



# HOSPITALITY

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## 115-year-old building is new events facility

Ironworks will be companion to Mile High Station. It has been 11 years in planning.

Eleven years after beginning work on the project, Joe and Celeste O'Dea are getting ready to open Ironworks – a sister event facility to the Mile High Station space just south of downtown Denver that the owners believe will have a look and feel approximating “The Great Gatsby meets industrial.”

The O'Deas, who also operate the 17-year-old Mile High Station space with which Ironworks shares a parking lot, have owned the 115-year-old building at 25 Larimer Street since 2003, acquiring it in a land swap with the Colorado Department of Transportation when CDOT was building new on- and off-ramps for Interstate 25 and Colfax. It was the drafting and architecture office for Midwest Steel & Ironworks Co., which produced frames for facilities such as the Denver City and County Building and the Moffat Tunnel, for the first half of the 20th Century and then served briefly as the Ironworks bar from 1976-84.

After finding success with Mile High Station – which features 18,000 square feet of event space and 15,000 square feet of office space, includ-



A line of taps at Ironworks.



PHOTOS: MARVIN ANANI, SPECIAL TO THE DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Joe and Celeste O'Dea are the owners of the Ironworks event facility.

ing the headquarters for Joe O'Dea's 34-year-old contracting company Concrete Express Inc. – the owners wanted a smaller facility next door, particularly because they believed people would be attracted to its historic nature. But then the Great Recession hit, and the self-funding couple put it on hold from 2007 until 2014, when they began working with Historic Denver to realign its entrance while keeping the character of the building.

On Nov. 1, they will open the facility, offering up 7,000 square feet of event space and a 60-foot-long bar that they hope will be popular for corporate parties, weddings and maybe even political rallies. They have invested more than \$2

million in the renovation and feel that, even in a city that isn't hurting for event venues, they have conjured a spirit of the past that will set the building apart from many of its competitors.

“I think it brings a space to Denver that was much like it was in the 1920s and 1930s,” Joe O'Dea said. “Mile High was a venue with a personality. We're calling this a venue with a past.”

Though originally constructed in 1903, the Ironworks building was added onto several times, including an addition to its east side in the 1930s and new space in the back in 1955. The renovation of the interior will stick with that art-deco feel of the '30s, even as the O'Deas scoured for bricks

from the first decade of the 20th century in order to maintain its exterior appearance.

A crystal chandelier hangs from the original turret and a brass ceiling from the period has been installed. The entrance will lead to a glassed-in vestibule, and black tile lines the floor.

Working with the help of partner Xernie Meritt, the facility faced a big private opening – the Oct. 13 wedding reception of the couple's daughter, Tayler O'Dea, an architect who helped with the design of the facility. But while the building is meant for intimate and maybe higher-end smaller parties – it can hold 400 people over two floors, including a VIP area upstairs – it also will offer brunch before Broncos games, looking particularly toward corporations that may want to bring clients to it.

The opening comes as the Sun Valley neighborhood in which it sits is going through big changes. Meow Wolf's art gallery/performance space/amusement park will open just north of Ironworks in 2020, and Raices Brewing and future phases of the Steam on the Platte mixed-use development will be coming soon, adding life to a part of town that previously had been defined largely only by Broncos games and events at Mile High Station.

“It's just a really cool history of Denver he said,” noting the marquee signs from both the Midwest Steel offices and the Ironworks bar that will continue to mark the building. “I think people are going to have a lot of fun here.”

### ► HE SAID IT

*“It looked like a kindergartner's experiment. But the cool thing about it is it allowed up to innovate very quickly. It was a very rapid prototyping approach.”*



**ANTHONY PIGLIACAMPO**, Modern Market co-founder and CEO, describing the research-and-development test kitchen the Denver-based restaurant chain has built in Broomfield, in which officials build plywood layouts of kitchens, put equipment in place, make food and then tear it down to test out potential ways to do it more efficiently. The kitchen is a new investment since Los Angeles-based Butterfly Equity acquired ownership of the company in February.

### ► CLOSER LOOK



Chick-fil-A aficionados wait in line outside the restaurant at 2710 S. Colorado Blvd. before it opens.

PROVIDED BY CHICK-FIL-A

### ► BIG NUMBER

## Nearly 1.1 Million

The number of room nights booked already at the Gaylord Rockies Resort and Convention Center, nearly two months before the scheduled Dec. 18 opening of the 1,501-room Aurora hotel. Aurora economic-development leaders relayed the figure – which includes convention bookings as far as eight years out – to the Colorado Economic Development Commission, adding that 81 percent of the meetings coming to the facility have never held events in Colorado before.

## LINING UP FOR CHICK-FIL-A

More than 100 people camped out in advance of the Oct. 18 opening of Denver's newest Chick-fil-A restaurant at 2710 S. Colorado Blvd., earning a free meal a week from the restaurant for a year and continuing a 15-year tradition for the chain.

The crowd had grown to 100 by

11 p.m. the night before the opening, officials reported.

The 4,500-square foot restaurant is the 34th in the metro area for the Atlanta-based chain and the fourth to open in the past two years here. It includes a two-lane drive-thru and a dining room that seats 120 people.