

THE BEACON

Union Station, Chicago

CONCEPT

Compared to when using twentieth century infrastructure, the new high-speed rail network will allow people to travel far greater distances in a greatly reduced amount of time. This phenomenon can be described as an expansion of the realm of daily life, or rather, a shrinkage of the perceived scale of the entire Midwest region. In effect, through the new rail networks urban nodes will be pulled closer together, and industries, commerce, and most importantly, people will be connected more intimately than ever before. The Beacon, a proposal for a renovation of Chicago's Union Station will be at the center of this new age, and our design proposal symbolically represents this new paradigm.

PROPOSAL

The main component of the proposal will be a highly illuminated mixed-

use volume called the "Beacon" which houses a hotel, railway offices and a conference center. The Beacon will be positioned above the existing Grand Hall, which will provide a venue for the new Midwest regional market. However the Beacon will not take on the form of a typical vertical structural addition. The Beacon's simple, spiritual form, resonating as a familiar yet iconic component of the existing Chicago skyline, will be raised up far above the Grand Hall with its complex structural, service and circulatory system exposed beneath. This complex infrastructural web is a reminder of the extensive transportation network that exists directly beneath the surface of the streets of the city. The Beacon will be noticed from miles away, clearly declaring the role of Union Station as the symbolic heart of the new Midwest high speed transportation network, which will help revitalize Chicago and the neighboring regions through enhanced social and commercial exchange.

