

BUILDING DIALOGUE

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Block 162

New kid in town delivers \ PAGE 78



New Kid on the Block 162

Spec build
beautifully
blurs office
& hospitality

WORDS: Kevin Criss

I'm walking into Block 162's expansive, columnless 30th floor with David Haltom, Patrinely Group's Rocky Mountain Division vice president. Haltom exudes a mix of excitement and pride as he directs my attention to the jaw-dropping Front Range panorama spread out before us.

"There's Mount Evans," he announces. "You can see Pikes Peaks right over there in the distance. And then, straight on axis, right up 15th Street you see Longs Peak. You can even see the Flatirons up in Boulder."

Earlier, Haltom had pulled no punches when he discussed his latest project.

"We were always intent on delivering the best new office development in the city. That was our goal from Day One. And we believe that we will have achieved that goal when the building is delivered."

Turns out, that's not just developer spin. Forget the best in the city. Block 162 is the best new office building in Colorado.

A Project Years in The Making

Block 162 is the much anticipated 30-story, 595,000-square-foot, Class A, glass tower at 15th and California. It's a rare speculative office high-rise in Denver's central business district and it has easily wooed tenants with a mix of location, unrivaled amenities, flexibility of space, and stellar mountain and city views.

Named for the site's block number on the original 1859 plat map of Boyd's East Denver survey, Block 162 sits in a neighborhood rich in history, but for decades the parcel had been just another one of Denver's many surface parking lots littered with broken glass and wadded-up parking passes.

Years in the making, Block 162 came together thanks to the all-star team of the Denver arm of developer Patrinely Group, along with primary capital partner USAA Real Estate, out of San Antonio, Gensler Houston for the architecture and Denver's Swinerton as the general contractor.

According to Haltom, the process began when a prospective tenant asked Patrinely



TOP:

*Views from Block 162 include the Front Range mountains as well as much of metro Denver.
Courtesy Michelle Meunier Photography*

BOTTOM:

*The travertine on the walls was quarried in Italy.
Courtesy Michelle Meunier Photography*

to find the best location in downtown Denver for a new “top of market” office development. It became clear that Block 162 checked all of the boxes, but after the prospective tenant changed plans, Patrinely decided to forge ahead with the project. So, a meeting with landowner Evan Makovsky resulted in a 100-year land lease on the property with the idea that Patrinely would hold off on development until it had significant preleasing.

But, as predevelopment work progressed, including advanced architectural designs, city approvals and countless meetings with the city and county of Denver, it became clear to Patrinely and USAA that the Denver market was robust enough to proceed without preleasing.

“We’re very grateful for our partnership with USAA,” says Haltom. “It’s not every equity investor who has the horsepower and wherewithal to be able to support a full spec development of this scale in a market like Denver.”

With Gensler and Swinerton on board from the very beginning, Haltom says that the design process was an iterative and collaborative process that featured the input of many players, including Patrinely President and CEO Robert Fields, and Gensler Design Director and Principal Raffael Scasserra, whose resumé includes 900 G Street and Patriot’s Plaza in Washington, D.C., and The Post Oak Hotel in Houston.

But it was the experience of Gensler and Patrinely in the hospitality space that informed many of the design decisions for Block 162.

“For many years I’ve been seeing the line blurred between the work environment and hospitality,” says Scasserra, AIA, LEED AP. “We wanted to create a building that blurred those lines.”

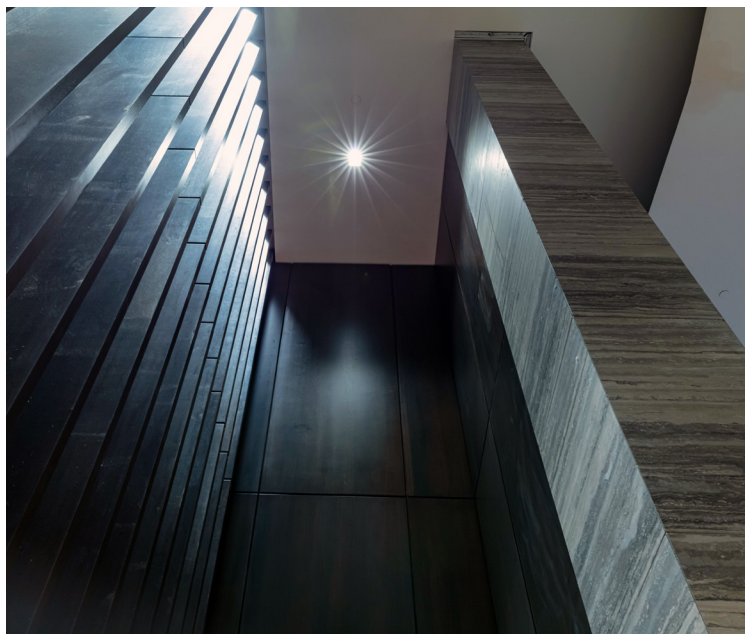
A Feature-Rich Environment

Over the last quarter century, Patrinely and Gensler have created striking, high-profile office buildings. And it seems that experience and expertise has paid off in Block 162. The core and shell structure makes a statement with its striking blue glass curtain wall, notched corners and gently curved roofline, meant to mirror the shape of the foothills to the west.

Concerned about the loss of parking? There are three parking levels below grade, as well as parking on levels 1 to 10, for a total of 932 parking places.

The ground floor will feature a restaurant, retail space and a massive lobby that blurs that line between office and hospitality. Its elegance and sophistication welcome you from the street like a grand hotel lobby. The dazzling Forte dei Marme bright white marble floors and the travertine on the walls were both quarried in Italy. Milled walnut fins on the wall add warmth and exposed structural concrete columns reach up to the 30-foot ceiling, but they’ve been given a faceted look, a design element that threads its way through Block 162.

At the south end of the lobby is a front desk and toward



the north end is a kinetic art installation by Brooklyn-based kinetic artistry group Breakfast. The piece is similar to the Brixels Wall installed recently in New York's Hudson Yards. According to Haltom, it's the first of its kind in the world.

"There will be kinetic devices in the floor that will sense physical presence and respond dynamically to the presence of someone moving close to the sculpture. We'll have approximately 400 acrylic extrusions that will wave like a wheat field in the wind."

The post-tensioned concrete podium, which houses the parking levels and lobby, supports 20 levels of steel-structured office space that provides internal column-free workspaces and expansive 29,800-sf floor plates, which Haltom says allows for flexible planning modules.

Sky Terrace and Amenities

The blurring of the line between office and hospitality is probably most obvious on the 11th floor.

And according to Haltom, that was by design.

"We wanted to take a page out of the hospitality and high-end luxury residential playbook and gang those amenities together and locate them on top of the podium for the benefit of activity and adjacency with each other and those outdoor spaces."

The west side of the 11th floor is office space, while the east side features three distinct spaces that all open onto a sizable Sky Terrace via 110 feet of Nana wall doors:

- Fitness center with leading-edge equipment indoors, and outdoor turf lawn for yoga sessions and more.
- Indoor/outdoor social lounge with fireplaces, ample seating and a snack bar that disappears into the wooden millwork for after-hours events. More seating, fire pits and manicured garden on the sky terrace.
- Conference and prefunction area that can be combined into double space, and a covered porch on the outside terrace.



OPENING ART:

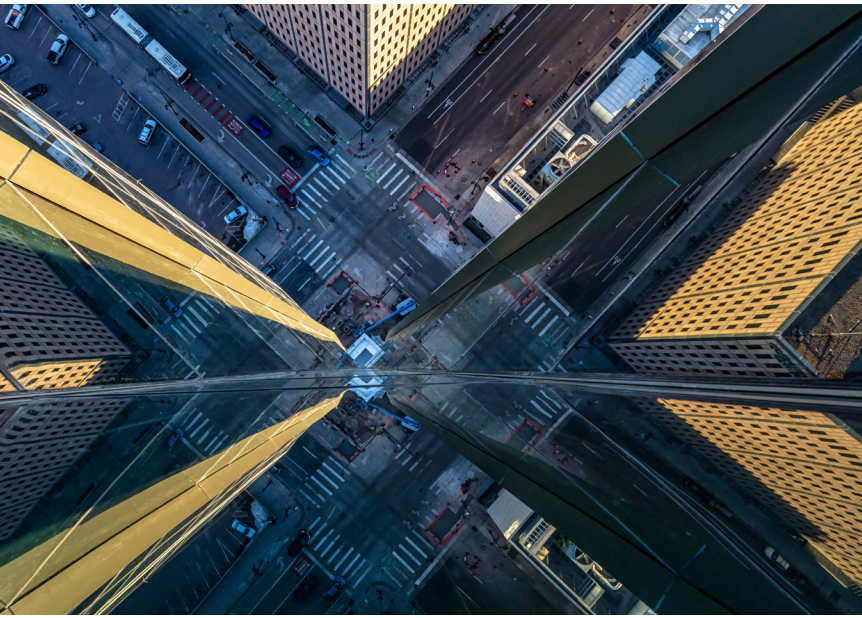
Courtesy Brad Nicol | Architectural Photography

TOP LEFT:

Milled walnut fins on the wall add warmth while columns reach up to the 30-foot ceiling. Courtesy Michelle Meunier Photography

TOP RIGHT:

The Front Range is reflected in Block 162's blue glass curtain wall. Courtesy Michelle Meunier Photography



TOP LEFT:

Looking down to street level, the city is reflected in Block 162's notched corners. Courtesy Michelle Meunier Photography

TOP RIGHT:

Elegance and sophistication welcome visitors. Courtesy Michelle Meunier Photography

BOTTOM:

Adjacent to the sky terrace – which includes seating, fire pits and a manicured garden – is a social lounge for after-hours events.

Pandemic Ready

When COVID-19 hit the U.S., Swinerton acted immediately to implement safety protocols, even before state and local government officials.

Chad Holajter, Swinerton project executive, explained that Block 162 is LEED Gold certified and was already designed with tenant health and safety in mind, but COVID provided the opportunity to improve in those areas.

“We already had filters that were upgraded, but Patrinely has gone above and beyond that and upgraded the filters further. So now the building’s going to have MERV14 micro-filters.”

Holajter added Block 162 has improved ventilation and also will be the only office building in Denver that can offer an entirely touch-free access sequence from when you enter, either via the parking garage or through the lobby, until you reach your office. Lobby and garage entrance doors will be motion activated and a Thyssenkrup Agile destination dispatch system allows tenants to call an elevator via the app and it will take them to any floor in the building they have access to, all touch free.

As our conversation winds down, I ask Haltom how it feels for Block 162 to be a lasting landmark on the Denver skyline.

“Denver has a lot of great architecture and we believe Block 162 will be an excellent addition to the city’s skyline and the opportunity to do that is something that we take great pride in and believe is a real privilege.” \\\