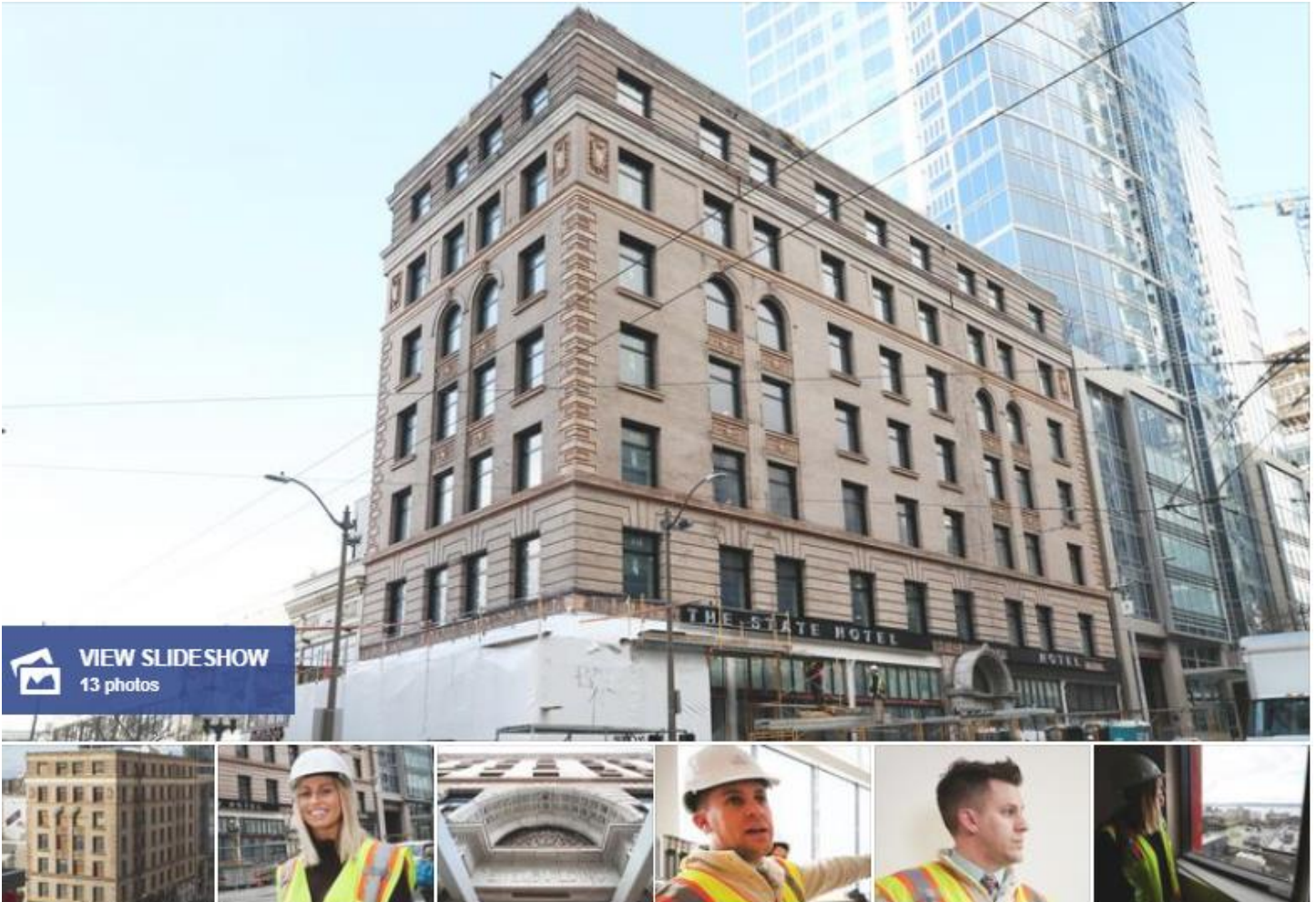


First look: One of Seattle's 'intractable eyesores' reborn as the State Hotel 🔑



After a \$35 million top-to-bottom makeover, a once-derelict building near Pike Place Market will reopen in March as an independent boutique hotel called the State.

The project team on Thursday gave the Business Journal a tour of the building whose upper floors had sat vacant for decades. Today, those floors are hotel rooms, and on the newly added eighth floor are suites with private terraces and a private bar for guests with views of the market and Elliott Bay.

The Wall Street Journal in 2000 dubbed the building one of downtown's "most intractable eyesores." That characterization now has been proved wrong, as the 115-year-old building has undergone a dramatic transformation with a complete seismic retrofit along with new elevators and other systems. The once grimy exterior walls have been scrubbed, as well.

For at least 20 years, different developers saw the building's potential and tried to buy it from longtime owner [Richard Nimmer](#), with Seattle-based Lake Union Partners finally prying it loose in 2015 for \$5.35 million.

The key was lining up a group of local investors, according to [Norah Potter](#), project manager at Lake Union Partners. "I think that was a huge factor getting the project going," she said.

Building on this, the State will emphasize local food and art, said hotel General Manager [Rob Nichols](#) of Seattle-based Columbia Hospitality, whose CEO, [John Oppenheimer](#), is among the project investors.

The hotel restaurant, Ben Paris, is named for a man who years ago operated Paris Cigars, Lunch & Cards in the basement. The State will try to emulate what the project team said was Paris' passion for bringing people together.

[Reid Kendall](#), formerly of Tallulah's on Seattle's Capitol Hill, is the general manager of Bar Paris, with [Quinton Stewart](#) the executive chef. Stewart previously worked at James Beard Award-winner Maria Hines' Tilth in Wallingford.

Portland artist [Kate Blairstone](#) is painting portraits in the guest suites and designed wallpaper for the elevator lobbies. Seattle artists Ryan Molenkamp and Kyler Martz will paint murals in the lobby and restaurant, respectively.

One piece of artwork, the four-story mural on the exterior wall facing the market, already has become a landmark, visible from ferries in the bay. The work by noted street artist Shepard Fairey is called "Fire Sale." He said it's a comment on the challenges people face when pushing for "environmental and climate responsibility."

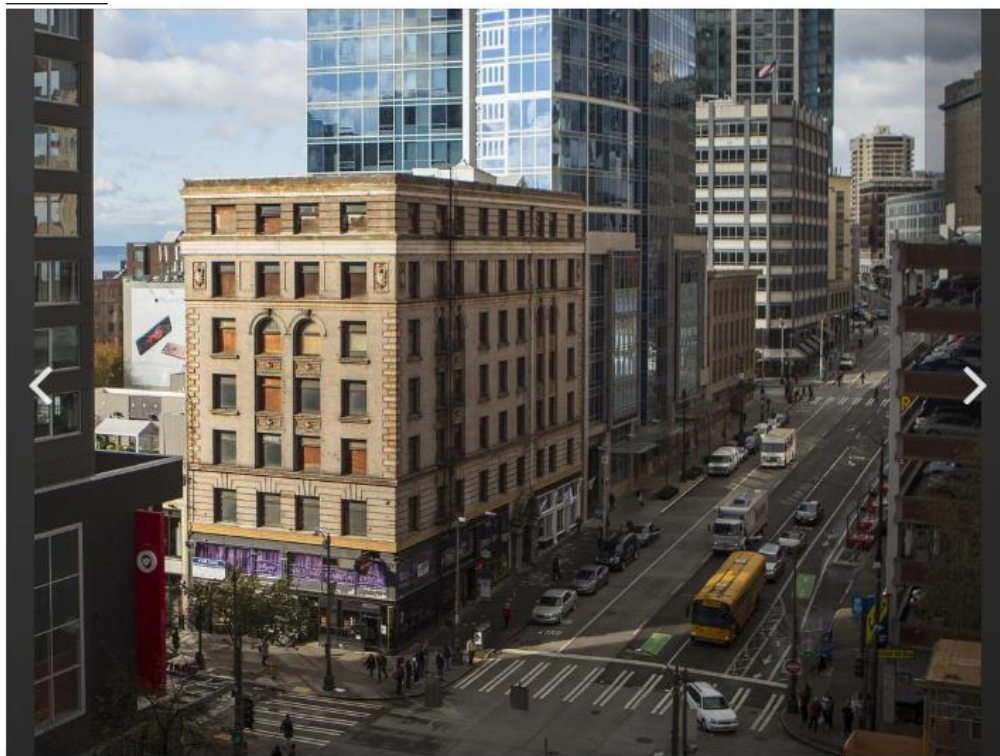
Potter and Nichols said the project team, including architecture firm Weinstein A+U, contractor Exxel Pacific and interior designer Vida Design, paid meticulous attention to details large and small.

"We feel really strongly we've done this project justice," Potter said.

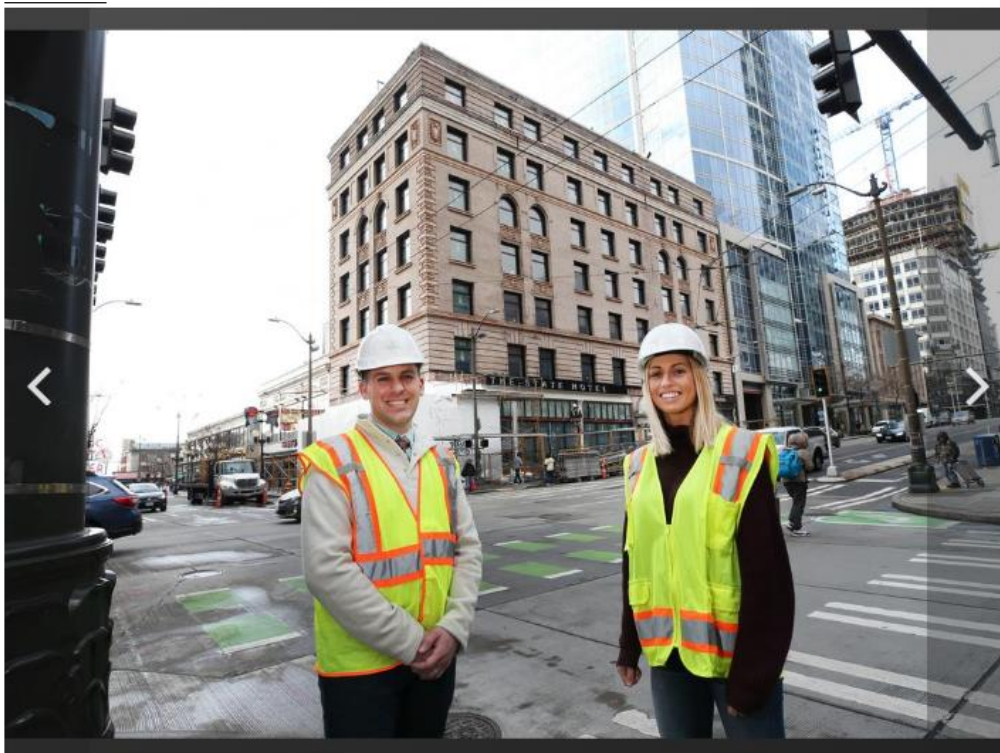
Suite rates have not been set, but rooms will go from \$239 to \$439 a night during the high season and top out at \$239 in the low season, Nichols said.



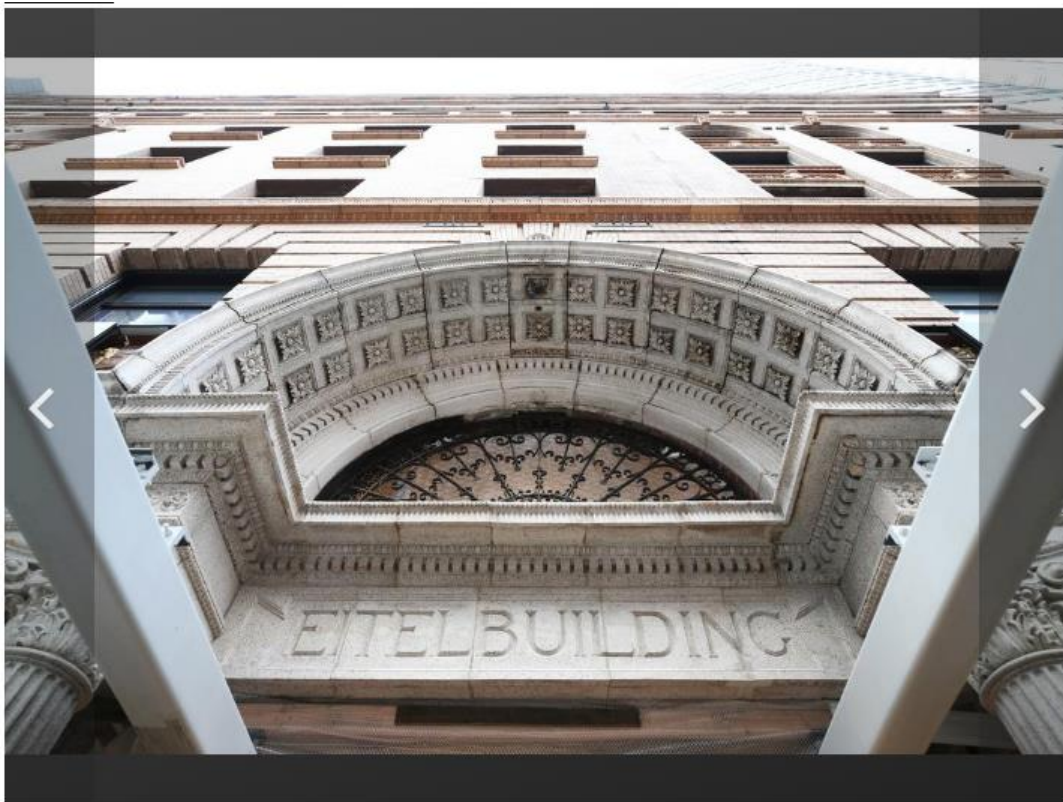
State Hotel officials on Thursday gave a behind-the-scenes tour of the boutique hotel at Second Avenue and Pike Street. The State is scheduled to open in March.



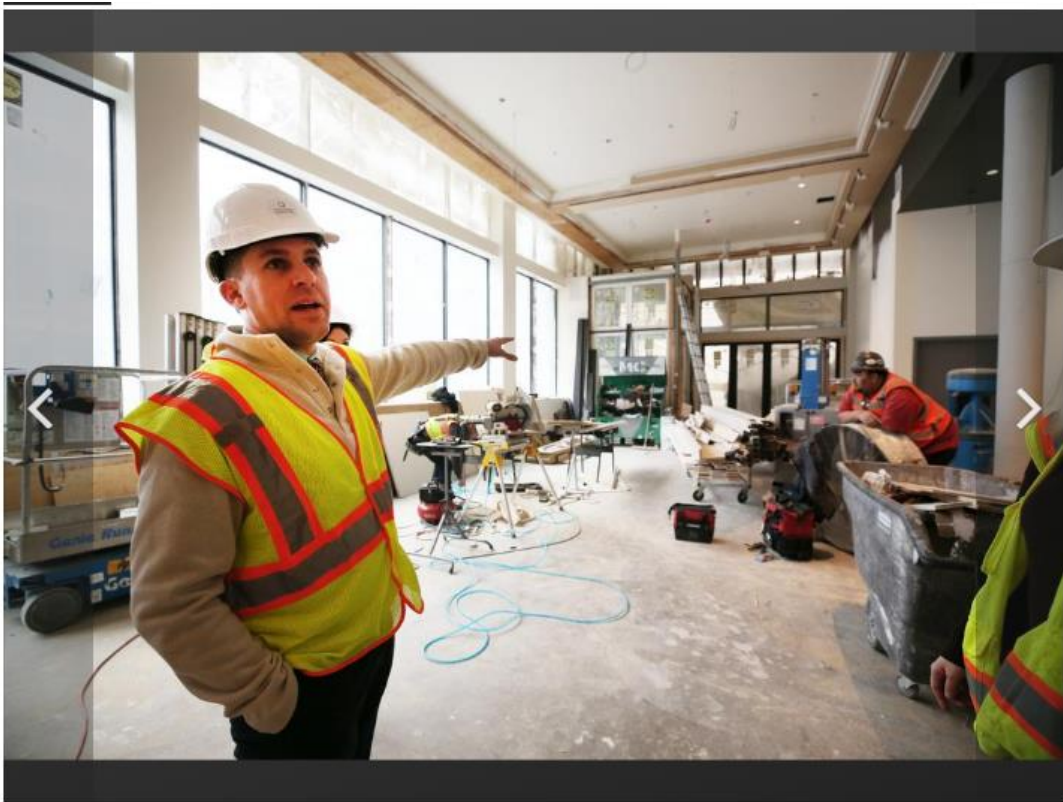
This is the building in 2015, when Seattle-based Lake Union Partners bought it and took on a \$35 million redevelopment, which included a complete seismic retrofit. The result is the State, a 91-room boutique hotel. For decades, the condition of the building along the main pedestrian corridor between Pike Place Market and the downtown retail core frustrated civic leaders. The upper floors were vacant, and on the ground floor were the King County Needle Exchange; a wig shop with neon-colored coiffures in the window; and a teriyaki joint.



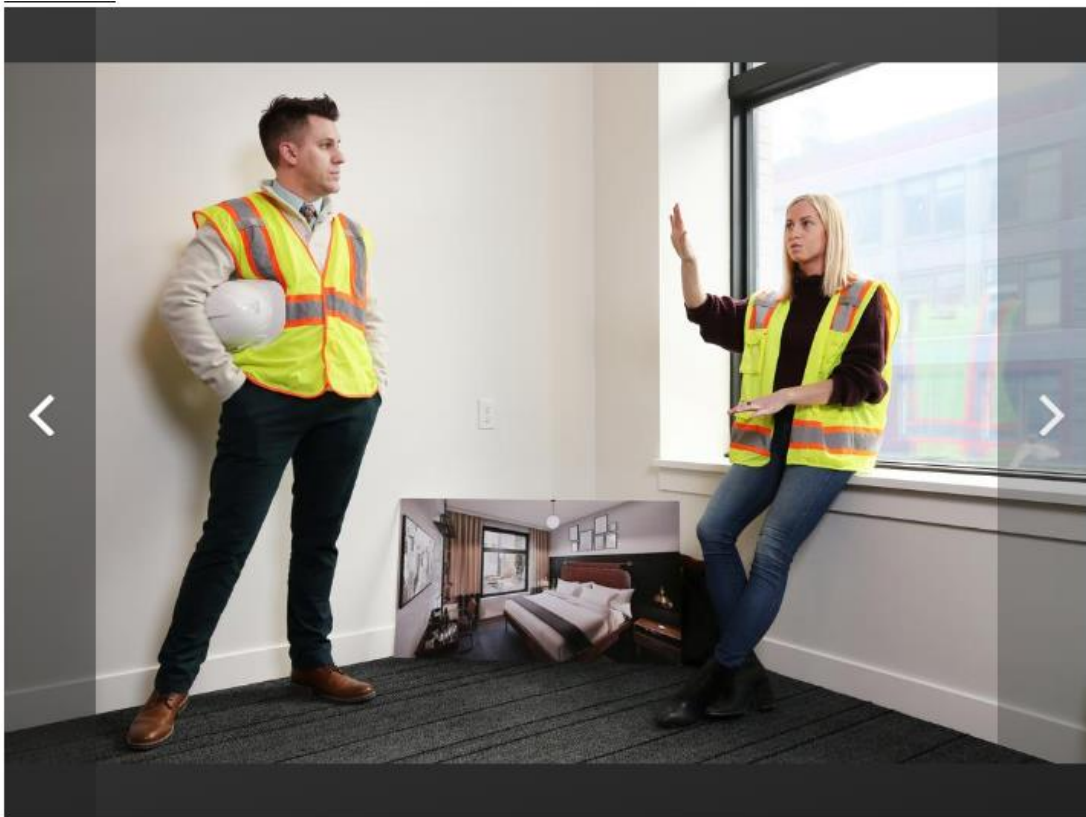
State Hotel General Manager Rob Nichols (left) and Lake Union Partners Project Manager Norah Potter stand at Second and Pike with the hotel in the background.



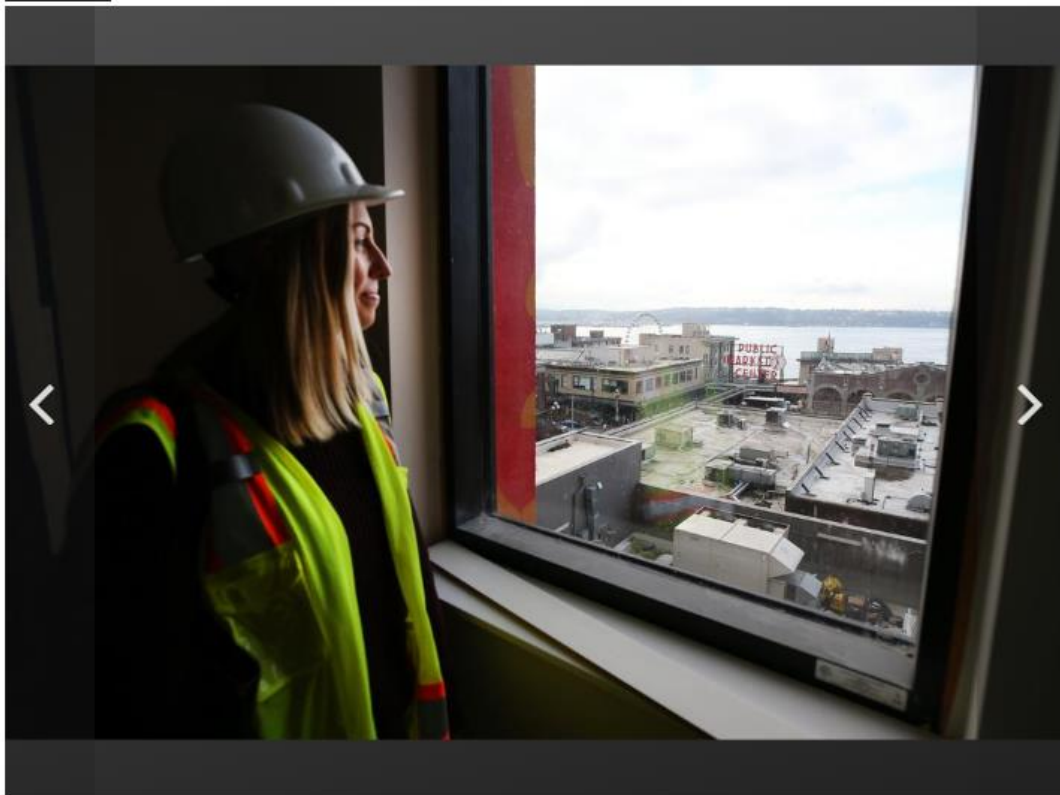
Beams support the refurbished State Hotel's arch entryway on Second Avenue. The beams are for a new steel-and-glass canopy. The city declared the 115-year-old building a landmark due in part to the facade's architectural flourishes.



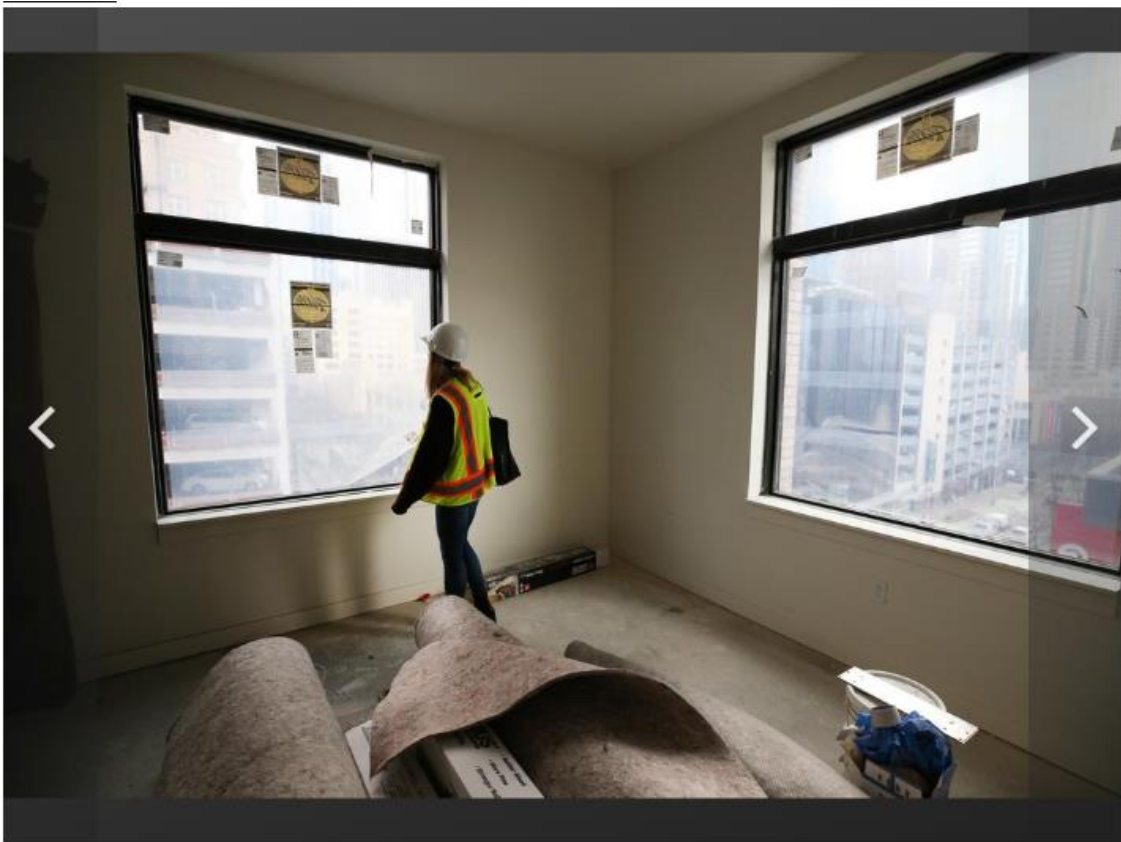
State Hotel General Manager Rob Nichols talks about the Pike Street entrance and the lobby area of the under-construction State Hotel in Seattle. The property is wrapping up a \$35 million redevelopment, which included a complete seismic retrofit.



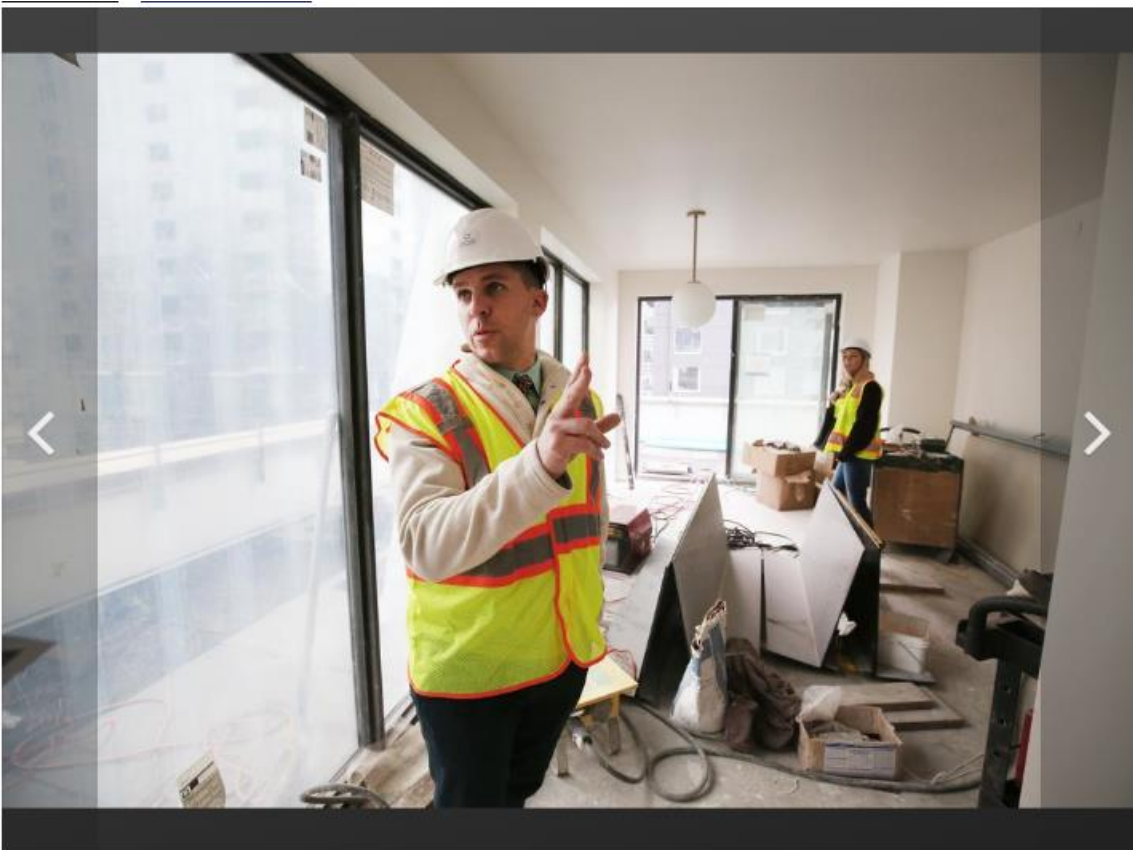
Lake Union Partners Project Manager Norah Potter (right) chats with State Hotel General Manager Rob Nichols in a room at the State Hotel. Room rates will range from \$239 to \$439 a night during the high season, Nichols said.



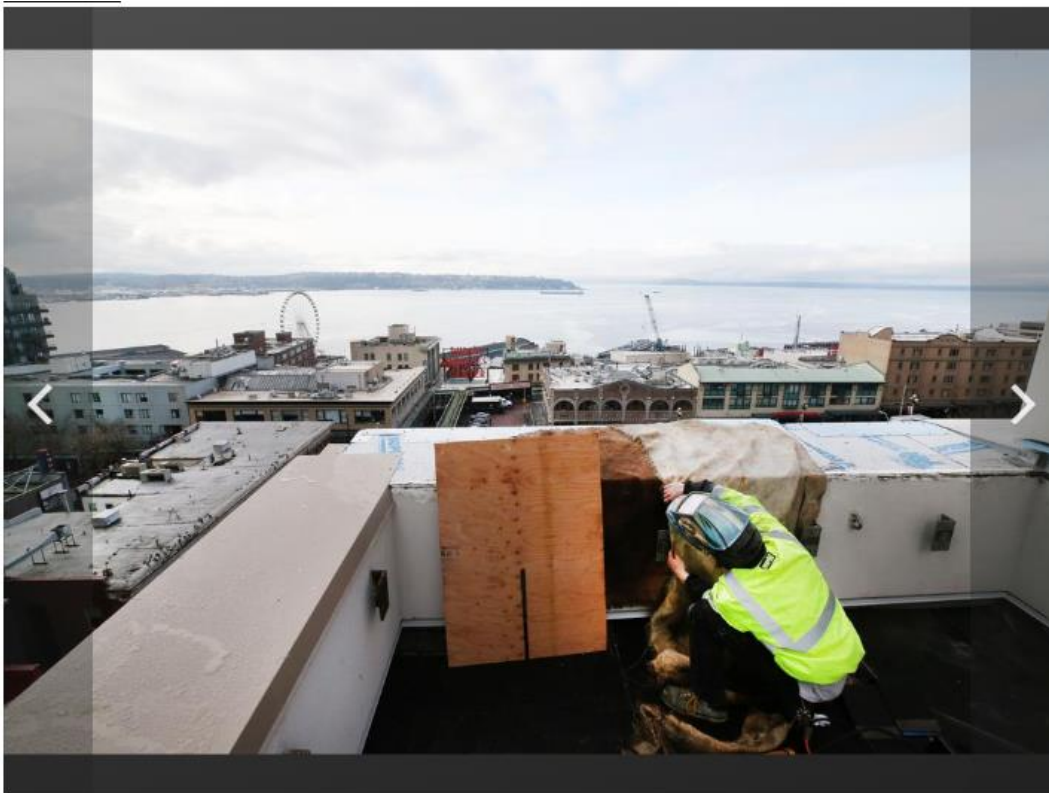
Lake Union Partners Project Manager Norah Potter glances out of a third-floor hallway window that overlooks Pike Place Market and Elliott Bay. She said it's her favorite view from the property.



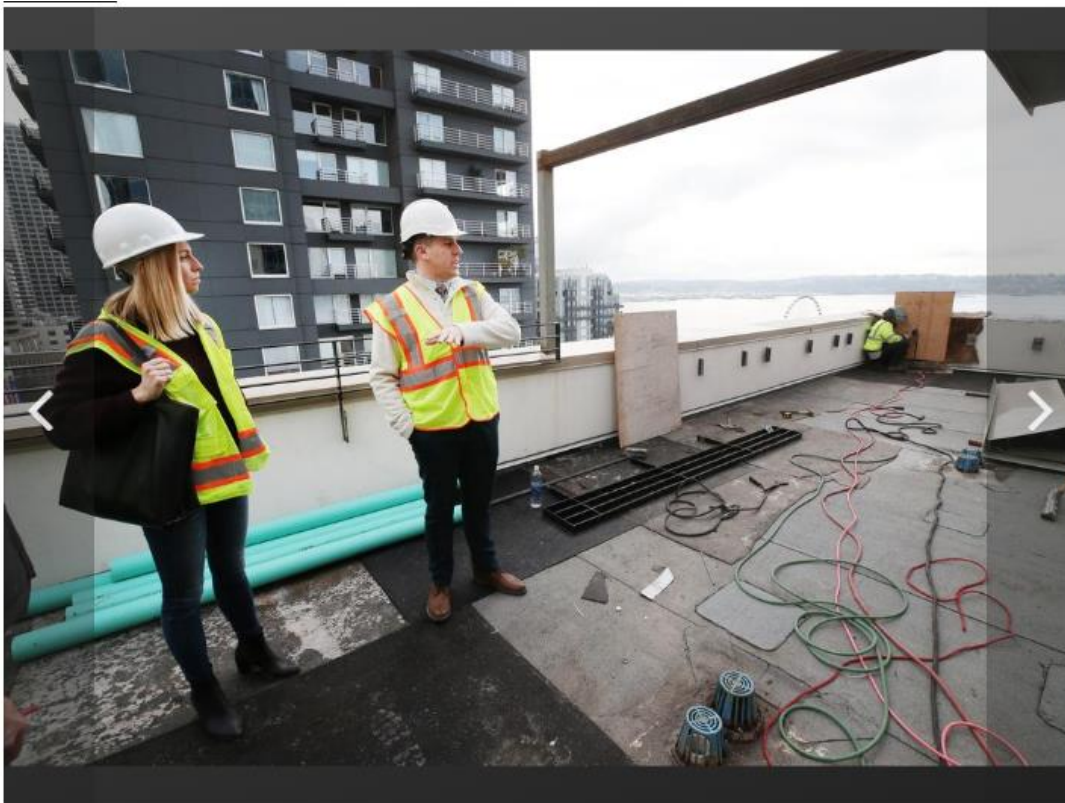
Lake Union Partners Project Manager Norah Potter walks through a third-floor corner room, which overlooks Pike Street and Second Avenue.



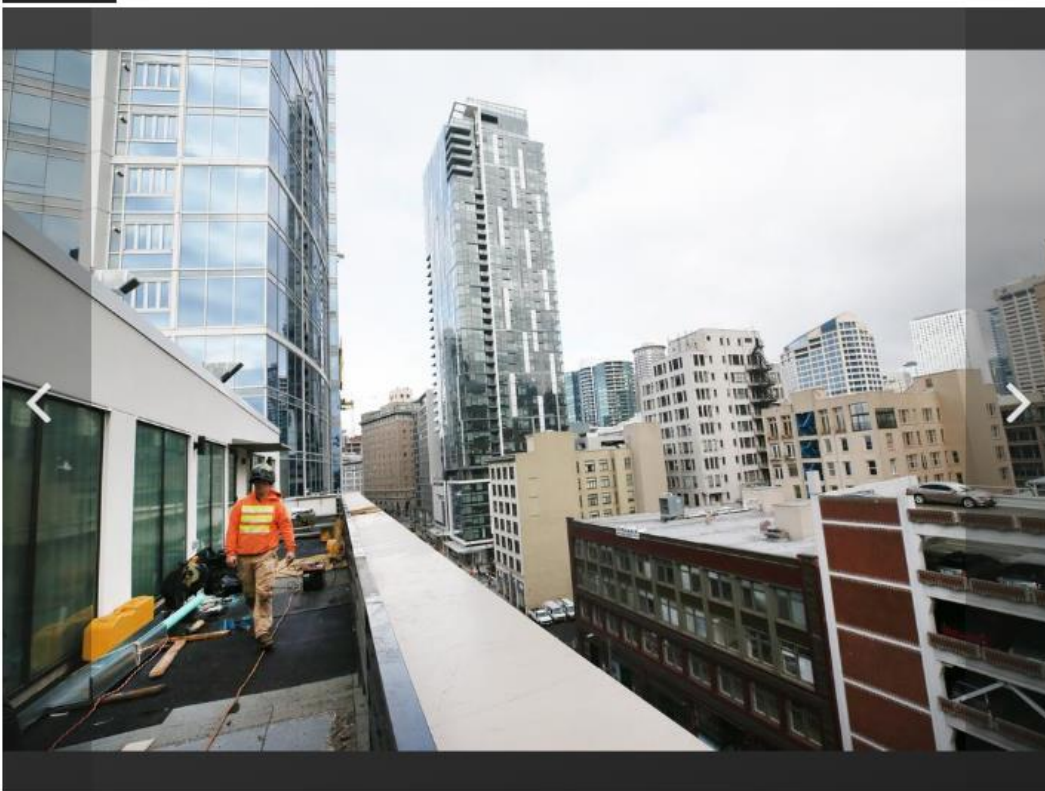
Hotel General Manager Rob Nichols (left) shows a two-bedroom hotel suite on the newly added eighth floor. The suite opens onto a terrace.



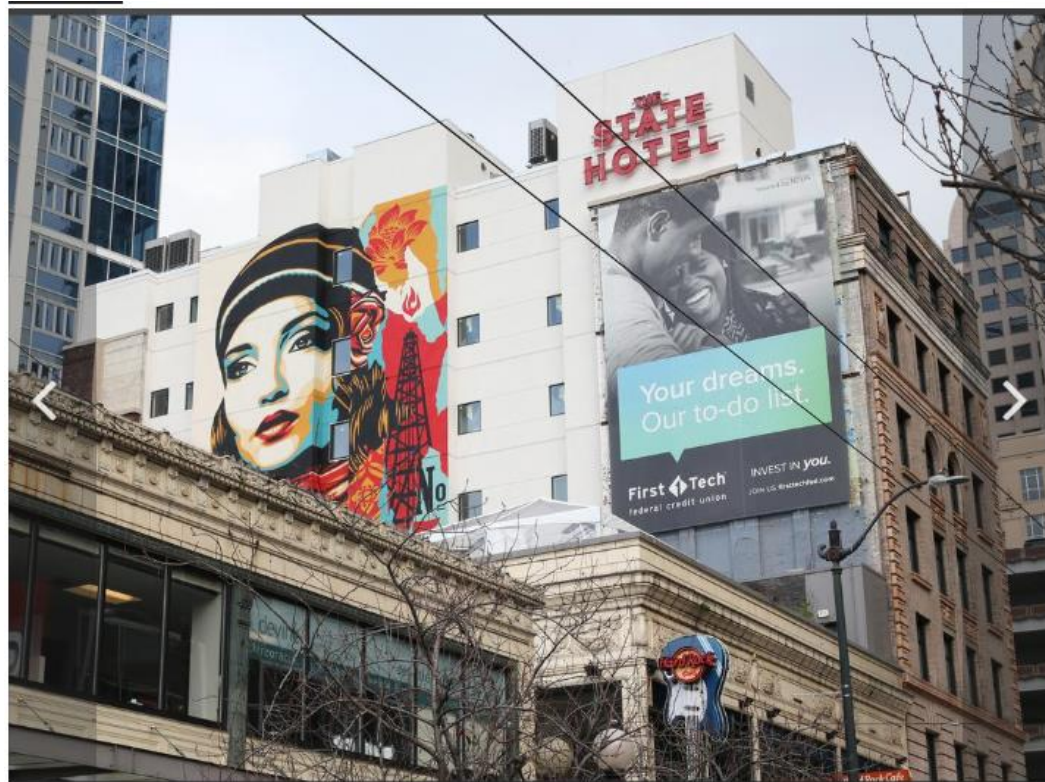
A welder works on the railing of the eighth-floor deck. This area will be off of a private bar for guests. The hotel's public bar and restaurant on the ground floor will operate as Ben Paris, named for the owner/operator of Paris Cigars, Lunch & Cards, which operated in the building's basement years ago. The Seattle Great Wheel is in the distance.



Hotel General Manager Rob Nichols (right) and Lake Union Partners Project Manager Norah Potter show off the eighth-floor penthouse deck.



A construction worker works on the eighth-floor penthouse deck, which abuts the 1521 Second Avenue condo tower.



The west-facing facade of the State Hotel features a four-story mural by street artist Shepard Fairey. Called "Fire Sale," Fairey has said it is "a comment on the challenges any individual faces (when) pushing for environmental and climate responsibility, especially when confronted with the massive power of fossil fuel industries whose short-sighted, profit-driven tactics include lobbying and bribing politicians who are supposed to work for the citizenry."