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## Denver's next Union Station: DU's chancellor on how master plan will remake the campus

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First there was a new Denver Union Station.

Next, there will be a new University of Denver.

At least that's what Chancellor Rebecca Chopp and other university officials hope.

DU is rolling out a plan that involves the \$143 million construction of three new buildings:

A first-year residence hall for \$55.5 million.

A new community commons center for \$72.5 million.

A career achievement and global alumni center for \$15 million.

Officials say the buildings, particularly the new community commons center, are part one of " DU Impact 2025," a long-term strategic plan that involves rethinking — and rebuilding

— the way the campus of the 153-year-old private university is connected with public transit and the rest of metro Denver.

Both RTD's University Station and Colorado Station are used by DU students and are also the target of a master plan by the city of Denver and Transportation Solutions, a nonprofit that advises the city. That plan calls for a better pedestrian design and enhanced connectivity, something DU Vice Chancellor David Greenberg said is a focus of the university as well.

"We want to have [things] that enhance light rail, pedestrians, bikes, ... etc," Greenberg said, adding that DU wants to make the campus easier for outsiders to access.

Chopp said step one of that is turning DU's current Driscoll Student Center building, which was built in 1949 and includes a skybridge over East Evans Avenue, into a place that will attract students and the community alike.

Plans include tearing down much of the current building to make way for a community dining area similar to The Source — the artisan food market in Denver's River North district — as well as shops, student services and social space.

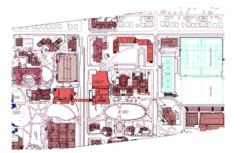
" Our image is that this could be another Union Station, a buzz of activity," Chopp said.

Baltimore-based Ayer Saint Gross, an architectural firm specializing in campus master plans, is drawing up a plan that also involves making DU's campus more inviting to outsiders and more interconnected. Greenberg said they expect to have <u>Ayer Saint Gross's initial set of initiatives by spring 2018</u>.

"We would love people to come out, enjoy the restaurants, do some shopping and go to the Newman Center [for a play]," Chopp said.

## **Enhancement starts with students**

The first part of DU's long-term plan, the \$143 million construction of the three buildings, is largely focused on enhancing the student, faculty and staff experience of the university, something Chopp said is necessary to take the school to the next level.



COURTESY DU

A campus map of the University of Denver shows where the new projects are located. These are preliminary design options, subject to change as we identify architect(s) of record and conduct further analysis. "Traditionally, we've educated students academically," Chopp said. "We realized we need to keep critical thinking skills, but we also need to create an environment for students to work hands-on."

Chopp said the university will make classrooms more experiential, overhaul the residence centers, encourage students to work in teams and make available financial literacy modules. Freshman students will also begin working with Student Services staff to create a post-graduation plan. In the past, it was only seniors who worked on their career plans.

"We know that nearly every profession and job is changing in the 21 st century," Chopp said. "We know that students will no longer enter a job and have it stay the same for the 21 st century. We know our student populations are becoming more diverse. We want to capitalize on our history and position ourselves for the future."

The \$15 million Career Achievement building, she said, will give students the ability to activate their careers early on by teaching them resumé-writing skills, help them refine their work skills and learn how to network and leverage relationships to obtain employment.

Greenberg added that nowadays, it's common for students to want to live on campus well past their sophomore years, another change from years' past.

" It used to be that we could have students living around campus, but real estate [prices] are going up around DU rapidly," Greenberg said.

The coming, \$55.5 million first-year residence hall is one way DU is addressing the issue. It will free up capacity in other residence halls allowing more students to live on campus.

Funding for the DU master plan will come from a combination of taking on debt, university savings and a \$6-per-credit-hour student services fee.

"The board and the students have been talking about this for 10 years," Chopp said. "We took the need ... we've transformed it into this opportunity."

Building locations have not yet been specified. Construction is slated to span from the summer of 2018 to the summer of 2020. DU still needs to choose an architect and is currently gathering comments from community members.

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