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business

## Project sought for LoDo lot

**Opus Northwest wants to convert a parking site to 440,000 square feet of residential, commercial and office space.**

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A national real-estate developer is working on a project that would create bookend buildings in Denver's Lower Downtown.

Minneapolis-based Opus Northwest, developer of the Environmental Protection Agency building under construction at 16th and Wynkoop, is proposing a project for office, residential and commercial space at 14th and Wewatta streets. It's across from the 160-unit Waterside Lofts developed about five years ago by Ray Suppa. Opus has appeared twice before the Lower Downtown Design Review Board. A third presentation is scheduled for today.

"They've made some really sensitive changes to make sure it feels like a couple of small buildings rather than one big, massive building," said board member Dee Chirafisi, broker/owner of Kentwood City Properties. "They're working hard on getting the scale right and to get it to feel appropriate for that lot."

Opus has proposed 440,000 square feet in three buildings. It would include 200,000 square feet of office space, 45,000 square feet of residential space and 18,000 square feet of commercial space. About 175,000 square feet was either residential or commercial.

The additional office space would be a welcome addition to LoDo, which has a vacancy rate of about 7 percent, said Stockton Baker, senior vice president of Fuller Real Estate who specializes in the downtown office market.

"The downtown market is tightening up, and LoDo is one of the tightest markets in the city right now," Baker said. "It's a great location. The success depends on the timing and the quality of the building."

Opus acquired the site, now a parking lot, as part of the deal to build the EPA building.

"It's always nice to see parking lots turned into buildings," said board member Larry Nelson of the real-estate development firm 620 Corp.

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