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April 26, 2011

By Ken Schroepel, Denver Infill Blog

The [Nichols Partnership](#), developers of the successful [Spire](#) residential tower in Central Downtown, announced back in June 2007 that they had purchased almost the entire block bounded by Wewatta, 19th, Chestnut, and 20th in the Union Station district. At that time they [proposed](#) for the site a mixed-use concept consisting of a ground-floor grocery store with residential and possibly other uses such as hotel or office above. The project didn't proceed, however, as the pending economic collapse and other factors intervened.

Four years later, I'm happy to report that the Nichols Partnership, along with partners Loftus Developments and the [Mulhern Group](#), announce that the project is now ready to go!

The project (named "20th & Chestnut" for now) will be built in two phases. The first phase will cover about three-quarters of the block fronting Chestnut Place and will feature a 42,000 SF urban grocery store (national chain TBD) and an additional 13,000 SF of retail, plus 307 apartments above in a five-story building. Included within the ground-floor level are 104 parking spaces reserved for the retail uses, with vehicle access to these spaces from Chestnut Place. Below grade are two levels of parking containing 447 parking spaces for the residential uses, accessed via 19th Street. Here's the street-level site plan:



The building will feature a prominent glass corner entry at 20th and Chestnut and a facade consisting primarily of glass and brick. Here are renderings looking toward the 20th & Chestnut corner and the 20th Street side:



Here's a view from above showing the overall building orientation and footprint. The remaining one-quarter of the block fronting Wewatta Street will be developed as a future Phase 2 as a 12-story mixed-use tower.



If all goes as planned, the project will begin construction in December, 2011 and will open in 2013.

It looks like Downtown Denver is finally going to get a full-service grocery store!

April 29, 2011

By Helen Hu, North Denver Tribune



17th Street Linear Gardens and Regional Bus Facility

The ambitious Union Station project will take another step forward this summer when the light-rail stop is relocated, anchoring the west side of the project's vast site.

The 19-acre site, which includes the historic station, is envisioned to become Denver's central intermodal hub and a gleaming draw for downtown.

The \$480 million project has been billed the largest transportation redevelopment project in North America, and has been in the works in some fashion for more than a decade.

The transportation portion of it, incorporating commuter and light rail, Amtrak, and commercial and RTD buses, is scheduled to be finished by the spring of 2014.

The current light rail stop, behind Union Station, will move west by the Millennium Bridge in July. Track has been laid and two white shelters for the stop, which will be separate from the rest of the station's transportation, are already up. The 16th Street Mall will be extended so shuttle buses go directly to the stop.

For now, the Union Station project's most striking feature is its sheer size. It's a flat expanse behind the station with giant piles of dirt and clusters of activity and equipment. Pedestrians at the Millennium Bridge, which offers sweeping views of the site, look out, wonder exactly what they're seeing, shrug, and move on. But the bones of the project are taking shape.

The project will basically consist of a renovated Union Station; an airy, futuristic rectangular commuter train hall lying parallel to the station; and a “spine” extending from the station toward the new light-rail station. The spine will contain an underground “bus box” and, above ground, a resumption of 17th Street, with driving lanes on one side and pedestrian areas with skylights and gardens on the other.

A pile of dirt and rubble and train track, cordoned off with red tape, sits on part of the area that will become the train hall. Passengers will catch trains on eight tracks accommodating RTD’s planned Northwest, East, North Metro and Gold commuter rail lines, and existing Amtrak and Ski Train services.

West of the train hall area, visitors can see a giant slab on the ground, the surface of the underground “bus box.” On top of the slab are wooden teepees draped with tarps that hold skylights for the box. When finished, buses will be funneled down into and out of the box, which will contain 22 bays. A new bus service, called the Downtown Circulator, will shuttle between the box and the north side of downtown.

Land around the station acquired by the Neighborhood Company will be marketed as retail and office space.

The Denver Union Station Neighborhood Company, the project’s master developer, acquired parcels to the north and south last year that are expected to be built up as retail and office space.

The IMA Financial Group plans to occupy a building on the north parcel within a year.

The company will purchase a triangular piece of land southwest of the station in April. Land flanking the project’s “spine” and light-rail station is eyed for retail, office, hotel, and residential development.

As for Union Station itself, an advisory group recommended that RTD seek competitive bids for renovating the inside. The group urged that proposals preserve the building’s integrity, retain the central waiting room as the focal point, and offer features that bring in the public.

Frank Cannon, president of the Neighborhood Company, said his team seems to be the logical ones to renovate the station. The company is familiar with the structure and knows how to make it fit in with the rest of the project, he said.

Cannon envisions a waiting room, baggage handling, a car rental desk, business services, and restaurants and cafes in the wings of the station. “We feel it needs the right mix to engage with people using the station, and broader reasons for the community to come here,” he said.

Another group, consisting of Sage Hospitality and Larimer Associates, plans to submit a proposal that will include a 100-room hotel on the second and third floors, according to preservationist Dana Crawford, a participant in the group.

Under plans drafted by the Neighborhood Company, the station’s parking lots will be removed, and interactive fountains will be installed on the station’s south side. The north side will feature shade trees and places to sit.

A plan for building a parking garage above train tracks north of Union Station was scrapped because it was too expensive, Cannon said. Studies show most users of the station would not need parking, he said.



Commuter rail train hall



Construction activity behind Union Station in April 2011