

ALERT TOP STORY

Singing Sands project to bring worker housing to downtown Michigan City

Joseph S. Pete

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This is the Singing Sands workforce development site at southeast corner of E. 8th and Franklin Street in downtown Michigan City.

John J. Watkins

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A developer plans to build a workforce housing apartment project in downtown Michigan City.

Indianapolis-based Helix is expected to soon break ground on the Singing Sands development at the southeast corner of E. 8th and Franklin Street in downtown Michigan City. The multi-story project is expected to have about 300 units.

"They have done similar projects in Central Indiana," said Clarence Hulse, a Michigan City Redevelopment Commission board member and the executive director of the Economic Development Corporation of Michigan City, Indiana.

The project at a busy corner on Franklin Street in Michigan City's Uptown Arts District will include a pool and first-floor retail, including a juice bar and a childcare facility.

"We believe in building amenities like that as part of these projects," Hulse said. "We want amenities for when people are walking down the street. It's the street code that there should be first-floor retail or offices. Its amenities are for the residents of these buildings but also ones that everyone in the public can enjoy."

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The project aims to provide affordable, high-quality housing for working-class residents, Michigan City Mayor Angie Nelson Deutch said.

"When we think of workforce, we think of teachers, police officers, working-class people," she said. "Those are going to be our partners. When we think of workforce housing, we think about affordability for people who are mid-income, low- to mid-income. It's not low-income housing. There aren't any subsidies or anything like that. Workforce housing is about that middle-income group like police officers, teachers, somebody just out of college."

New housing stock is needed in Michigan City to draw more residents and give existing residents options, she said.

"People want amenities. But right now, in most of our cities, we don't have brand-new apartments," she said. "We're looking to provide amenities that my kids, when they get out of college, would want to come back here for. We need workforce housing for somebody who's not ready for a starter home but might want to live in a nice place with nice amenities."

More than \$400 million in investment in partly residential mixed-use will bring hundreds of new apartments and condos to downtown Michigan, including at Sola and Franklin at 11th Street Station, by the new South Shore Line Station that was built as part of the Double Track project that's shortening commutes.

"We're excited that a broad range of housing is coming to Michigan City," Hulse said. "We have more than 2,000 units coming, ranging from single-family homes to multi-family and from rental to ownership. We keep announcing these developments. We've had \$100 million in investment for the third year in a row. We have a great team and a great mayor, city council and staff working together to make things happen."

There's a strong need to ensure workers will be able to afford to live in Michigan City as hundreds of millions of dollars of investment flow into the downtown of the lakefront city in LaPorte County, Hulse said.

"If you work in Michigan City, you should be able to live there. You shouldn't have to drive in from Kouts to come to work in a restaurant or hotel here," he said. "You should be able to live here and work here and walk to work in our downtown. We want to make walking to work attractive. People can work and live downtown and enjoy all the amenities of being downtown."

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