

DUS News Digest

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June 13, 2010

By Ken Schroepel, Denver Infill Blog

Today we'll review the other major public space planned for Denver Union Station: Wynkoop Plaza.

Wynkoop Plaza is proposed for the east side of the historic station along Wynkoop Street. It's hard to not call that side the front of the station, since that has effectively been the case for decades. But with the new transit elements going in to the west and with all the new vertical development in the Central Platte Valley, both sides will now be the "front". Fortunately, the historic station was designed with equally attractive east and west facades.

Currently, ugly surface parking lots occupy the key corners of 16th and Wynkoop and 18th and Wynkoop. Both of these will be replaced with "wing" buildings as they've been called, given their location at the end of the historic station's two wings. The north wing building at 18th and Wynkoop will be the new home of IMA Financial and will look something like this. The design of the south wing building hasn't been completed yet but it will be of similar scale and quality. Both buildings are critical to the success of Wynkoop Plaza for two reasons: they define the plaza edges and help visually enclose the space to make it feel more intimate, and they provide the ground-floor retail and restaurant uses that will help enliven the plaza with people and activity.

Wynkoop Plaza consists of north and south sections, with each having a different programmatic and design emphasis. Here's an overview:



The south (left) plaza will be more open and sunny than the north (right) plaza. Given the south plaza's proximity to the 16th Street Mall and the end of the commuter rail platforms, it will experience more pedestrian traffic, which the open design facilitates.



The south plaza will also include an area with pop-up fountains that, during the warmer months, will engage the senses and draw more people into the plaza. The fountain will be computer programmed to allow for a variety of effects, such as the jets of water popping up in different shape and timing patterns. The height of the water jets can also be adjusted depending on wind speed and other factors, and up-lighting can make for dramatic nighttime displays. Of course, during the colder months and during larger events in the plaza, the fountain can be turned off entirely to create an unobstructed hardscaped area. A row of trees closer to the historic station will provide shade to restaurant patios. Movable chairs will be used throughout the plaza along with a few permanent seat walls that will help delineate the primary pedestrian paths.



While the south plaza is the sunnier, more open and active section, the north plaza will be a bit more quiet and shady, although still a great people place.



The north plaza will feature a bosque of trees that provides plenty of shade for both permanent seat walls/planters and movable tables and chairs. The far north end of the plaza closest to the IMA Financial Building will remain open to provide a sunny space and clear sight lines to the pedestrian bridge/plaza spanning over the commuter rail tracks.



Like the 17th Street Gardens, the Wynkoop Plaza has been designed for both passive use as well as programmed events, such as stage performances, festivals, vending carts,

games, etc. The diagrams below show two of the many ways different events can be configured into the space.



LARGE MARKET / FESTIVAL



MULTI-EVENT FESTIVAL

Regarding Wynkoop Street itself, many people have suggested that the street be rebuilt between 16th and 18th so that the Wynkoop Plaza's paving surface and streetscape elements can extend across to the storefronts on the other side of the street, thereby making the street itself part of the public space. Everyone thinks this is a great idea, but currently there is no money in very-tight project and city budgets for this to occur at this time. However, nothing in the Wynkoop Plaza design would preclude that from occurring in the future when funding is available, so it's just something we have to keep on the front burner and eventually we'll find a way to get it done.

About the revival of the Welcome/Mizpah Arch: You may recall Union Station Advocates held a big gala event in the historic station to start raising money for the return of the arch. Currently, there's no consensus among the Downtown community as to the arch's design or location. Some people feel it should be an exact replica of the original arch (at the same scale or perhaps at a smaller scale) and some people feel it should be a contemporary arch inspired by the original. Some people favor the original location at 17th and Wynkoop, while others favor a new location on the west side where there are more potential sites available. Regardless of the ultimate design and location, it would be several years at the earliest before the arch could be constructed and installed anyway, given the funds that will need to be raised to pay for it. So for now, a healthy debate over

the arch continues while a longer-term fundraising plan and decision-making process is devised.

Finally, it is the hope and goal of Union Station Advocates and many of us throughout Denver that Union Station becomes much more than a transportation hub. The station's location between our beloved Lower Downtown historic district and the exciting contemporary developments in the Central Platte Valley, along with the infusion of masses of people every day, creates the opportunity for Union Station and its surrounding public spaces to become a nearly perfect urban nexus for Downtown. It can become the place where, when asking what not to miss when in Downtown Denver, first-time visitors are told "go to Union Station". It can become the place where locals hang out even if they have no plans to travel by transit. Paired with its likely-to-be-very-dramatic Calatrava-designed sister station at Denver International Airport, Union Station will be the gateway to Denver for millions of people every year and may become Downtown's most important single place.

Some patience will be required for Union Station to achieve its full potential. While the basic layout and urban design elements of the public spaces are being constructed now, the area will evolve and improve over time as the trees and plantings mature, public art is added, the private-sector developments are built out, and other enhancements (like the Mizpah Arch or extending the plaza across Wynkoop) are implemented. Union Station won't be perfect on opening day, but the planning and design framework is in place for it to get off to a great start.

Denver Union Station work stalls over groundwater issue

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June 14, 2010

By Jeff Leib, The Denver Post



Officials say water pumped from this excavation west of Union Station into the South Platte River has too much iron and will get a different type of filtration. (Leah Millis, The Denver Post)

A major segment of the Denver Union Station redevelopment project is on hold as officials seek a new permit from the state to allow the removal, filtration and release of groundwater on the construction site.

For months, the project's contractor has been "dewatering" and excavating a large site west of the venerable train station that will be the location of an underground bus station.

Such excavations frequently require the temporary removal of groundwater so that concrete foundations can be installed, said Bill Mosher, an executive with Trammell Crow Co.

Trammell Crow has a contract with the Denver Union Station Project Authority to oversee the \$480 million station redevelopment.

On Thursday, Mosher briefed the project-authority board about the halt in construction of the "bus box" because of the dewatering problem.

Through the end of May, the contractor had pumped as much as 170 million gallons of groundwater from the site, filtered it and dumped it in the nearby South Platte River, according to project officials.

About two weeks ago, officials determined that the extremely high iron content of the water was overtaking the ability of the project's two filtration units to clean the water adequately before its release into the Platte, said Trammell Crow senior vice president Mike Sullivan.

To avoid permit violations, dewatering was halted to await an improved filtration process, Sullivan said.

That plan, which includes the addition of seven filtration units and a new chemical process to separate and filter the iron, requires a new permit from the state health department.

The authority hopes to receive that approval in about a week, Sullivan said.

If it is approved and the new filtration process is successful, it should take about two days of renewed dewatering to reduce groundwater levels to a point that caissons can be added to support the bus box, he added.

After caissons are installed, the plan calls for pouring a 4-foot-thick concrete slab as the base of the station.

With dewatering on hold, officials estimate that the aquifer has been recharging itself at a rate of one-tenth of an inch of water every two hours, Sullivan said.

Also at the project-authority meeting last week, Mosher said officials are weighing whether to go ahead with plans to put a parking structure over commuter-rail tracks just north of 18th Street.

A "threat and vulnerability" assessment suggested that the structure might need to be reinforced to withstand an explosion aimed at collapsing the building onto the tracks.

Initial estimates put the cost of building a 150-space elevated parking structure over the tracks at about \$5 million, according to Jerome Nery, the Regional Transportation District's project manager on Union Station redevelopment.

Nery and Mosher agreed that constructing it to engineering standards that would resist a "progressive collapse" of the entire building in the event of a bombing might double the cost of the parking deck.

June 14, 2010

By Rick Anstey, Denver Infill Blog

Walking tours of the Union Station project are about to become a reality. At 4:30pm on the third Thursday of June, July, August and September, you can participate in the tour by showing up at the front of Union Station on Wynkoop Street. The first tour (June 17) will start with a presentation by Union Station Neighborhood Company before moving to the Millennium Bridge for an overview of the project by Hunter Sydnor of Kiewit Corporation. This is a perfect opportunity to learn about the project directly from the experts and to ask those unanswered questions.

Union Station Update #20

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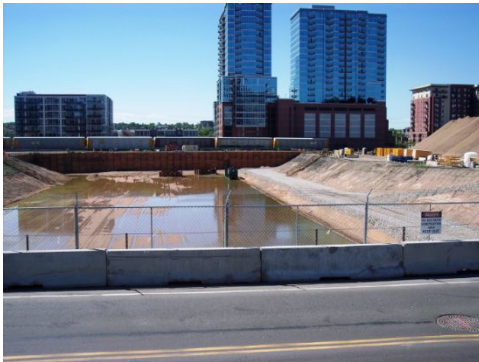
June 17, 2010

By Rick Anstey, Denver Infill Blog

As you may have seen in Jeffery Leib's [article](#) in Monday's *Denver Post*, work on the bus box has been suspended while a beefier dewatering filtration system is installed and approved by the state. The green tanks in the photo below contain the original charcoal filters that have been prone to clogging due to high levels of iron. The new blue and yellow filtration units are intended to remedy the situation.



In the meantime, ground water is seeping into the bus box hole such that nearly the entire floor is now under water, as you can see in the photo below.



Once the ground water situation is resolved, work can begin on the concrete floor called a mud slab, and digging inside the three sheet pile holes will begin. Those holes are for plumbing vaults which will be ten feet deeper than the current floor of the bus box hole. A pit for the bus terminal elevator will be dug in the same vicinity but will be only four feet deep and will not require sheet pile.

The stone roadway seen on the right in the photo above is the pathway for the crane that is pictured in [Update #17](#). The crane will move along the road as it sets in place the

structural parts of the bus box. The structural material staging area is up and to the right of the stone roadway.

There is also progress on the light rail system. Work has begun on foundations for the overhead catenary system (the power delivery system for the light rail) along the future light rail tracks beside the consolidated main line tracks. Also, workers have started backfilling between the two new light rail retaining walls. Eventually, the surface will be raised to the top of the retaining walls before the new tracks can be installed. The relocated light rail station is expected to be completed and in service by the spring or summer of 2011.

There is also progress to report at the temporary Amtrak terminal at Wewatta and 21st streets. Interior walls are being framed and electrical work is underway. Part of the interior concrete floor had to be removed for placement of new utilities. That work has been completed. An insulated water line will be built over 20th Street to supply water to the area near the temporary Amtrak platform. The water is needed to clean the trains and replenish potable water in passenger cars. The need for water at the platform is yet another item that falls into the category of, "I never would have thought of that."

In [Update #18](#), I mentioned the application of a coating on the two mountains of dirt. It has proved to be very effective. There is no evidence of erosion after last weekend's rain.

I uploaded 12 new photos to our Denver Union Station page at JobSiteVistor.com including the the two photos in this post.

Thank you to Hunter Syndor of [Kiewit](#) for providing the information in today's blog.

Remember the first [walking tour](#) is this Thursday.