

Denver Union Station
Land Use/Urban Design Break-out Group
May 8, 2008 - Meeting Summary

Public Space Design

The Public Space Design Selection Committee met on April 30 and selected four firms to interview. The firms are:

- Gustafson Guthrie Nichol, Ltd (GGN)
- Martha Schwartz
- PWP (Peter Walker) Landscape Architecture
- Hargreaves

Public presentation by the shortlisted firms will be Wednesday June 4, 5:30-9:30, Auraria Events Center

Design Standards and Guidelines

Key Concepts

- DUS located between two very different areas—LoDo and Commons
- Transportation is intertwined from LoDo through DUS to Commons
- Public space is threaded into built form and transportation is integral to public space
- All four sides of DUS have an established character—how does this character influence the adjacent edges of the DUS site?
- Shade/shelter from the sun in summer
- Capture changing light
- Views of the mountains, especially dramatic with changing glimpses

Expectations

- Refinement of how buildings make and shape spaces
- First floor is most important to pedestrian environment
- Integrate public space and building design
- Clear way finding and transparency
- All buildings require four-sided design
- Different uses create different expectations and opportunities for each building façade.
- Multiple gateway locations: light rail, bus entrances, commuter rail, historic station

Discussion

- Modern architecture started in transportation structures such as train sheds—carry forward the tradition of elegantly engineered structures
- Architecture that is contemporary, not replicative; prefer simple, modern, clean buildings to set off historic station
- DUS should provide a subtle transition from LoDo to Commons
- The west side (Commons side) of the site should look like a city
- The east side (LoDo side) should complement, not mimic the historic character

- Consider light and sun angles
- Where is the hinge between the LoDo and Commons on the site?
 - Perhaps the wing buildings should hint at what's beyond.
 - Is the train shed a demarcation between the two sides of the site or an integrating feature?
- Buildings form a U-shape around the commuter rail train shed area. Consider tightening up the massing and simplifying the shed component to create an outdoor room
- Do the existing Commons Design Guidelines adequately anticipate the relationship to DUS, especially along 17th Street and adjacent to the light rail platforms? (Note: the Commons Design Standards and Guidelines would need to be amended through a separate process)

Process Suggestions

- Visual preference survey as a means to develop guidelines. Use examples of existing buildings to build the vocabulary.
- Key components: proportion, rhythm and datum points
- Infill buildings can be instructive about what works and doesn't work
- Provide illustrative diagrams as standards and guidelines develop

Next meeting

June 5, 5:30-7:00 at Union Station Neighborhood Company (in the north wing of the Union Station); agenda items will include a tour, table of contents review, and intent (goal) statements