

> ON THE BOARDS



A QUILTING BEE

TAXI: CATALYTIC. CREATIVE.
FLEXIBLE. SECURE. VIABLE.
SUSTAINABLE. FLEXIBLE.
SECURE. VIABLE. FLEXIBLE.
CATALYTIC. CREATIVE. TAXI:

A COLLABORATIVE RISK

> BY CYNTHIA KEMPER, PA

In the arena of project development, creativity and daring are often the exception to the rule.

But Denver has always been at the cusp of the frontier—a city where visionary leaders honor the tension between western tradition and daring innovation. Out of this unique milieu comes yet another edgy urban project envisioned by one of Denver's renaissance men.

Mickey Zeppelin, founder of Denver-based Zeppelin Development Inc., is the developer leading a diverse and talented team in creating a new phase of TAXI, a cutting-edge mixed-use development on the city's industrial north side.

THE MANY PHASES OF TAXI

In 2000, motivated by a desire to create a "catalyst for change," Zeppelin purchased the former Yellow Cab taxi garages located on the west bank of the South Platte River at 34th and Ringsby Court. He named the abandoned space "TAXI" and renovated it to house a diverse collection of businesses. The TAXI building remains 100% leased, employing about 100 people, with a mix of tenants that includes small incubator start-ups to medium-sized marketing firms, studios and boutique offices.

The renovated space retains much of its original, industrial-chic character with high-bay doors, sprawling corridors and multiple access points.

Now, Zeppelin wants to take TAXI a step further by creating an initial 134,000-sq-ft addition to house 29 top-floor residences above two floors of business and commercial space. He envisions extensive art and public spaces, including cafes, wine bars and courtyards. Future phases could substantially increase the residential totals to as many as 250 units, an ambitious plan for a mostly undiscovered industrial area 10 minutes from downtown.

"I saw a rare opportunity to do something that would set a new pace for what could happen in Denver—to be at the heart of a new kind of community," Zeppelin said. "I envisioned a place that exudes pleasure, stimulation and pride; a community where people are living, working and playing together creatively with a sense of freedom and excitement. I wanted people to feel special, in a special place."

Zeppelin was so drawn to the eclectic TAXI space that he moved his own offices there in July 2001, even though the building's zany motor-pool aesthetics and

post-industrial landscape might be considered too far out of the mainstream for most developers.

But Zeppelin is not like most other developers. Known for turning lofty musings into meticulous site plans and inspired urban spaces, he has invested a lifetime of heart—and a great deal of his own hard-earned capital—into creating a better city.

Since emerging in the mid-'80s as a vocal leader during the redevelopment heyday of Denver's LoDo, Zeppelin has proven his ability to energize other people's talents around his dynamic vision. At TAXI, that vision includes a risky development process that redefines architectural collaboration.

EDGY DEVELOPER + MADCAP FORMULA = ARCHITECTURAL QUILTING BEE

Zeppelin's dream of creating a new kind of community at TAXI also required a more creative design process. Rather than simply hiring one architect to serve as his representative and spearhead the project, Zeppelin assembled a team to design it in distinct but complementary pieces, layered and stitched together by an evolving master plan—like an architectural quilt.

He started by turning to an old friend and Zeppelin Development's main architect, Alan Brown, AIA, who oversaw the redesign of the original TAXI building. Brown, known for his work on the Stapleton redevelopment master plan, is a principal of Eldorado Springs-based Alan Eban Brown Architects.

As the final tenant moved into the original TAXI building in March 2004, Brown completed the initial "gothic-style" site plan for future phases, spreading 12 buildings across the nine-acre site. In the meantime, the city was creating a new plan for the neighborhood—River North—through an expansive rezoning approved in January 2005.

Zeppelin had been quietly touting the project to several other architects since early that year. Then, in a daring move, he decided to expand the TAXI team to include three additional architects, men widely recognized for their creative yet economical designs.

In April 2004, those three—Will Bruder, AIA, founding partner of Phoenix-based Will Bruder Architects Ltd.; David Baker, FAIA, founding partner of San Francisco-based David Baker + Partners; and Harry Teague, AIA, founding partner of Aspen-based Harry Teague Architects—joined the team around the TAXI conference table for the first charrette.

The question on everyone's mind was: "Why four architects?"

Zeppelin's answer: "I took this route partially because I'm a little bit insane, but I'm also very curious. Like a mad chemist, I try to mix different combinations together to see if I can come up with something new—it was a bit of an adventure, to say the least."



"Everything was new—[we are working with] a new area, a new approach to collaboration, a new concept of site plan and building and a new work model with 3-D modeling, bringing in the contractor early."

- Mickey Zeppelin, Zeppelin Development



"The technology and 3-D tools we're using are one of the key components of the project. When you have architects in four geographical regions, even using a Web site can make communications challenging."

- Todd Hager, AIA, M.A. Mortenson



"Complexity, debate, natural differences, calculated risks and a fragile consensus are conditions that are here to stay. Successful professional collaborations will achieve clarity in communication, greater working efficiencies, and will enhance community in their specific design solutions."

- Alan Brown, AIA, Alan Eban Brown Architects



"This is very 'retro' with the costing of value-engineering and construction getting more and more complex—the old paradigm isn't working anymore."

- Will Bruder, AIA, Will Bruder Architects Ltd.

> ON THE BOARDS

CREATING THE CIRCLE

During the early stages of the process, Baker, Teague, Bruder and Brown brought their individual backgrounds and voices into the room. But over time, a truly collaborative resonance emerged—quietly heralding its presence in unexpected moments.

“They are all very ‘real,’ with an ability to apply their ingenuity and creativity in ways that capture the essence of place,” Zeppelin said. “Their [past] projects offered a sense of empowerment, but with feeling—not merely architecture. And they use a variety of materials in very creative ways.”

The first three charrettes, in April, August and October of 2004, lasted two days each. They got to know each another, defined their shared versus individual contributions and established the architectural vision, process and schedule. Then they began a collaboration about site planning and schematic design.

The one thing they all had in common was Zeppelin's dream.

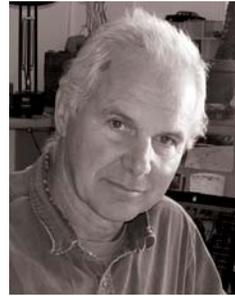
He wanted to bring the fresh eclecticism of the original TAXI to the project's later phases, which will encompass a new brand of mixed-use design. The “railroad car-like” forms of the next buildings parallel the existing TAXI in a “bar scheme,” with room between them for landscaping and surface parking. The first and second floors will house commercial and retail uses, with residences on the third floor.

The new units will be thematically tied to the site by the towering presence of the original TAXI communications antenna, whose guy wires will be “notched” into the space of the new building.

“We’re letting the environment influence the building,” Bruder said. Exactly who’s designing what pieces, and other elements—such as unit sizes, shapes and materials—are still being determined, but the project is moving forward more quickly now that the team’s dynamics have been worked out.

A BIG REACH

Looking back at those early meetings, Bruder said, “As a group, we're at a ‘hinge-point’ in the development of the New West. We all want to create an



“It’s like an authentic jazz venue. Where collaboration exists, you’re on an adventure together—you

bond with your peers over the process while still retaining each architect’s individuality.”

– Harry Teague, AIA, Harry Teague Architects



“There is this Ayn Rand ‘Fountainhead’ thing in the architectural world—but everything we do is really

about collaboration. It’s merely a matter of how much you suppress your collaborators.”

– David Baker, AIA, David Baker + Partners

OPPOSITE Catalytic Architects (left to right) Eric Hendricks, Harry Teague Architects; Patrick Leeds, Harry Teague Architects; Ben Nesbeit, Will Bruder Architects; Will Bruder, Will Bruder Architects; Mickey Zeppelin, Zeppelin Development; Brandi Henderson, David Baker + Partners; Alan Brown, Alan Eban Brown Architects; David Baker, David Baker + Partners; Harry Teague, Harry Teague Architects; and Bob Yeager, Zeppelin Development

HALF PAGE-HORIZONTAL ADVERTISER
CAD-1

architecture that celebrates both people and place—to create community, take the ordinary and make it extraordinary.”

Teague admits to experiencing an architect’s inherent fear of the collaborative peer process, where iconic elements can easily disappear.

“TAXI is a rare event. So why are we normally so afraid of this?” he asked. “Because we’re afraid of losing our individuality. But what I’ve discovered is that I learn something different every time we come together.”

Bruder agreed: “Nothing is easy with TAXI. Everything is a big reach ... a big exercise. We have a bunch of 'quilters' sitting here at the table. And like with quilting, we take random parts and put them together so no one knows which part is whose.”

“By nature, we think we’re exclusive to the ideas; that our work is our reputation. But Mickey had to help us get beyond this,” Baker said. “Architecture is not a single moment. A city is created over time, by many different people. So we continue to ask where does individuality fit into a quilt?”

CONTRACTOR AS MASTER QUILTER

Despite the array of architectural talent assembled to design TAXI’s next phase, the architect-of-record works for the project’s general contractor, M.A. Mortenson. Todd Hager, AIA, was brought on board partly because of his familiarity with the 3-D technologies that Mortenson used to build Frank Gehry’s Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles and is currently using on Daniel Libeskind’s new Frederick C. Hamilton Building at the Denver Art Museum.

“Zeppelin was interested in our technological ability to reduce risk by clarifying the end-product three-dimensionally,” Hager said. “Our role—to ensure that the established budget reflects what’s in the plans—helps the design team identify a bigger, better scope of work while leveraging their expertise toward a better end-product.”

Initially, Brown was expected to be the architect-of-record. But the group wanted to aggressively streamline the process and eliminate overlap. Hager’s



WHY MICKEY ZEPPELIN CHOSE EACH OF THE TAXI ARCHITECTS

WILL BRUDER, AIA: THE ARTIST

“Will’s projects are very sculptural. He has been trained as an artist and has a fabulous aesthetic edge. He’s incredibly creative, and really pushed the boundaries at the library in Phoenix. It’s a wonderful people place. He takes current reality and turns it into something new.”

HARRY TEAGUE, AIA: THE CONTEXTUALIST

“Harry always captures the essence of the environment around him, and especially the feeling of the West. He’s a contextual architect who has an ability to create places for people that are both environmentally sensitive and beautifully crafted.”

DAVID BAKER, FAIA: THE ENVIRONMENTAL PRAGMATIST

“David is a real pragmatist. He understands economy and has the ability to create beautifully crafted housing in an economic way. He’s proven to be a real asset and an important addition to the team.”

ALAN BROWN, AIA: THE TRANSLATOR

“Alan has been such a wonderful architect who has helped pull everything together. We’ve worked together for a long time and he really understands this area. He’s sensitive to each architect and how best to capture the essence of each individual’s contribution.”

TODD HAGER, AIA: THE SYNTHESIZER

“Todd understands where the other architects are going. He’s the perfect ‘keeper of the model’—a master at translating drawings into reality.”

KEN’S...YOUR FULL SERVICE REPROGRAPHIC SHOP
SERVING METRO DENVER FOR 42 YEARS...

*Providing ALL your reprographic needs,
and a proud Host of Océ Plan Center, Member CNS Plan Room,
Member US Reprographic Network...printing your plans from coast to coast.*



Ken’s Océ Plan Center is your solution for:

- Publishing • Viewing • Ordering • Archiving
- 24/7 Security and Accessibility
- Call Ken’s for your 30 day FREE Trial.



KEN’S DOWNTOWN
2220 Curtis Street • Denver, CO 80205
303.297.9191 Fax 303.297.8885

KEN’S SOUTH
7304 S. Alton Way • Unit 3-H • Centennial, CO 80112
720.493.9904 Fax 720.493.9917

Visit us on the web: www.kensrepro.com

background with conflict-resolution “hub” technologies was seen as a major asset, so he was tapped to serve as the architect-of-record.

“The concept of master builder-architect was our model. We wanted to lower risk while [reviving] this historical ideal with its extra level of detail and care,” Hager said. “The technology helps us remove the issues and conflicts, [so the architects can] focus on the finer details of design and the final product.”

“As an architect, Todd understands where the architects are going,” Zeppelin said. “He’s the perfect ‘keeper of the model’—a master at translating drawings into reality. It’s an aggressive project, so everyone saw the opportunity and embraced the idea.”

Speaking more philosophically about the project, Bruder said: “We need to move back into a space where we as architects are collaborators with the contractors and suppliers rather than adversaries. This project got better because we all stepped up to a place where we could each attack this as creatively and professionally as humanly possible.”



TAXI Future... Phase 2
 3455 Ringsby Court, Denver, Colorado... a mixed use project by Zeppelin Development Inc.

COLLABORATIVE DESIGN BY
 DAVID BAKER ARCHITECTS
 ALAN EBAN BREWSTER
 WILL BRUDER ARCHITECTS
 HARRY TRAGLE ARCHITECTS

TAXI: DEVELOPMENT

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	FUTURE	TOTAL
Gross project area	74,012	134,007	184,316	392,335
Number of dwelling units	None	29	219	248
Gross floor area total	27,285	103,708	261,007	392,000
Gross residential floor area	None	37,479	132,167*	169,646*
Gross commercial floor area	27,285	66,229	128,840*	222,354*
Maximum height of structures in Stories	1	3	15	NA
Total Land Area	74,012	134,007	184,316	392,335
Land area covered by Structures	37%	22%	53%**	39%**
Land area covered by Parking	34%	44%	18%**	30%**
Land area covered by Landscaping	16%	22%	20%**	20%**
Land area covered by Private Driveway	13%	11%	9%	11%
Total parking spaces provided	77	183	653	913

* The mix of residential and commercial area in Future Development may be adjusted based on future market conditions.
 ** The Land area covered by Structures, Parking and, Landscaping in Future Development may be adjusted based on changing conditions.

ON THE BOARDS SUBMISSIONS

For projects that are unbuilt and/or under construction, please submit the following:

- > Project description (limit: 250 words)
- > 1 rendering or elevation (JPG or TIF, at least 5 x 7 in size; 300+ dpi resolution)
- > Photo or rendering credit (individual photographer and/or firm name)
- > Project Location
- > Owner
- > Scope (size, in sq ft)
- > Cost (if not confidential)
- > Start Date (design & construction)
- > Anticipated Completion Date
- > Send all submissions to
 Editorial Dept.
 Architect Colorado
 2661 Valentia St.
 Denver, CO 80238