

City Buys Barelvas Rail Yards for \$8.5 Million

■ *Goal is to save historic structures while redeveloping site*

By DAN MCKAY
Journal Staff Writer

It could pass for a post-apocalyptic aircraft hanger.

Chunks of broken bricks, dust and railroad ties litter the floor. Staircases made of steel climb toward the ceiling. Sunlight passes through green and broken windows.

And now it's all owned by

city taxpayers.

Mayor Martin Chávez joined other supporters Wednesday to sign an \$8.5 million check to purchase the old Barelvas rail yards. The goal is to save the historic structures, which date to the early 1900s and sit on 27 acres near Second and Iron SW.

The site "is part of who we are," Chávez said, describing the railroad's role in the growth of Albuquerque.

The city has hired the Urban Land Institute to do an economic analysis of the site.

After that, the city will request proposals from companies interested in developing the area.

Supporters hope the effort will preserve the buildings while infusing them with new life. Some of the money spent to acquire the land could be recovered by selling much of it to developers.

The site is expected to house the Wheels Museum, which will focus on transportation; at least 30 units of affordable housing; and other mixed uses, depending on development

proposals.

City Councilor Isaac Benton, who represents the area, said it probably will cost about \$1.2 million to clean up environmental hazards, such as lead.

The state government could help pay for that, officials said. The state has also helped pay to acquire the site and to conduct the economic analysis.

Chávez credited Leba Freed of the Wheels Museum for helping save the rail yards.

"It's the heart and soul of Albuquerque," Freed said.

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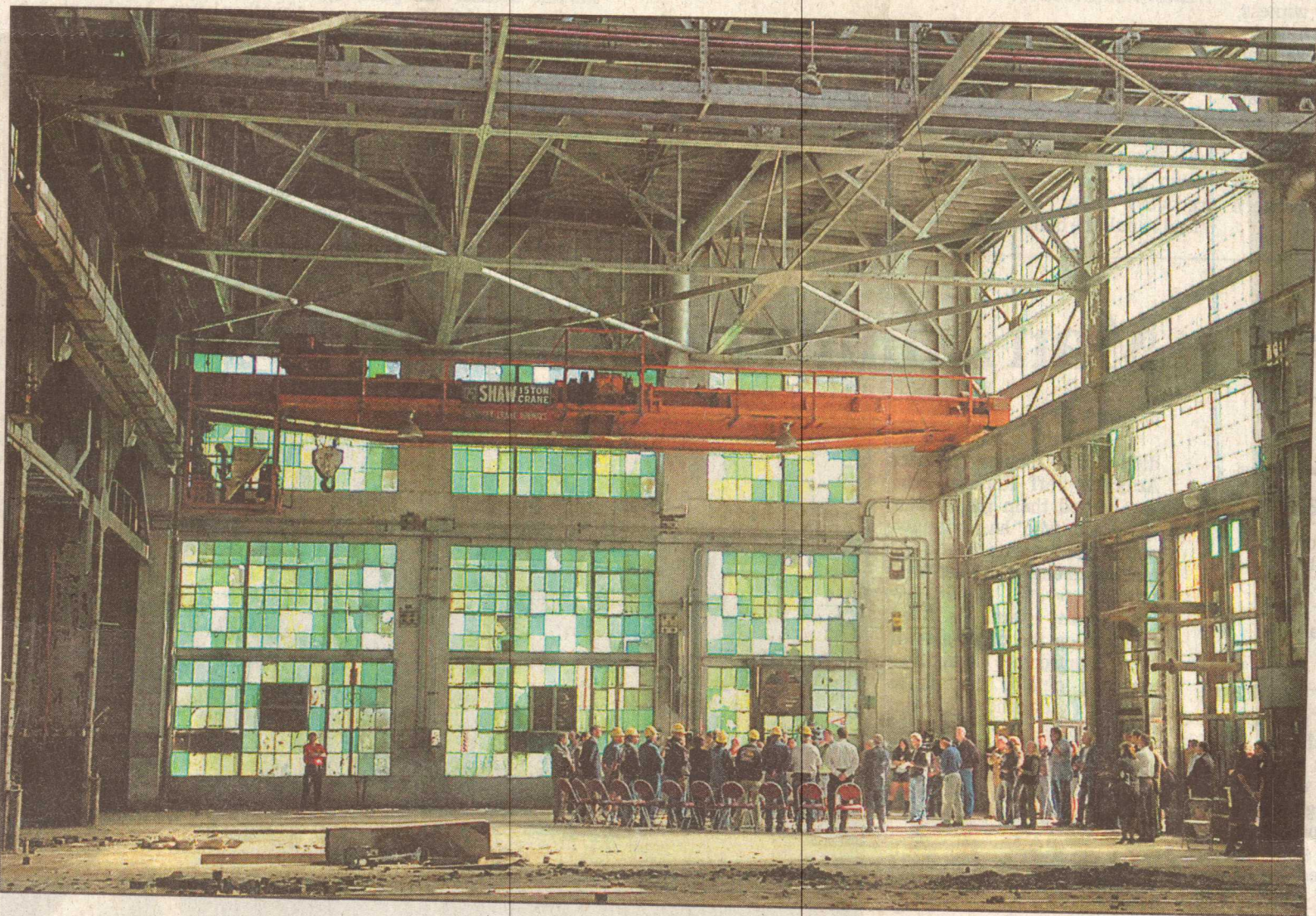


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RAIL YARD REJUVENATION



DEAN HANSON/JOURNAL

Officials gather Wednesday morning to announce the city's purchase of the old Barelvas rail yards. The city paid \$8.5 million for them. See story on Page C2.