



Mountain Metropolitan Transit - City of Colorado Springs

# Passenger Rail Station Location Study

Executive Summary

December 2022







**The State of Colorado, various local jurisdictions, Amtrak, and other proponents have advanced the development of new and expanded passenger rail services, all with critical connections in Colorado Springs, the state's second-largest metropolitan area.**



# WHAT IS THE PASSENGER RAIL STATION LOCATION STUDY?

Rail service shaped modern-day Colorado Springs. Historically, freight and passenger services transported raw materials, finished goods, and the people who developed and built Colorado Springs. For decades, passenger rail service was the backbone of the transport network; until the post-World War II expansion of the Interstate Highway System, attainable personal vehicle ownership, and broader access to commercial air travel.

The last passenger trains stopped in Colorado Springs in 1971. Resuming passenger rail service in Colorado Springs and across Colorado has been an ongoing debate for many years. However, there is new motivation and a material effort to redefine and implement passenger rail service that meets the needs of modern Colorado residents and visitors. The State of Colorado, various local jurisdictions, Amtrak, and other proponents have advanced the development of new and expanded passenger rail services, all with critical connections in Colorado Springs, the state's second-largest metropolitan area. To support this effort, the Colorado Legislature created the Front Range Passenger Rail (FRPR) District in 2021 as a new taxing district to study, design, operate, and maintain a new passenger rail line; this corridor stretches from Pueblo to Fort Collins and will include Wyoming and New Mexico in the future.

Recent planning efforts to advance passenger rail motivated the City of Colorado Springs' (City) Mountain Metropolitan Transit to initiate the Passenger Rail Station Location Study (Station Location Study or the Study). The study aims to identify the preferred location of a new passenger rail station in central Colorado Springs. While the timeframes for the development of passenger rail are still being determined, the City endeavored to be proactive and ready should passenger rail service become a reality. With a preferred and supported station location identified through this study, the community will be prepared when (or if) the FRPR District, CDOT, Amtrak, or other proponents advance new passenger rail service to Colorado Springs.

The desired outcome of the Station Location Study was to identify the optimum location for a station to provide the best access and highest benefits to City residents and the Pikes Peak region.



# WHAT SITES WERE CONSIDERED?

The study examined a wide range of potential station locations across Colorado Springs. A basic premise of the study was the future passenger rail would follow the existing freight rail corridor through the city. Potential sites were selected based on their proximity to the freight rail corridor, and various attributes, such as connectivity to activity centers, walkability, and potentially available lands, were considered. Stakeholders were also polled to help inform the range of considered sites.

**A**



## Fontanero Area (A)

This area is north of Fontanero Street on the east side of the railroad mainline, just west of Fountain Creek and the Pikes Peak Greenway Trail. Much of the land in the area is publicly owned, including the current Colorado Springs Utilities property.

**B**



## Denver & Rio Grande Depot Area (B)

This area is situated along the railroad mainline from Sierra Madre Street to Monument Creek; and between Pikes Peak Avenue and Colorado Avenue, within the historic depot building grounds.

**C**



## America The Beautiful Park Area (C)

This area is generally bounded by Colorado Avenue to the north, Cimarron Street to the south, Cimino Drive to the west, and Sierra Madre Street to the east. Major attractions in the area include America the Beautiful Park and the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum.

**D**



## Drake Power Station Area (D)

This area is South of Cimarron Street and west of Conejos Street, at the Martin Drake Power Station. The long-time coal-burning plant permanently shut down in September of 2022 and is scheduled to be fully decommissioned.

**E**



## Tejon/Nevada/Weber Area (E)

This area is located just south of downtown Colorado Springs, in the vicinity of the existing Tejon Street and Nevada Avenue rail bridges. A separate rail realignment and bridge replacement project is planned in this area.

**F**



## Shooks Run Area (F)

This area is located South of Fountain Boulevard, and east of Nevada Avenue on the north side of the railroad mainline within the railroad wye/junction. This area previously rail tracks and is adjacent to the popular Shooks Run Trail.

**G**



## Future BNSF Yard Area (G)

This area is east of Royer Street and north of Las Vegas Street along the railroad mainline on private property. As part of the South Downtown Rail Underpass Reconstruction project, BNSF is relocating their maintenance yard to this area.





### Current BNSF Yard Area (H)

This area is East of Wahsatch Avenue and south of Costilla Street on a BNSF (former Santa Fe) spur track. Rail activities in this area are continuing to lessen as the yard activities are planned to be relocated.



### Santa Fe Depot-Catalyst Area (I)

This site is southeast of Pikes Peak Avenue at the end of the BNSF (former Santa Fe) spur track within the historic depot building grounds. The former station and surrounding area is being redeveloped as the Catalyst Campus for Technology and Innovation



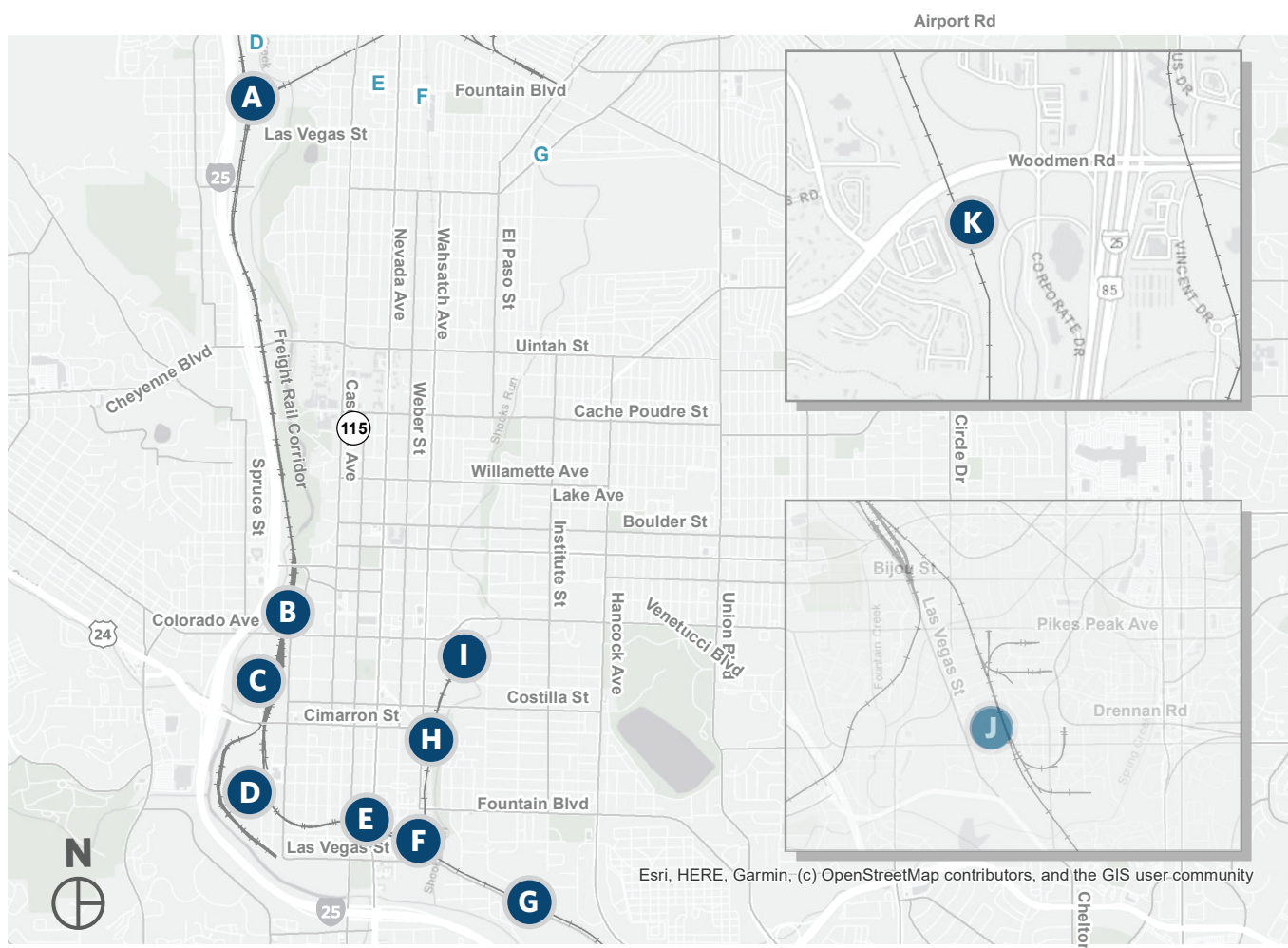
### Las Vegas-Rail Corridor Area (J)

This area is located southeast of downtown on the east side of Las Vegas Street in the vicinity of Drennan Road. The Colorado Springs Airport is directly east of this site. The site is generally in an area of other industrial uses.



### Woodmen Road Area (K)

This area is located seven miles north of downtown on the west side of I-25 and south of Woodmen Road. This was the most northern option considered because, from this point, the rail line shifts west, away from populated areas





# HOW WERE THE STATION LOCATIONS EVALUATED?

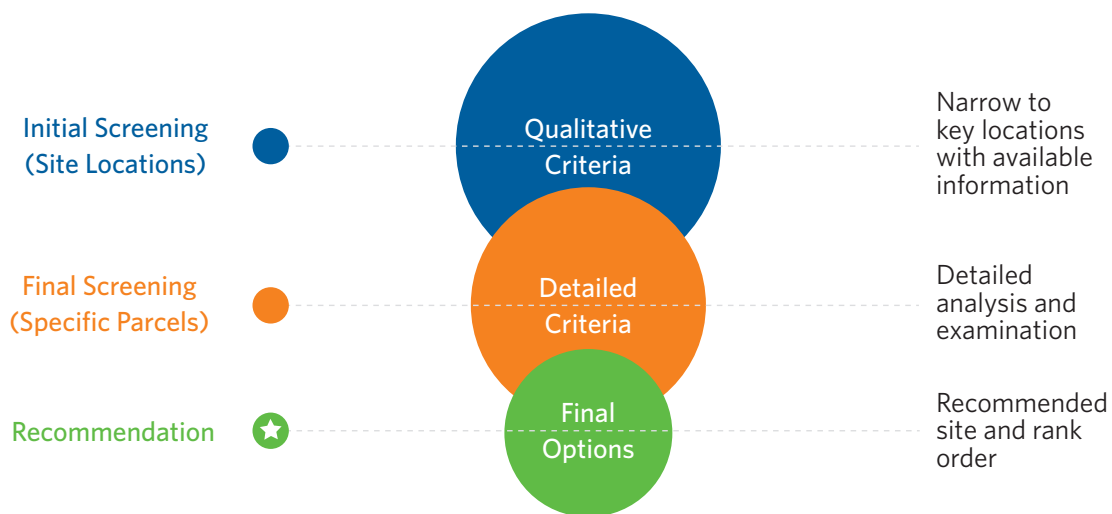
The evaluation process followed a logically stepped process, applying two levels of evaluation screening. The goal was to narrow the options at each screening to just the most promising potential station sites.

The initial screening qualitatively evaluated the universe of possible sites, while the final screening consisted of a more detailed analysis of specific parcels using a blend of qualitative and quantitative data.

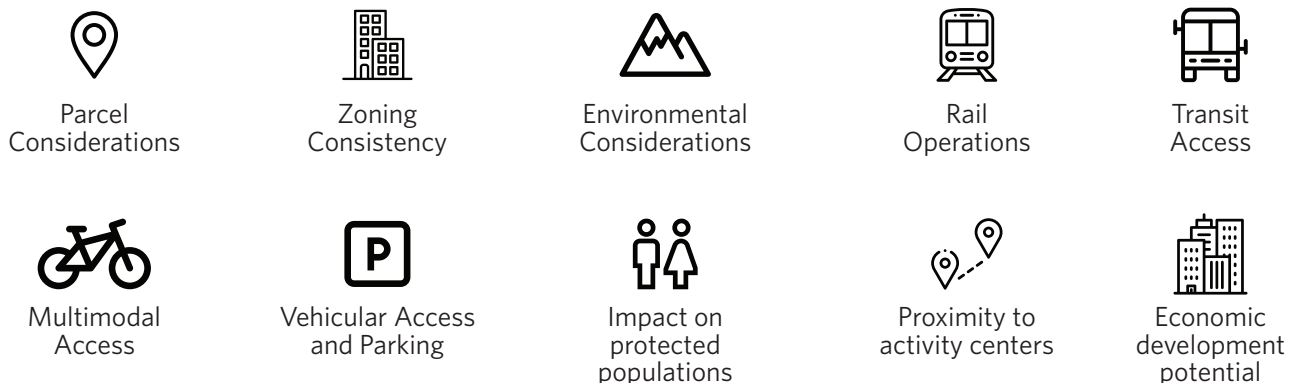
Evaluation criteria were identified for both levels of screening that assessed each site's viability based on elements related to access (transit, walking, biking, driving, parking), land use and zoning, operational feasibility, and general constructability. The final evaluation dove into more detail and considered specific parcels of land and conceptual designs demonstrating the potential layouts of each station.

The outcome of the two-level screening resulted in the final recommended site that best met the majority of screening criteria and received favorable feedback from stakeholders.

## Evaluation Process



## Evaluation Criteria Categories





# WHAT DID THE EVALUATION TELL US?

## Initial screening

The initial screening narrowed the 11 sites to select locations primarily near the city’s core. The primary differentiators between sites in the initial evaluation related to multimodal transportation access (transit, pedestrian, and bicycle access), topographic complexity (land use, natural environment, and planned uses), and consideration of freight and passenger rail operations.

## Final screening

In preparation for the final screening, the sites advanced were further refined to define the specific parcels of land required to develop each. For two site areas, this included developing options on the both the east and west side of the existing mainline. Conceptual designs for each site option were created that displayed the station elements, rail, rail platforms, and other critical infrastructure. Six individual station sites were conceptually designed and evaluated in the final screening. The adjacent table displays seven key criteria used to compare and contrast the sites in the final screening. The results are illustrated using colors to indicate rating: green for high (positive), yellow for medium, and red for low (reflecting the negative end of the spectrum).

Criteria	Denver & Rio Grande Depot Area	Denver & Rio Grande Depot Area	America The Beautiful Park Area	Drake Power Station Area	Drake Power Station Area	Tejon / Nevada Area
	<i>Depot Square East</i>	<i>Depot Square West</i>	<i>East Side (Olympic Museum)</i>	<i>Drake West</i>	<i>Drake East</i>	<i>Tejon / Nevada Rail Bridge Area</i>
Parcel complexity and impacts	● Medium	● Medium	● High	● Low	● Low	● Medium
Multimodal access	● Medium	● Low	● High	● Medium	● Medium	● Low
Vehicular access	● High	● Low	● High	● Low	● High	● Medium
Land Use and Activity Centers	● High	● Low	● High	● Medium	● High	● Low
Economic Development	● High	● Medium	● High	● Medium	● High	● Low
Rail Operational Considerations	● Medium	● Medium	● Medium	● Medium	● Medium	● Low
Conceptual Cost	● Medium	● Low	● Medium	● Low	● Medium	● Medium





### America The Beautiful Park Area - East Side (Olympic Museum)

This site option is rated highly for integrating well with existing enhanced infrastructure, including upgraded bicycle and pedestrian facilities along Sierra Madre Street and the new streetscape on the nearby Vermijo Avenue. The site is directly adjacent to the Olympic and Paralympic Museum. The site also offers significant economic development potential, located within the planned 82-acre Park Union revitalization project. Placing the platform on the west side of the mainline requires a long pedestrian crossing between the station facilities and the train platform. However, relocation of the platform to the east side would likely result in significant impacts on private property, freight yard tracks, freight operations, and cost.



### Denver and Rio Grande Depot Area - Depot Square West

This option is rated highly for rail platform considerations as the platform is adjacent to the station building, simplifying passenger movement. However, this configuration would result in more significant property acquisitions and relocations, including a historic building. There are conflicts with the existing bridge piers and space constraints related to the placement of the tracks. This site's location between Fountain Creek and the rail corridor presents challenging access on foot, by bike, or by car.



### Denver and Rio Grande Depot Area - Depot Square East

This option is rated highly and would reintroduce passenger rail service to the very site where service previously operated until 1971. The primary issues with the site include potential property acquisitions and relocations, which impact properties east and west of the existing mainline freight tracks. Additionally, there are potential conflicts between the existing Colorado Avenue bridge piers and the proposed station platform. The Monument Creek crossing north of the site presents another potential issue by limiting the flexibility of servicing track.



### Drake Power Station Area - Drake East

This option addresses some issues associated with the west site, including improved vehicular and multimodal access. It is also rated highly for potential integration with planned developments in the area. However, as the station platform remains on the west side of the mainline with this option, the issues associated with the timing of the Drake site redevelopment remain.





### Drake Power Station Area - Drake West

This option is rated highly for integrating with the planned redevelopment of the Drake Power Station, identified as one of five “Influence Sites” in the 2016 Experience Downtown Master Plan. It is also rated highly for rail platform considerations, as the platform is located adjacent to the station building. Current vehicular access to the site is extremely limited, as the site is relatively isolated from the roadway network. While these issues will likely be addressed with the eventual redevelopment of the Drake site, the timing of that effort remains unknown, and redevelopment may still be years away.



### Tejon/Nevada Area - Tejon Nevada Rail Bridge

This site is rated highly for taking advantage of the property being acquired as part of the South Downtown Rail Underpass reconstruction project. It is also rated highly for transit connectivity, including planned BRT service on Nevada Avenue. However, as the site is the furthest from major activity centers, it would require a transfer to access downtown destinations. Additionally, the aerial structures required significantly increase the level of implementation complexity and cost.



# WHAT IS THE RECOMMENDED PASSENGER RAIL STATION LOCATION?

The project team found that America the Beautiful Park East (Olympic Museum) and the Denver and Rio Grande Depot East were considered the most advantageous locations for the new station. The remaining four had positive attributes but could not fully meet the criteria and would likely result in higher costs, higher risks, and greater operational conflicts with the freight railroads. The top two sites received a final “high” ranking for various criteria, with America the Beautiful Park Area receiving a slightly higher ranking than the Denver and Rio Grande Depot East.

## Recommended Location

Ultimately, America the Beautiful Park East (Olympic Museum) was deemed the final recommended location. Key components of the evaluation supporting this site include:

### Proximity to Activity Centers

The site is ideally situated, only one block from the newly renovated Vermijo Avenue, across the railroad tracks from America the Beautiful Park, directly adjacent to the US Olympic and Paralympic Museum, three blocks from Pikes Peak Center for the Performing Arts, and many other amenities.

### Station Facilities Integration

The station is proposed on a vacant site planned for new development and directly adjacent to the US Olympic and Paralympic Museum. This location provides a significant opportunity to integrate the station into the new development and enhance the public spaces surrounding the Museum.

### Connectivity

While walking to these downtown amenities from the station is a comfortable option, rail users also have the choice to transition from the rail line and use transit, including the free ZEB shuttle that stops adjacent to the site. Additionally, vehicular access is supported due to its proximity to I-25 via Cimmaron Street, limiting the infrastructure that would need to be created.

## Potential Collaboration

The site’s current owners have historically envisioned a potential rail station here as part of their future development. The owners are open to potentially collaborating with the future proponents of the station.

## Future Integration with Drake Redevelopment

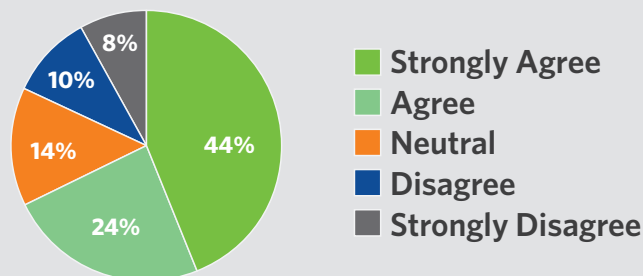
The schedule for the future redevelopment of the Drake Power Station is not known. However, the rail platform is located just north of Drake under the Cimarron Street overpass. This proximity would allow simple connectivity to the rail platform from the future Drake redevelopment without being impacted or limited by the redevelopment’s unknown schedule.

## Economic Development

This area is already developing as a vibrant new destination. The Park Union Business Improvement District (BID) and the City have already invested considerably in the surrounding infrastructure to serve the station site and new development along Sierra Madre Street.

## Lesser Freight Operations and Private Property Impacts

The location of the rail platform and track serving this station resulted in the least impact on private property and freight operations.



The final public engagement questionnaire occurred over a three-week period in August 2022, with almost 700 responses received. Stakeholders were asked if they generally agreed with the recommended site, with 44% in agreement and 24% in strong agreement.





**Geometric Landscape  
Based Of USOPM**

*U.S. Olympic and  
Paralympic Museum  
(Colorado Springs - Colorado, US)*



**Bermed Landscape  
Incorporated into Buildings**

*Capital Park Redevelopment  
HDR Concept  
(Victoria - British Columbia, CA)*



**Modern Rail Infrastructure  
Station Update**

*MBTA Government Center Station  
HDR Design  
(Boston - Massachusetts, US)*



**Intimate, Active Spaces  
Between Buildings**

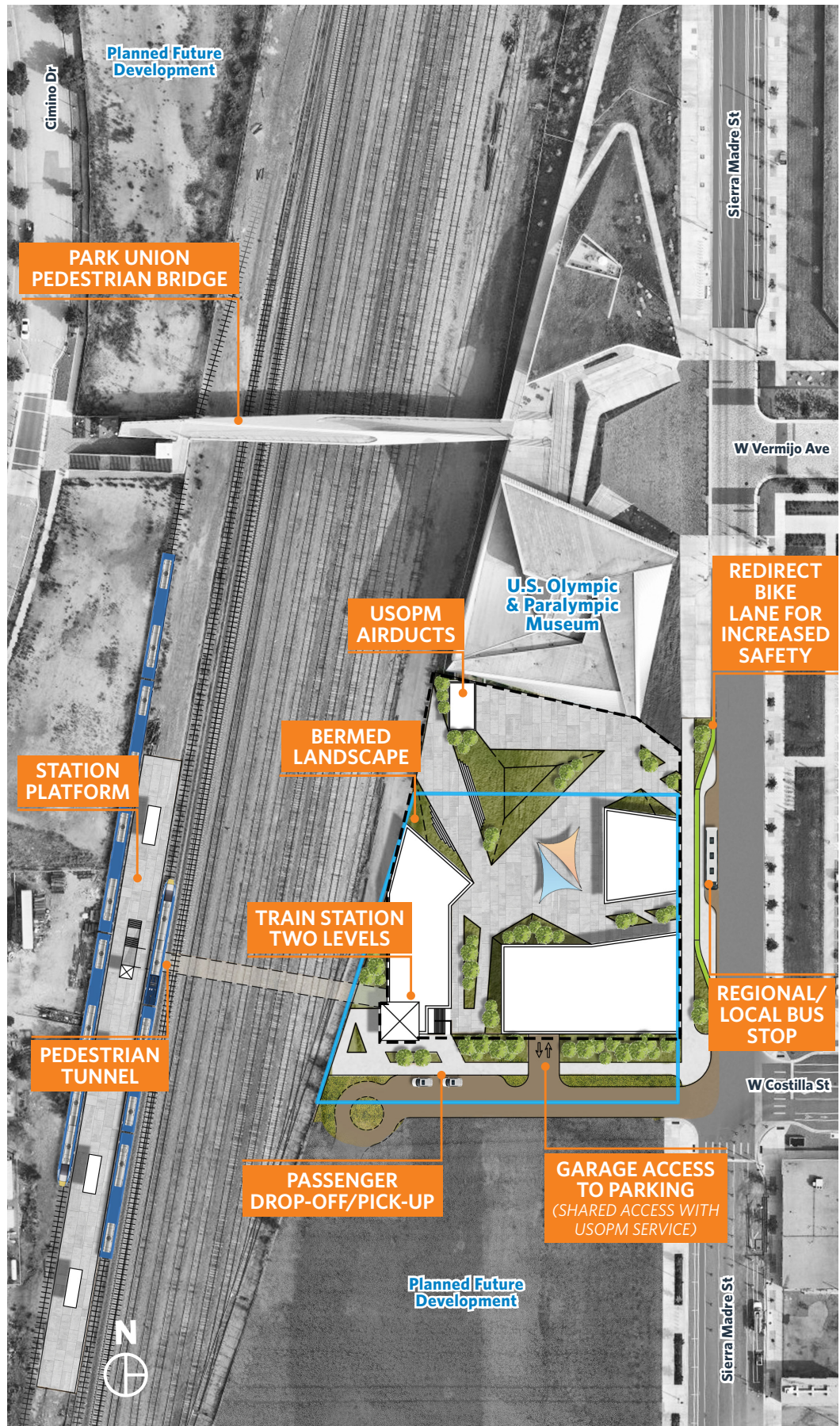
*Ed.Square Town Center  
HDR Concept (Edmondson Park -  
New South Wales, AU)*



## Conceptual Layout

This graphic presents an example layout of the site to be used as a starting point for discussions on future design.

This is not intended to be a final design but to provide ideas on how the station could be integrated with the surrounding properties and ideas for creating additional public space along Sierra Madre Street.





# WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Now that a preferred site has been recommended, the Colorado Springs community is prepared to respond to any future implementation of passenger rail service. While the City of Colorado Springs has been responsible for identifying the station's location, they will likely not be responsible for its development.

Development of the station would likely fall the FRPR District, CDOT, and/or Amtrak as the proponents of advancing the passenger rail service. These organizations continue to develop plans and evaluate funding opportunities to advance passenger rail. The City of Colorado Springs will continue to coordinate with the appropriate organizations and advocate for the needs of City residents and businesses as the passenger rail plans materialize.

## For more information, contact:

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