



UNION STATION

Master Plan

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The vision for the future of Union Station is stronger and this Plan is much improved as a result of the many thoughtful contributions we received.

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PREFACE

In May of 2004, the City of Toronto commissioned a Public Consultation Process and Peer Review of the Draft Master Plan for Union Station as submitted by City of Toronto staff in January of 2004. The objective of requiring a consultation process and plan review was to identify any modifications to the Plan that might be necessary through an independent Peer Review. Although atypical of a Peer Review process, Council recognized the need to consult broadly on the high-level principles that would direct the development of the Station over the long-term, and as such a requirement for extensive public consultation was included in the terms of reference for the study.

At the initiation of the study, while it was clear that modifications would be needed to enhance the Plan and to add clarity, the extent to which the Plan would need to be revised remained a contested issue: whereas some favoured maintaining a moderate and contained vision for the Station that ensured current planning could continue unfettered, other voices advocated for a bolder, more visionary plan that would address larger issues – such as the future of the trainshed and the air rights above the Station.

Sometimes, the easy way forward is not the right way. Following our consultations and assessments, the technical underpinnings of the draft Master Plan have remained intact and its overall direction has been affirmed. However, failure to clearly articulate the vision related to several substantive issues has been identified as a major, problematic gap. While Master Planning must be considerate of implementation constraints, it must not be solely shaped by the present day complexities in ensuring that a vision can become reality. A prime consideration has been to ensure the long-term relevance of the Master Plan, as opposed to shying away from issues that are difficult to confront in the short-term.

The Master Plan for Union Station presents a one-time opportunity to imagine, dream, and put forth the guiding principles and policy framework that will ensure the Station complex contributes to no less than the thriving of the downtown, the fruition of the City of Toronto's plans for a dynamic Waterfront, and the vitality of the entire region. In essence, Union Station holds the capacity to be about great city building – its Master Plan must reflect this possibility. To do so, its vision must embrace complexity, reflect the confidence of the City, and resonate with users, operators, residents of Toronto, the GTA, and beyond.

The outcomes of this study include both a Peer Review and the Master Plan. The Peer Review (Part 2 of this document) presents highlights and analysis of the current (January 2004) Draft Master Plan based on both our consultations and our technical evaluation, and identifies key recommendations that have been integrated into this Master Plan.

Following our consultations and assessments, the technical underpinnings of the draft Master Plan have remained intact and its overall direction has been affirmed.



FOREWORD

Great cities evolve, sometimes by design, and often through planning and mediated strategic actions that are the product of foresight. The purchase of Union Station by the City of Toronto in 2000 has come to be about no less than facilitating great city building. This key move ensured that the vital transportation functions that the Station contributes to the City of Toronto will remain intact and the building will be improved to a state of good repair. It has also demanded that we think carefully about Union Station as a treasured historic structure, as a link to our Waterfront, and as a catalyst for revitalizing the core of our City.

The Master Plan for Union Station is the next piece in a planning continuum seeking to bring a great vision for the Station to fruition. By outlining the key initiatives, structuring principles, guiding principles and objectives that will ensure the vitality of the Station, this Master Plan sets out a strong and clear framework that protects transportation uses and public interests while allowing for visionary interventions as warranted.

This framework has evolved throughout the course of the Peer Review of the Union Station Draft Master Plan. This was a result of an extensive consultation process that has sought to engage operators, adjacent land owners, special interest groups, Toronto City Council, and members of the public. Has consensus been reached? Inevitably, when diverging voices are heard, at times, perspectives differ. However, we are confident that this Master Plan negotiates tensions while offering a collective vision for Union Station. This vision is transportation centered, responsive to the needs and demands of both pedestrians and its urban context, rooted in the long-term success of the building, and most importantly, bold and optimistic.

Our great City demands no less.

Office for Urbanism

R. E. Millward & Associates

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Union Station handles more people traffic than Pearson International Airport, more in fact, than any other building in Canada.



INTRODUCTION

Union Station is essential to the future of this City.

Its importance continues to increase.
Currently, Union Station is dilapidated, difficult to navigate, congested, and historically degraded.
Yet, it has underutilized spaces and tremendous untapped potential.
Now. Imagine a restored & revitalized Union Station.
The City of Toronto did...

A high-level policy document

The Master Plan embraces a clear and strong vision for the future of the Station that is rooted in the policy framework outlined in the Draft Master Plan (January 2004). As a high-level policy document, it is designed to direct decision-making as a specific concept for the Station continues to evolve and take shape. As a National Historic Site, the Master Plan must respect its history and enhance its historic setting inspired by the City Beautiful movement. The intent has been to generate a clear, concise policy framework that is rigorous in its scope, visual in its articulation, and long-term with respect to its relevance.

A Master Plan rooted in existing studies

The Master Plan is an amalgam of various policy documents related to Union Station that have been generated by the City of Toronto over the past 15 years, including the Railway Lands East Secondary Plan, the Union Station Heritage Character Statement (1989), Union Station Pedestrian Circulation Plan (1991/2001), the Union Station Heritage Guidelines (2001) and the Commemorative Integrity Statement (2002). It generally affirms the policies outlined in these documents, incorporates and integrates them within the Master Plan and, where appropriate, provides a greater level of detail. In addition, various high-level policy statements are further articulated and tied to specific outstanding objectives and “actions” that are the tangible next steps necessary to make the vision for the Station a reality.

Positioned to be relevant and useful

The complexity of the Station, in terms of its operating environment, demands considerable negotiation throughout the implementation of detailed concept and functional plans. Given the need to ensure this Master Plan is useful and relevant in directing implementation, it has been necessary to avoid prescribing specific design details.

Because we understand Union Station to be a **multi-modal transportation hub** for the region, the Master Plan must uphold transportation functions within the Station complex as primary.

Because we understand Union Station to be a **public space**, the Master Plan must sufficiently protect, enhance and promote public access.

Because we understand Union Station to be a **gateway** to the City of Toronto, the Master Plan must ensure that Union Station represents the City's civic pride and beauty.

Because we understand Union Station as a **link to the downtown & Waterfront**, the Master Plan must address its context by seeking to extend the porosity of the Station complex to its surroundings.

Union Station handles more than 63 million passengers every year.

Local Connections

- 96 percent of Toronto residents live within 400m of TTC service ⁱ
- 20 million TTC passengers pass through Union Subway Station every year or 75,000 per day ⁱⁱ

[i] Toronto Transit Commission; Operating Statistics, 2002.

[ii] City of Toronto; Union Station By the Numbers, http://www.toronto.ca/union_station/numbers.htm, 2004.

Regional Connections

- 160,000 GO Transit passengers pass through Union Station on a regular work day or 41 million per year ⁱⁱⁱ
- GO Transit serves a population of 5,000,000 in an 8,000 km² area ^{iv}

[iii] City of Toronto; Union Station By the Numbers, http://www.toronto.ca/union_station/numbers.htm, 2004.

[iv] *ibid.*

Continental Connections

- Union Station is VIA Rail's busiest station - with over 50 percent of all VIA passengers (2.39 million per year) arriving or departing through its platforms ^v
- AMTRAK's 22,000 mile route system is made accessible through VIA-AMTRAK joint partnership ^{vi}

[v] City of Toronto; Union Station By the Numbers, http://www.toronto.ca/union_station/numbers.htm, 2004.

[vi] AMTRAK.

Global Connections

- The proposed Air Rail Link will connect Union Station to Pearson International Airport
- By mid 2008, Union Station could provide direct air-rail transport, linking it by air to 25 Canadian, 43 American, and 42 International cities.



Operators (GO, VIA, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), and others), and Parks Canada (which has jurisdiction with respect to interventions due to the heritage designation of the building), will be involved in ensuring that the Station meets their respective requirements, both in relation to transportation considerations and heritage issues. The Master Plan, however, is designed to provide the guiding principles and to recommend key design moves that will facilitate the overall long-term vision of the Station.

Acknowledging context: both geographically and politically

Significant consideration has been given to the context of Union Station, as outlined in Part 3.3 of this document. Recognizing that it must be understood as an entire city block with multiple frontages, it is necessary to ensure the Station complex effectively and eloquently interfaces and integrates with the public realm. But the notion of context has greater implications than just urban design for a station that hosts over 63 million passenger trips a year – the Master Plan acknowledges Union Station as fundamental to regional and national movement, both in terms of travel and commuting. As such, policy directives have been identified to advocate for a stronger role for other governments in facilitating the recommendations identified within this Master Plan.

A Master Plan summary: the 4 Big Moves

The future vision of Union Station is firmly embedded in, and seeks to contribute to, great city building in the City of Toronto. To do so, four Big Moves have been identified that summarize the essence of the direction contained within the Master Plan, moves that are later entrenched in policy and outlined in more detail (see Part 1.2). These moves are fundamental to ensuring the Station is revitalized in such a way that big thinking can continue to both incubate and materialize.

Additional technical studies

In some instances additional technical studies are recommended that are beyond the scope of the Master Plan but are necessary to better understand opportunities and constraints related to specific issues. These studies are identified in Section 4.8 of the Master Plan.

A Master Plan refined through consultation

To ensure the relevance of the Master Plan, it has been refined through extensive consultation with GO, VIA, and TTC operators; adjacent landowners; an advisory committee to Council – known as the Union Station Revitalization Public Advisory Group; the Save Union Station Committee; interested members of the public and the Union Pearson Group, the proponent selected by the City of Toronto to restore, develop and operate the Station. The objective has been to generate, as much

as possible, a broad understanding of user and operator needs to ensure that the principles of the Master Plan are appropriate, pertinent and meaningful. It is hoped that these principles will provide clarity and direction as specific design details are negotiated and subsequently implemented.

Components and ownership of the Station complex

The Station complex is composed of the following major elements:

- the station building (or Head House) at both ground and concourse levels;
- the moats along Front Street, turning south along both Bay and York Streets to the start of the teamways at the viaducts;
- the teamways running south from the moats along both Bay and York Streets;
- the trainshed, its platforms and tracks;
- the VIA concourse;
- the east GO concourse and planned west GO concourse; and
- the service areas directly beneath the arrival/departure hall currently used for storage, mechanical uses, parking and loading docks.

The City of Toronto owns all the lands and the building south of Front Street between York and Bay Streets north of the Canadian National Railway's High Line, plus the York West Teamway. GO Transit owns the rail corridor roughly stretching between the Don River and Strachan Avenue, and the former CP Express site across Bay Street, including the Bay East Teamway. Between York and Bay Streets, GO Transit owns a 27 foot high three-dimensional stratum or envelope through the City of Toronto's property which houses the trainshed, tracks and platforms. The City of Toronto owns the building below and the air space above the GO envelope.

Several other entities have leasehold or other contractual rights to space in the Station and neighbouring properties enjoy rights of access through the block for pedestrian routes.

Study Area

The Union Station complex, as described, in addition to the surrounding urban environment, comprises the study area for the Master Plan. Policies related to both the redevelopment and revitalization of the Station are contained within the Master Plan, as are policies that seek to promote the integration of the Station into its urban environment.

Master Plan requirement

The Secondary Plan for the Railway Lands East (found in Section 17 of the City of Toronto Official Plan) defines the requirements for the development of a Master Plan for Union Station. The Secondary Plan notes that the retention of Union Station as

a transportation terminal will be ensured and will include the satisfactory functioning of the Station complex. Towards this end it is required that the Master Plan for Union Station will:

- respect the historic significance of Union Station;
- ensure transportation use is primary function of Union Station;
- provide for each of the necessary transportation functions in a safe efficient and coherent manner;
- ensure flexibility for expansion and future changes of use;
- ensure that Union Station is fully integrated with its environs; and
- establish civic design quality

The principles of this Master Plan are explicitly structured to be consistent with the requirements outlined in the Secondary Plan.

Organization of the Master Plan

This document is organized in four Parts.

Part 1 contains the wider long-term vision for Union Station, and the Big Moves that are necessary for the vision of the Station to come to fruition. The Vision and Big Moves are supported by the policy context outlined in Part 3.

Part 2 contains a summary of the process that lead to the creation of this Master Plan, including the methodology and approach for the Peer Review. An overview of the outcomes of the Peer Review is also provided.

Part 3 contains the Plan. It begins with a brief historical overview of Union Station, continuing with a context analysis and a description of the Station complex. The extensive policy context that informs the principles and objectives is then outlined. The final section contains the initiatives, principles and objectives that provide the overall framework for the restoration, development and revitalization of the Station complex.

Part 4 contains the implementation policies necessary to address important high-level planning issues, including recommendations related to a Master Plan review, governance of the Station, and additional studies that remain outstanding.

The Master Plan is not, and does not presume to be the final word on the future of Union Station. It is a framework plan that seeks to promote key structuring initiatives - maintaining and promoting transportation first, heritage restoration, and revitalization - while entrenching policies that will serve to guide decision-making as opportunities for change arise.

