

business

IMA Financial will relocate headquarters to Union Station building

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IMA Financial Group Inc. plans to relocate its headquarters to Union Station's planned north-wing building, kickstarting the first phase of private development at the site.

The \$32 million project is part of the private development that will surround the historic train station. It is key to repaying a portion of the \$300 million federal loan backstopped by Denver's general-fund dollars, a measure approved by the City Council on Monday.

When construction is complete, the building will generate an estimated \$670,000 in tax dollars annually that will be used to help repay the loan

in a process known as tax-increment financing.

"It's a huge deal to have something announced that is this tangible this early," said Claude Pumilia, the city's chief financial officer. "This just adds to our argument that the risk to the city is minimal."

Roughly half of the \$300 million federal loan the city is expecting to receive will be repaid through the money generated through the FasTracks funding.

The remainder will be repaid through funds generated through tax-increment financing flowing into the project from development surrounding the station.

IMA Financial will occupy the top four floors of the 100,000-square-foot, five-story building at 18th and Wynkoop streets, immediately north of the station. A restaurant or other retailer will occupy the first floor.

"This is a unique opportunity to do something really special," said Rob Cohen, chairman and chief executive of IMA. "Union Station has always been this magical place of what could be when it happens."

Over the past nine years, IMA's Denver office has grown from 45 to 180 employees, outgrowing its current Lower Downtown office space. The company is the 13th-largest independently owned brokerage in the country.

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"IMA's decision to stay downtown and reinvest is an excellent example of what it's going to take to make sure downtown remains vibrant in the future," said Tami Door, president and chief executive of the Downtown Denver Partnership. "It's a strong vote of confidence in the project and really serves as a catalyst to get this project rolling."

The building, designed by Anderson Mason Dale Architects and Semple Brown Design, is a joint venture between Cohen and Union Station Neighborhood Co., a partnership formed between Continuum Partners and East West Partners to redevelop Denver Union Station and the 19.5 acres surrounding it.

Haselden Construction LLC is expected to break ground on the project early next year.

The IMA project is the first deal Union Station Neighborhood Co. has made for the surrounding land. Under terms of its deal with the Regional Transportation District, the developer must adhere to a schedule for purchasing the property.

Under the agreement, Union Station Neighborhood Co. was supposed to have acquired the land for the north-wing building by the end of 2009. However, RTD would not sell the land before financing for the transportation project closed, said Tom Gougeon, president of Union Station Neighborhood Co.

The next required land purchase is for the

south-wing building by the end of this year.

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