

Exclusive-AI startup Cohere seeks \$5 billion valuation in latest fundraising, source says

Krystal Hu



U.S. Venture plans to turn the 222 Building in downtown Appleton into its corporate headquarters.

APPLETON — Elected officials ratified a development agreement Wednesday that provides public support for [U.S. Venture Inc.](#) as it renovates the iconic 222 Building on West College Avenue into its new corporate headquarters.

"This is a big deal," Common Council member Kristin Alfheim said. "It's a big deal for U.S. Venture. It's a big deal for Appleton. It's a big deal for all of us."

"This is a pivotal moment," added Jennifer Stephany, executive director of Appleton Downtown Inc. "It is definitely a win, win, win, win, win for downtown Appleton. We've long awaited the U.S. Venture

headquarters in downtown."

The city will [pay as much as \\$2.1 million, plus interest](#), to U.S. Venture as a financial incentive to bring the project to fruition. The money will be funded through [Tax Incremental Financing District No. 11](#) and will be paid only after sufficient property taxes have been collected on the new development.

"In terms of fiscal risks, we're not taking on any debt," Appleton's Community and Economic Development Director Kara Homan said. "We're not fronting any money."

U.S. Venture will invest \$40 million in the renovation and guarantee an assessed property value of \$29.3 million. That's a gain of \$16.4 million over the property's current value of \$12.9 million.

In addition to the financial incentive, the city will reserve 650 parking permits in its Green Ramp for purchase by U.S. Venture at the lowest available rate.

In return, U.S. Venture will redevelop five of its seven parking lots in the College North neighborhood within five years. Otherwise, it will convey the lots to the city for redevelopment.

The council approved the agreement by a 14-1 vote.

"I'm very excited, as I said earlier, to welcome U.S. Venture to the neighborhood," council member Denise Fenton said.

Council member Chad Doran voted against the agreement, saying he thought the city could have avoided the TIF payments by purchasing parking lots from U.S. Venture.

Partnership yields several wins for Appleton

Like Stephany, Homan said the deal with U.S. Venture presents multiple wins for Appleton.

"First and foremost, the win is getting a major corporate headquarters for downtown," Homan said, "and the employees and activity that that brings to our downtown, eating downtown, shopping downtown, adding vitality and livelihood.

"Nationwide, commercial real estate is trending in a different direction, so for us to be able to secure initially 650 employees working downtown is a huge win."

The purchase of parking permits by U.S. Venture will generate revenue for the [Appleton Parking Utility](#). That's another win. Homan said Appleton has sufficient capacity in its parking ramps to accommodate U.S. Venture's needs.

Yet another benefit for the city is the redevelopment of the parking lots. That's expected to reinvigorate the College North neighborhood and create additional tax base. In all, U.S. Venture has about 5 acres of parking that it intends to redevelop.



U.S. Venture already occupies the newly renovated eighth floor of the 222 Building.

U.S. Venture capitalizes on TIF aid, tax credits to move downtown

U.S. Venture currently is headquartered in Kimberly but desires to capitalize on, and contribute to, the vibrancy of Appleton's downtown. It announced in December that it [planned to purchase and renovate the 222 Building](#) for use as its headquarters.

The company's move was contingent on Appleton's assistance and on the transfer of \$20 million in enterprise zone tax credits that the [Wisconsin Economic Development Corp.](#) previously granted U.S. Venture when it planned to build [a new headquarters on the bluff south of Lawrence Street](#). Both elements now have been secured.

U.S. Venture estimates that it will invest \$56 million in the 243,000-square-foot building, including the purchase and renovation. It will occupy all 10 floors and have 650 employees in the building by late 2025.

"This is something that's truly a passion project for us as an organization," U.S. Venture

spokeswoman Mercedes Bereza said. "We believe in the vibrancy of Appleton, and we're excited to see the project come to life."

[Founded in 1951](#), U.S. Venture distributes renewable and traditional energy products, lubricants, tires and undercar parts and manages energy and information in the global movement of goods. It has more than 4,200 employees in 48 states.

Contact Duke Behnke at 920-993-7176 or dbehnke@gannett.com. Follow him on Twitter at [@DukeBehnke](#).

This article originally appeared on Appleton Post-Crescent: [Appleton approves financial incentive to bring U.S. Venture downtown](#)