



AUSTIN, GARFIELD PARK, NORTH LAWDALE

A West Side Landmark Will Be Redeveloped Into A Museum, Cafe And Business Incubator

The city chose the project to give new life to Austin's Laramie State Bank as part of the INVEST South/West initiative. Plans also call for housing to be built nearby.



Pascal Sabino

4:00 PM CST on Mar 8, 2021



Credit: Provided

Rendering for the proposed redevelopment of the Laramie State Bank.

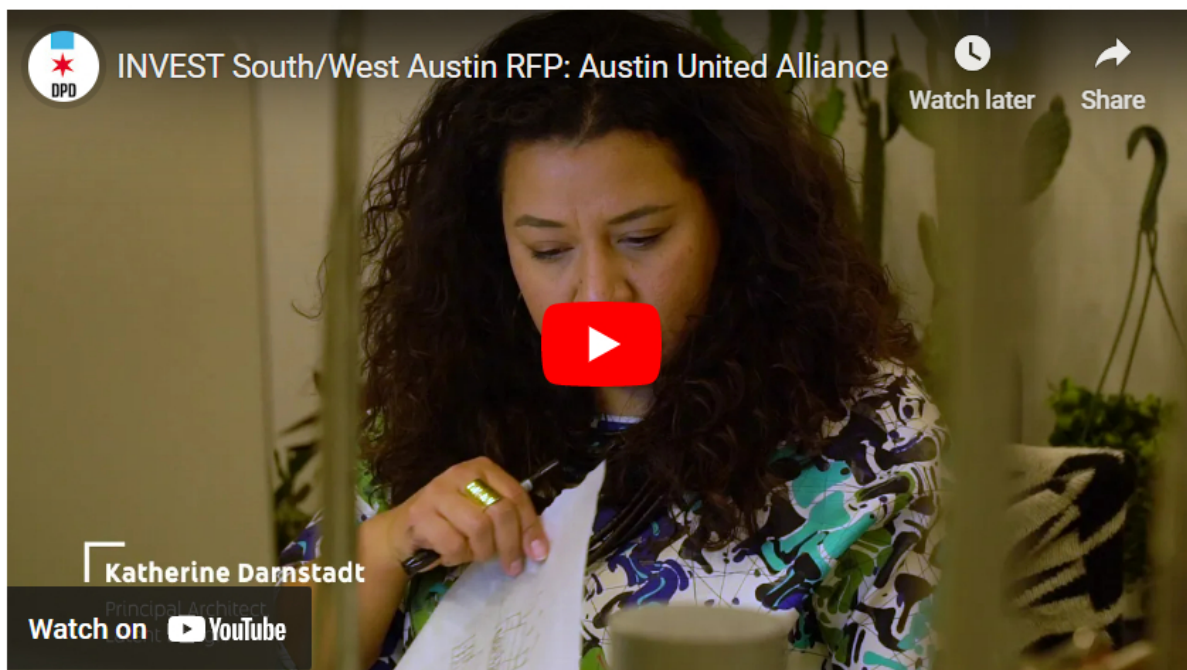
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AUSTIN — A vacant West Side bank will be redeveloped into a café, a business incubator, and a museum celebrating the history of Chicago blues, city officials announced Monday.

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The Laramie State Bank building at 5200 W. Chicago Ave. was selected to anchor investment and revitalization efforts in Austin as part of the city's INVEST South/West program. City leaders chose the proposal from Austin United Alliance — a team of developers, architects and designers led by Heartland Alliance, Oak Park Regional Housing and Latent Design — to redevelop the 92-year-old bank building.

"It's a milestone in our city's journey of improvement from the inside out by empowering residents to become changemakers within their communities," Mayor Lori Lightfoot said.



The \$37.5 million redevelopment will preserve the bank's notable architecture but rehab its interior to suit several community needs. The building still will house a bank to improve access to financial services for residents in the areas as well as a café and an incubator to support emerging entrepreneurs and attract businesses to the corridor.

A museum honoring the contributions of Chicago artists to blues music also will be launched inside the building, aligning with efforts to rebrand Chicago Avenue as Soul City Corridor by the Austin African American Business Network Association.

Plans also include several lots surrounding the old bank building, which will be developed into 72 units of mixed-income housing. There will also be a courtyard between the bank building and the housing complex that will include a community plaza, gardens, and several public art installations, developers said.

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“This is part of how we can use design as a tool to undo some of the spatial and systemic injustices that we see,” said Katherine Darnstadt, founder of Latent Design.

The Laramie State Bank building has been vacant since it was foreclosed on in 2012. Despite many deferred maintenance issues, the former bank’s Art Deco architecture and long history in the area has made it a designated Chicago Landmark.

“There is literally nothing like it anywhere else in Chicago. ... It will be a fitting anchor to the evolving soul city corridor,” planning department commissioner Maurice Cox said.

Pascal Sabino is a Report for America corps member covering Austin, North Lawndale and Garfield Park for Block Club Chicago.

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The Latest

LAKEVIEW, WRIGLEYVILLE, NORTHALSTED

Guns N’ Roses In Chicago: Their Wild, Drunken, Lost Summer On Clark Street

For two months in 1989, the band booked a studio above the Metro and rented condos nearby as they tried to work on their next album. They didn’t get much work done, though.

Shamus Trammell 1:17 PM CST



LAKEVIEW, WRIGLEYVILLE, NORTHALSTED

Guns N' Roses Is Coming To Wrigley Field This Summer

Tickets to the Aug. 24 show go on sale for the general public 10 a.m. March 3.

Jake Wittich 12:20 PM CST



LOGAN SQUARE, HUMBOLDT PARK, AVONDALE

'Drunk Eats' Spot Sausage King Opens In Logan Square With Lots Of Dirty Jokes For Late-Night Crowd

The spot featuring drunk food favorites like spins on McDonald's and Taco Bell — as well as inflatable sex dolls and dirty songs — is "one giant d--- joke," its chef said.

Mack Liederman 8:58 AM CST



BRONZEVILLE, NEAR SOUTH SIDE

Bronzeville, Chinatown Activists Push City Officials To Consider Alternate Site For Near South Side High School

Community leaders who don't want the school on former public housing land said a site near 17th and Canal streets would be a better fit.

Jamie Nesbitt Golden 8:57 AM CST



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