

Why downtown Denver needs to add more housing to thrive



Sara B. Hansen



Will introducing new housing options help revitalize downtown Denver? Developers behind some major metro projects believe that could be the case.

During the Sept. 18 Denver Metro Commercial Association of Realtors Colorado Commercial Real Estate Symposium at the Denver Art Museum, Asher Luzzatto, president of The Luzzatto Company, discussed plans to convert four downtown office buildings.

Luzzatto plans to transform the office buildings into residential units and mixed-use spaces, creating a 24/7 neighborhood.

The company plans to convert the Denver Energy Center and the towers at 621 and 633 17th Street into multi-use buildings featuring residential, retail, and amenity spaces, including a day care and art galleries.

The projects not only address Denver's office vacancy issue but also promote urban density while focusing on sustainability. Key priorities include preserving existing structures and materials for sustainability and innovation while maintaining a vision for diverse housing options.

"If we can get people enjoying downtown again, we won't have to worry about retail, restaurants, bars," Luzzatto said.

"All that will come after you get people living there. You need that 24/7 element that Denver's lacking."

Luzzatto cited density as a factor in New York's quicker rebound post-pandemic.

"Diversity and density are a good thing," he said.

Luzzatto was one of four speakers during the Colorado Innovates and Competes panel discussing the importance of housing to their projects.

Matt Mahoney, senior vice president of development at Kroenke Sports & Entertainment and another panel speaker on Sept. 18, discussed redevelopment plans for the 55-acre property surrounding Ball Arena.

The project will create a new urban neighborhood with mixed-use development, including residential and commercial spaces.

The first phase involves two 12-story apartment buildings, a 13-story hotel, and a roughly 5,000-seat concert venue. The entire project will include up to 6,000 new housing units.

The goal is to create a space that resonates not only with Colorado Avalanche and Denver Nuggets season ticket holders but also with people who want to live and work downtown.

"It all comes back to place-making," Mahoney said. "How do we create an environment that resonates?"

Coloradans love sunshine and spending time outdoors, so creating trails, parks, and bridges to build connectivity is vital to create "a neighborhood that's ours," he said.

Sara B. Hansen has been an editor and writer for more than 20 years.

Her professional background includes editing positions at The Denver Post, The Des Moines Register, The Fort Collins Coloradoan, and At Home with Century 21. She's also the founder and editor of DogsBestLife.com and the author of "The Complete Guide to Cocker Spaniels."

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