

Article Last Updated: 8/24/2005 02:18 AM

## Whirlwind tour sold Trump team on developing downtown Denver

By Margaret Jackson  
Denver Post Staff Writer  
DenverPost.com

Donald Trump and his developers have "fallen in love with Denver" and plan a "signature Trump piece" in Lower Downtown, a member of his team said Tuesday.

And Trump's Denver canvas could grow: The city's request for proposals will extend beyond Union Station to include the city block bordered by 16th, 17th, Blake and Market streets, Cal Marsella, general manager of the Regional Transportation District, confirmed.

The New York real estate titan caught Denver by surprise this week by seeking city qualification to serve as "master developer" of Denver's historic Union Station project.

More details emerged Tuesday about Trump's interest, which was first reported in The Denver Post.

Dawn Bookhardt, a partner in the Denver law firm Bookhardt & O'Toole who is on the Trump team, said Trump's company threw its hat in the ring after a whirlwind tour of the Mile High City.

Representatives from the Trump Organization spent just a couple of days in Denver before responding to the request for qualifications, she said.

The public project, one of the most significant attempted in Denver, will serve as a gateway to downtown and link the LoDo and Central Platte neighborhoods.

Trump's response drew both applause and questions from community leaders familiar with the project.

Marilee Utter, president of Citiventure Associates LLC, a Denver advisory and development firm that specializes in mixed-use and transit-oriented development, said the team selected will need leadership that understands the public policy issues and the players involved.

"I presume they have the capital, and he certainly has high-rise development experience. But I'm not sure those are the most important things for this project," said Utter, who is not on any of the teams responding to the city's request for qualifications. "The key is day-to-day leadership that comes from the selected party."

Others, however, say that Trump's interest indicates that Denver is emerging as a hot, urban real estate market.

"I think it shows the importance of this project both locally and nationally that we would attract that level of developer," said Tamara Door, president and chief executive of Downtown Denver Partnership Inc. "The more competition we have, the better choice we can make."

Ten development teams besides Trump International Hotel & Residences responded to the city's request for qualifications. The Union Station Executive Oversight Committee will cull the number to five or six who will be asked to submit proposals to redevelop the 19.5-acre site.

Staff members from RTD; the Denver Regional Council of Governments, or DRCOG; the Colorado Department of Transportation; and the city will review the responses and make a recommendation to the executive oversight committee by early October.

The committee will issue another request for proposals to the development teams it deems qualified.

Members of the executive oversight committee include Marsella; CDOT deputy executive director Peggy Catlin; DRCOG executive director Jennifer Schaufele; and Denver planning director Peter Park. Two members of the Union Station Advisory Committee besides Door also will review the qualifications: Jim Graebner, Lower Downtown district representative; and Shannon Gifford, a financial consultant to real estate companies.

Staff writer Margaret Jackson can be reached at 303-820-1473 or [mjackson@denverpost.com](mailto:mjackson@denverpost.com).