



## PART II





## Project Context



Four Agency Partnership

The four agencies involved in creating the Master Plan represent a unique partnership among the City and County of Denver (City), the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG), and the Regional Transportation District (RTD). This partnership continues previous collaborations on transportation projects related to Denver Union Station, including efforts to develop a multimodal hub.

In the late 1980s, RTD and the City cooperated with the Denver Union Terminal Railway Corporation (DUT), the private owner of the terminal, to make improvements on the Denver Union Station site. These improvements included upgrading rail-platforms and canopy facilities, and accommodating an RTD bus lane to access Market Street Station from the I-25 bus/HOV lanes.

Between 1994 and 1996, RTD, the City, and CDOT, with DUT, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Trillium Corporation prepared a feasibility study to determine the prospects for using the station as a regional intermodal transportation center. That study was the precursor to this Master Plan.

RTD, the City, and DRCOG cooperated from 1997 to 2000 with the Union Station Transport Development Company (USTDC) and various private land owners and businesses to create the Central Platte Valley Light Rail Spur (C-Line), a major public transit connection to Denver Union Station. The C-Line opened in April 2002 and has been a success in connecting people to Lower Downtown and to major venues in downtown.

In 1999, CDOT, working with the City and USTDC, led an effort to secure a federal grant to study the potential for a bike station, electric-vehicle, and trolley program at Denver Union Station. Bicycles and electric vehicles are accommodated on-site in this Master Plan, with an adjacent off-site trolley stop contemplated.

In August 2001, RTD purchased the site in accordance with a jointly funded Intergovernmental Agreement between RTD, the City, CDOT, and DRCOG. As the Master Plan process continues, the four agencies have

agreed to continue their cooperative efforts beyond the planning phase and into implementation of a full multimodal center at Denver Union Station.

Project Scope

The project encompasses four major work products: the Master Plan (development guidance), Site Rezoning (entitlements), Landmark Designation (historic building protections), and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The other work products besides this Master Plan are summarized and referenced in this document, but exist as separate stand-alone documents.

The Master Plan focused on creating a multimodal transportation center, with transportation elements designed first, followed by development that is compatible with the site’s transportation uses.

Given the highly visible nature of DUS and its importance to the fabric of LoDo, Downtown Denver, and the region, community involvement and outreach were important elements in the Master Plan and EIS processes.

Town meetings were held periodically throughout the Master Plan process in coordination with the EIS processes. A citizen’s advisory committee allowed the community to provide regular responses and recommendations. Special presentations were made to community groups and local businesses. A project website informed the community of project progress.

Master Plan

The Master Plan is a guide document that provides the framework for future development. It gives an overview of the history, structuring elements, and Vision Plan arising from the master planning process, the next steps in implementing the plan, and the basis for rezoning.

Rezoning

Zoning needs to allow for both transportation and development on the site. Existing zoning did not fulfill these requirements. After studying numerous possibilities, it was determined that rezoning the site to a new zone district, Transit Mixed-Use 30 (T-MU-30), would meet the future needs of the site.

Landmark Designation

The historic Denver Union Station building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. However, it has never been designated as a Denver Landmark structure. The effort to designate the historic structure has run concurrently with the Master Plan and rezoning processes with the goal of simultaneous approvals for each process.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

In accordance with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement was published on June 4, 2002, in the *Federal Register*, titled *Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the Union Station Master Plan and Vicinity in Downtown Denver, CO*. The purpose of the notice was to inform interested parties of the intent to prepare an EIS.

The purpose of the EIS is to evaluate the possible impacts to the natural and built environment of the multimodal center identified during the scoping and Master Plan processes. This will evaluate the project’s transportation components. The EIS also identifies mitigation measures.

The EIS entails the longest process. Begun in June 2002, the process is projected to be completed in early 2005. Impacts of the Vision Plan on the natural and built environment, developing and circulating a draft EIS (DEIS), incorporating responses to the DEIS during the public review and comment period, and preparing a final EIS (FEIS), are all components of the EIS.

The FEIS recommends a locally preferred alternative, and documents mitigation. The team will complete the process by seeking the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) signature for a Record of Decision on the locally preferred alternative. If there are no significant impacts associated with the proposed action, FTA may issue a Finding of No Significant Impact instead of a Record of Decision.

Project Vision and Goals

The Master Plan Vision and Goals statements were created to serve as a guide for the future redevelopment of Denver Union Station. These statements were prepared jointly by the Executive Oversight Committee, the Union Station Advisory Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee.

Denver Union Station Vision Statement

*“Denver Union Station will be a multimodal transportation hub of international significance and a prominent and distinctive gateway to downtown Denver and the region.*

*Denver Union Station will bring critical elements of the public and private local, regional, statewide, and national transportation systems, both existing and future, together with private development and inspiring civic features.*

*Denver Union Station will create an exciting setting that will improve the connections between all transportation modes, respect the character and historical significance of the station and its adjacent neighborhoods, and provide a stimulating environment for public activity and economic vitality.”*

*Vision statement developed by the Union Station Advisory Committee and the Agency Partners, Summer 2002.*

Master Plan Goals

I. Transportation/Multimodal Center

- Develop a public transportation facility that will:
  - Serve as the hub of the regional transportation system.
  - Ensure that all modes function together to optimize the efficiency of each mode for system wide efficiency.
  - Provide connections for all transportation modes into and throughout the Denver region.
  - Increase transit ridership and use of other forms of public and private transportation and alternative transportation modes.
  - Provide increased ground transportation options to the traveling public.
  - Accommodate all ground passenger modes, both public and private, to the greatest extent feasible on the site.

- Create a system of mode transfer and way-finding orientation that allows for simple and efficient movements and connections for travelers.
- Support major activity centers and destinations in the region by providing easy access and seamless connections.
- Provide transportation options and uses at Denver Union Station that are consistent with the Metro Vision Regional Plan.
- Provide the opportunity for connections to and between local, regional, statewide, and national transportation systems and networks.

II. Urban Design and Neighborhood Integration

- Develop a plan that will provide pedestrian-friendly urban design elements that:
  - Ensure that the mass, scale, orientation, and architecture of the redeveloped Denver Union Station site and its private development are harmonious with the historic station and the surrounding neighborhoods.
  - Encourage a mix of land uses on the site that creates appropriate densities of development that are compatible with neighborhood plans and concepts.
  - Connect downtown, the Central Platte Valley, and the adjacent neighborhoods, emphasizing pedestrian and bicycle connections to and through the development, easy access to transportation, and an active, attractive environment.
- Create a positive user experience for the Denver Union Station multimodal transportation center and related on-site development.
- Provide for the creation of public spaces

III. Historic Preservation

- Provide for the preservation of the historic Denver Union Station building.
- Fit the form and architecture of the project’s new development with respect to the historic character of Denver Union Station and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- To the greatest extent feasible, fully incorporate the historic train station into the multimodal transportation hub both physically and functionally.

IV. Development Feasibility

- Develop a plan for the facility that maximizes the opportunity for public/private development that supports transportation ridership, serves neighborhood needs, functions as a regional and statewide amenity, generates project revenues to help offset costs, and enhances downtown’s environment.
- Develop a financing package that optimizes the use of funding from federal, state, local and private sources.
- Integrate transportation and development in an economically sustainable phasing and build-out strategy that takes advantage of available funding and public/private partnerships.

V. Implementation and Governance

- Develop a plan that provides governance of the Denver Union Station site that is appropriate for a public/private facility, that does not put undue risk and burden on the taxpayers, and that provides opportunities for private partners and users.
- Ensure that the long-term ownership and governance structure for the Denver Union Station site incorporates strict and demanding standards of quality and cost-effectiveness for facility design and quality of workmanship, as well as for on-going operations and maintenance.

Guiding Principles

The Master Plan goals will be achieved by implementing the Vision Plan with the following guiding principles developed by the planning team:

Urban Form

The principles of urban form are site and context-specific outgrowths of the project goal statements. They are framed to provide direct feedback for design decision-making. These principles are intended to ensure that the revitalization of Denver Union Station occurs in a way that integrates this large and complex transportation center into the life and form of the downtown that encompasses it.

Sustainability Principle

Sustainability entails meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The objectives behind a multimodal transportation center are linked to the related concept of regional and global sustainability. The availability of transportation options beyond the personal automobile can produce significant environmental, economic, and social benefits, such as greater energy efficiency. This concept should be implemented at the community level by a parallel concept of project sustainability. Project sustainability attempts to minimize adverse effects of development and identify and implement approaches that have net positive effects on the local environment, social, and economic health.



LEGEND

- 1. Pepsi Center
- 2. Six Flags - Elitch Gardens
- 3. Denver Children’s Museum
- 4. Aquarium
- 5. Centennial Gardens
- 6. Confluence Park
- 7. Commons Park
- 8. Skateboard Park
- 9. Cuernavaca Park
- 10. Coors Field
- 11. Skyline Park
- 12. Larimer Square
- 13. Auraria Campus
- 14. Denver Center for Performing Arts
- 15. Colorado Convention Center
- 16. 16th Street Millenium Bridge
- 17. Denver Union Station
- 18. 16th Street Mall
- 19. South Platte River Greenway
- 20. Cherry Creek Trail
- 21. Commons Neighborhood
- 22. Museum of Modern Art

Area Context

For most of Denver Union Station’s history, the site has held the western edge of Downtown’s warehouse district. In the last 15 years, the mercantile warehouses of the Lower Downtown Historic District (LoDo) have been rejuvenated with residences, galleries, restaurants, shopping, and entertainment. Downtown, LoDo, and surrounding neighborhoods now contain more than 11,000 residents. Major sports and entertainment venues around LoDo have turned the entire area into a regional attraction.

The site is at the western end of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Mall, with a strong connection to Central Business District employment. Just three blocks north, Coors Field has spurred new residential and commercial development north and east of the station. To the south and west, the new Commons Neighborhood is emerging on former railyards in the Central Platte Valley. The historic Highlands Neighborhood is further west across I-25, featuring spectacular views of the Denver Union Station site and Downtown. Six blocks south is Larimer Square, Denver’s first historic district. The Pepsi Center and Invesco Field at Mile High are located one-half mile and one and one-half miles south and west, respectively.



Area map showing various Denver destinations and walking distance to those locations from Denver Union Station.



Centennial Gardens in foreground with Six Flags Elitch Gardens behind.



Rock sculpture at City of Cuernavaca Park.



View of the aquarium from the south bank of the South Platte River.



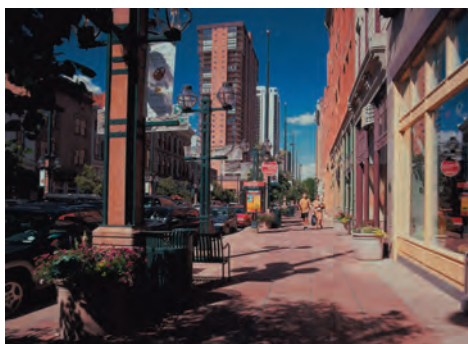


Aerial photo showing Downtown Denver and surrounding area, as well as points of interest, ca. 2001.

The site is connected to the regional trails of the South Platte River and Cherry Creek, which provide most of the area's public open space. The 30-acre Commons Park is located along the South Platte River just across the Consolidated Main Line (CML) in the Commons Neighborhood, with a pedestrian connection at 16<sup>th</sup> Street across the Millennium Bridge. Additional open space includes Skyline Park, which runs for three downtown blocks along Arapahoe Street, the City of Cuernavaca Park and Centennial Gardens on the South Platte River Greenway, and Civic Center Park on the south end of the 16th Street Mall.

Major highway access is via I-25 at Speer Boulevard, 20<sup>th</sup> Street, and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. Local access streets include Auraria Parkway, Speer Boulevard, Wewatta Street, Wynkoop Street, 15<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, and 23<sup>rd</sup> Streets. An HOV lane along 20<sup>th</sup> Street links the north end of LoDo to I-25 North. The site can also be accessed from I-70 to the north via Brighton Boulevard.

Regional entertainment and sports venues include Coors Field (home of the Colorado Rockies), the Pepsi Center (home of the Colorado Avalanche, Denver Nuggets, Colorado Crush, and Colorado Mammoth), Invesco Field at Mile High (home of the Denver Broncos and Colorado Rapids), Colorado's Ocean Journey aquarium, and Six Flags-Elitch Gardens amusement park. All have access to the Denver Union Station site through rail, vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian connections.



Larimer Square.



Wewatta entrance into the Pepsi Center.



Denver Millennium Bridge at night.



**Neighborhood Context**

Denver Union Station is located between LoDo and the new 54-acre Commons Neighborhood in the Central Platte Valley. Within a quarter-mile radius of the site are many historic and new uses that will benefit from the multimodal hub.

***Lower Downtown (LoDo)***

Adjacent to Denver Union Station and across Wynkoop Street is LoDo. This 21-block area encompasses the city's origins and includes many large historic warehouses. Many have been converted into commercial, retail, and residential spaces. LoDo's historic context includes 131 contributing buildings, of which 85 percent are under fifty-five feet tall, 15 percent are between 55 and 85 feet tall, and none exceed 85 feet. Front doors are oriented primarily toward named streets. LoDo features a traditional right-angle grid with 80-foot right-of-way streets.



LoDo first-floor retail with offices above.

LoDo's revitalization resulted in part from creation of the Lower Downtown Historic District in 1988. Widespread rehabilitation of historic mercantile buildings has created a rich, varied mix of uses, including residences, specialty retail, art galleries, small offices, restaurants, bars, and clubs. About 2,000 people now live in LoDo. New infill buildings have been tailored in massing, street orientation, and detailing to respect the district's character, while also differentiating themselves as modern designs.

Public space in LoDo is mainly provided by sidewalks, many of which have been improved under the 1988 Lower Downtown Streetscape Plan. Additional open spaces include Market Street Station between 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Streets on Market Street, the Cherry Creek Greenway, and the Ballpark Promenade at the Wynkoop Street terminus between 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Streets.



Coors Field promenade along Wynkoop Street.

***Commons Neighborhood***

The Commons Neighborhood is located between Denver Union Station and the South Platte River. Formerly rail yards, this area within the next 10 to 15 years will be developed to include as much as 6 million square feet of new office, commercial, retail, and residential uses. Zoning for the Commons area allows for a larger-scale district compared to LoDo. Buildings of 140-foot height are typical, with five sites allowing buildings up to 250 feet. The 1997 Commons Neighborhood Urban Design Guidelines promote high-quality design, neighborhood compatibility and lively pedestrian-scaled streetscapes.

The Commons Neighborhood faces Commons Park along the South Platte River. A 17<sup>th</sup> Street extension is planned to include a wide landscaped median in a 160-foot-wide right-of-way. A new neighborhood landmark is the Millennium Bridge, which spans the CML tracks and links pedestrians from Commons Park to LoDo and the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Mall. Other pedestrian connections are planned across the CML at 18<sup>th</sup> Street, over the South Platte River, and over I-25 on axis with 16<sup>th</sup> Street.



View from the Sky Garden in Commons Park, looking south towards Promenade Lofts.



***Adjacent Uses***

The historic IceHouse building is adjacent to the northeast edge of the Union Station site. The IceHouse includes ground-floor retail and residential lofts on the upper floors. Across 16<sup>th</sup> Street is the Post Office Annex building, slated for redevelopment and offices for the Environmental Protection Agency. Other uses include restaurants, offices, and lofts across Wynkoop Street from 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Streets. The Tattered Cover Bookstore is located across Wynkoop Street at 16<sup>th</sup> Street.

***Access to the Site***

Wewatta Street provides local vehicle access to the Denver Union Station site. Wewatta Street connects Speer Boulevard to 23<sup>rd</sup> Street along the edge of the Commons Neighborhood, and is slated to become a four-lane arterial in the future. On the LoDo side, Wynkoop Street runs only between 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Streets, providing local access. Wynkoop Street is a two-lane street with on-street bike lanes and parking on both sides. Currently 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> Streets terminate at the station at Wynkoop Street.

There is also transportation access to the site via the RTD 'C' Line light rail, which terminates at Denver Union Station; regional bus access from the HOV lane, which passes on the Wewatta Street side of the historic station; local bus access on Wynkoop Street; and 16<sup>th</sup> Street Mall Shuttle access at a turnaround stop on the Wewatta Street side of the Station and at the corner of 16<sup>th</sup> and Wynkoop Streets.

Bicycle access is provided on Wynkoop Street and on 16<sup>th</sup> Street with easy connections to the Cherry Creek Bikeway and the South Platte River Greenway. Pedestrians access the site on the street network at 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, Wynkoop, and Wewatta Streets.



Coors Field at 20<sup>th</sup> and Blake Street.



View of Station Platforms looking northeast. Note 20<sup>th</sup> Street HOV ramp and flyover, ca. 2003.