included with museum admission

Now on-view outside of Leadville for the first time, this exhibition uncovers stories of the mining boomtown's Irish immigrant community. First established in the late 1800s, Leadville became known as "The Little Ireland of Colorado" and attracted immigrants and first-generation Irish Americans, including Margaret and J.J. Brown, who sought their fortunes in the West.



HOMESCHOOL DAY: VICTORIAN VALENTINE CREAM TEA

Monday, February 9 ❖ 10:30 a.m. ❖ Molly Brown House Museum ❖ \$20 Member, \$25 Non-member

Join us for a special Valentine's Day-themed cream tea on the third floor of the Molly Brown House Museum. Enjoy tea and treats while learning about Victorian Valentine traditions, then make your own Victorian Valentines to share with a loved one! Every Homeschool Day also includes a self-guided tour of the museum.



1340 PENN AFTER HOURS: ART OF THE VICTORIAN NUDE

Thursday, February 12 ❖ 6:30 p.m. Molly Brown House Museum ❖ \$25 Member, \$30 Non-member

Explore the sultry, playful side of Victorian burlesque at this 1340 Penn After Hours. Though notoriously "buttoned-up," naughty artforms and secret debauchery were part of the culture behind closed doors. Experience the historic home of Margaret Brown after dark and enjoy a signature cocktail or mocktail while discovering risqué curiosities of the Victorian era.



VINTAGE VALENTINE TEA

Saturday, February 14 ❖ 10:15 a.m. and 1:15 p.m. Molly Brown House Museum ❖ \$45 Member, \$50 Non-member

Celebrate Valentine's Day with someone you love at the Molly Brown House Museum! Explore historic Valentine's cards, then enjoy high tea with fruit, scones, tea sandwiches, desserts, and Margaret Brown's favorite tea blend.



VALENTINE'S DAY TOUR OF LODO

Saturday, February 14 ❖ 10-11:30 a.m. \$23 Member, \$28 Non-member, \$46 Couple

Enjoy hot chocolate while exploring Lower Downtown. Our tour will begin with Union Station, exploring its history both inside and out. We'll continue from there, strolling through LoDo to better understand how Denver's first warehouse district became the nightlife destination we know and love today.



SALON SERIES: "WE THE PEOPLE" TOWN HALL

Thursday, March 5 ❖ 6 p.m. Molly Brown House Museum ❖ Free

The Molly Brown House Museum's Salon Series returns in 2026 as an opportunity to come together in conversation during Colorado's 150th and America's 250th commemorations. With special guest speakers and partners, we'll explore examples of past people's resilience when faced with adversity. In a safe and inspiring space, attendees will also share thoughts on how we can apply those lessons to today's issues.

For Women's History Month, the Salon Series topic will ask, "Who are 'We the People'?" Using the life and times of Margaret Brown, we'll consider such questions as "Who is considered an 'American'—and who gets to decide?" And "Who has been, and remains, excluded from full participation and representation in our democracy?"

ST. PATRICK'S DAY TEA

Sunday, March 15 ❖ 10:15 a.m. and 1:15 p.m. Molly Brown House Museum \$45 Member, \$50 Non-member

Honor Margaret Brown's Irish heritage with a St. Patrick's Day-themed tea. Explore her historic home and stories, then enjoy high tea with fruit, scones, tea sandwiches, desserts, and Margaret's favorite blend.



Cocktails in Cool Places RETURNS IN 2026!

Our popular Cocktails in Cool Places series, where we visit some of Denver's chicest historic spots to drink and learn, is coming back! Sip, socialize, and discover Denver history with us in the new year.

SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR FIRST EVENT OF 2026:

Wednesday, March 18
4:30-6 p.m. or 6:30-8 p.m.
Acme Lofts
Cheers!



TITANIC EVENTS

DEEPER DIVE TITANIC TOURS

Thursdays throughout April ❖ 5:30 p.m. Molly Brown House Museum \$20 Member, \$25 Non-member

Step inside the historic home of Titanic survivor Margaret "Molly" Brown and follow her extraordinary journey before, during, and after the ill-fated voyage. This tour weaves Brown's firsthand experiences with key details of the Titanic disaster, revealing both the human drama and the larger historical moment. Discover how courage, class, and compassion collided on one of history's most famous nights at sea.

1340 PENN AFTER HOURS: TITANIC TASTINGS

Thursday, April 9 ❖ 6:30 p.m. Molly Brown House Museum ❖ \$25 Member, \$30 Non-member

Step aboard Titanic Tastings at 1340 Penn After Hours! Savor appetizers inspired by Titanic dishes paired with a signature cocktail or mocktail, all while exploring "The Unsinkable" Margaret Brown's home after dark.

TITANIC TEAS

Saturday, April 11 and Sunday April 12 ❖ 10:15 a.m. and 1:15 p.m. ❖ Molly Brown House Museum ❖ \$45 Member, \$50 Non-member

Margaret "Molly" Brown was unsinkable in more ways than staying afloat in the Titanic disaster in 1912. Learn about her life by exploring the historic home 114 years after the famous ship's sinking, then enjoy a high tea with fruit, scones, tea sandwiches, desserts, and Margaret's favorite blend of tea.



HOMESCHOOL DAY: THE SINKING OF THE TITANIC

Monday, April 13 and Tuesday, April 14 9:30-11:30 a.m. ❖ Molly Brown House Museum ❖ \$14 Student, \$5 Adult

What really happened the night the Titanic sank? Explore the science, stories, and surprises behind the sinking of the famous ship.

Homeschool Days include specialized programs and hands-on activities to offer non-traditional students the same opportunities to come visit the museum as traditional students. Registration is per person; siblings under age 5 not participating in activities are welcome to attend for free.