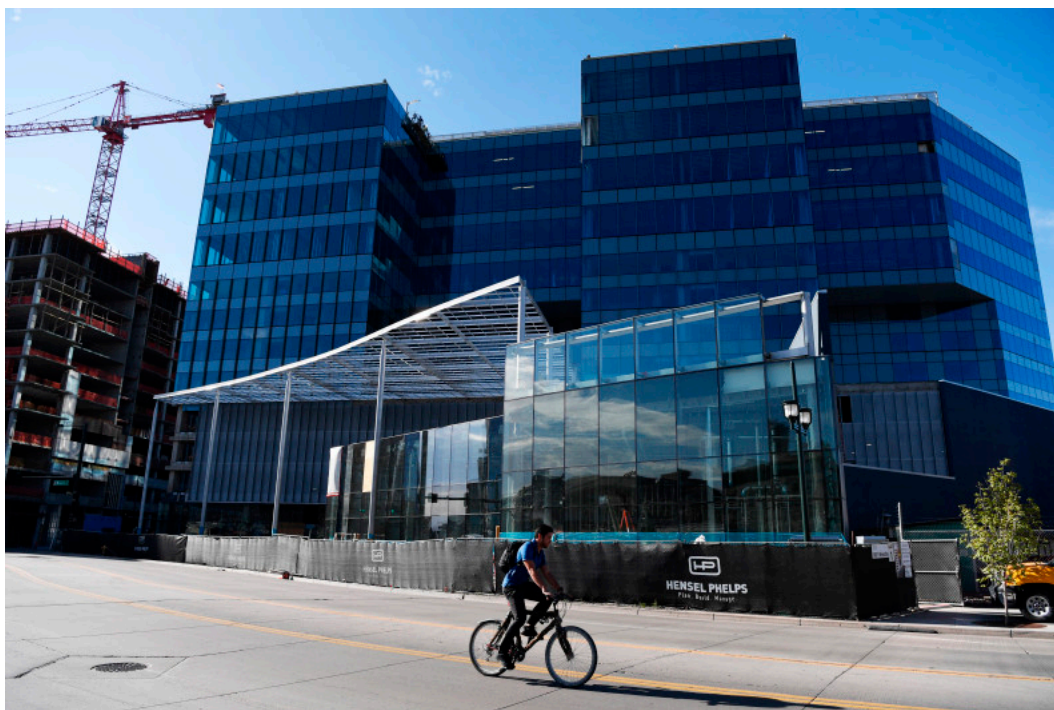


BUSINESS > REAL ESTATE

The 12-story, 312,000-square-foot Union Tower West rises at Union Station

Developed by Atlanta-based Portman Holdings and Hensel Phelps, mixed-use tower will house offices, restaurant and state's first Hotel Indigo



Andy Cross, The Denver Post

Exterior of the new Union Tower West under construction, a mix of hotel and office space at the intersection of 18th Ave and Wewatta Street on Sept. 29, 2016.

By **EMILIE RUSCH** | erusch@denverpost.com | The Denver Post
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The 12-story, 312,000-square-foot tower nearing completion at 18th and Wewatta streets is actually one of the smaller mixed-use projects in Gordon Beckman's portfolio.

In China, where the design director for Atlanta-based architecture firm [John Portman & Associates](#) frequently works, it's not unusual for mixed-use projects to be "10 to 15 times bigger than this," he said.

Whether it's 312,000 square feet or 4 million, though, the goal is similar, Beckman said: "creating the most efficient project we possibly could."

"The thing about a mixed-use building is all these things have to be woven together," he said during a construction tour late last week.

In the case of [Union Tower West](#), Portman's 12-story tower at 1801 Wewatta St., that meant stacking the four office floors on top of the four hotel floors to minimize the distance the hotel room plumbing had to travel. That also meant the building's best views go to the office tenants who most appreciate their value, Beckman said.

"The hotel people are transient. They're here one or two days. The office tenants are here eight hours every day," Beckman said. "The best part of this building is outside — the mountains, the city skyline and the fact that the (train) tracks are here so there will never be a building built in front of this."

When it opens in mid-January, [Union Tower West will be the latest addition](#) to the booming new neighborhood behind Denver Union Station. The project's developer is John Portman & Associates' sister company Portman Holdings and Hensel Phelps.

"There aren't very many micro-markets in the country right now that are as hot as Union Station and the Central Platte Valley," said Travis Garland, director of leasing for Atlanta-based Portman Holdings. "When we got into it, we thought the back of Union Station would be developed in a couple of real estate cycles. But by 2018, all of those sites will have been developed."

Union Tower West shares its block with an Xcel Energy steam plant and [Ashley Union Station](#), a 107-unit apartment complex, including 75 income-restricted units, that also is construction.

Union Tower's 180-key hotel will be a [Hotel Indigo](#), a boutique brand from Intercontinental Hotels Group. Law firm Husch Blackwell has already announced it will take all of one office floor and half of another.

Garland said last week they were “days away” from signing another tenant for the entire 12th floor, which would bring the office component to more than 60 percent leased. Floor plates were designed to accommodate either traditional private office arrangements or newer, more open concepts.

The building’s ground floor will house lobbies for the hotel and office users, as well as about 6,000 square feet of restaurant/retail space. An operator has already been identified for one of the spaces, but Garland said they were not ready to release details about the restaurant.

“That restaurant space looks directly down Wewatta,” Garland said. “We started calling it the jewel box. The initial vision was almost as you envision an Apple store — it’s really tall glass with a clean look.”

Design wise, the entire building was inspired by the curve that Wewatta takes on the block, Beckman said. At street level, a trellis over a small public plaza connected to the “jewel box” follows the very same curve.

“Had Wewatta not had this little bend, this would have been a very different building,” Beckman said.

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