

May 18, 2015

Ms. Beverley Swaim-Staley
President, Union Station Redevelopment Corporation
10 G Street NE, Suite 504
Washington DC 20002

Dear Beverley:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the full final draft of the Washington Union Station Historic Preservation Plan. The Union Station Preservation Coalition is grateful to have been involved at important points throughout the fourteen-month drafting process for the preservation plan.

As the preservation plan notes, the non-governmental historic preservation community previously was not directly involved in any aspect of planning at Union Station. Nevertheless, under your leadership, the Union Station Redevelopment Corporation has established new productive relationships with our public-interest groups and has welcomed representatives of the Union Station Preservation Coalition to help guide development of the Historic Preservation Plan. This is a remarkable change for the better which gives the Preservation Coalition confidence that historic preservation will be a top priority for future undertakings at the landmark station.

We are pleased that Building Conservation Associates, Inc. has produced a very good Historic Preservation Plan. The preservation plan conveys a tremendous amount of valuable information and useful guidance. It is thoughtful, well organized, and ably presented. The plan's graphic documentation is especially effective and essential to the reader's comprehension. We appreciate the leadership of the preservation plan's sponsors, USRC, Federal Railroad Administration, Union Station Investco, Amtrak, and Akridge. We thank BCA and its project team for their significant contribution to the long-term protection and preservation of Washington Union Station.

The Preservation Coalition has reviewed the final draft plan, with a focus on the sections which were not reviewed by the stakeholders during the work sessions. We would like to share three comments:

First, we respectfully recommend that the introduction to the Historic Preservation Plan should be revised to emphasize the Preservation Philosophy and its meaning for the Second Century Master Development Plan. The introduction should observe that there is room within the rehabilitation standard for the use of restoration, preservation, and reconstruction techniques for spaces within the historic station complex. Furthermore, we recommend that the preservation plan's introduction should clearly indicate that the best practices of historic preservation call for a balance of conserving the historic fabric of the 1907 station complex with allowing compatible changes to modernize the 21st century transportation center. There is no inherent conflict between historic preservation and effective use of the station.

Second, we respectfully recommend that the introduction to the Historic Preservation Plan should be expanded to incorporate examples of the preservation plan's guidance to maximize how historic preservation can benefit users of Union Station. For example, the introductory section might include references to the guidance for:

- *Columbus Plaza*: Repair the memorial fountain to reanimate the plaza. [Section 4.2, page 48]

- *Center Portico of South Elevation:* Inspect and document the condition of this portico to develop an appropriate repair program. [Section 3.1.4]
- *Main Hall:* Remove retail from vestibules between Main Hall and Retail Concourse to reinstate circulation and improve wayfinding. [Section 4.2, page 64]
- *East Hall-North Retail and Columbus Club:* Restore the original double-height volume for use as restaurant. [Section 4.2, page 84]
- *Retail Concourse:* Restore the sense of grandeur and open volume of the former passenger concourse by removing, modifying, or replacing the existing mezzanine, by reconstructing the existing concourse ends, and by relocating the non-historic stairs and escalators to reinstate circulation. [Section 4.2, page 75]
- *Umbrella Sheds and Cast-iron Columns:* Salvage and re-use character-defining elements of the rail yard. [Section 4.2, page 61]
- *Design Guidelines for New Construction:* To ensure design excellence, establish, communicate, and implement guidelines for new construction throughout the historic station complex. [Section 4.2.1]

Third, we respectfully recommend that USRC and the preservation plan’s sponsors should ensure that the Historic Preservation Plan is readily accessible to the interested public. We suggest that hard copies of the preservation plan should be available at USRC, DC Historic Preservation Office, DC Preservation League, DC Historical Society, public libraries, and DC universities. In addition, online access to the Historic Preservation Plan should be provided on USRC’s website. In our view, full public access to the Historic Preservation Plan will help assure that the public has a meaningful role in the master planning process.

Finally, the Union Station Preservation Coalition endorses the Historic Preservation Plan as an essential planning tool for the proposed expansion of Union Station and construction of Burnham Place. In closing, we note with approval that the case studies of other historic stations presented in Section 4.3 of the preservation plan each demonstrate the irrefutable benefits of historic preservation. As the Historic Preservation Plan states: “In every case, historic preservation both attracted and enhanced the experience of contemporary rail and station users, from long-distance travelers, to commuters, to tourists, to local residents.” Thus, historic preservation is a proven strategy for ensuring that Washington Union Station remains a beautiful, vibrant center of urban life in the Nation’s Capital.

Thank you for considering the views of the Union Station Preservation Coalition.

Sincerely,

Lisa Dale Jones, President
Capitol Hill Restoration Society

Bill Wright and Erik Hein, Trustees
Committee of 100 on the Federal City

Rebecca Miller, Executive Director
DC Preservation League

Rob Nieweg, Field Director
National Trust for Historic Preservation