

**DUS News Digest**  
April 27, 2012 to May 4, 2012

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## Free Guided Tours of the Denver Union Station Project Offered this Summer

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April 27, 2012

Downtown Denver Partnership, Skyline



### Denver Union Station

The Denver Union Station Project Authority (DUSPA) will be conducting free guided tours of the Denver Union Station redevelopment site this summer. The tours will be held at 4:30 p.m., starting on Thursday, May 10, 2012, and continuing on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month through July. The one-hour tour will start inside the Great Train Hall at the historic station, 1701 Wynkoop Street.

The guided tour will include information on the storied history of Union Station from the late 1800s to the present day. You will learn about the early station buildings and famous travelers who visited Denver by train, hear about the new Union Station Neighborhood and its transformation of downtown and witness construction of the largest transportation redevelopment project in North America first hand.

Participation is limited to 35 people per tour. To reserve your spot, visit [www.denverunionstation.org](http://www.denverunionstation.org).

April 29, 2012

By Ken Schroepel, Denver Infill Blog

Downtown Denver's 15th Street is one of the city's most historic streets, as many of Denver's first commercial structures were built around 15th and Larimer in the 1860s.

15th Street extends exactly 1.75 miles from W. Colfax Avenue in Civic Center to the grid-transitioning intersection at W. 29th Avenue, Boulder, and Umatilla streets in Lower Highland. Along its southern half from Colfax to Lawrence, 15th Street suffers from a severe case of parkinglotitis. But its northern half, from Lawrence to its terminus in Lower Highland, is one of the city's best urban streets with few vacant parcels, a great mix of historic and contemporary structures, and good street vibe.

The view today down 15th Street from LoDo towards the Highlands, with Asbury Methodist Church centered above the street at the top of the hill, is one I never tire of taking in. Speaking of which, here is one of my favorite photographs from the fantastic Western History and Genealogy Department at the Denver Public Library. It's of the same view down 15th Street, from the corner at Larimer Street looking northwest towards Highlands, in 1865. As the photograph shows, six years after the city was founded, development along 15th Street petered out around Wazee Street. Off in the distance, two shacks sit along the banks of the South Platte River. Beyond that, a whole lotta nothing.



I mention all of this because one of the few underdeveloped sites along this important stretch of 15th Street is about to get a nice big dose of urban infill. Here's a GoogleEarth aerial where I've identified the site:



The L-shaped site currently includes a small one-story brick building at the corner of 15th and Delgany, an even smaller cinder-block building, a large surface parking lot, and a run-down brick building fronting Wewatta Street mid-block. The rest of the block contains the historic Wewatta Transfer and Daniels & Fisher Warehouse buildings and the 13-story Waterside Lofts. The 15th and Delgany corner has been on the cusp of redevelopment for a decade. Back in the early 2000s, a 5-story office building, 1490 Delgany, was slated for the site, followed later in the decade by the proposed 7-story Komorebi condominiums. Now, with the recovering economy and the strength of Denver's apartment market, it looks like 15th and Delgany will finally be getting its long-awaited urban upgrade. Here's a street-level photo of the site, with chain-link fence already in place:



The Opus Group, along with Amstar and Urban Market Partners, is planning to break ground this summer on the Delgany Apartments, a 10-story, 284-unit residential building. Here's a preliminary rendering from the Opus Group's project website.



On the ground floor, the project will feature four townhomes facing Delgany, along with approximately 4,000 SF of space at the corner that may be used by the Museum of Contemporary Art|Denver (located across the street) for gallery or other museum functions. The rest of the ground floor would include the residential lobby on the Wewatta side, a bike parking facility, and vehicle parking in the interior of the block. The townhomes continue on the second floor, along with more interior vehicle parking. Floors 3 through 10 include the apartment units

plus a 2-level club, pool, and fitness center. Two levels of underground parking cover the entire site.

If all goes as planned, demolition of the three small buildings on the site, along with relocation of utilities and general site prep, will occur this spring/summer. That will be followed by excavation for the underground parking during the fall and winter, with completion scheduled for early 2014.

Not only does this project finish the redevelopment and revitalization of the block bounded by 15th, Wewatta, Delgany, and Cherry Creek but, from an urban form perspective, it intensifies and completes the street wall along 15th from LoDo into the Central Platte Valley, and it signifies that Denver's historic 15th Street will continue to thrive into its second century.

Real estate: Trains and buses and bikes, oh my!

The new Union Station will be Denver's centerpiece for all things transportation, and a lot more

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May 1, 2012

By Stephen Titus, Colorado Biz

The redevelopment of downtown Denver has seen several landmark projects that draw crowds: Coors Field, 16th Street Mall, Larimer Square, Riverfront Park and even the new county jail. But the most significant project yet is finally under way.

The reconstruction of Union Station will bring that building and the surrounding area full circle from its original status as the heart of transportation in Denver and carry it beyond to a centerpiece of not just transportation, but business, entertainment, architecture and public spaces.

"It's going to have an enormous impact, not only on downtown Denver and the immediate neighborhood, but the entire region," said Frank Cannon, president of The Union Station Neighborhood Association. "With FasTracks fully developed, there will be more than 200,000 transit trips a day. It becomes a new front door and gateway to our downtown."

Putting that number into perspective, Coors Field holds about 51,000 people, so expectations for Union Station are four times the pedestrian activity of a sold-out Coors Field every day. It is difficult to overstate the magnitude of the Union Station redevelopment. City officials, architects, developers and concerned citizens have been massaging plans for its rehabilitation for more than 20 years, with FasTracks and its multi-billion dollar price tag as the spark that ignited the discussion.

The master developer of the project is the Union Station Neighborhood Association. It is an evenly divided venture between uber developers East West Partners and Continuum Partners. They submitted their substantial credentials to the city in 2005 and were awarded the lucrative deal in 2006. They created the overall configuration of the transit portion of the project and how it interacts with the rest of the 19-acre site. They now coordinate the construction of the transit portion of the project, along with how this will interact with the rest of the development. They also have the right to buy several prime parcels of real estate surrounding the station, of which the proceeds go toward financing the infrastructure. More about this later.

"There are so many different projects advancing by different developers," Cannon said. "There are at least four or five projects on the undeveloped land west of the station (from 15th Street to 20th Street). "I think it goes to show the importance of this project in this community, that there are so many people directly and indirectly involved who are passionate about developing our transportation future and downtown."

In the last 25 years, the historic station has been woefully underutilized with small crowds wandering the 100,000-square-foot building waiting for a late Amtrak train or parking in the

adjacent lot. The new station will have far more to offer than just unpredictable Amtrak service. Along with the obvious duty of combining a dozen different modes of transportation, plans also call for office space, public art, restaurants, and public performance and congregation areas and underground parking, all filling the 19.5-acre site. Perhaps most interesting is the disposition of the landmark train building and how the historic structure would be used. Cannon's team had its own ideas but another group of development top-guns presented the case for a luxury boutique hotel that would encompass most, if not all, of the building.

The Union Station Alliance is headed by an impressive team of visionaries, architects and builders including Dana Crawford who, in the late 1960s, was the lever that lifted Larimer square from skid row to an upscale focal point of entertainment and shopping. She also pioneered Denver's loft rehabilitation rage in the 1990s and has gone on to successfully tackle some of the most difficult remodeling projects in downtown Denver. She is also a founder of the Oxford Hotel.

Other members of Union Station Alliance include Walter Isenberg of Sage Hospitality, which owns 63 hotels around the country – including the Oxford – and Ferd Belz, who developed the \$320 million Tabor Center. Their concept involves converting the 100,000-square-foot station into a boutique hotel with a lobby on the second floor, retail on the first floor and hotel rooms on the second and third floors that will be operated by the Oxford Hotel management team. The Oxford was recently voted the No. 1 hotel in Colorado and No. 47 in the United States by Condé Nast Traveler magazine. The group hopes to be equally successful with the Union Station hotel.

"I have been working on Union Station since 1982, so it's a really big thrill," Dana Crawford said. "I think for the Lower Downtown district this is kind of the major piece of the puzzle that's been waiting to be placed, and it's going to create a lot of jobs."

Crawford said repurposing and remodeling the historic train building has a budget of \$48 million and will bring 350 jobs created directly from construction and, later, hotel operations. This does not include jobs created by other businesses directly related to the hotel.

"It's an economic engine, there's no question about that," Crawford said.

Considering the 24-7 nature of the businesses that will operate in the compact Union Station Neighborhood, this will be the not-so-little engine that could. Along with the hotel creating a resort atmosphere, the multi-modal transportation facility will continue to grow in conjunction with FasTracks and virtually guarantee that businesses in this area of downtown grow with it.

"People think about FasTracks as a regional transportation program. Union Station is thought of as a multi-modal transportation hub. We think about Denver Union Station as a city (landmark) building. It had to be as much about downtown as the transportation needs. It has to be transportation first but not transportation only. It's about people, it's about the city, it's public spaces and the city all coming together," Cannon said.

There will also be a sizable office component in the north wing of the project headed by IMA Financial Group and built by the partnership of Rob Cohen, CEO of IMA Financial, and Ed Haselden of Haselden Construction, and designed by Anderson Mason Dale Architects. The five-story, 108,000-square-foot building single-handedly doubles the size of the current building with more than 200 people working in the building for IMA alone.

Cohen said the \$32 million project will be owned by himself and Haselden, along with a few key investors, then leased to his company. Cohen organized a similar situation with his current headquarters in the Millennium Financial Center. Cohen built that project in 2001, and it was fully leased almost immediately. With nearly perfect timing, he sold the building in 2008 and has leased back his space since that time. Once again, it's hard to argue with Cohen's timing as he breaks ground on his new office at the bottom of the market in what will easily be the hottest piece of real estate in all of Denver. In addition, it will be built to LEED Gold standards.

"It's one of my larger personal investments and it's a large investment for IMA," Cohen said. "There's obviously cost associated with a new building as opposed to renting, but it's a big part of who we are. We like to make a difference in the community. It's a high-profile project for the company and has a lot to do with our image and morale."

Cohen's company will occupy 65,000 square feet of the building with retail and public spaces occupying the first floor – a requirement of all developments in the Union Station neighborhood. A tenant for the rest of the building has not yet been found, but most companies won't sign on until bricks and mortar are out of the ground.

Everyone involved with Union Station's resurrection said it ranks high on their list of complex undertakings, but paying for the \$500 million worth of public infrastructure is "a Rube Goldberg set of sources," said Diane Barrett, chief projects officer for the City and County of Denver.

An entire magazine could be filled with the intricacies of organizing all the colorful squares that generated the awesome sum needed to finance the core purpose of Union Station. But in brief, the capital needed to finance loans comes from federal and state grants totaling \$180 million and another \$28 million from the Obama stimulus fund. There are \$27 million in proceeds from the sale of five development parcels within the 19-acre site. Master developer Union Station Alliance is under contract to buy all five of the parcels over a period of time and has already closed on three of them for \$7 million, with the final two worth \$20 million. Other property sales generated another \$10 million, and \$11.4 million came from the City of Denver. The final \$300 million comes from loans to be repaid by taxes generated from increased revenue at Union Station and money pledged by RTD.

With the diverse combination of inflated personalities and egos, and equally huge amounts of money, bureaucracy and statewide importance attached to it, the Union Station rehabilitation project will be historic on many levels. History is being made as this is written with the first phase of the transportation aspect of the project under way and IMA's office building set to break ground in April.



## Denver Union Station Will Be Transformed Into a LEED Gold Transit Hub and Hotel

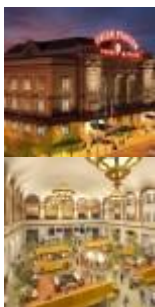
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May 2, 2012

By Andrew Michler, Inhabitat



Denver's vaunted Union Station – once the transportation gateway to the west – recently received the nod to be renewed as a contemporary vision of urbanity and clean transportation. The [Union Station Alliance](#)'s winning proposal is a [LEED Gold](#) restoration that will be anchored by a 130 room hotel, a retail center, public plaza, and a train hub connecting [Amtrak](#) with regional trains and buses. The location of the station, smack in the heart of Denver's popular LoDo neighborhood, helps weave together all the elements needed for a thriving downtown renaissance.



Please scroll to next page to continue reading.



As a multimodal transit system, the development will link Denver's neighborhoods to regional and national transportation systems — in its heyday the station saw more than 80 trains a day. An underground [bus hub](#), now under construction, will connect to the recently developed FasTracks light rail system and [Amtrak](#), in turn reclaiming the project as a national rail hub.

The Union Station Alliance, lead by restorationist [Dana Crawford](#) and developer [Sage Hospitality](#), has big plans to turn the storied building back into a vital tourist center. Developed for LEED Gold certification, most of the original barrel vaulted roofed building will be fully restored. A posh hotel will become an anchor tenet, and retail and six public plazas will be developed for a go-to destination downtown.

The [LoDo District](#) of Denver is an urban renewal magnet with vigorous development of residential and retail spreading north of downtown. Completion is anticipated for 2014. This is a very tight timeline considering the historic nature and scale of the project.

[Union Station Alliance](#) link.