

Union Station Revitalization – Alteration to a Designated Heritage Property

Date:	June 9, 2009
To:	Toronto Preservation Board Toronto and East York Community Council
From:	Director, Policy and Research, City Planning Division
Wards:	Ward 28, Toronto Centre Rosedale
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council approve the proposed alterations to the property at 71 Front Street West. Union Station is designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act and is within the Union Station Heritage Conservation District.

This report addresses an application by the City of Toronto to “dig down” underneath the concourse area of Union Station in order to improve pedestrian circulation and provide for the introduction of two new GO concourses off York Street and Bay Street and a new retail area in a central concourse below the existing VIA concourse. In addition, other alterations to the building are being proposed including the reintroduction of pedestrian movement through the arches on the south wall of the Great Hall, the opening up of an originally planned passage from the Great Hall into the East Wing, and reconfiguring circulation areas in the York Street and Front Street Promenades. City Council has already approved the introduction of a glazed moat covering as a part of a previous proposal.

The above alterations are being accompanied by a substantial commitment to state of good repair work, including a comprehensive package of heritage rehabilitation and restoration on the interior and exterior of this landmark heritage property.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Division recommends that:

1. City Council approve the alterations to the heritage property at 71 Front Street West, substantially in accordance with the Heritage Impact Assessment Statement dated March 2009, prepared by Fournier, Gersovitz and Moss Architects and on file with the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services subject to the owner:
 - a. Prior to the issuance of any building or heritage permit for related work at 71 Front Street West including a permit for the demolition, excavation and/or shoring of the subject property, state of good repair or conservation work;

providing building permit and/or heritage permit plans and drawings including detailed descriptions / specifications to the satisfaction of the Manager, Heritage Preservation Services.

Implementation Points

Union Station is a National Historic site and is subject to a Heritage Easement Agreement between the Federal Government, The City of Toronto and the Greater Toronto Transit Authority. The approvals process is set out in a Collateral Agreement dated June 30, 2006. In addition to obtaining the necessary municipal approvals, the Union Station Revitalization Plan (USRP) is subject to the review and approval of Parks Canada and Heritage Preservation Services through a four-stage approval process.

The existing Collateral Agreement specifies that building permits will not be released until Stage 4 approval conditions have been completed to the satisfaction of Parks Canada and Heritage Preservation Services.

Financial Impact

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report. The overall financial impact of the USRP is covered in detail by the Union Station Revitalization Implementation report prepared by the City Manager, the Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer for the June 2, 2009 meeting of the Executive Committee.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on June 14, 15 and 16, 2005, Council adopted a clause to endorse the Historic Structures Report (HSR) for Union Station prepared by Fournier, Gersovitz and Moss Architects, April 2005 as part of the background research and documentation of existing conditions and as a guide for the revitalization of Union Station.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2005/agendas/council/cc050614/plt5rpt/cl008.pdf>

At its meeting of July 25, 26 and 27, 2006, Council adopted several recommendations pertaining to the revitalization project. The most comprehensive of these directed the City Manager to convene an interdivisional staff team, engage expert consultants as required to review models for the restoration and continued operation of Union Station, and consult with the Station's stakeholders, including GO, VIA and the TTC to bring forward a new strategy for the revitalization of Union Station.

(<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/council/cc060725/pof6rpt/cl011.pdf>)

Since then staff prepared two reports related to the revitalization of Union Station. These reports are available online at the following links:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-8803.pdf>

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/cc/bgrd/ex15.2a.pdf>

The decision document from the Council meeting on December 11, 12, and 13, 2007 Council (<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2007/cc/decisions/2007-12-11-cc15-dd.pdf>) defines on pages 41-44 inclusively the authorization to proceed with a variety of tasks and to report back to Executive Committee.

A report seeking authority to proceed with the design for the revitalization of the Station and the Northwest PATH connection was approved by Council at its meeting on December 1, 2 and 3, 2008. The report is available on-line at:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-16776.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

While plans for the revitalization of Union Station have been under study in various forms for a number of years, in December 2008 City Council approved the continuation of work on the current recommended approach as described in this report. Since that time, City staff and consultants have furthered design development to address issues related to the needs of the transportation operators, enhanced pedestrian flows, heritage approvals, sustainable design initiatives and a detailed analysis of the commercial viability of the project. The completion of design development documents including architectural, heritage restoration, mechanical, electrical and structural reports/drawings is needed in 2009 to support the commencement of the first phase of construction in 2010.

Taken as a whole, the project is a large and complex undertaking and its complexity requires a phased approach in terms of both design and construction. The interventions proposed constitute the bulk of planned work in heritage areas at the site, although additional proposals for comparatively minor alterations or heritage rehabilitation projects will be submitted as developed. Such projects will likely fall within the delegated authority of staff to approve (in addition to Parks Canada) within the Collateral Agreement approvals process.

In March of 2008 Parks Canada approved the revitalization of the station in principle. Through a series of meetings with Parks Canada it has been agreed that due to the scale of this construction project, approvals within the Collateral Agreement process will also be phased and based on separate projects and areas of the station. A presentation on the revitalization of the station was presented to the Steering Committee of Parks Canada on May 7, 2009 to gain Stage 1 approval for Phase 1 work (Phase 1 encompasses all of the work outlined in this report). Stage 1, Phase 1 Approval has now been granted by Parks Canada.

The Union Station Revitalization Project (USRP) is being undertaken alongside a number of other important initiatives that will improve the station physically and operationally. These include the Building Condition Assessment (BCA), a preservation project to address the building's overall state of good repair, the GO Train Shed Roof Renovations, the renovation and rehabilitation of the East Wing as the new offices of GO Transit and the expansion of the Union Station subway station. Each of these projects is following its own discrete approvals processes, although the construction schedules will need to be carefully aligned.

COMMENTS

Proposal

The USRP, as a distinct suite of alterations and rehabilitation projects, has three specific goals

- to enhance existing and provide additional circulation routes through and around the building that will accommodate the anticipated increase in pedestrian traffic
- to excavate a new “dig down” level below a portion of the station and train tracks that will allow the construction of two new GO concourses
- to restore and enhance the station, celebrating its remarkable architecture and cultural significance, and making it a destination in its own right

To accomplish these goals the project proposes several interventions that affect the historic fabric of the complex. The key components are

- rehabilitation and restoration of the Great Hall
- rehabilitation and restoration of the main level of the West Wing
- changes to incorporate the main level of the East Wing into the complex
- changes to the east side of the Front Street Moat
- creation of a continuous Promenade below the Head House
- rehabilitation and restoration of the VIA Concourse
- excavations to create new GO Concourses areas and new retail spaces
- changes to the copper roof to accommodate HVAC louvers.

To facilitate and inform the heritage approvals process, a Stage 1 Heritage Impact Assessment Statement (HIAS) was prepared by conservation architects Fournier, Gersovitz and Moss in consultation with NORR, the project architects. The purpose of the HIAS was to provide reviewing authorities with sufficient information to grant Stage 1 approval for the alterations necessary to implement the core goals.

The Stage 1 HIAS identifies those components of the proposed work that fall within zones possessing high heritage value and reviews each to determine the nature of the impact on the heritage features of the building. It then proposes mitigation measures to ensure the compatibility of new work with the heritage character of the station. Additionally, the HIAS includes a comprehensive structural report and engineering risk analysis prepared by NORR. The purpose of that section of the report is to document the structural interventions proposed (including excavating underneath the viaduct area to the south of the headhouse and underpinning the existing structure to create a new lower basement level), to evaluate their impact on the overall heritage conservation strategy for Union Station and to provide a discussion on risk management including mitigation strategies.

Heritage Comments

The proposal calls for the excavation of new concourse areas, the rehabilitation of the headhouse of the station and the expansion of pedestrian promenades and other circulation areas. Within the station complex, the Great Hall stands out as the key heritage resource on the site. Further, the relationship of connecting ramps and circulation of spaces including the Great Hall, the West Waiting Room, Departures Concourse, Arrivals Corridors and the lower Arrivals Concourse form a sequence of circulation and spatial inter-relationships that make up the essential heritage character of Union Station. The original program of inter-city train travel is reflected in both the external expression and organization of the architectural elements and the key internal circulation elements that remain largely intact.

The contemporary operational demands on Union Station challenge these original spatial relationships. The passenger train access which originally came via central stairs from the departures concourse now consumes the entire train platform and the limitation of platform space demands the highest level of vertical connection possible between the platforms and the lower circulation spaces. In addition the proposed “dig down” and associated retail opportunities in areas of new construction and within heritage areas of the building will pose both structural risks to the building and to the visual and spatial integrity of the interior.

Heritage Impact Assessment

The HIAS incorporates research and conclusions from the HSR and was written according to the *Standard and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* (2005). The final version of the Stage 1 HIAS integrates comments provided by both Parks Canada and Heritage Preservation Services during regularly scheduled project meetings.

As the detail of architectural design and mitigation is necessarily broadly understood (in some cases schematic) at this stage of the project, the Stage 1 HIAS outlines the key interventions sector by sector within the context of existing conditions and prevailing heritage character. On the whole, the conservation strategy balances potential negative impacts with potential positive impacts and emphasizes the parallel but integral mitigation that restoration work will provide to the benefit of the station complex as a whole. Significant heritage rehabilitation work within the HIAS includes the rehabilitation of the West Waiting Room (underneath the previously restored skylight), preservation and restoration of the Great Hall, the removal of unsympathetic additions and restoration of the North Ticket Counters, restoration of the ramp and the skylight over the ramp to the Great Hall, preservation of the Front Street Promenade, York Street entrances, the VIA Concourse and complete masonry repair and restoration on the exterior of the building.

Where impacts are unavoidable due to evolving operational requirements, the HIAS suggests design solutions that are sensitive to the heritage character of the area and the character-defining elements to be affected. In general, changes to the existing circulation systems and the rehabilitation of back-of-house spaces into public spaces respect and employ the Beaux Arts planning principles of symmetrical and axial design. Additionally, the HIAS identifies opportunities for additional restoration work within areas of minor impact.

Retail Uses

Where new commercial uses will be introduced into (or adjacent to) areas of heritage value, the evolving conservation plan should create the parameters and limits to future interventions. In this way, heritage conservation principles shall not be subordinate to economic imperatives and perceived commercial viability. Such an approach not only provides a high level of protection for the heritage resource, it also ensures the secondary benefit of protecting and creating a unique landmark location for potential commercial partners. Tenant Design guidelines will be an important part of this evolving stewardship imperative.

Structural Intervention and Excavation

The engineering solutions that are proposed are intended to ensure constructability, performance and maintain the heritage character of the original structural support system. While an analysis of the technical solutions provided by the consultant is outside the expertise of Heritage Preservation Services staff, it is noted that the most intensive construction activity will occur within the areas of least heritage character. In this way, the proposal minimizes the impact of the intervention on the heritage values of the station.

This portion of the HIAS was reviewed by the structural engineering staff of Parks Canada.

Next Steps

In the next step of this project, a Stage Two submission will be prepared and submitted to Heritage Preservation Services and Parks Canada that presents detailed design plans and drawings for each intervention and provides further refinements to impact mitigation, protection and the proposed rehabilitation of heritage fabric. Subsequent reviews within the Collateral Agreement approvals process will continue to be structured to protect the heritage values and the character-defining elements of the Union Station National Historic Site during this period of significant transformation.

Conclusion

The challenge for the execution of the Union Station Revitalization Project is to satisfy contemporary needs while preserving the original fabric and legibility of the original systems and fabric. How effectively heritage conservation will be executed for the building will largely come from design mitigation, rehabilitation and restoration of existing heritage fabric and the pursuit of opportunities to interpret the historic function and fabric of the building within areas of change or transformation. It will also come in the form of close monitoring during periods of construction. The USRP addresses these pressing operational requirements and does so with due regard to the *Standard and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* (2005).

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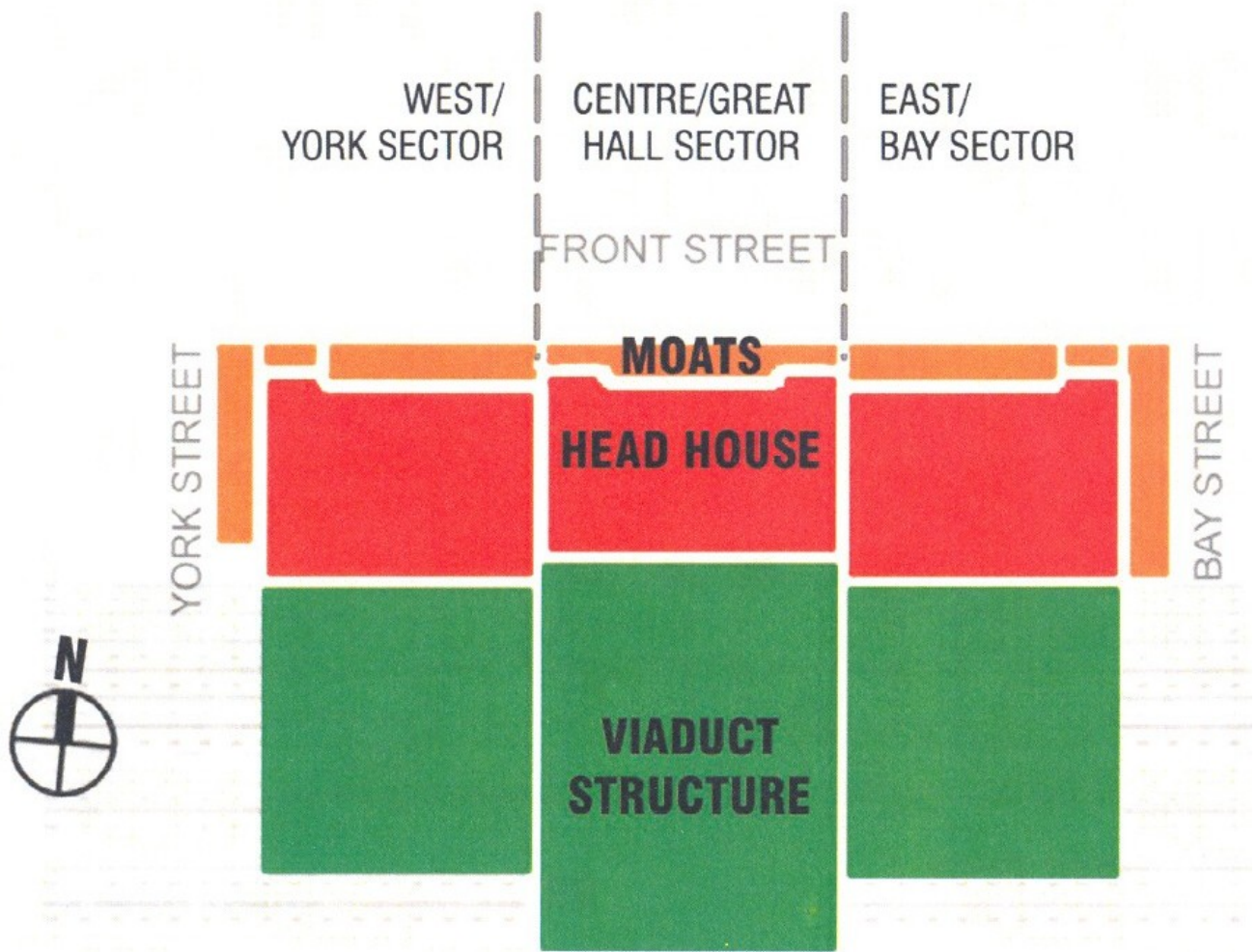
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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No. 1 – Sector Overview
Attachment No. 2 – Building Plans
Attachment No. 3 – Great Hall Arches (proposed)
Attachment No. 4 – Great Hall Historic Photo
Attachment No. 5 – Waiting Room Historic Photo

SECTOR OVERVIEW

ATTACHMENT NO. 1

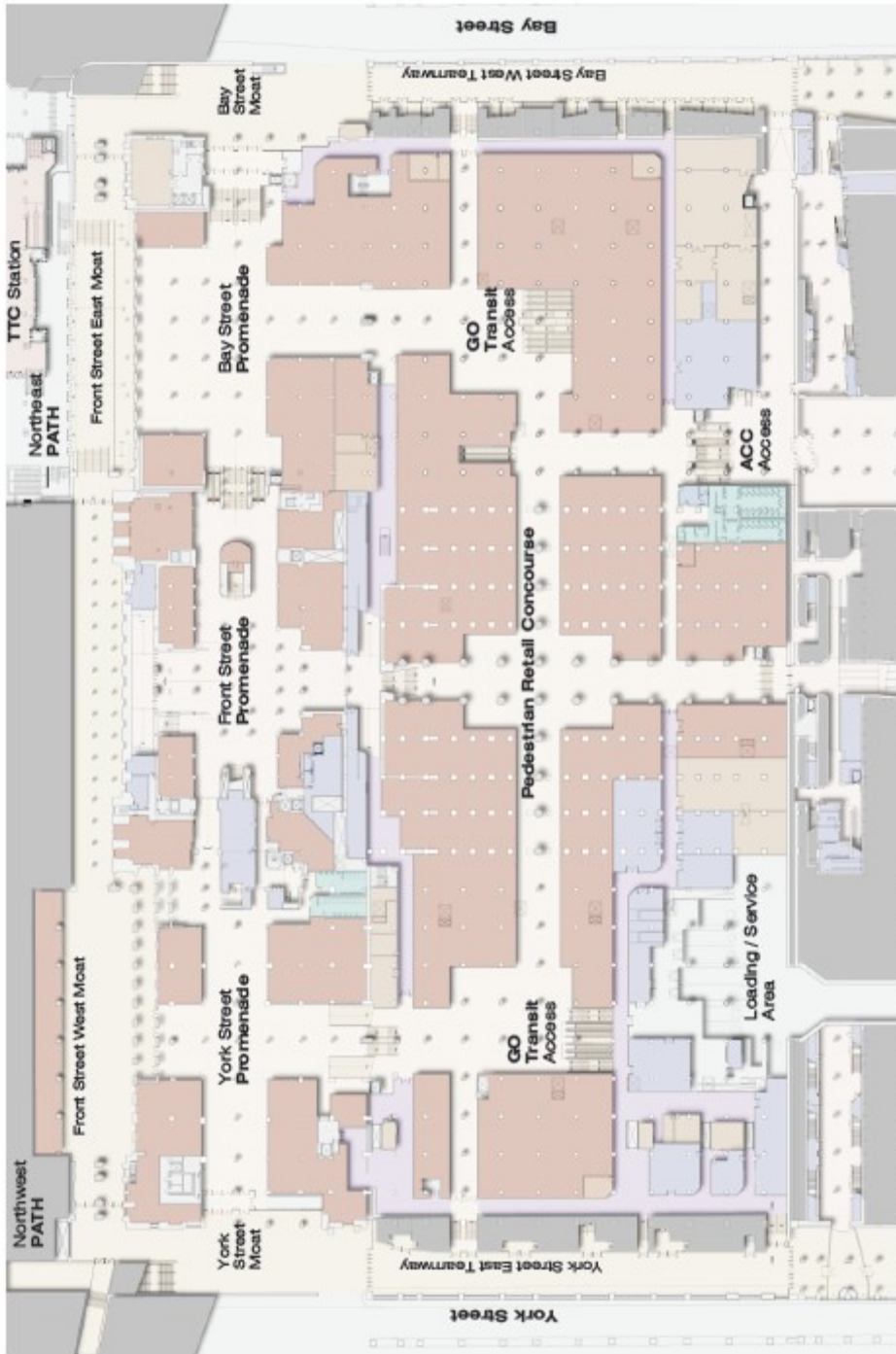




Union Station Revitalization Project / Great Hall / Concourse Level

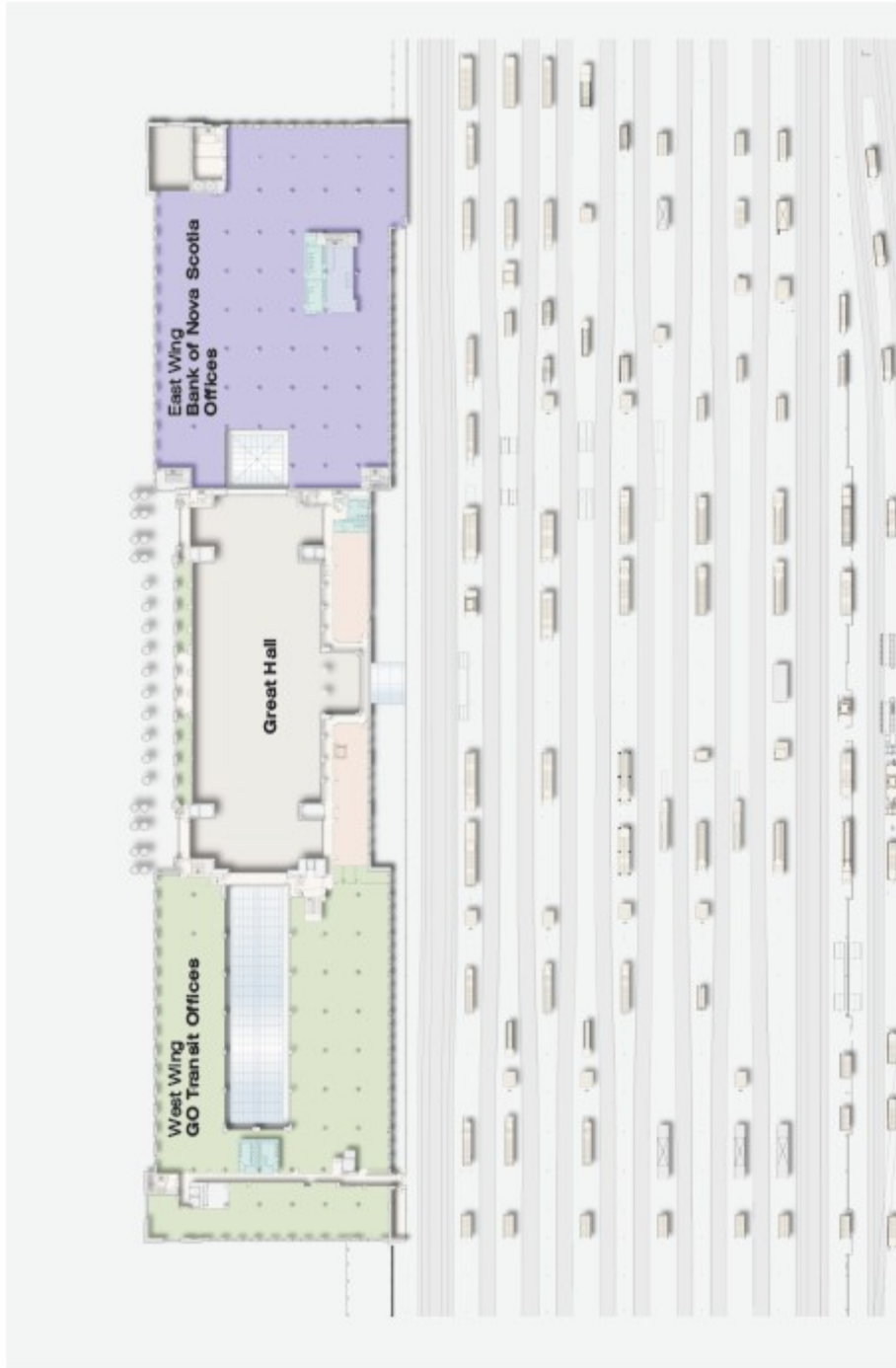
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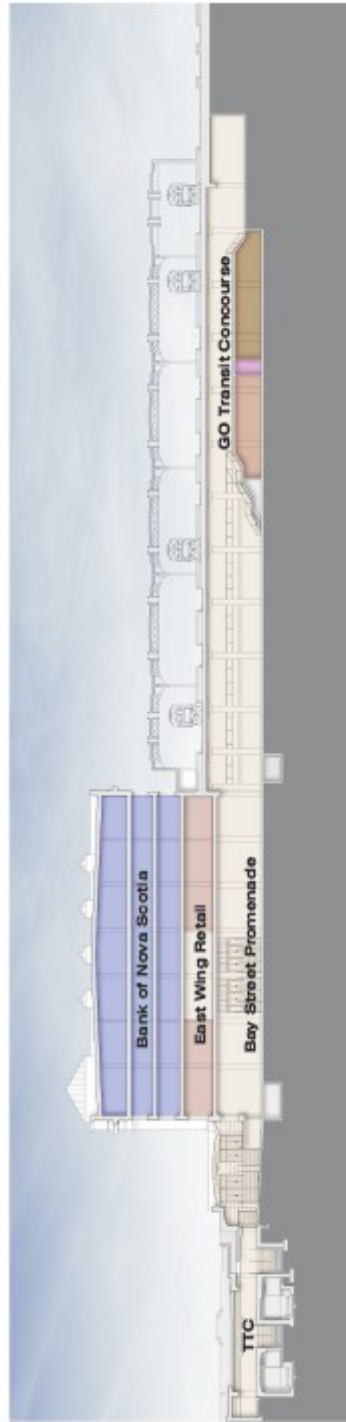
Union Station Revitalization Project / Promenade / Pedestrian Retail Level

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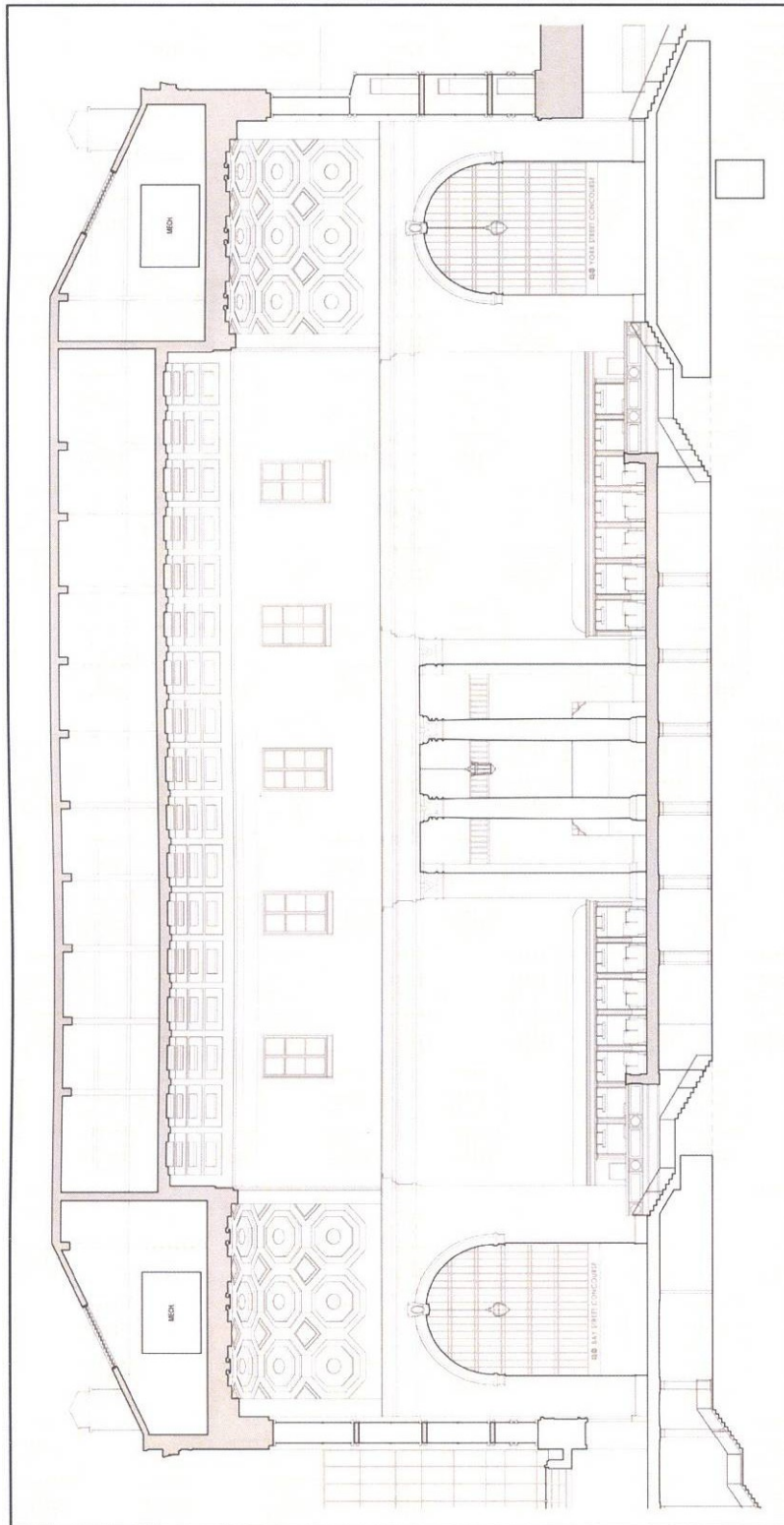
Union Station Revitalization Project / Typical Upper Level

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Union Station Revitalization Project / North/South Section through East Wing

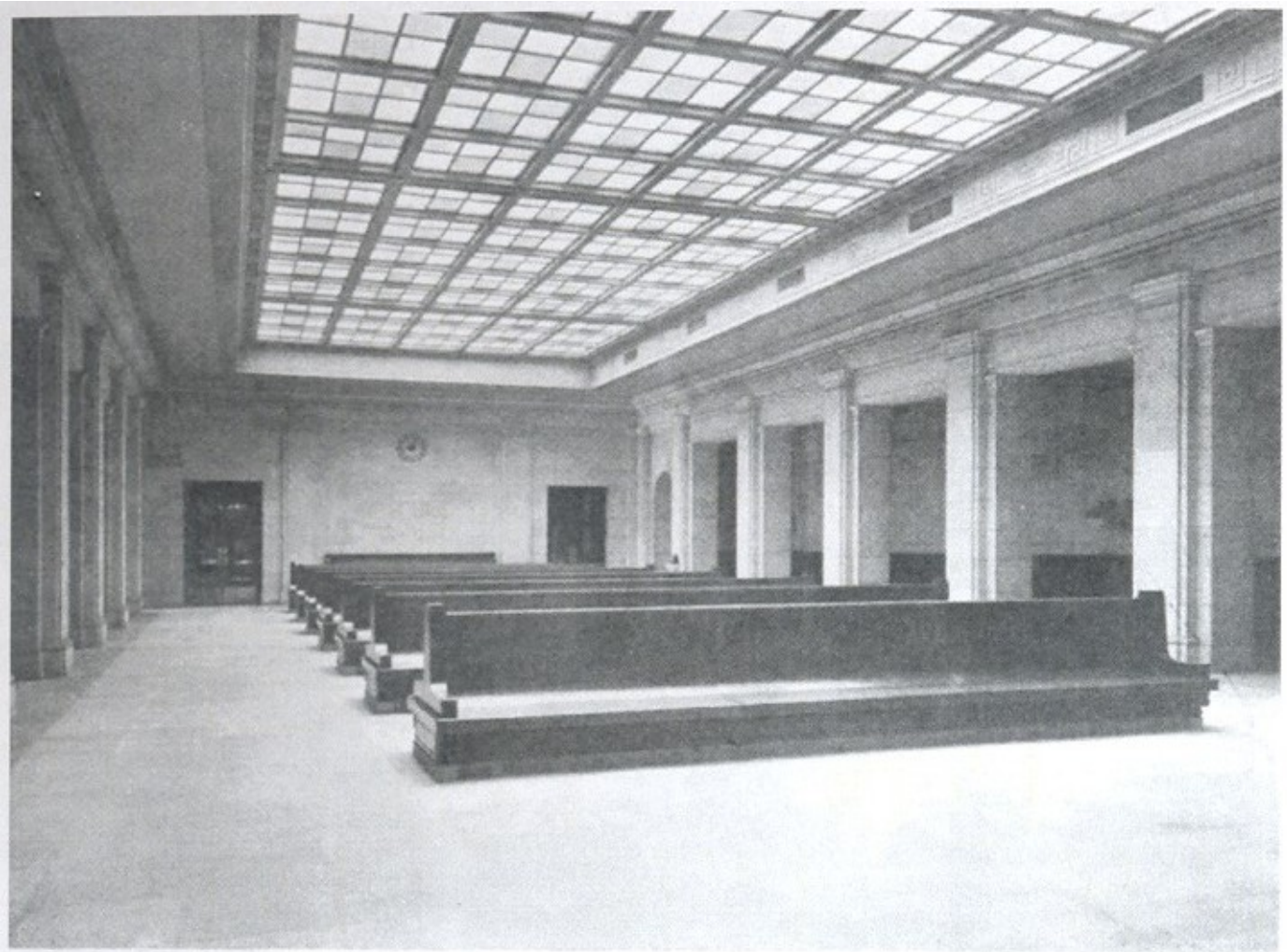
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Great Hall, Proposed Section looking south showing arches open



Historic Photo of the Great Hall looking West.
Ticket offices add human scale to Great Hall, (Date unknown)



Historic photo of the Waiting Room looking west (1924)