



City Council Report

City Council Meeting: February 14, 2012
Agenda Item: 4A

To: Mayor and City Council

From: David Martin, Director of Planning and Community Development
Martin Pastucha, Director of Public Works

Subject: Colorado Esplanade Design Progress and Recommended Roadway Configuration

Recommended Action

Staff recommends that the City Council review and provide input on the recommended roadway configuration (Scenario One) and schematic design for the Colorado Esplanade and Light Rail Station Plaza.

Executive Summary

The proposed Colorado Avenue Esplanade Project will integrate the Expo Light Rail into the Downtown, streamlining the existing intersection functions and guiding passengers to their business, shopping, cultural and entertainment destinations. The project accomplishes this with a combination of major urban design improvements at the Downtown Expo Station Plaza and along Colorado Avenue between 4th Street and Ocean Avenue. The improvements organize and simplify the flow of pedestrians, vehicles and bicycles, and provide more detailed directional cues such as new signage and green street improvements that clarify pathways, improve wayfinding, enhance landscaping, and provide public art. The project is designed by the internationally renowned landscape design firm, Peter Walker Partners.

This report outlines the design progress on the Colorado Esplanade project, and recommended roadway reconfiguration to optimize flow for pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles with:

- A significantly wider pedestrian area on the south side of the street
- Dedicated and separated bicycle facilities
- Two lanes of one-way westbound vehicle traffic, continuing the one-way westbound flow created by the Expo Station between 4th and 5th Streets
- Alignment of Second and Main Streets into a single intersection

Integral to the schematic design are coordinated pedestrian amenities such as decorative paving, landscaping, lighting to support evening activation, public seating and public art. The schematic design for the Colorado Avenue Esplanade and Expo Station Plaza has been reviewed by the community, key Downtown stakeholders, and adjacent property owners during numerous meetings, public workshops and presentations. The response has been very positive and a summary of the outreach and feedback is included in this report. At the February 1, 2012 meeting, the Planning Commission reviewed and endorsed the proposed roadway configuration, encouraged the team to proceed with the next stages of design, and provided comments to be incorporated into design development.

Background

The Colorado Esplanade, the area on Colorado Avenue between 4th Street and the Santa Monica Pier, is an important crossroads between the City's Downtown, Civic Center and beach and oceanfront districts and serves as a critical gateway into the City's downtown. On [May 24, 2011](#) City Council identified the Colorado Esplanade as a priority project in the Civic Center/Downtown district and designated Redevelopment funds. On [June 28, 2011](#) City Council authorized staff to negotiate and execute a contract with Peter Walker and Partners Landscape Architecture (PWP) to design the Colorado Esplanade and prepare construction bid documentation, and a contract with Atkins (formerly PBS&J) to prepare environmental clearance documentation. The project was also awarded a 2009 Metro Call for Projects grant in 2009 for \$3.3 million for construction.

On [September 13, 2011](#), City Council received an update on Expo Light Rail design-build including the improved Downtown Station layout and access. With implementation of Expo Light Rail there will be one lane of traffic in each direction on Colorado Avenue from 17th to 5th Street. Between 4th and 5th Streets, Colorado will be *westbound-only* with one through-lane and a dedicated left-turn lane at 4th Street. Existing eastbound traffic will be eliminated.



Expo Downtown Station Plan results in one-way westbound only on Colorado Avenue from 5th Street to 4th Street.



View from Expo Downtown Station entrance looking west to the Esplanade and Pier sign beyond.

With 62,000 daily riders system-wide, Expo Light Rail will increase demand for pedestrian and bicycle access near all stations. The Colorado Esplanade proactively

creates the wider sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and vehicle flow necessary to be ready for this new demand in the Downtown.

Civic Center Specific Plan

The Colorado Esplanade is consistent with the Civic Center Specific Plan update (June 28, 2005) that called for the re-alignment of Second Street and Main Street and a new bridge to streamline north-south access across the freeway. Due to proximity of the future bridge footings to the Moreton Bay fig tree, it was determined that the new bridge concept approved as part of the CCSP was infeasible as outlined to the City Council at the [March 24, 2009](#) meeting. The Colorado Esplanade achieves the streamlined roadway alignment intended in the CCSP while preserving this significant tree.

General Plan Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE)

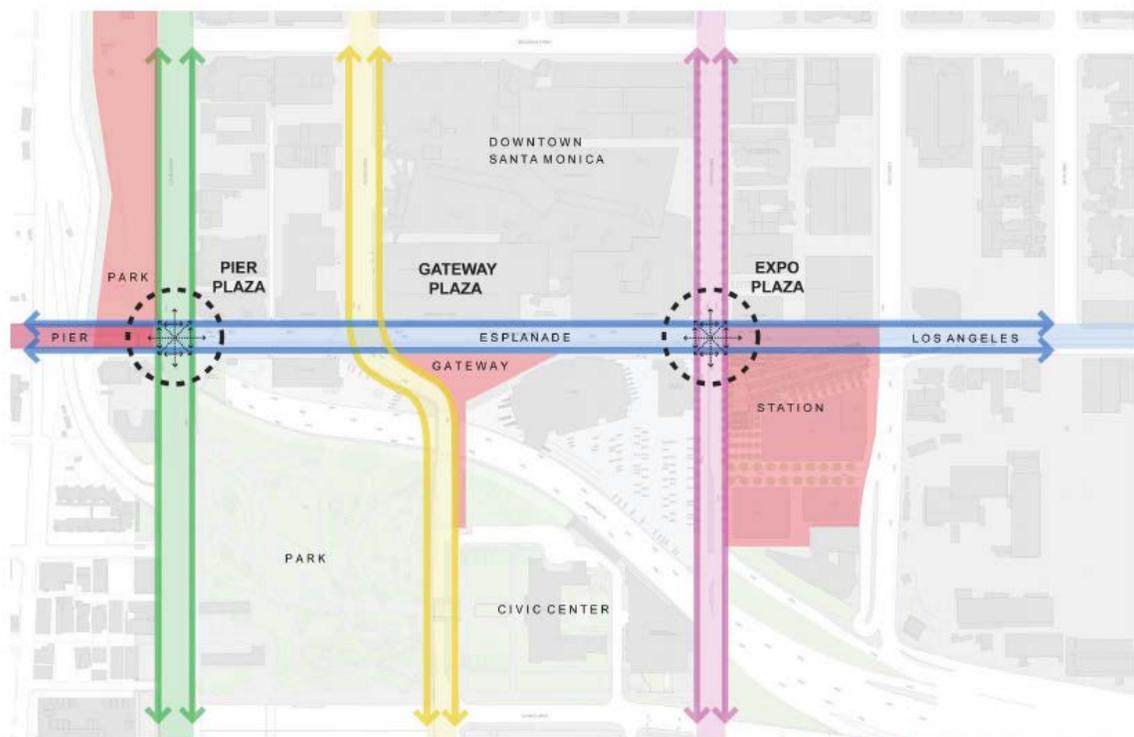
The Colorado Esplanade is recommended in the adopted General Plan Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE) as part of the Downtown, Beach and Oceanfront Districts. The goal of the Esplanade is to integrate and connect these districts, improving the ability of users to access and orient themselves to key civic, business, open space and recreational destinations. The LUCE vision calls for fully integrating the Light Rail Station into the existing city fabric and creating multi-modal access to the new station, while preserving the existing vital circulation functions, enhancing the vibrancy and excitement of this vital gateway to the City and the entire Los Angeles region.

Discussion

Pedestrian demand created by the arrival of the Expo Light Rail will transform the blocks surrounding the station into a place which is active day and night. The need for the Colorado Avenue Esplanade Project was identified as a result of three over-arching goals:

- 1) Integrate the Expo Light Rail Station into the Downtown
- 2) Provide the additional sidewalk space, bicycle facilities, wayfinding and connections to business, shopping, cultural and entertainment destinations needed to accommodate the increase in pedestrians and bicyclists
- 3) Create an appealing gateway to the City that celebrates arrival and departure at this unique location, while providing orientation of a complex area

The project also creates opportunities to advance the City’s goals for creating complete “green streets” which are strategic places for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, increasing carbon dioxide capture, supporting non-motorized vehicle travel, and increasing the size and biodiversity of the urban forest. The project is also an opportunity to reduce the divisive nature of the I-10 freeway, and enhance north/south and east/west linkages. The design can orchestrate the complex circulation functions in this area, improve flow for all modes of travel, and achieve a sense of arrival and departure at this major entrance to Santa Monica where light rail will deliver residents and visitors to the edge of the continent.



SITE DIAGRAM - AREAS OF INTERSECTION

This report outlines the progress on the Colorado Esplanade project, and recommends a schematic design and roadway reconfiguration to optimize flow for pedestrians, bicycles and vehicles with:

- A significantly wider pedestrian sidewalk on the south side of the street
- Dedicated bicycle facilities such as a buffered “cycle track” that connects to the future Pier bridge bicycle facilities and ultimately to the regional beach bike path

- Two lanes of one-way westbound vehicle traffic that continues the one-way westbound flow between 4th and 5th Streets created by the final Expo Station alignment
- Alignment of Second and Main Streets into a single intersection to improve vehicular flow into the Downtown, which also improves access to the enlarged Parking Structure 6 scheduled to open in 2013.

The resulting design improves traffic flow over the current conditions by simplifying the number of movements at all major intersections in the project area, and organizing pedestrian and bike flow. The additional pedestrian space and dedicated zones for pedestrians and bicycles eliminates potential pedestrian spillover into the traffic area, while improving the quality and legibility for the cycle route.

In order to arrive at the recommended configuration and schematic design, the Colorado Esplanade project team has completed significant design work since project initiation in June 2011 including:

- Community Input:** The team held dozens of stakeholder meetings, focusing on owners of adjacent properties, Downtown Santa Monica, Inc., the Pier Restoration Corporation, and Santa Monica Spoke. There was a site walk and public “listening” workshop in December, a January public workshop to review design progress, and a February update to the Planning Commission.
- Site Reconnaissance and Roadway Evaluation:** The team completed in depth review of pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle flow, curb cuts, loading areas, site access, landscape resources, iconic elements (Pier Sign, views, etc.), and urban design context. Dozens of preliminary roadway scenarios were identified with a variety of lane and sidewalk configurations, intersection treatments, and bicycle facilities. Two primary scenarios were selected for detailed evaluation.
- Design Components:** The design team responded to community requests to create a sense of arrival at the key gateway for visitors arriving by train, on foot, bikes, or in cars or buses. The design addresses the desire to improve the aesthetics of the site, and creates legible, intuitive, and appealing orientation and wayfinding in this highly complex space.
- Expo Plaza:** The team developed an Expo Station Plaza design and coordinated with the Expo design-build team to ensure seamless integration of the station, pedestrian plaza, and Esplanade.

A. Community Input – Rounds of Stakeholder Meetings and Public Workshops

In August 2011, and again in December 2011, PWP and staff conducted stakeholder meetings to assess key issues and test preliminary concepts. Meetings were held with:

- Adjacent property and business owners
- Downtown Santa Monica Inc.
- Santa Monica Spoke
- Pier Restoration Corporation
- City Departments including Big Blue Bus and Community and Cultural Services

The team also met with the Expo design-build team. These interviews helped staff and PWP understand stakeholders' critical issues regarding areas in need of improvement related to the arrival experience into Santa Monica, property access, vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian circulation and way-finding, bus routing and layover, and access to parking.

On September 14, 2011 the Planning Commission held a Study Session on the design process and preliminary concepts. On October 26, 2011 the project team hosted a public meeting and site walk to solicit impressions of the site and identify significant features. The site walk was followed by a public workshop at Ken Edwards Center. The workshop allowed participants to explore a range of concepts to improve walking, bicycling, and vehicle circulation, and ways to create a memorable gateway into the City with landscaping and public art. Themes that emerged from this outreach were:

- The Colorado Avenue experience in this area needs improvement, both aesthetically and functionally.
- Create a sense of place and gateway at this iconic location adjacent to the Pier and Downtown.
- The project, at a minimum must maintain or improve access to the City parking structures 7 and 8 and driveway access to existing buildings in the project area.
- Minimizing areas where there is conflict between bicyclists, pedestrians and vehicles is critical
- The design must promote northward flow of pedestrian traffic into the heart of the downtown as well as to the Pier.
- The project must include a comprehensive wayfinding program that is integrated with and complementary to the current DTSM Inc. and Downtown Specific Plan work plans to create a comprehensive downtown wayfinding system.

- Providing improved entrances to the new PGW park and the Pier from Colorado is important.
- North-south circulation across the Esplanade and the freeway at 4th and Main Streets is as critical as the east-west circulation along the Esplanade. It would be a benefit if the Esplanade project could improve current existing traffic flow.
- Address adjacent property owners' desires to facilitate turning left into Sears, the Holiday Inn, and the alley egress circulation for the Paseo del Mar property.

In December 2011, the design team conducted a second round of one-on-one discussions with stakeholders to test conceptual designs and circulation options. The recommended roadway configuration (Project Scenario One) was preferred by stakeholders during discussions. A second community design workshop was held on Saturday, January 21, 2012. The workshop included a presentation of the design elements and roadway configuration, and was followed by an open house with four discussion tables with the specific topics of Planting and Tree Palette, Site Elements, Bike Facilities, and Open Space Gateway (to address the "triangle" open space area at the intersection of Main Street and Colorado Avenue). Community feedback was very positive, and a summary of the workshop is included as Attachment A. General comments included:

Planting and Tree Palette

- Support for a formal planting character with a strong identity down Colorado Avenue that frames the Pier sign.
- Use trees that are strong and enduring, that unify the street but don't over-shade.
- Palm trees at the station could be appropriate if they are not over-used.
- There was strong support for creating the Ficus grove in the gateway as a playful and appropriate use of existing trees.
- Diversity of planting should be considered, including ground cover, as a way to create interest and soften the streetscape.

Site Elements

- There was practically unanimous support for signature lighting, and lighting was identified as a critical element for safety and night-time design experience. Choice and placement of lights should consider the trees and focal areas.
- Playful art was preferred by many people, and art was considered a great way to create a sense of place along the Esplanade.

- Support for integrating vertical elements, pavement features, and an interpretive timeline into the wayfinding strategy.

Bike Facilities

- Strong support for creating a bicycle connection between the Pier and Expo Downtown Station, including finding a direct connection to the Beach Bike Path
- Preference for the cycle track on the south side of the street, with a refinement of intersection details
- Desire for a clear separation between bikes and pedestrians, including keeping bikes on the street level and creating physical barriers between modes.
- Overarching support for making Downtown bicycle connections, including at 2nd Street and 4th Court.

Open Space Gateway

- Unanimous support for creating the larger unified open space as a signature space and simplifying the intersection of Main and 2nd Street.
- Desire to balance pathways with areas for landscape or enjoyment.
- Support for an artistic element, focal piece, or signature treatment in the open space/gateway.

A survey was also distributed to solicit detailed input and individual comments. Approximately 30 surveys were collected during the workshop, representing a majority of the workshop participants. In response to “What do you think would make the Esplanade feel like a special place of arrival into the City?”:

- Signature Lighting was selected by over 80%
- Unique Paving which was selected by over 75%
- Public Art which was selected by a majority of people, and listed as a top choice by some
- Planting and Iconic Trees were selected by a majority of people
- Integrated Wayfinding was also selected by a majority of people, with some listing it as a top choice

Planning Commission Comment

The project was presented to the Planning Commission at the February 1, 2012 meeting. The Commission discussed the importance of the project as a creative way to address the increase in pedestrians around the Light Rail station, and provided comments on the aesthetic components to be refined in the next stages of design.

Commission comments included:

- Unanimous support for the one-way westbound roadway configuration, noting the simultaneous benefits to aesthetic conditions and open space, to the circulation of pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles, and to reducing present day bottlenecks a Fourth and Second Streets.
- Discussion of the relative merits of bicycle facility options, concluding that the final design of either off-street “cycle-track” or on-street dedicated lanes should reflect community preferences and optimize connectivity to other facilities.
- Agreement that signature lighting would be an important component and a request that as the lighting design progressed that it strike the right aesthetic balance between “fun and unique” and appropriately sophisticated and elegant.
- Suggestion that if additional funding was available, a major work of art should be cited in the open space triangle.

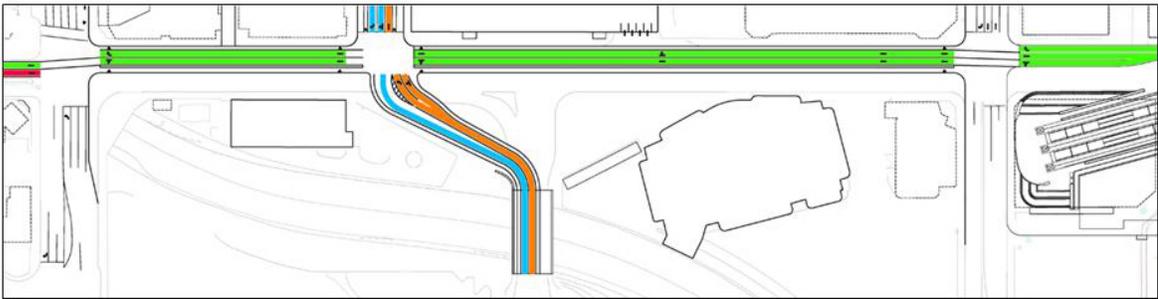
The Commission encouraged continued design on the Open Space/Gateway Plaza created by the realignment of Main and Second Streets, noting that the space should be simultaneously considered as a place that people can move through and as a place where people can take a moment to reflect, orient and experience the landscape. Although there was general support for the re-use of the Ficus trees here, and recognition that this was a successful way to achieve the transition to the Park, there were also suggestions that other signature trees might be considered for this site. California Oak or Moreton Bay Fig were cited as species that are in keeping with the designer’s intent that the trees be considered an art form. The overall discussion of trees focused on the importance of choosing a species that would be both iconic and uniquely Santa Monica. There was support for trees that framed the space and did not obscure buildings, signage or the Pier Sign, but would provide dappled shade rather than full shade.

The Commission unanimously supported the direction of the station plaza design, citing the views achieved from the station, and clear sense of orientation and arrival. There was some discussion about shading for people seated on the stairs, and opportunities to create a meeting plaza filled with activity. The Commission was particularly encouraged by the stairs that guided people northward into the Downtown, and encouraged staff to continue to pursue additional opportunities to make improvements to 4th Street north of the station.

B. Site Reconnaissance and Initial Roadway Evaluation

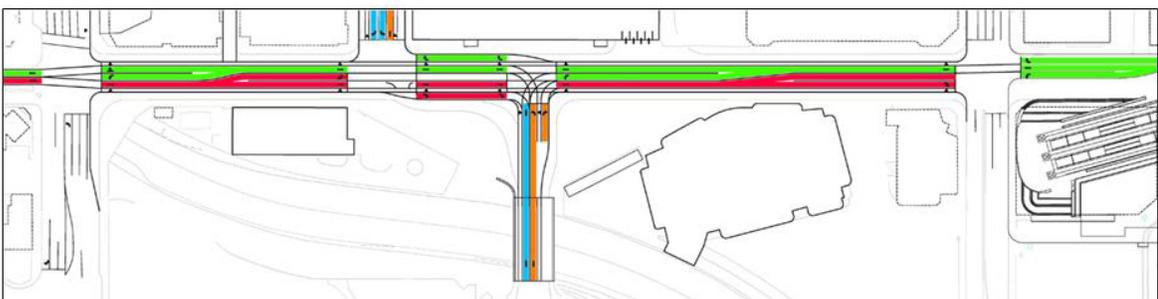
The design developed by PWP is based on a comprehensive site reconnaissance and identification of landscape resources, iconic elements (Pier Sign, views, etc.), adjacent uses, and urban design context. Because of the functional importance of this area, the first step was to determine the best circulation options taking into consideration existing and future pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle demand as well as stakeholder input and access concerns. Dozens of preliminary roadway scenarios were identified and evaluated during this initial consideration including a variety of lane and sidewalk configurations, intersection treatments, and bicycle facilities. Two scenarios stood out for their performance, urban design and responsiveness to stakeholder concerns.

- **Scenario One:** One-way westbound only with two traffic lanes; Reconfigure and align Main Street to 2nd Street connection across Colorado Avenue; Bicycle lanes in both directions (either cycle-track or on-street lanes). The additional pedestrian sidewalk is aggregated to the south side of Colorado Avenue, and both north and south curb locations align with the locations at the Expo station.



Scenario One

- **Scenario Two:** Two-way traffic option, with one through traffic lane in each direction plus a center turning lane; Maintain the double intersection transition between Main Street to 2nd Street; Bicycle lanes in both directions. The additional pedestrian sidewalk is split between both sides of Colorado. North and south curb locations have to be shifted to align with locations at the Expo station and Pier entry.



Scenario Two

The scenarios were subject to a detailed traffic analysis performed by Fehr and Peers. Analysis confirmed the feasibility of both Scenarios One and Two, and that intersection operations would be similar to or improved over existing conditions with the implementation of the Colorado Esplanade. The analysis also identified that both scenarios perform substantially better than the future baseline (year 2030) scenario. The one-way configuration of Scenario One reduces the number of turning movements required at the critical 4th Street/Colorado Avenue intersection. This simplification of lanes and intersections between 5th Street and Ocean Avenue results in more efficient operations and shorter wait times than the two-way option. Particularly, Scenario One allows for the alignment of 2nd Street to Main Street, thus consolidating two signalized intersections into one. This would simplify the intersection and eliminate wait time associated with the two signals.

The one-way scenario performs better for pedestrians because it provides more overall sidewalk space, and locates it on the south side away from the major pedestrian/vehicle driveway conflicts along the north side of Colorado Avenue, such as the entrance into Parking Structure 8. Below are the findings:

- Simplification of signal phases at all three Colorado intersections at Ocean Avenue, 2nd Street and 4th Street would relieve existing bottlenecks at three key intersections within the Downtown network
- Westbound-only traffic on Colorado Avenue between 4th and 2nd would promote clockwise flow around the block, facilitating flow in and out of the eight primary Downtown Parking Structures
- Configuration of vehicle lanes and improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities would be consistent with City's circulation network goals, including those established with the LUCE and Bike Action Plan
- Continuation of one-way traffic on Colorado Avenue from 4th Street westward eliminates an eastbound dead-end at 4th Street and would provide less confusion and more predictability in vehicle circulation
- With the removal of the northbound Ocean Avenue turn lane at Colorado, space exists to widen the sidewalk along the eastside of Ocean Avenue. The sidewalk expansion will accommodate the increased pedestrian activity at this crucial transition point between the Esplanade and Palisades Garden Walk, and eliminate an existing pinch point at one of the most used bus stops in the City.
- Elimination of cross-traffic turning movements would provide better driveway operation for both north and south side properties. The detailed operational

controls for loading deliveries at the Sears and Holiday Inn property driveways will be resolved in the final design.

Pedestrian scramble intersections, where all pedestrians cross at once within a dedicated pedestrian signal phase, were studied at both the 4th Street and Ocean Avenue intersections. Although they are not currently drawn in the plans, both scenarios provide the ability to add pedestrian scrambles in the future.

C. Design Components

The design team has responded to the community requests to create a sense of place and arrival at the key gateway locations, improve the aesthetics of the site, and provide an urban design framework that creates legible, intuitive, and appealing orientation and wayfinding in this highly complex space. The following describes and illustrates some of the overarching design components that provide the complete program for the project. The schematic site plan is included as Attachment B.



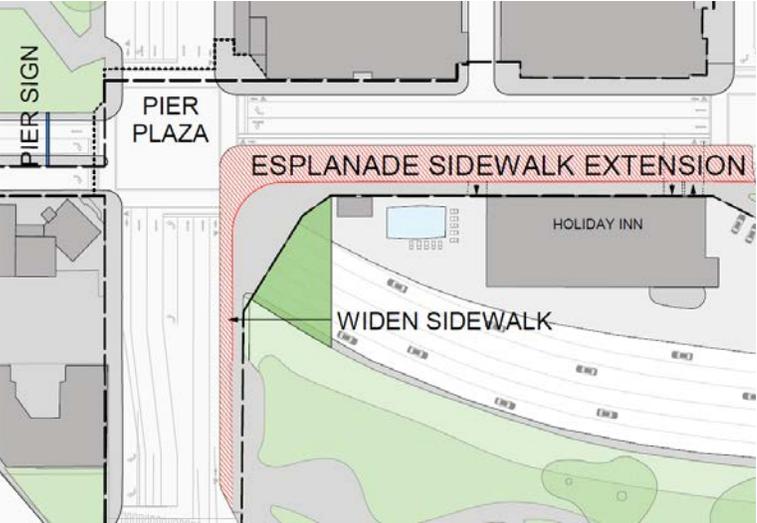
Creating Pedestrian Space, Direct Connections and Linking Destinations.

There are three key opportunities for creating pedestrian linkages that would help orient pedestrians toward their destination, as well as disperse pedestrian flow more evenly throughout the area, thus improving the overall balance of travel modes and reducing potential conflicts:

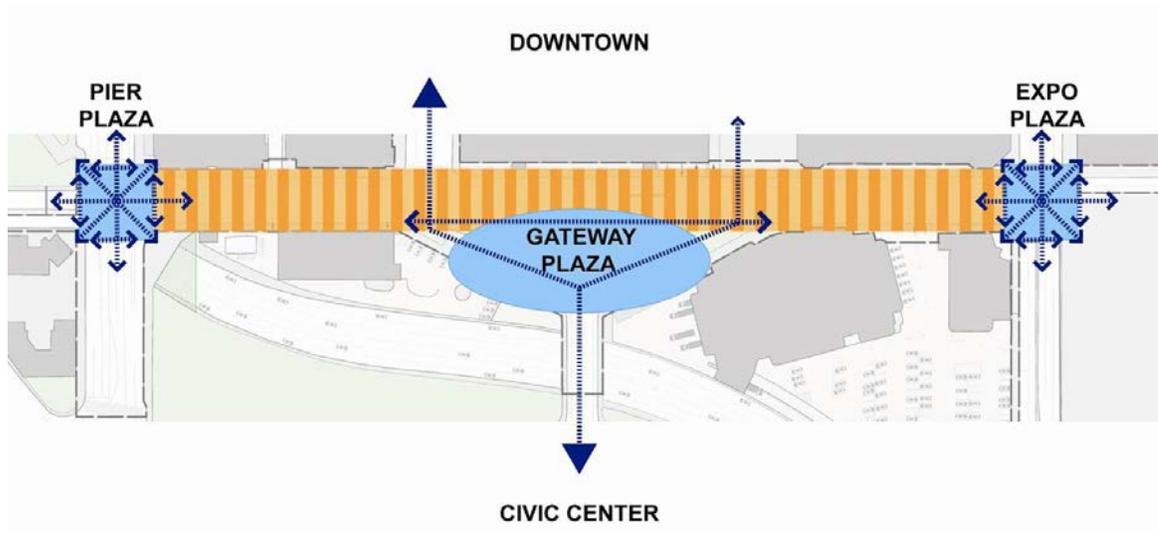
- 1. A significantly wider pedestrian sidewalk (up to 40-55 feet wide) on the south side of the street is created that includes pedestrian amenities such as decorative paving, landscaping, lighting to support evening activation, public seating and public art.



- 2. On the southeast corner of Ocean and Colorado Avenues, a sidewalk widening that creates a generous entry into the new Palisades Garden Walk and improved connection to the Pier. This transition area between the Esplanade and PGW will be designed in coordination with James Corner Field Operations. The sidewalk widening is feasible because the one-way flow on Colorado allows the dedicated northbound right-turn from Ocean Avenue onto Colorado Avenue to be removed. The southbound turn pocket currently on Ocean Avenue would be eliminated and could be converted to pedestrian sidewalk space.

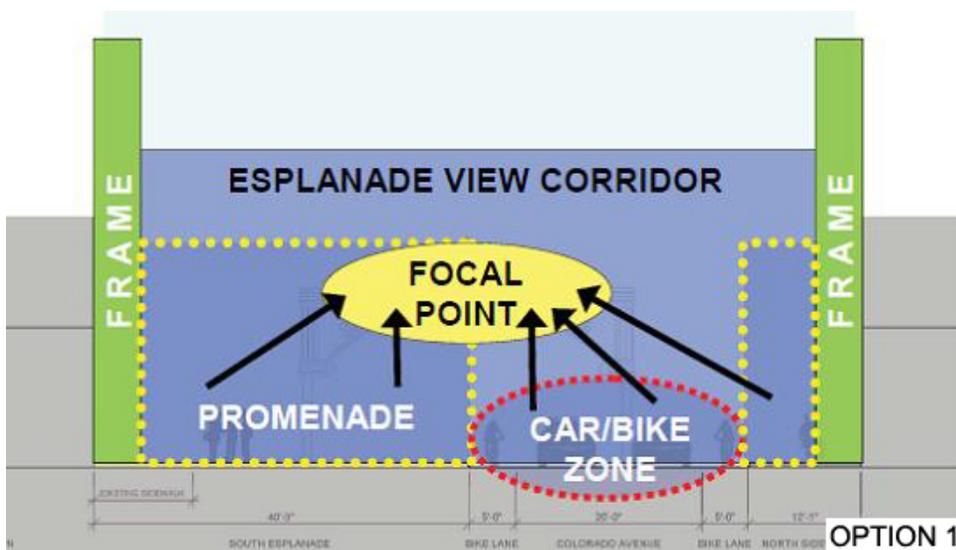


- 3. Key intersections with in-pavement patterning to give identity to both ends of the project and to highlight the opportunity to reach destinations in many directions. Interaction between vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian modes of movement will be made safe and clear at these intersections.



Creating a Gateway to Downtown and the Pier

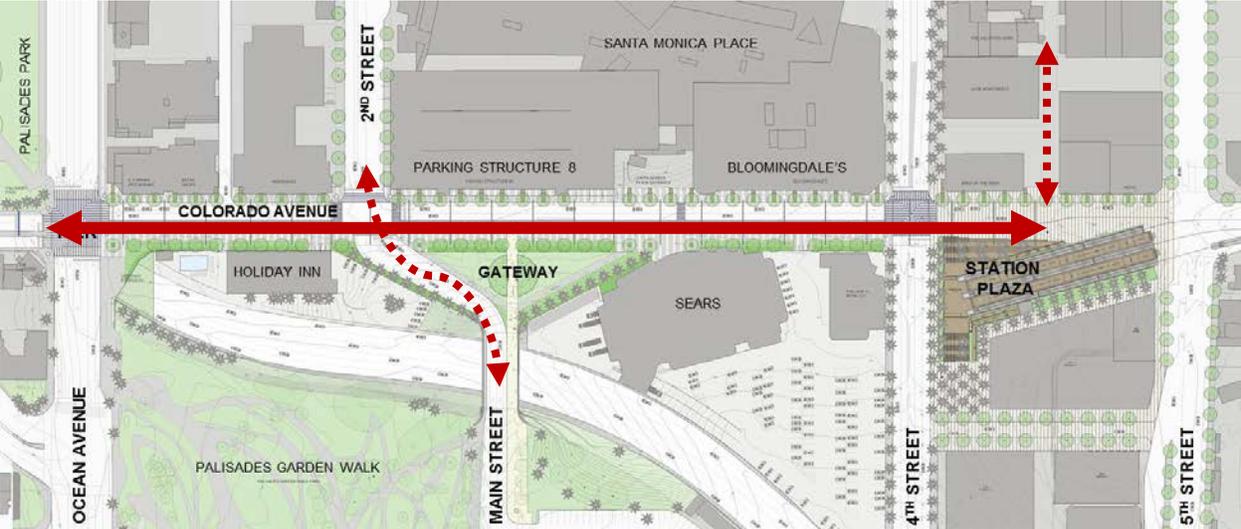
As the view of the Pier sign was considered to be a critical aesthetic and historic component, the designers have analyzed the best way to maintain the view of the Pier sign for all users. The space allocation for vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles of the one-way scenario would provide a larger view-shed toward the Pier sign and engage all travel modes in the view. In this configuration, pedestrians would have a direct view of the Pier sign, in comparison to current conditions or Scenario Two where only drivers have a direct view of sign. In addition, the recommended design proposes to locate the trees at the back of the sidewalk to symmetrically frame the Pier sign and avoid blocking the view.



Expands perception of space, equalizes view of Pier sign for all modes.

Bicycle Facilities Linking Expo, Downtown and the Pier/Beach

The project was successful in receiving Metro Call for Projects funding in part because of a concept that would better link Light Rail passengers with bicycles to the regional beach bike path. The project includes dedicated bicycle facilities with a separate bike lane or cycle track which will include raised lane dividers, state of the art bike facility pavement markings and signal timing to connect the new Bike Center and the intended future Pier Bridge bicycle improvements and the regional bike path. The project also fulfills an important component of the recently adopted Bike Action Plan by improving the integration of the Main Street bike lane into the Downtown bicycle network.



Bike Lanes in both directions connect the Downtown Station and the Pier; a proposed bike connection through the 4th Court alley proposes to connect the Downtown Station to the bike lanes on Broadway; and the Main to 2nd Street realignment connects the Main Street bike lane directly to the new Bike Center and Downtown.



Public Art

In coordination with ongoing discussions with Downtown Santa Monica Inc. and the Downtown Specific Plan consultants, the project would include a public art component that integrates with the Downtown Specific Plan public art program and contributes to celebrating a place of arrival. A RFQ for a team artist was issued in the fall and the artist selection process is underway. It is anticipated that an artist will be chosen shortly and will provide concepts to be reviewed in context with the final design.

Trees that Celebrate the Space and Enhance Pier and Business Visibility

The Urban Forest Master Plan defers the tree planting program along this stretch of Colorado to the Esplanade project. The designer intends to select a tree program that would shape the space and become a part of the area identity. Species for the project have not yet been selected, however the goal of the tree program would be to frame the views to the iconic Pier Sign and provide a view corridor down the length of the street. The planting plan would allow for views to businesses while visitors move along the corridor at a variety of speeds, on foot, on bike and in vehicles. Where existing healthy trees are proposed to change, the design team plans to re-locate them as much as possible.

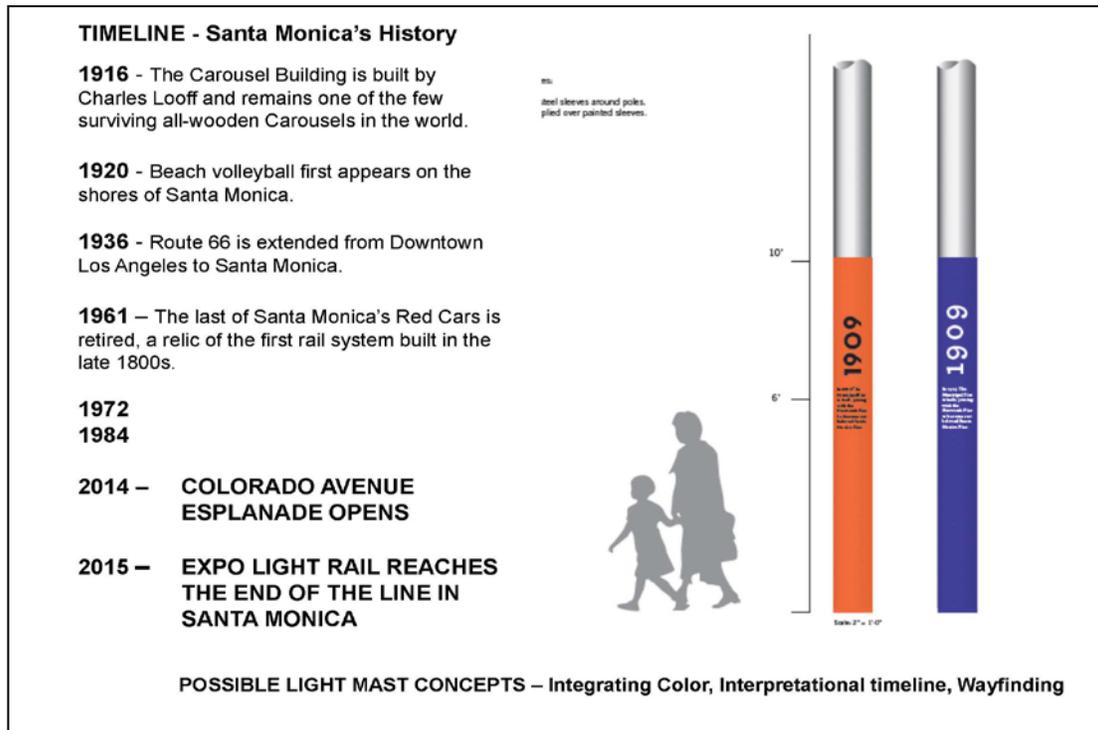
Wayfinding for a Welcoming Gateway that Guides People to Key Destinations

The project would include wayfinding and signage that addresses the multiple types of necessary wayfinding including:

- Directional information for pedestrians arriving and leaving from the station, Promenade, Pier, Civic Center and the future City project at 4th /5th and Arizona
- Bicycle signage
- Urban design and pedestrian amenities that provide wayfinding information without signage so as to minimize proliferation of signs

The designers are working with both the Downtown Specific Plan consultant and Suisman Design, hired by Downtown Santa Monica Inc., to integrate the signage program into the larger Downtown area. The designers are considering integrative

elements throughout the project that serve many purposes, such as light pole masts imprinted with wayfinding information or timeline references.



Potential timeline or wayfinding concept that could be considered for light pole masts

Creating a Sense of Place with a Unified Open Space

The project area includes an opportunity for an exciting new open space design at the existing lawn “triangles” at the pedestrian intersection of Main Street and Colorado Avenue. The current design concept calls for re-location of the remaining healthy Ficus trees, which are located in front of Parking Structure 8, to the new open space, extending the concept of the Ficus grove in the PGW Park across the freeway. The aggregation of these trees together would provide enough mass to draw the eye from the Gateway to the PGW Park, providing the visual “sign post” to the park from the station.



Cross-section through Main Street Bridge, the open space triangle, and the Esplanade, illustrating the relationship of the proposed relocated Ficus trees to the Ficus grove in the PGW park.



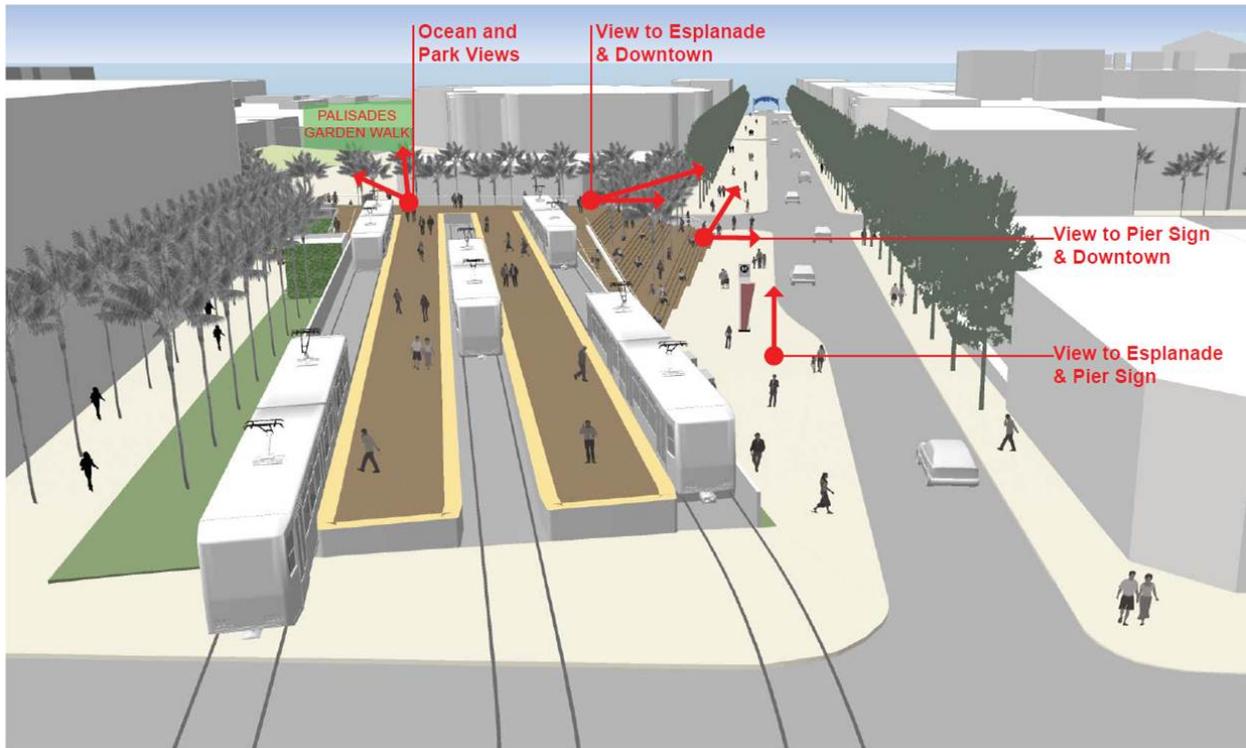
Alternative concepts for the triangle open space.

D. Expo Light Rail Station Plaza

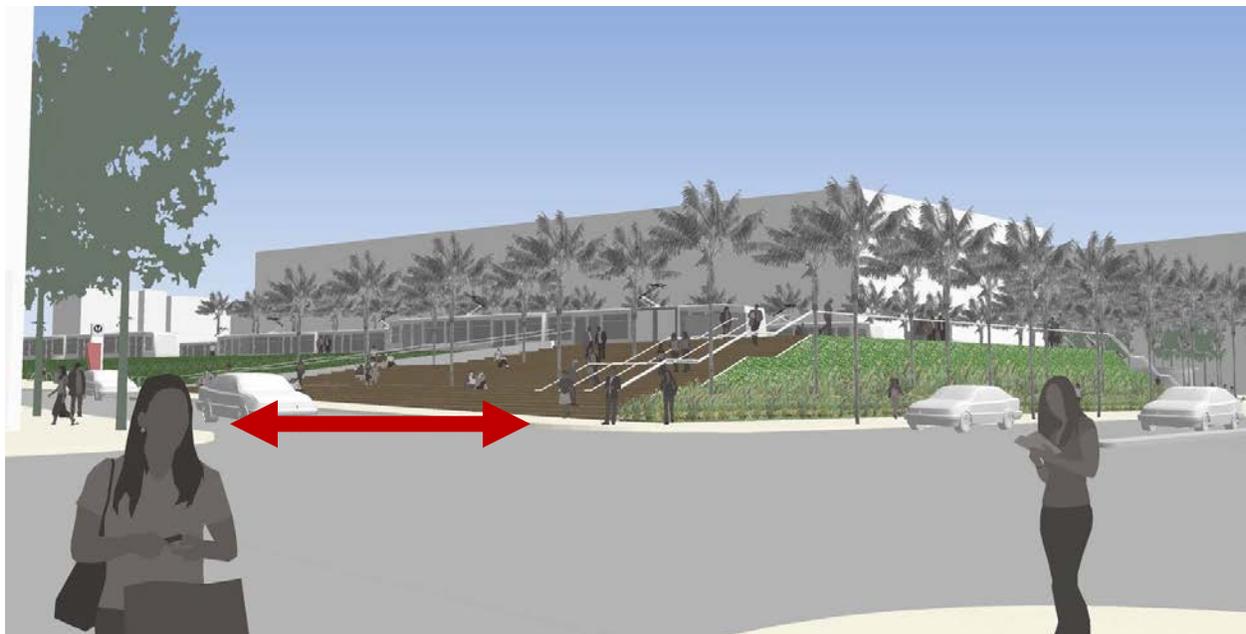
PWP is also designing the public plaza at the Expo Station to create a seamless connection between the station, Esplanade and the Downtown. Staff and PWP have been working with the Expo design team to create a plaza and pathway design that integrates the Expo station into the aesthetic and urban design of the Esplanade, while creating the urban design and visual cues that orient the pedestrians to their destinations. Two key components of the design are:

- The slight grade elevation would create views of the Ocean and Pier as passengers alight and board the trains.

- Orienting pedestrians north and south along Fourth Street into the heart of the Downtown, to avoid unnecessary pedestrian crossings at Colorado and Fourth Street and guide shoppers northward.



Orienting views to Palisades Garden Walk and the Civic Center, the Ocean, the Pier, the Esplanade and 4th Street from the Downtown Station Platform and Landings



Station entrance/exit stairs lead Downtown visitors directly north, across Colorado Avenue and up 4th Street.



The garden wall along the 4th Street elevation reinforces a strong north-south axis as the pedestrian and vehicle entrance into the Downtown

Process for Next Design Stages

Following City Council input on the recommended roadway option, staff will be able to proceed with the additional design details such as:

- refinements to adjacent property owner access
- the detailed design of the bicycle facility
- the creation of a public art project
- the review of opportunities with the Recreation and Parks Commission
- cost estimating
- completion of CEQA/NEPA analysis

The project would then return to Council for CEQA certification and to move forward with Final Design. This project is subject to the scheduling and processing requirements of Caltrans as the administrator of the \$3.3 million Metro Call for Projects grant which requires CEQA/NEPA certification prior to construction bidding.

Financial Impacts & Budget Actions

There is no immediate budget/financial impact associated with the recommendation in this report. The design phase of the project has been funded in account C177040.589000.

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Attachments:

Attachment A: January 21, 2012 Workshop Summary
Attachment B: Esplanade 75% Schematic Design Site Plan

Attachment A

January 21, 2012 Community Workshop Summary

The Colorado Esplanade Workshop #2: Schematic Design Input



On Saturday, January 21, 2012 a second community workshop was held about the Colorado Esplanade to solicit input on the design evolution since the initial workshop in October 2011. The Colorado Esplanade Project is being created to integrate the Expo Light Rail into the Downtown, and create a sense of place and arrival that is memorable and enjoyable for residents and visitors alike. As the Esplanade connects Santa Monica's Downtown, Civic Center and Beach Districts, it is also improving the existing intersection functions and guiding passengers to their business, shopping, and entertainment destinations. The project accomplishes these important goals with a combination of physical urban design directional cues, new signage and green street improvements that clarify pathways, improve wayfinding, enhance landscaping, and provide public art.

The project's second workshop was kicked off with a presentation from the Peter Walker Partners (PWP) design team showing the schematic design drawings and images of potential streetscape elements including open space, landscape, lighting, roadway configuration, bike facility, paving and other street design elements. An open house followed the presentation, allowing participants to ask questions, learn more about project details, and provide specific comments. During the open house, workshop participants were invited to topic tables including:

- Planting and Tree Palette
- Site Elements
- Bike Facilities
- Open Space/Gateway

Each table provided additional information about the topic, and was facilitated by a design professional from the PWP design team and a recorder. Everyone was encouraged share their opinions and preferences for elements of the Colorado Esplanade. Feedback was recorded on the plans and on flip charts at each table.

A survey sheet was also provided at each station enabling participants to identify the key features they feel are important in the development of the Esplanade, and to solicit additional thoughts, comments and input. Survey comments to the question, "Do you have additional thoughts about the following elements of the Esplanade?" are included below, categorized by table topic.

Approximately 40 people attended the workshop, representing a wide range of community stakeholders, residents, business leaders, bicyclists, and many others. A lot of valuable feedback was gained from the workshop which is included in this summary. Overall, comments were very positive, and the project has been well received.

Comments and Feedback

The following summarizes the general comments from each topic table, along with specific comments from individual participants and relevant comments transcribed from the surveys.

TABLE 1 – PLANTING AND TREE PALETTE



Summary of Planting & Tree Table Comments:

- The character of the planting should be formal, not random. Colorado trees should be a strong, planted identity that moves down the street and unifies it, without creating dense shade
- Trees should contribute to the creation of a unique space
- Strong support for trees to frame view of the Pier sign
- Trees and plants should be enduring/bulletproof
- Generally positive about use of some Palms – type must be appropriate and not overused
- Some interest in diversity of planting – use of materials at ground level in addition to signature trees, and plant diversity as contributor to “City as Arboretum”
- Strong support for Ficus trees grove in Gateway – playful and good use of existing material.

Specific Table Comments:

- Trees are the most important part of the scheme
- Concerned about street trees blocking Sears sculpture; trees should accentuate buildings
- Expo Plaza needs canopy trees to provide shade
- Make sure there is no tree litter in the bike lanes. Also, remove trees at corners where there are right-hand turns. Such trees create visibility problems for bicyclists and vehicles.
- Trees do not necessarily need to be unique; trees need to be able to stand up to intense traffic
- Significant trees in pop-outs
- Is Expo Station so far out that it is necessary to keep the focus on the Pier sign?
- Need grouping of planting at human level, not just trees (SEE: State Street in Santa Barbara)
- Trees shouldn't be structural (conifers); trees should soften sterile rigidity of architecture, like London Plane Tree
- Prefer formal & symmetric; random = chaotic
- Consider Monterey Cypress, a historically significant & stately tree that grows vertically—roots don't grow above ground
- Need softer feeling along street at pedestrian level
- Wayfinding can be incorporated into art
- May be too many palms, only need enough to communicate Southern California
- Don't need dense trees for shade because of Southern California's mild weather; would not repeat Ficus Trees
- Does not prefer Date Palms
- Likes Ficus grouping idea (exciting & playful)
- Pines near ocean does not have coastal feel; Lemon Scented Gum is better
- Mix in 1 other tree species (in addition to palms & pines) for a different form
- Use uncut buffalo grass as a barrier between bicyclist & pedestrians
- Use non-invasive species—sustainability is important Pines do not ring Santa Monica; "needs to be more iconically Southern California"
- Consider economics of moving Ficus Trees; plant new trees instead, don't need to save every tree
- Have a mix of trees; a uniform row will look good in the short-term but variety is better for the long-term
- No bottle brush trees
- Trees should be 'green-house gas' trees (native trees on the list of trees approved for the City's Green House Gas Study)...like Torrey Pine, Island Oak, Catalina Ironwood
- Likes palms but concerned that they do not do any environmental work...shading or improving air quality
- Mix palm types at station plaza – use alternating species
- Love the Ficus trees in the Gateway Plaza – must thoroughly check trees prior to move to make sure root mass can support tree or identify need for providing supports until rooted.
- A strong tree form and layout is needed. The palms indicate the beach, and speak of Southern California, but maybe there are too many palms.

- For Colorado Street – could use Lemon-Scented Gum which is grand and columnar or Chinese Flame tree that is on Santa Monica Blvd
- 4th Street arrival needs continuity. Continue existing Ficus and Ginkgo
- Would like to see color and softness on North side of Colorado – larger tree wells where design can support it

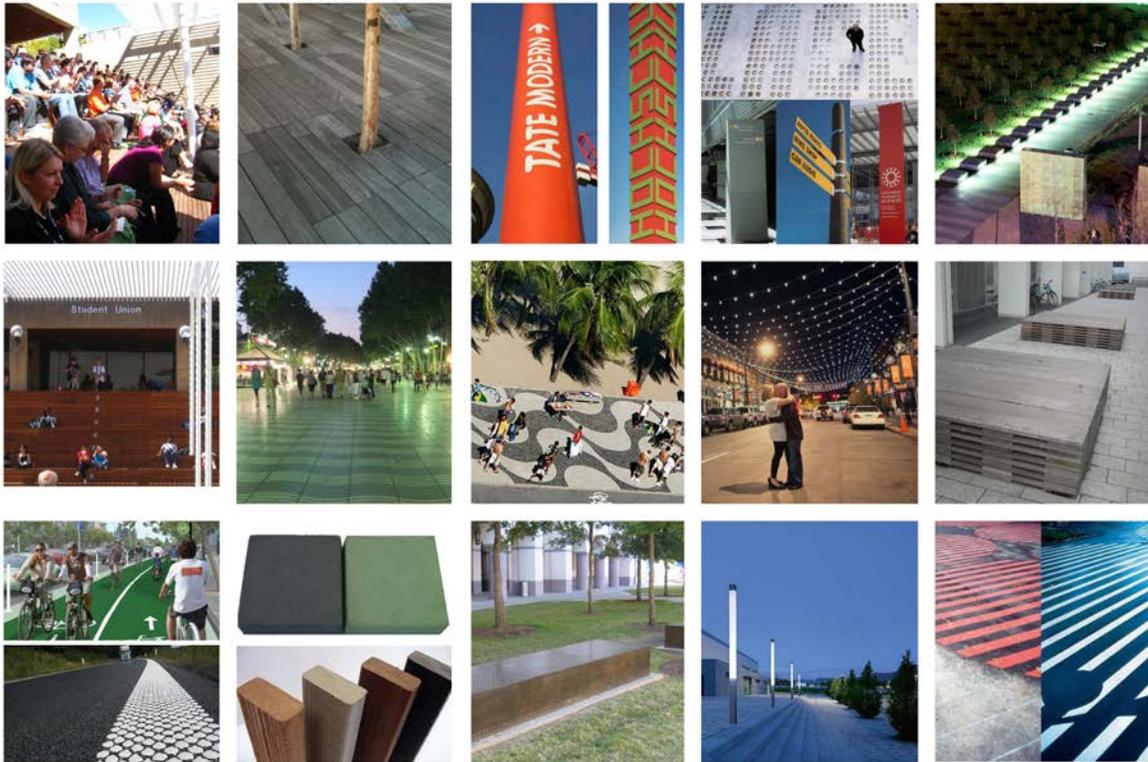
Survey General Comments:

- Strong support for a bold or iconic landscaping design and trees; Use trees to create a sense of space/place
- Strong support for playful re-use of the Ficus
- Concern about Palms – but okay in limited area to communicate beach location

Survey Specific Comments:

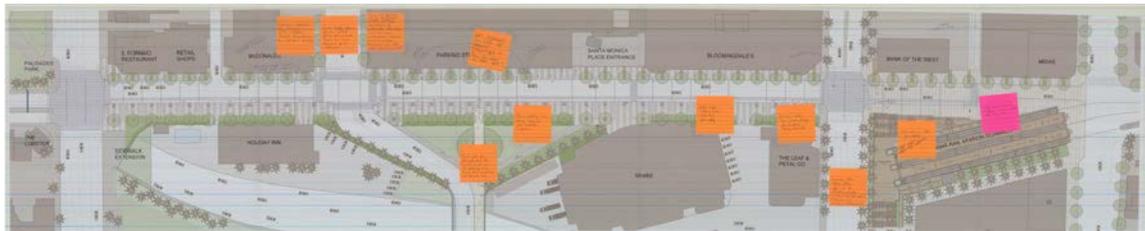
- provide shade
- Use succulents and CA natives with some color accents – bouganvillea.
- Like the proposed trees – interesting and different. Seems like a lot of space for planting
- Create some variation of the path for an element of surprise or progress – change color from block to block or undulate trees or plantings. Let Pier sign be seen and then lost and then found
- Love transplanting Ficus – ensure viability with buttressing or cabling until established
- Like columnar trees on Colorado – consider if any native trees could be added. Look at alternatives to Palms for 4th Street that have GHG benefits
- Trees are awesome – make this as green as possible
- Use plants to create a great space
- Not too many palms – just enough to reiterate that you are in SoCal at the beach
- No trees on the sidewalk
- Use Monterey Cypress for the border – same and Palisades Park – they grow narrow and tall.
- Very good to save and reuse the Ficus trees – be very careful in relocating and evaluate before deciding to move. Must check root structure, and provide adequate support until they are established

TABLE 2 – SITE ELEMENTS



COLORADO AVENUE ESPLANADE | PAVING AND SITE ELEMENTS

01.21.2012 | PWP LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



Summary of Site Elements Table Comments:

- Almost unanimous support for signature lighting, and lighting identified as a critical element for safety and night-time design experience. Consider trees and night-sky in lighting choice and placement
- Strong interest in playful art elements, and using art as an opportunity to create a sense of place
- Support for integrating vertical elements or pavement features into wayfinding or timeline

Table Discussion Specific Comments:

- We need a “Bean” art element here
- Coney Island vs. Time Square—why symmetrical trees?
- Look at sidewalks around Ficus Trees (they need repair)
- Look carefully at string lights; similar concerns at Palisades Garden Walk regarding lighting levels and the appearance of metal poles during day
- Safety concern regarding seating at the Station Plaza
- Treescape—acclimation/arborist commitment and City Staff review is important

- Palms need to be appropriate for coastal zone
- Ficus Tree preservation idea is great!
- Concern regarding tree relocation, and stability due to pruning that's occurred
- Interest in seeing lights arc-shaped like pier gateway; not so rigid/straight; consider linear lights on Colorado east-west to reinforce views down to the pier
- Station Plaza—consider trees that shade, appropriate species
- Historical elements would be great; consider continuity with Garden Walk historic elements/story
- What do poles look like during day? Can they serve other purposes?
- Concern regarding stadium seating (sleeping issues + security)
- Need good lighting at night for safety
- We need a fountain here (use recycled water)
- Consider a BIG art piece
- Provide seating/resting for seniors walking length of Colorado
- Consider raising buffers of sidewalk to protect pedestrians from bikes/cars
- Look at moving away from pure rectilinear design approach & seek more curvilinear design; possibly historic or geographic/geologic reference (like from Garden Walk a bit, but different)
- At Station Plaza, seating/stadium could be curved, not just straight/hard edged
- Love bringing Pier/wood timbers up to station!
- Will porcelain tile in wood grain pattern work for paving?
- Love historic story/timeline and way finding/directional on light poles; lead people to other places in Santa Monica
- Be broad or thematic if integrating history of Santa Monica
- Integrate smart app—could tell story or tour the area
- Consider a working group to develop content of history elements
- Fountains/water elements
- Pedestrian/kid friendly
- Some higher features with recycled water
- Carts (food, sunscreen, etc.)
- Would like mirrored buildings to increase views, even if reflected on surfaces
- Like integration of history
- Include history of historic train line, "Santa Monica Air Line," that ran here
- Like the re-use of Ficus Trees

Survey General Comments:

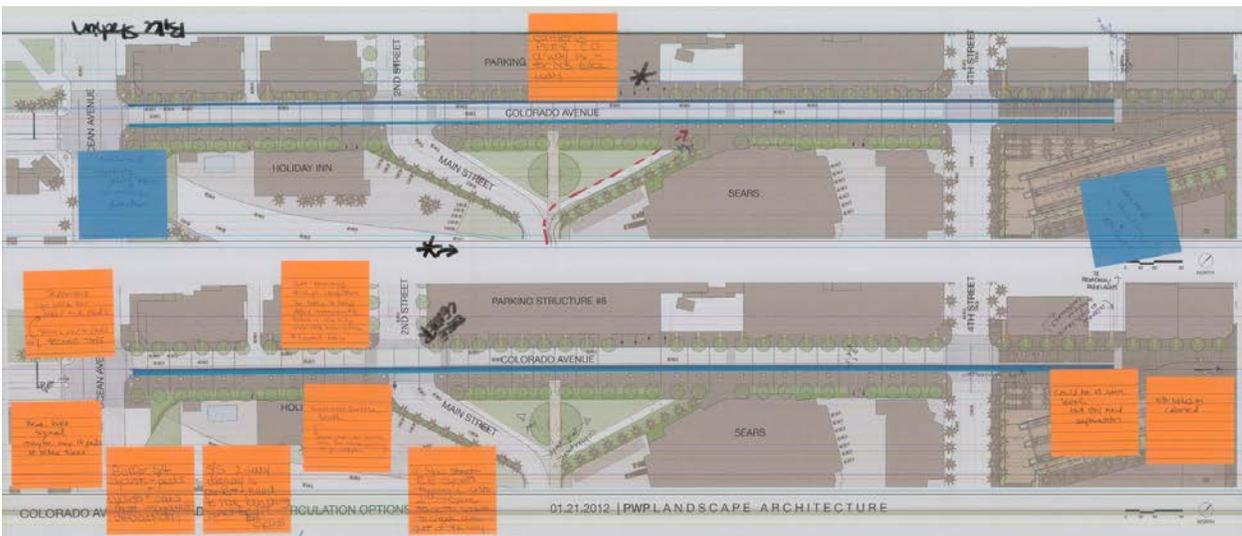
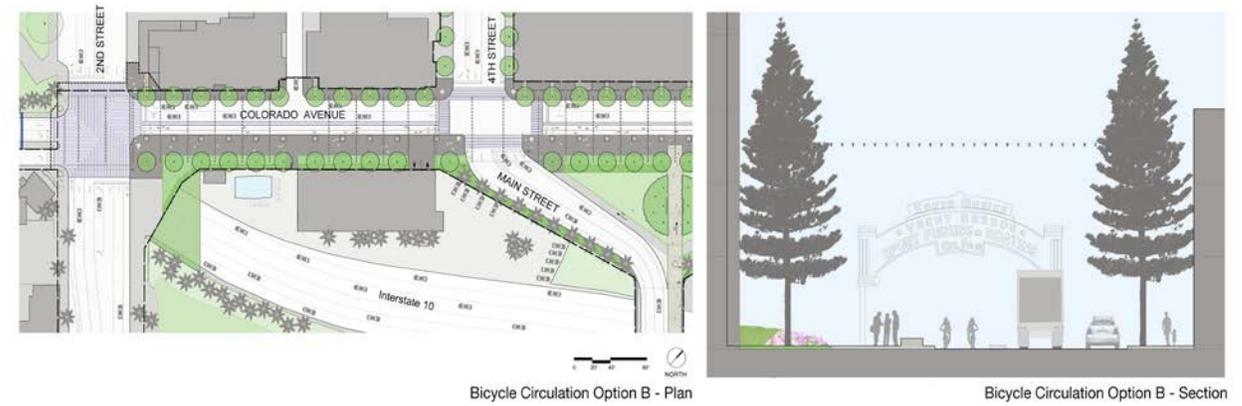
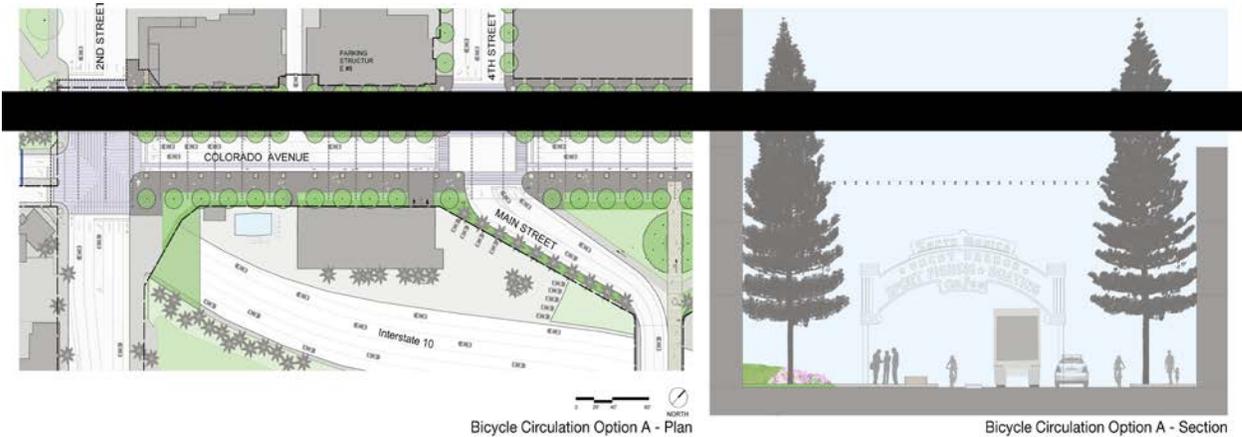
- Support for differentiated paving
- Wide support for special lighting
- Focused lighting to balance the night sky
- A range of ideas about light forms between support for string lights and preference for a more sculptural light fixture

Survey Specific Comments:

- Remove pedestrian barriers and obstructions between Pier and parking structure – remove paper racks, signs and relocate trees and exterior stairwells
- Like the boardwalk/bold stripes
- Decorative tiles like City Hall or Portugal

- Consider colored gravel
- Consider permeable paving
- Create some variation of the path for an element of surprise or progress – change color from block to block or undulate trees or plantings. Let Pier sign be seen and then lost and then found
- Complement the Pier; use different colors for pedestrian and bike paths
- Differentiate street paving for cars, bikes and peds
- Lighting as Art
- I like the proposed lighting idea
- Take lighting out of tree canopies that shade lighting and locate at the bottom of canopy.
- I like the “historic” mast idea for the light poles – include historic SM information.
- Shield night sky from lights – otherwise I like the lights
- Lighting very important – especially for women at night
- Any lit fountains?
- The overhead lights feel cheap. They create a carnival environment that is much more appropriate for Venice Beach. SM needs more creative and sophisticated lighting. It interrupts view down the Esplanade
- Uplighting at different levels – on westbound Colorado less intense lighting so as not to overshadow the Pier sign and eastbound more intense to “lead” people back to the Expo station. Don’t make straight lines of lights – mirror or reverse mirror the pier sign arch
- I like strings but uniform spacing/height is boring. Make it more organic and free form with different angles and heights
- LED pendant lights?
- Use light for ornamental purposes – darkness is good too
- Light strings are ugly and add to light pollution upward. How about something like Pico lighting?
- Love light tubes at LAX. Something like that could make this a special place
- Lean toward contemporary design overall. String lighting is contemporary, less cornball “old timey”. Concept of string lights as shown is more appropriate to a narrower streetscape but is probably feasible with more designer input
- String lights have been done so much already. Why can’t we have a sculpture street lighting similar to Pico Blvd on a bigger scale. Fabricate in the USA
- No sky lighting
- Use LED, use lights as way finding as well

TABLE 3 - BIKES



Summary of Bike Table Comments:

- Almost unanimous support for the cycle track on the south side of the street, with the intersection details getting refined and worked out
- Provide a clear separation between bikes and pedestrians, including keeping bikes on the street level
- Very strong support to make bicycle connections between Pier and Station, including finding a direct connection to the Beach Bike Path
- General support for making Downtown connections, including at 2nd Street and 4th Court

Table Discussion Specific Comments:

- Cycle Track needs separation from pedestrians
- 2nd Street/Colorado EB Colorado Bike – left @ 2nd
- 4th Bike Route (uses bus lane, especially southbound); NB use bus to Broadway & keep going or go to street
- Interested in making 2nd better for bikes
- Will we be able to bring bikes on train? How many bikes will fit?
- Consider a taller element between pedestrian and bicycle zones
- Work on bicycle signal and intersection details
- Cycle track should be wider than minimum standard
- In-roadway striping 4th and 5th streets might encourage drivers to use the bike lanes
- Support access to Bike Center
- Provide clear marking at Alley connection/4th Court
- Consider angled connection between northbound Main Street and eastbound Cycle-track

Survey General Comments:

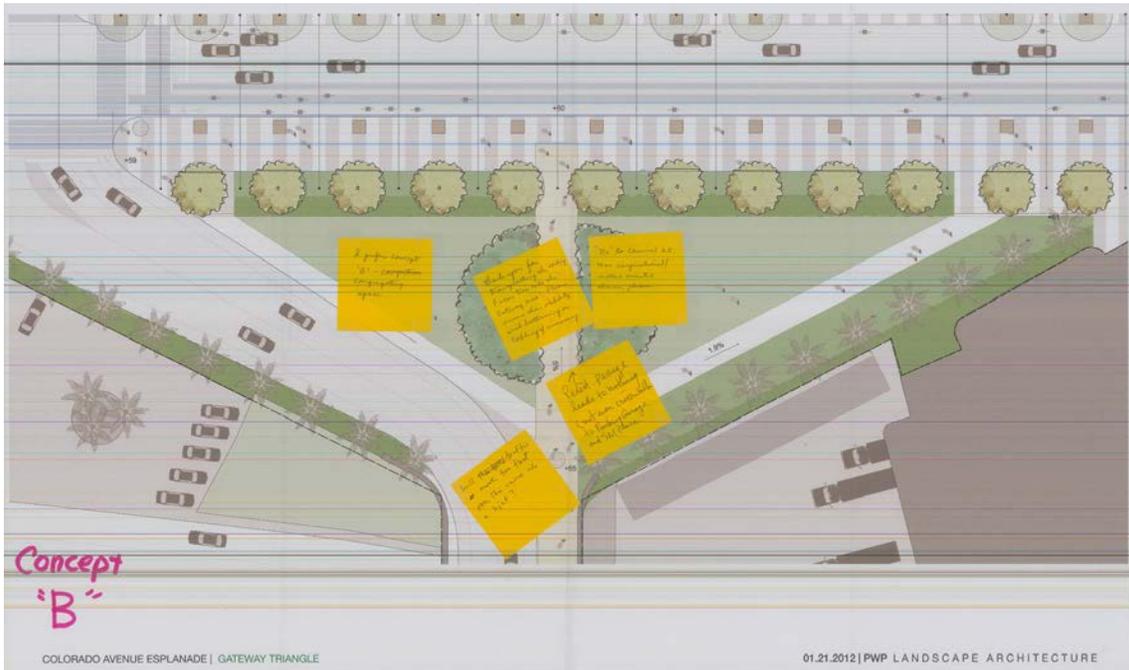
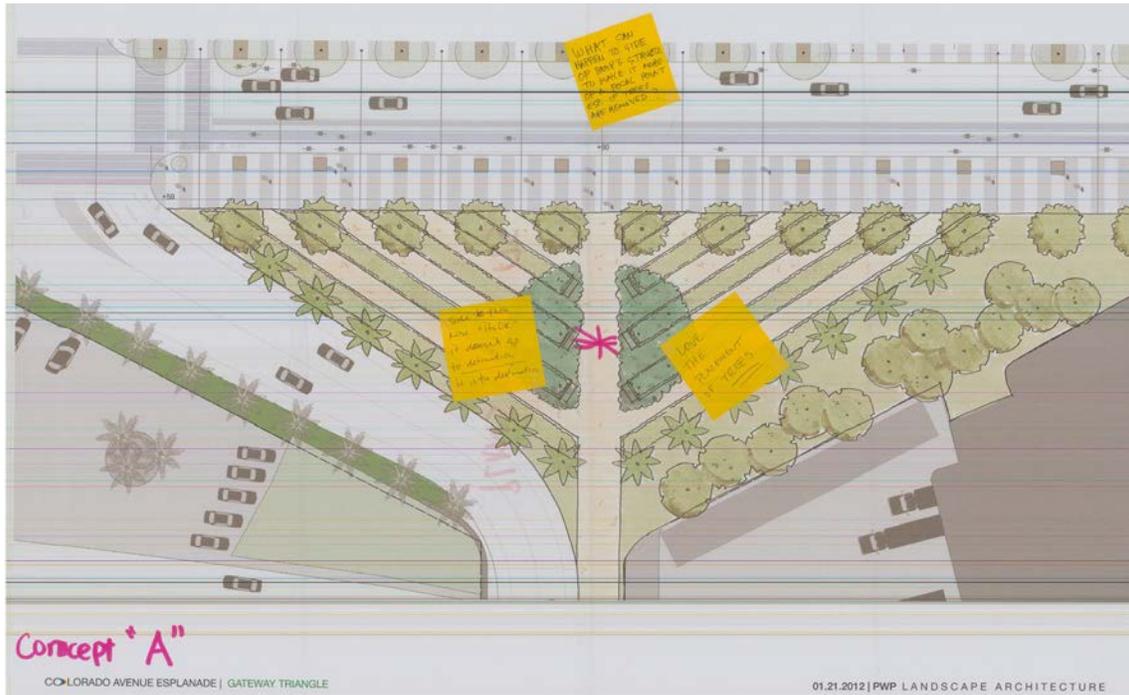
- Practically unanimous support for cycle track
- Strong preference for a clear delineation between bicycle, pedestrian and vehicle areas – i.e. raised buffer on one or both sides
- Consider increasing width of cycle track
- Including signage or design elements that make the bike space clear

Survey Specific Comments:

- Separate bike path from other paths
- Seems like bike facility is well thought out
- Bikes should obey lights and respect pedestrians
- Split bike lanes
- Like the combined cycle track – minimum 14'. Grade separate and carefully design signage and way finding
- Including signage about where bikes are prohibited
- Bikes need their own lane with curbs – separated from peds and cars
- Provide elevated buffer toward pedestrian; widen cycle track – minimum 14'; carefully design intersections and transitions
- Prefer cycle track with raised curb on both sides; also provide sharrows for westbound on-road cyclists
- Carefully design intersections; include bike racks in plaza

- Separate bikes and peds
- Prefer cycle track
- Cycle track solves most of the issues, and removed driveway conflicts at parking structures
- Provide safe connection Ocean-Colorado; improve north-south routes
- Like the bike plan; not sure about one lane for east and west travel
- Higher buffer between pedestrians and bikes
- Don't stripe ped and auto areas the same – too confusing

TABLE 4 - OPEN SPACE/GATEWAY



Summary of Open Space/Gateway Table Comments:

- Unanimous support for creating the larger unified open space as a signature space
- General support for new pathways with need to refine, and balance movement with enjoyment areas
- Support for artistic element, focal piece, or signature treatment in open space

Table Discussion Specific Comments:

- Schematic A is too broken up, should be more continuous
- Symmetry redundant, not for trees
- Concept B: liked open grassy flexible area; disliked cluster of trees, takes away from openness, look for a hybrid to gain more openness but keep a point of interest in the middle (art), suggested some palms in the triangle
- Central area should have a focal point
- Perhaps a less linear path on Concept A
- Liked that sidewalk is not street adjacent
- Consider landscape/vegetation at eye level, at grade & lower
- Liked that triangle paths moved people in 3 directions
- Add public art
- How would cyclists navigate in/around triangle?
- Tables, chairs, coffee kiosk in the green space
- Path concept is user friendly in Concept A
- Consider asymmetric design, make sure space works
- Limit path cut-throughs, widen paths
- Low maintenance area, keep it simple, furniture
- Keep visibility of Santa Monica sign on garage/structure
- Playful art piece in the green space, make it iconic
- Interactive art piece in the green space, something kids could climb, push, interact

Survey General Comments:

- Strong support for art element, especially playful art
- Balance pathways and landscaped areas
- Support for plaza steps and seating
- Create space for seating or gathering in a landscaped area

Survey Specific Comments:

- Provide a welcome to one of America's best Downtown's/World's Best Beach Cities
- Like both options – provide grassy open space without too many pathways
- Few pathways and more grass
- Need signature art – remember Frank Gehry design is on side of parking structure
- Must function as both path and place! No symmetrical design. Fewer paths than concept A, less grass than concept B. Like plaza steps. Allow bikes across triangle
- Include fountains with recycled water
- Love the idea of public art – particularly animal-shaped forms covered in planting, or Latin-feeling mural

- Eliminate north-south path that ends in parking structure. Put art element in the middle Meander E-W paths and make pathways porous not restricted to pathways or blocked by planting
- Incorporate restrooms – clean and open late to address urine smell at Holiday Inn.
- More rails along plaza steps
- Provide resting area between 4th and Ocean. Consider Pier exiting traffic congestion.
- Provide bike path on east side
- Love the steps with seating
- Provide art element on side of parking structure to look at
- Add activity – coffee kiosk or little playground or merry go round
- Prefer art and trees. Form a semicircle with art in center and paths/trees around
- Balance trees art and lighting
- Open community space for special events – NYE, pep rallies. PGW park is already broken up space
- Festival celebration/culture
- Provide space for crowd surges on weekends and special events
- Art could be a giant beach ball
- Consider food carts – for hot dogs, drinks, sunscreen, etc.

COLORADO ESPLANADE COMMUNITY MEETING

JANUARY, 26TH 2012 10:00 A.M.



What do you think would make the Esplanade feel like a special place of arrival into the City? (Please check all that apply)

- Signature Lighting
- Planting
- Unique Paving
- Public Art
- Sustainable Design
- Street Furniture
- Integrated Way-finding
- Iconic Trees within the Urban Forest

Do you have any additional thoughts about the following elements of the Esplanade?

Lighting

timeline is good

Lighting as Art

Bikes

Bike paths separate from
all ~~the~~ other paths

Gateway/Open Space

Welcome to one of America's
BEST Downtowns / World's best
beach cities

Planting/Paving

You'll do a great job.

Look at how people get from their state to state & like it from stop.
- good practice

SURVEYS

Approximately 30 surveys were collected during the workshop, representing a majority of the survey participants, which provided additional detailed input and opportunities for personal comments. The following summarizes the feedback received from the surveys.

When asked “What do you think would make the Esplanade feel like a special place of arrival into the City?” and given choices of Signature Lighting, Planting, Unique Paving, Public Art, Sustainable Design, Street Furniture, Integrated Way-finding, Iconic Trees within the Urban Forest, responses were:

The most important elements identified were:

- Signature Lighting was selected by over 80%
- Unique Paving which was selected by over 75%
- Public Art which was selected by a majority of people, and listed as a top choice by a some
- Planting and Iconic Trees was selected by a majority of people
- Integrated Wayfinding was also selected by a majority of people, with some listing it as a top choice

When asked “Do you have additional thoughts about the following elements of the Esplanade?” responses outside of the table topics included:

Other Comments

- Provide restrooms
- Provide space for the surges of pedestrians and crowds
- Mirrored art elements – like Chicago “Bean” creates photo opportunities and ability to see more things at once. Reflect Pier sign, Expo station, parking structure
- Space must feel warm and for the community
- Consider creating a “free speech” zone
- Access and circulation is the top priority!
- The timeline is a good idea
- Use timeless colors for any lights or street elements.
- Carefully integrate Esplanade into Pier Bridge Renovation – bikes must not be an afterthought.
- Like a place-based interpretive element – but richer than just SM history – maybe history of the location or transportation history that is relevant to that space?
- Make sure the historic Sears building and sculptures are visible and enhanced by planting and lighting
- Create one-way eastbound on Santa Monica Blvd (Ocean to 5th); one-way northbound on 5th (Olympic to Santa Monica Blvd); south on 4th (Santa Monica Blvd to Olympic)
- Look at one-way eastbound street to match
- Where will train riders park?

Attachment B

Colorado Esplanade Schematic Design Site Plan

