



# Information Item

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**Date:** June 12, 2012

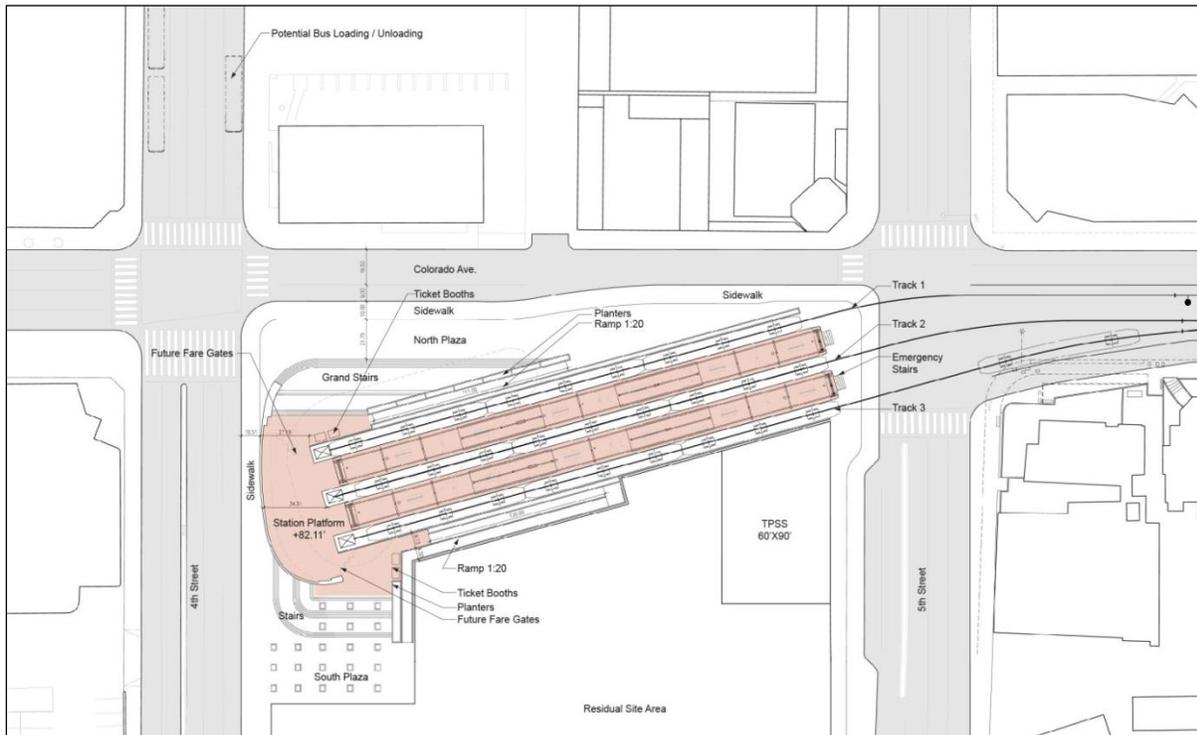
**To:** Mayor and City Council  
**From:** David Martin, Director, Planning & Community Development  
Martin Pastucha, Director, Public Works  
Kathryn Vernez, Deputy City Manager  
**Subject:** Expo Light Rail - Revision of the Terminus Station North Entrance Design

## **Introduction**

The north entrance design of the Expo Light Rail Downtown Station/4<sup>th</sup> Street has been revised since the September 13, 2011 City Council meeting to address comments raised by Metro, the City and local stakeholders. Reconfiguring the north station entrance to enhance the ramp and replace the amphitheater seating element with garden terraces will address Metro Design Criteria compliance and maintenance concerns, will reduce the overall betterment cost of the station upgrades to the City, and will provide an improved universal access arrival and departure experience for light rail patrons. The City of Santa Monica has consistently prioritized strong access and connectivity to the Expo Light Rail stations to encourage walking, bicycling, transit use and to support the City's sustainable transportation and greenhouse gas reduction goals.

## **Background**

On [September 13, 2011](#), the City Council received the final track alignment and alternative station concept for the Downtown Station/4<sup>th</sup> Street. The revised alignment softens the curvature of the tracks enabling faster train speeds across the intersection of 5<sup>th</sup> Street/Colorado Avenue, reducing the potential wheel noise, improves connections to the future Colorado Esplanade, and improves the resulting opportunities for use of the remainder of the Sears automotive and adjacent City-owned sites, including preserving the 4th Street tunnel access.



**Final Alignment Concept – Reviewed by City Council September 13, 2011**

The Alternative Station Concept shown here provides plaza entrances to the north and south.

Other features of the final Downtown Station/4<sup>th</sup> Street alignment design include:

- Two center platforms that meet Metro preferences
- Two station entrances and space for pedestrian queuing from the north and south
- A continuous sidewalk on south side of Colorado between 4th and 5th Streets
- One westbound vehicle lane and one westbound left turn lane at 4th Street
- Integrated stairs and street-level plaza interface to the north and south

The City Council directed City staff to continue to work with the Construction Authority and Metro on several key issues, to be developed during final design. The change to the north entrance addresses the following direction from Council:

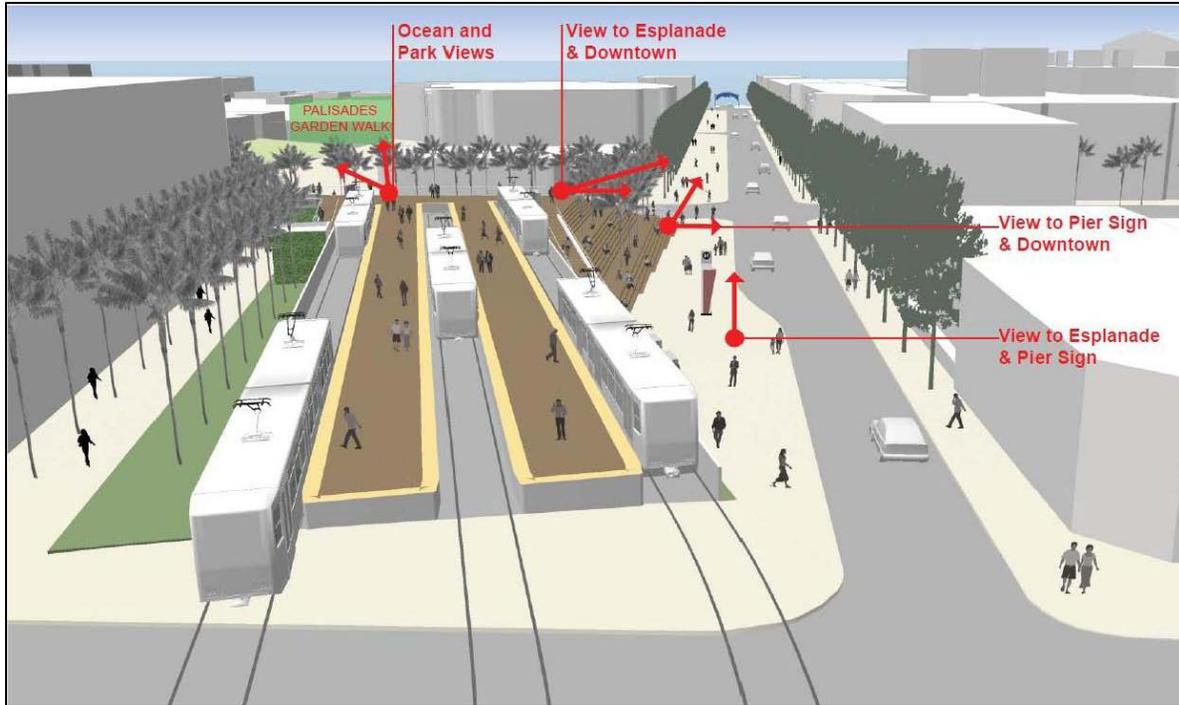
- Refine station entrances/exits at 4<sup>th</sup> Street to carefully address grade changes, and create a seamless and gradual transition to the Downtown through City-controlled plazas.

On [December 13, 2011](#), the City Council authorized agreements with the Exposition Metro Line Construction Authority (Construction Authority) to perform preliminary engineering services at the Downtown/4<sup>th</sup> Street Station. The Skanska-Rados Joint Venture team has since completed the preliminary engineering on the station and station plaza integration with the Esplanade based on City input and in coordination with Peter Walker Partners, designer of the Colorado Esplanade Project. On [January 24, 2012](#) the City Council authorized an agreement with the Construction Authority in an amount not-to-exceed \$8,850,000 to perform engineering services and construction of betterments at the Downtown/4<sup>th</sup> Street Station. The City is currently working with the Construction Authority and Skanska-Rados Joint Venture to refine the design and associated costs within the not-to-exceed betterment price.

## **Discussion**

The Downtown Station must be capable of handling a high level of activity and serving as the gateway to multiple destinations in Downtown, the Civic Center and the Oceanfront. Every rider exiting the train will become a pedestrian, and access to/from the train must be designed in a way that will accommodate the expected crowds. Working in coordination with Peter Walker Partners' (PWP) schematic design for the Downtown station plaza, City staff has coordinated with the Construction Authority, Metro and Skanska-Rados Joint Venture to refine the station design to address key issues of access, maintenance and costs.

The PWP schematic design for the Downtown Station/4<sup>th</sup> Street achieves a sense of arrival, at the edge of the continent, to a place that feels uniquely Santa Monica. Along the station site, the ground naturally slopes toward the west creating views from the station to the Pacific Ocean, the Pier sign, Downtown, the future Palisades Garden Walk Park and the Colorado Esplanade.



**PWP Design for Santa Monica Downtown Station – Oblique View Looking West**

Typical Metro station platforms are raised 3-1/2 feet above grade, but due to the natural slope of Colorado, the platform level is raised approximately 11 feet above grade near 4<sup>th</sup> Street which creates views and orientation to the Oceanfront, Pier and Downtown.

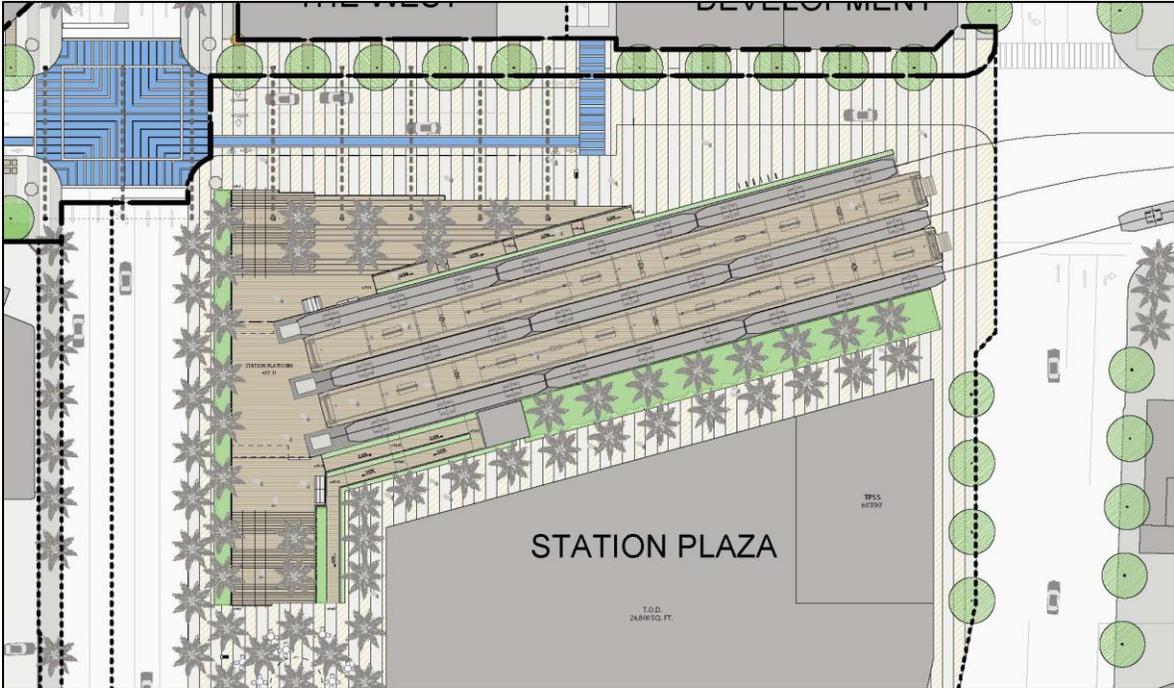
Original entrance design studies for the Downtown Station/4<sup>th</sup> Street included both ramp-only and combination ramp-and-stair entrance alternatives to address the change in grade. A ramp-only configuration is typically preferred by Metro but was not feasible because there is not enough room between the station platform and the Colorado Avenue roadway to fit the length of the ramp needed to address the grade changes while also providing the width of ramp needed to accommodate the anticipated volume of patrons. Of the multiple access configurations studied, the only configuration that would fit on site while meeting the egress requirements and access goals included:

- The wide north-facing stair which fulfills the egress requirements and provides strong orientation up 4<sup>th</sup> Street, leading pedestrians in the direction of Downtown.
- The north ramp facing east which meets the sidewalk grade where the topography is higher, resulting in a shorter ramp. A switchback ramp was first pursued but deemed infeasible to descend the required 11' to meet the sidewalk close to 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
- The south ramp and south stair which provide additional required egress, direct pedestrians to the High School and the Civic Center, and strengthen the north-south axis along 4<sup>th</sup> Street.



**PWP Original Design for the north entrance**  
The original design for the north entrance included amphitheater seating.

The final north ramp-and-stair configuration creates a triangular space between the ramp and the stairs. Within this triangular space, the original Peter Walker Partners



design included an amphitheater seating element, in wood or composite wood, to visually connect the station plaza to the Pier, to connect the experience of arriving in

Santa Monica with arriving at the water's edge, and to provide seating that contributes to a sense of place. However, based on material restrictions in Metro's Design Criteria, maintenance concerns from Metro and the City, and concerns from the Recreation and Parks Commission about universal access to the amphitheater, Peter Walker Partners redesigned the triangular space between the ramp and stairs based on a different concept, one focused on creating a shared arrival experience for all pedestrians, whether they use the ramp or stairs.

The new design for the north entrance reconfigures the triangular space into three garden terraces flanked on one side by a garden ramp and the west side by the stairs. The new north entrance design simplifies materials and form while enhancing the north ramp with a tall garden or art wall that will engage ramp users with the garden terraces. The garden terraces are designed with a combination of bold and iconic landscaping, featuring fragrant and colorful plants that announce the sea air and signal arrival. Whether alighting from the ramp or stairs, the pedestrian will step out of the station directly onto the Colorado Esplanade, where additional visual cues of planned ripple-patterned pavers and festive string lights create a dramatic yet uniquely Santa Monica arrival experience and a palpable connection to the water's edge.



**PWP Revised Design for the north entrance**

The revised design for the north entrance includes garden terraces and an enhanced garden or art wall



The new north entrance design for the Downtown Station/4<sup>th</sup> Street is designed to comply with Metro Design Criteria approved materials, addresses the maintenance and betterment cost concerns associated with the amphitheater seating element, and creates an improved universal access and arrival experience by replacing the amphitheater seating with garden terraces and an enhanced north ramp.

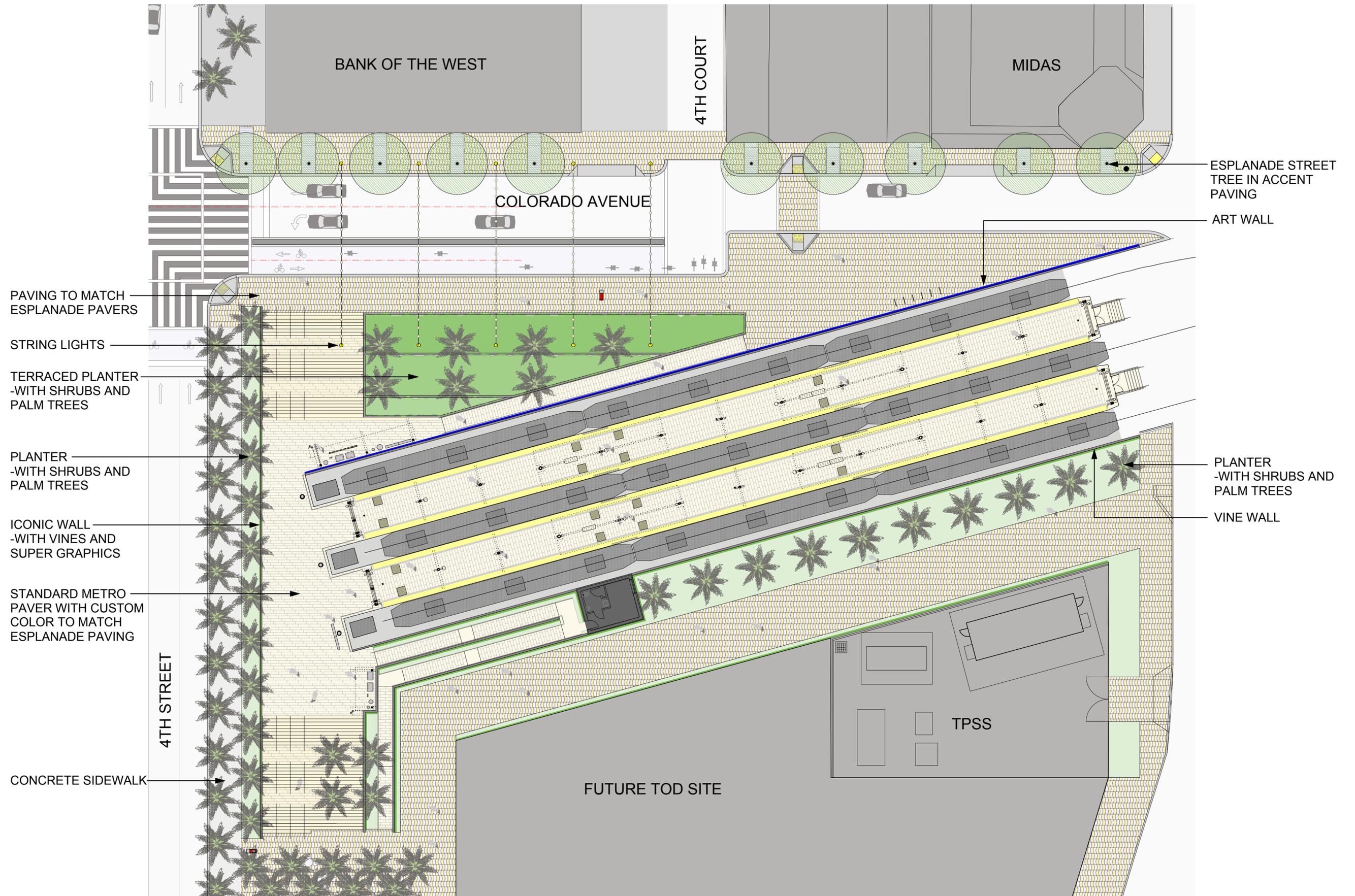
Staff is currently negotiating with Expo/ Metro and the design builder to realize this improved design.

**Attachment:** Site Plan - Downtown Station/4<sup>th</sup> Street

**Prepared by:** Joanna Hankamer, Senior Planner

# ATTACHMENT A

## EXPO DOWNTOWN STATION SITE PLAN



PAVING TO MATCH  
ESPLANADE PAVERS

STRING LIGHTS

TERRACED PLANTER  
-WITH SHRUBS AND  
PALM TREES

PLANTER  
-WITH SHRUBS AND  
PALM TREES

ICONIC WALL  
-WITH VINES AND  
SUPER GRAPHICS

STANDARD METRO  
PAVER WITH CUSTOM  
COLOR TO MATCH  
ESPLANADE PAVING

CONCRETE SIDEWALK

4TH STREET

BANK OF THE WEST

4TH COURT

MIDAS

COLORADO AVENUE

ESPLANADE STREET  
TREE IN ACCENT  
PAVING

ART WALL

PLANTER  
-WITH SHRUBS AND  
PALM TREES

VINE WALL

TPSS

FUTURE TOD SITE