



Springfield Union Station Springfield, Massachusetts 2017 Region 1 Winner

Key Project Lesson: Resiliency. A long vacant historic train station redevelopment project that had many starts and stops, was restored to a state of the art intermodal transit center thanks to the resiliency of its people and leaders.

Overview

44 years, and it was worth the wait. Springfield Union Station, built in 1926 by the Boston & Albany Railroad, sits at the midpoint of Boston and Albany, NY, and just 30 miles from Hartford, CT. Its central location made it popular among all the major railways in New England and was especially busy during World War II, and even hosted a visit by President Harry Truman in 1952. The station became the economic center of Western Massachusetts and the place where people went to send off and welcome back loved ones - whether it was to the military or to see the country or to access economic opportunities. After highways reduced train traffic, the station closed in 1973.

In 2017, after 44 years of being mothballed and a significant detractor to downtown Springfield, Union Station again opened its doors. The preserved Union Station has become intermodal – welcoming intra and intercity bus travel in a new adjacent facility to the historic terminal building. The terminal building has redeveloped itself as multipurpose, not only welcoming new commuter related retail, but also upper floor modern office space – and has already had the largest architecture firm in the region move in – Dietz & Company, but just recently signed the world headquarters of Peter Pan Bus Lines to occupy an entire floor of the upper floor space. The station becomes a main hub in a new commuter line connecting Springfield with Hartford, CT and New Haven CT. This commuter rail service begins in 2018, and joins existing Amtrak service, giving Springfield very frequent service into New York City and destinations across the country.

Featured Partners

- Congressman Richard E. Neal
- Springfield Redevelopment Authority; City of Springfield
- Environmental Protection Agency; Massachusetts DEP
- MassDevelopment; Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
- Tighe & Bond; TRC

Primary Reason for Redevelopment

In the late 1950's as transportation and economic patterns shifted to interstate highways usage at Springfield Union Station dwindled from 97 daily trains to just about a dozen when the Boston & Albany Railroad ceased to exist. The station, which had since been sold to a New York businessman, was boarded shut in 1973, and left to be forgotten.

Amtrak opened a makeshift station at street level on the Lyman Street side of the tracks – opposite side of the historic station, and the connection from Lyman Street to the old station was sealed - little did passengers know how long that tunnel would be sealed for. The old station had been literally cut off from the community. With a growing community and significant economic development projects moving forward, and the advent of regional commuter rail, it was essential that the long awaited reopening of Union Station be realized and that it incorporate all modes of transit.

Approach

The Springfield Redevelopment Authority (SRA) also became a lead driver, taking the property via eminent domain in 1989 - and after many fits and starts, leading the project into a \$94.1 million construction project. Financing for the Union Station project consisted of federal, state, and local funds including FTA grants and DOT Bus Livability grants, State Transportation Bond Funds, a state parking grant, and more.

Key to moving the project forward was removing the question of environmental contamination. An adjacent hotel - now the site of the new parking garage, the Hotel Charles, left behind old oil tanks and leaking petroleum and metals after it was demolished after a fire. The historic station itself had its own issues with hazardous materials in the building, and asbestos in both windows and roofing material. Several funding applications resulted in significant support for assessment and cleanup from the USEPA Brownfields Program as well as locally from MassDevelopment. Without these sources, and without moving forward on answering and remediating these concerns, the project likely would not have been able to move forward.

The project, which worked closely with state and local historic preservation officials, restored the original Union Station Terminal building for reuse as a modern intermodal station and fully built out the first floor and main concourse with 64,000 square feet of rentable commercial space ticketing, and waiting areas. Important to the project was making it truly intermodal, with the addition of 27 bus berths adjacent to the station in a state of the art facility that includes digital wayfinding and real-time scheduling, outdoor heated stations at each berth, and indoor waiting stations with wifi and charging stations for travelers. The bus services are both intrastate and interstate, with Peter Pan Bus Lines, Greyhound Bus, and Pioneer Valley Transit Authority all basing operations out of the station.

Innovative Techniques

- Including all modes of transit including rail, intercity and intracity bus, a new parking facility with car rental, bicycle storage, bike share, and Taxi, Uber & Lyft pickup locations
- Developing a true mixed-use project with upper story office space, attracting headquarters location for Peter Pan Bus Lines and local architects Dietz & Co., ensuring a healthy mix of tenants and transient customers to support new service retail
- Transforming a historic building and repurposing into a LEED certified project
- Transit-oriented development – the planned redevelopment helped spur a new \$15 million investment in redeveloping 265 housing units across the street

- Project has already won statewide awards for historic preservation including the Preservation Massachusetts “Paul & Nikki Tsongas Best Then & Now” award for 2017.

Challenges

Challenges were many over the course of 44 years of the building being vacant – most relating to funding to redevelop such a significant property and one with environmental conditions. Another challenge was maintaining focus on the importance of the facility to the economic health of our city and region despite the many project challenges that occurred

Benefits

We’ve seen immediate economic catalyst benefits of housing being redeveloped and new office tenants and jobs moving into the once vacant building. What was once an entire abandoned street along the front face of the station is now buzzing with activity. The redevelopment was also an important piece to the advent of commuter rail to Hartford and New Haven, CT, set to begin in 2018. This activity is also expected to be an economic driver in and around the station.

Before



After



Project Address:	55 Frank B. Murray Street, Springfield, MA
Contact Person:	Brian Connors
Phone:	413-787-6664
Email Address:	BConnors@springfieldcityhall.com
Names of Participants:	Springfield Redevelopment Authority, City of Springfield, Office of Congressman Richard E. Neal, Environmental Protection Agency, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, MassDevelopment, Tighe & Bond, TRC
Number of Acres:	134,840 or approximately 3.09 acres
Former Uses:	Transit
Current Uses:	Transit
Former number/Types of jobs:	Vacant for 44 years
New number/Types of jobs:	At full occupancy approximately 500 permanent and in transit
Type of Site:	Historic transit site
Regulatory Program:	State Voluntary Cleanup Program, USEPA
List of Major Contaminants:	Petroleum Hydrocarbons, Metals, Nickel, Asbestos
Magnitude of Contamination:	Underground and interior/structure (roof/windows)
Greatest Challenge(s):	Overall project funding
Length of Time to Remediate Site:	3 years
Primary Reason for Redevelopment:	Economic development, community need, transit need
Years Abandoned or Challenged:	44
Cleaned up under Consent Decree:	Cleaned up under an approved remediation plan
List of Financial Assistance:	USEPA Cleanup and Assessment (\$600,000), MassDevelopment (\$2,100,000), FTA, State funds
Other Financial Techniques Utilized:	State parking facility funds
New Tax Revenues:	The property is owned by the Springfield Redevelopment Authority, however there will be a currently undetermined amount of new tax revenue via private commercial tenants.
Community Outreach Activities:	Many public meetings over the years, open houses to the building, and public announcements. Once completed special tours were given to stakeholders such as historic preservation and veterans officials
Innovative Environmental Regulatory Techniques:	Worked with both state and federal partners on closeout plan
Innovative Remediation Techniques:	Utilized both state and federal funding opportunities to investigate and remediate
Innovative Economic Development:	Repurposing historic building to LEED certified mixed-use property
Land Conservation:	Multi story parking garage to reduce surface parking needs
Sustainable Development:	LEED certified
Federal Partners:	EPA, FTA