

## **Category 11: Best Building Project – General Contractor (Over \$70 Million)**

*Contractor: Saunders Construction*

*Project: Dairy Block*

*Start: May 2015*

*Completion: March 2017*

Almost everything about the Dairy Block project alludes to its relevance and justification in the market. From its location and amenities to the direct commissioned artwork and its design and construction challenges, it's hard to ignore its significance.

Dairy Block is a mixed-use hospitality, retail and office development along Wazee Street between 18th and 19th Streets, on the historic Denver Windsor Dairy Block in LoDo. The project broke ground on May 11, 2015, and features 260,000 sq. ft. of office space, a boutique hotel and a mix of restaurant, retail and lobby spaces on the ground-floor.

Located mid-block along Blake Street and just one block from Denver Union Station, this new development is located at the epicenter of the Denver's transportation corridor. Its immediate access to mass transit, including the Downtown Denver Circulator, close proximity to major highways, walking distance to sports venues, restaurants and entertainment, provides an ideal location where residents, guests, and tenants can maximize productivity and experience a balanced lifestyle in lower downtown.

Designed and built with a commitment to sustainability, the project is LEED Gold certified by the USGBC.

### **Major Accomplishments Born from Teamwork**

From the outset, the Dairy Block project proved to be difficult as demolition and excavation took place. The site was previously a maintenance shop, leather shop and Denver bus system facility. The Saunders team demoed all existing structures on the west end of the block to start a 36-foot excavation that would support three levels of below-grade parking. The bedrock soils were extremely difficult to excavate through and required a special excavator brought in from Texas.

Several discoveries were found during demolition and abatement, such as cobblestone roads and underground storage tanks. The team was literally digging up the past of Denver.

The project also required the demolition of two existing buildings, which were connected to other buildings that were to remain. The structures were built in the late 1800s, leaving a big risk to demolition. Many subcontractors turned down this risky demolition operation. The team made structural separations between the buildings before demolition took place. Saunders re-used all demolished brick for temporary infill and other brick was recycled offsite.

One of the biggest challenges on Dairy Block was maintaining complex logistics on a tight site and demanding design with numerous stakeholders. There were three major stakeholders and three architects, and Saunders was responsible for ensuring communication was streamlined to all parties and decisions were being made in a fast, effective manner.

Saunders was able to overcome numerous changes brought on by a complicated and ever-changing project. Our preconstruction and construction teams worked diligently to assure that the project stayed on schedule – as The Maven Hotel was expecting a set open date to generate revenue immediately. It took three project teams and an overall project superintendent and project manager to ensure each aspect of the building received detailed attention, while keeping the overall project intent at the forefront.

### **A Culture of Safety Guarantees Success**

As soon as the Dairy Block project was awarded to Saunders, the entire team made a concerted effort to ensure a team culture that would start at design and follow through to the entire lifespan of the project. A paramount aspect to this project was its proximity to an extremely active surrounding downtown. Leadership on this project did an exceptional job with creating the team's unique safety culture, but it was the field personnel who were truly the safety champions on this project.

Interactive safety meetings were held weekly, and stretch-and-flexes took place each morning with major trades. These safety programs added to the teamwork environment. But most

importantly, our people encouraged others onsite to stand up for safety. This encouragement truly changed the way our field personnel looked at safety. Everyone on the project site was empowered to stop unsafe practices and encouraged to positively recognize safe operations and procedures.

### **One Building With Two Different Intents**

The entire Dairy Block is all connected, however, there are two separate structural systems – one for the hotel space (post-tensioned concrete) and one for the office space (steel) of the building. This created a very complicated fire protection system, as well as final fire department inspection. To combat this, the project team met with all heads of the Denver Fire Department to figure out how to properly build one fire system for two completely different buildings — which happened to be connected.

Not only did the interior and structural system show the difficulty of managing one building with dual purposes, but the exterior of the building showed the differences as well. There were four different colors of brick on the exterior, which became a masonry nightmare. The team came up with a detailed plan to properly organize and separate bricks onsite. Extensive quality control checks took place to guarantee each brick type was properly installed. The end result is a one-of-a-kind exterior, lending to the individuality of this project.

### **Roof Detention Pond**

Saunders also constructed its first roof detention pond on the Dairy Block building. This brings many benefits to urban areas – economically and globally. This feature has a very unique installation process. Technical performance also varies by region, climate and building type. During heavy rain, runoff can greatly impact stormwater infrastructure and damage waterways. The project team ran across a few challenges with the installation of the detention pond, but installation was very successful and will have a positive impact on the Denver community.

### **Saunders Largest Concrete Job Ever Completed**

Saunders self performed all concrete work on the Dairy Block project — 17,459 cubic yards to be exact. When you walk into The Maven Hotel stands as proof to the quality challenges

associated with this undertaking. Concrete was a big portion of the project, and there are many exposed concrete walls, ceilings columns and floors throughout the building. With concrete being a heavy design component in all aspects of the facility, the team was required to perform very detailed concrete quality checks. As a result of the team's proactive quality approach and topnotch craftsmanship, concrete operations were delivered without issue.

From masonry and concrete to other unique components of the project, Saunders' project team performed our company's four-step quality control program and did an exceptional job with construction pre-planning with all subcontractors on the entire project.

### **Designed for Demand, Built for Denver**

This historic block will be the stomping grounds for tastemakers and fun seekers. From the enticing atmosphere of its alley to handcrafted food and beverage —Dairy Block has come to life and is rejuvenating Denver. McWhinney spent time traveling to cities around the world to study some of the liveliest alleys, in hopes to spur future alley development throughout downtown Denver. There are many thoughtful features incorporated into the exterior and the alley to ensure a unique and desirable sense of place, including: a state-of-the art conference facility, a trendy five-star hotel, secure tower access, outdoor terraces and efforts to become LEED Gold certified.

The soul of Dairy Block is the alley — a lively micro-district that will run from 18th and 19th between Blake and Wazee Streets and house an eclectic mix of Colorado retailers, artisans, chefs and cocktail crafters. McWhinney also invited local artists to submit their artwork for display throughout the building, especially the lobby. Through this artist competition, Dairy Block gained some of Denver's most unique art — the 300-pound hand in the main entrance of the Maven, an eccentric southwestern painting in the Kachina restaurant, and (soon-to-be) Denver's largest mirror throughout a portion of the alley.

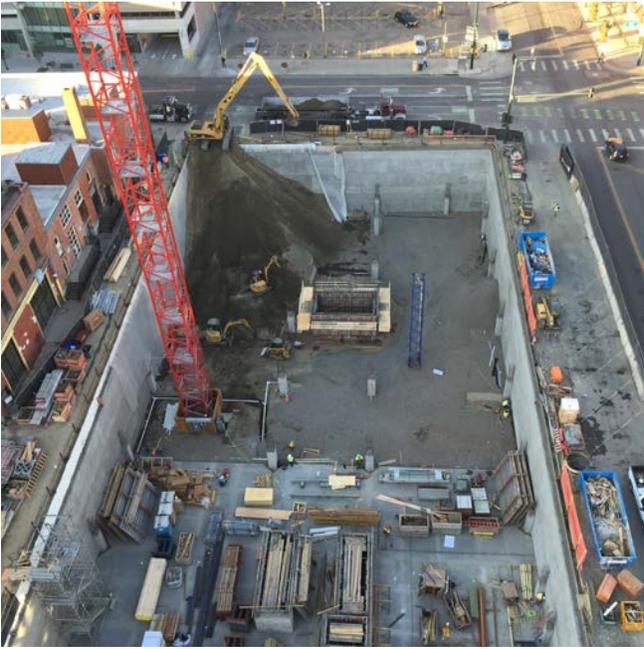
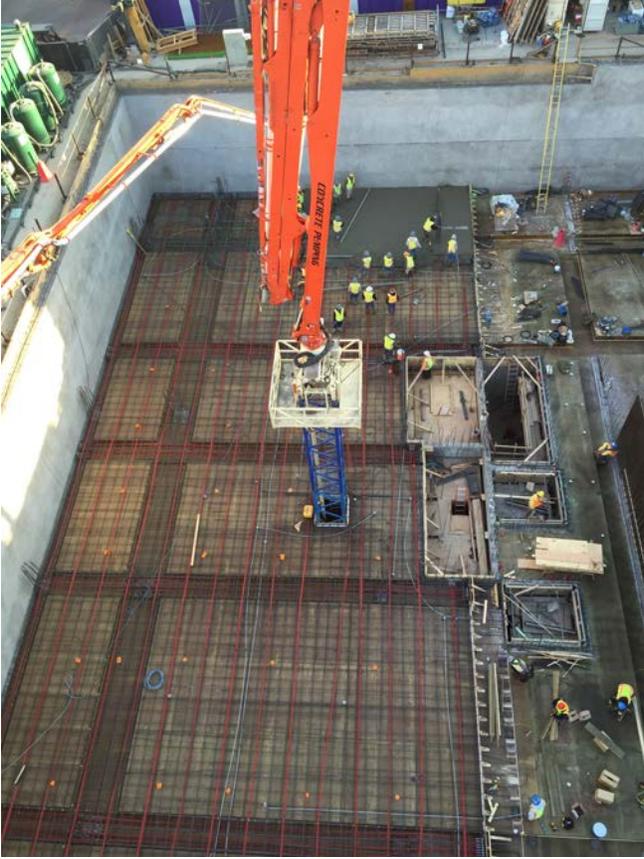
The Maven features an energetic lobby designed by Brooklyn-based design studio Crème, Jun Aizaki Architecture and Design. The lobby eliminates traditional boundaries, creating a unique connection between the alley and the hotel, a space that welcomes locals and visitors. The Maven will celebrate local talents with a rotating collection of creative art and handmade

products. Adjacent to the hotel is Kachina Southwestern Grill, a second outpost of the popular modern southwestern grill by Sage Restaurant Group co-founder Peter Karpinski, as well as an additional restaurant concept.

Please view this YouTube video to learn more about the Dairy Block Project:

<https://youtu.be/X2WBCnLAQWc>.







Dairy Block

Shot on March 21, 2016  
Colorado Sky-Shots  
(303) 571-5704



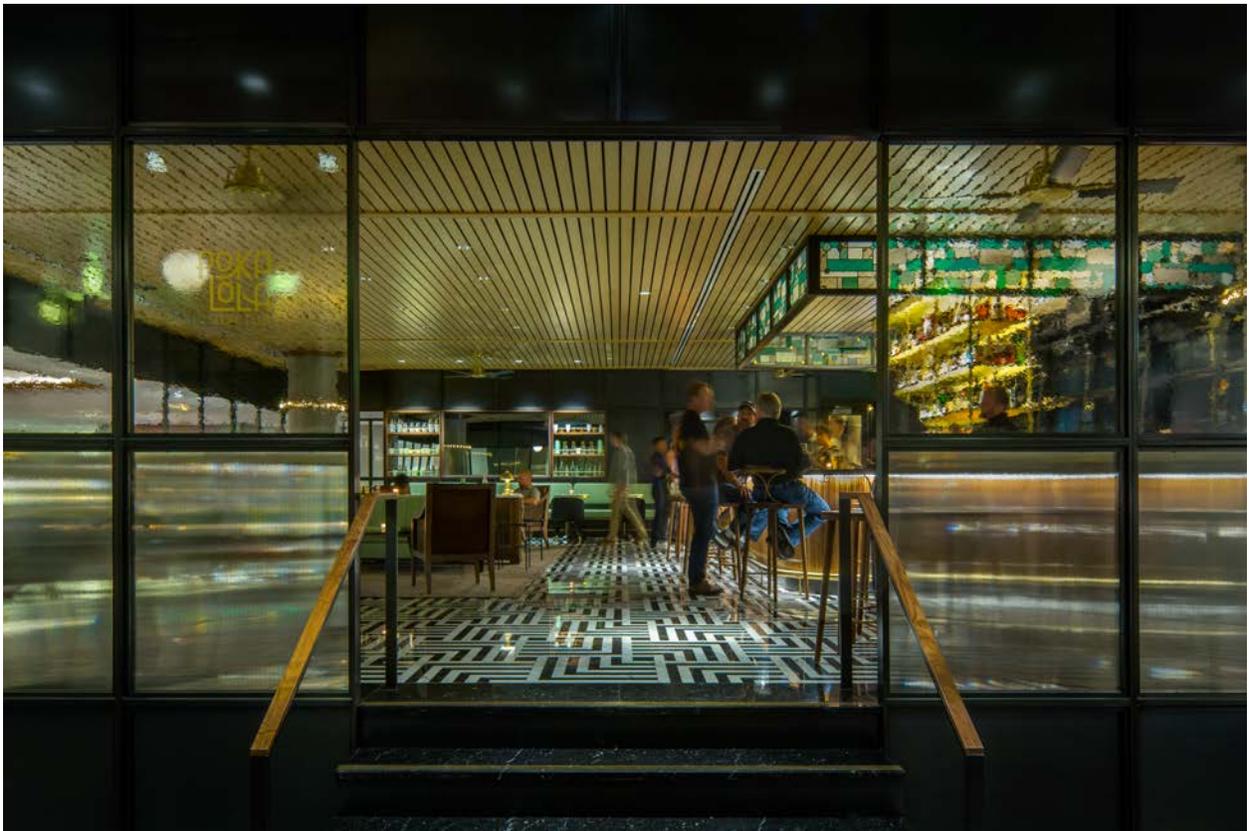
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