

DUS News Digest

August 10, 2012 to August 17, 2012

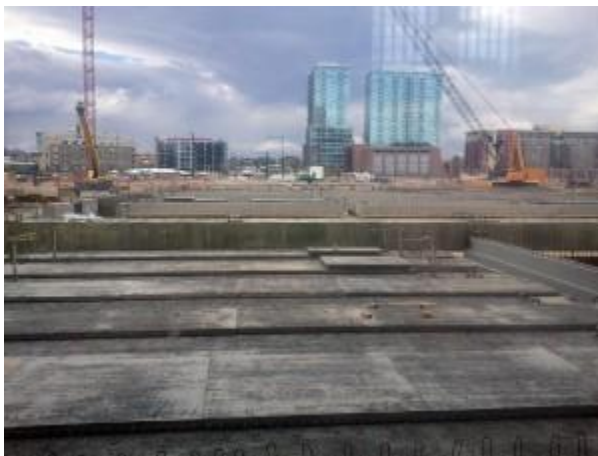
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August 11, 2012

By Ryan Dravitz, Denver Infill Blog

Today we will be focusing on the underground bus terminal right behind the historic station, along with the reconstruction of the 16th Street Mall in the Union Station area.

Looking out the northwest side of the historic station, workers are starting to cap and back fill the bus terminal (the dirt pile is beginning to get smaller). Stoplights are also beginning to be installed in preparation of rebuilding Wewatta Street.



Kiewit has a great webcam mounted on top of 1900 16th Street. Check out the link for more great angles of the entire project, as well as photos from the past two years. In this Kiewit image below, six of the eight Commuter Rail platforms are visible (the other two will be shifted down a bit towards 18th Street). Also visible on the left is the rectangular hole through which elevators, stairs, and escalators will provide vertical access between the underground pedestrian concourse and the street level. That access point is the Wewatta Pavilion, which will be a twin of the Chestnut Pavilion located by the Light Rail Station.



Heading over to the Mall, a lot of new concrete paving is underway, and portions are beginning to be completed. In the first photo you can see the new roadway under construction as well as new stop lights. In the second photo, the new wide sidewalks and multicolored concrete have been completed and new street trees planted.



The old railroad tracks are also being removed along 16th Street.



On the next Union Station update, we will focus on the 17th Street Gardens, as significant progress has been made.

August 14, 2012

By Dennis Huspeni, Denver Business Journal



An artist's rendition of the Union Station Alliance's proposed remodel of the interior of Denver Union Station.

The National Park Service has rejected the Union Station Alliance's request for "historic preservation certification" for its plan to remodel Denver Union Station to include a 130-room hotel, but left the door open for reconsideration.

That's according to an Aug. 7 letter the Park Service sent to USA, obtained by the Denver Business Journal, which states:

"Returning this National Register-listed station to a function that serves as a transportation hub is commendable. However, to be eligible for the federal tax incentives, the rehabilitation of the building must preserve its historic character and meet the program's Standards for Rehabilitation."

Parts of USA's plans don't meet those standards, the letter states. "Therefore, this project does not qualify as a certified rehabilitation, and is not eligible for the 20 percent investment tax credit for historic preservation," it says.

The Regional Transportation District board approved USA's \$48 million plan for remodeling the historic train depot in December.

USA, led by Sage Hospitality's President and CEO Walter Isenberg, declined a request Monday for an interview and instead responded via email.

Isenberg's email highlighted the following statement from the Park Service's six-page letter:

"In conclusion, recognizing that time is of the essence at this stage of your rehabilitation project, we would be willing to continue our review of the project upon receipt of substantive new information that addresses the issues raised in this letter. We appreciate the importance of the

project and significance of the Denver Union Station, and believe that if revised to address these issues the project can meet the program requirements."

In a statement, USA officials outlined their plan going forward: "Accordingly, Union Station Alliance is addressing the concerns and will be prepared to proceed with the project in short order."

They didn't provide specifics as to how the concerns would be addressed, if they planned on appealing the Park Service's ruling or if the project could proceed without the historic certification, and the accompanying 20 percent federal investment tax credits.

"The process we are going through is routine," according to USA's statement. "Projects of this nature are complex and require negotiation and refinement in the normal course of approval."

Park Service officials' concerns came from the USA's plans to install 16 dormers on the station's roof, build mezzanines between the first and second floors, change some windows to doors and "the removal of historic interior features, including the staircases."

"Those shed-roof dormers would visually crowd the historic hip-roof dormers, of which there are only two on each long side of both wings," the Park Service letter -- signed by Brian D. Goeken, chief of the Technical Preservation Services -- states.

The planned mezzanines "and related construction, as proposed, would erode the historic character of the building on both the exterior and the interior," according to the rejection letter.

The Park Service is part of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

In addition to the hotel rooms planned for the upper floors, the USA plan calls for retail and restaurants on the ground floor mixed in with ticketing and train/commuter rail operations.

The USA team includes Denver developer Dana Crawford, Larimer Associates, Milender White Construction Co., Tryba Architects, JG Johnson Architects and Ashkenazy Acquisition Corp.