

# NEIGHBORHOOD PARK 2.0



Photo credit: Yosemite Recreation Center in 1926, Los Angeles Public Library Archives



Photo: Yosemite Recreation Center in 2020



Image: Illustration of future entry design

## A Park for the 21st Century

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I would like to thank staff from the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks who shared with me their knowledge about the many challenges of operating and maintaining a public park. In particular I would like to thank Darryl Ford, Matthew Rudnick and Jennifer Rockwell, Steven

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provided me with information relating to parking and other related mobility topics. *A Pattern Language* by Christopher Alexander and *Design for Ecological Democracy* by Randolph T. Hester were invaluable resources for guiding early thoughts on ecology and community.

Table of Contents

05 introduction

11 Background

33 Site Analysis

47 Concept Plan + Illustrations

72 Bibliography



Location



Image: Google map of Eagle Rock community Los Angeles, CA

Community Statistics:  
Population- 34,000\*  
4.25 Square Mile Area  
8,235 persons per square mile

\*Data source: 2018 American Community Survey

Introduction

**Project Statement:**  
*Neighborhood Park 2.0 demonstrates how strategic design interventions and infrastructure improvements can enliven public space. The new design creates places where people can gather and strengthens their relationship to nature.*

**Neighborhood Park** is also a call for change that acknowledges the challenges of the past while doing

more to support community cohesion, active mobility options, and healthy watershed solutions. In doing so it sets aside past narratives and embraces a new, supportive and nurturing environment.

The park selected for the focus of this paradigm shift is Yosemite Recreation Center (YRC). This 10 acre park is located in the Eagle Rock community, a

neighborhood in the north east portion of the City of Los Angeles. The park originated in 1923 when the neighborhood was incorporated into the City of Los Angeles.

The park will celebrate its centennial in 2023 and this milestone could serve as a goal post for implementing some of the suggestions and strategies put forth on the following pages.



Neighborhood Setting



Image: Google map of Yosemite Recreation Center and nearby uses

Yosemite Recreation Center is a 10 acre neighborhood park owned and operated by the Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP). The park provides the local community with a range of indoor and outdoor recreational activities. The

recreational activities are located in the northern end of the park which is relatively flat. The southern end of the park which is nestled into the hills includes an outdoor amphitheater (Sylvan Theater) built as a WPA project in the 1930's. This southern end

extends up to an expanse of naturalized area that is frequently used by hikers. The abutting naturalized area is part of Occidental College and includes Mt. Fiji, which is the highest point of the campus and is a popular destination.



Photo: Yosemite Drive near YRC

The Eagle Rock Junior/Senior High School is immediately to the east of the park. La Roda Drive provides access to both the school and the park. The area immediately to the north and west of the park is exclusively residential.



Photo: Looking north on La Roda from cul-de-sac

A few commercial uses can be found at the intersection of Yosemite and Townsend but the area's primary commercial settings are along Figueroa Street and Colorado, Eagle Rock, and York Boulevards.



Photo: Looking north from top of hillside area

A total of 7,500 people live within 1/2 mile of the park. Therefore, a significant number of people live within a short walk distance.



- A park for all ages
- A park of diverse passive and recreational activities
- An open and accessible park
- A park for people
- A connected park
- A park for gathering
- A park for solitude
- A restorative park
- A park that honors its unique form and place
- A park for learning
- A park for health

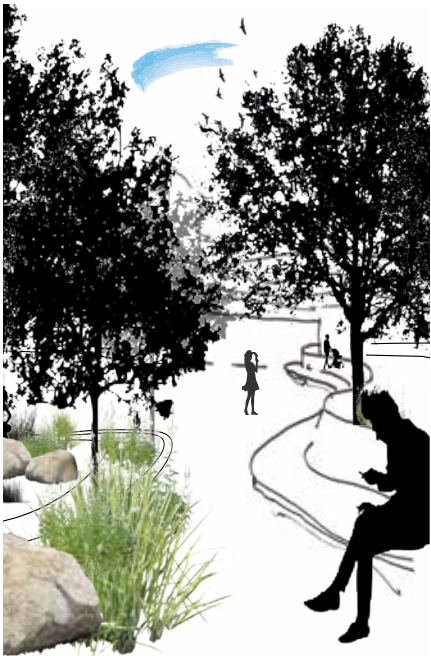


Image: Perspective of playscape area



Image: Perspective looking south on La Roda



Image: Perspective looking north from cafe area

Neighborhood Park 2.0 is grounded in the principles outlined here. These principles speak to the foundational concepts that are the basis for the proposed project. The project's goals and objectives which are introduced in the Site Analysis Section stem from these principles.



Photo: Families relaxing on south end of field during Covid-19 in Spring 2020

## Background

In this section we introduce the reader to a variety of topics that were considered during the site planning stage. We begin with an explanation as to why this project is needed. We

include information on the themes of community, circulation and watershed that were identified in the introduction as being fundamental to the concept of Neighborhood Park

2.0. We conclude with information gleamed from research that examined similar projects and that then influenced the park design outcomes.





Photo: Echo Park Lake, Los Angeles, CA

**W**ith communities increasingly interested in finding local opportunities to take respite from their busy lives by taking a walk in a nearby park, getting fresh air, and/or connecting with nature this seems like an ideal time to renew interest in existing park spaces. Residents, especially in this time of Covid-19 people are increasingly seeing the value in foregoing the cost of a gym when they can access exercise and nature just by stepping out their front door. Despite this interest in parks the cost of land in Los Angeles is extremely high and there is little funding today to purchase and develop new parks. This limitation though further fuels the need to examine existing spaces and identify design strategies that could enhance existing spaces in a number of ways. For example, at the YRC, the WPA amphitheater, since Covid-19, has begun to double as a work out staircase. The lawn at its feet could once again be enlivened as a performance space to showcase local talent. Similarly, the odd collection of concrete and dirt pathways that circumnavigate the park could be re-designed to

better connect park users to the various spaces while also serving as a walking loop for an early morning workout. The front buildings could be redesigned to include a more welcoming entrance area, and external facing activities in order to attract more users to the space. Native shrubs could be added to increase the amount of habitat within the park and the flow of stormwater could be captured into bio-swales instead of being channeled to nearby stormdrains. In particular, the park can serve as a trailhead connecting users to both the nature trails behind the amphitheater as well as a new green street network that could encourage residents to utilize their own streets as “hiking” trails and walk from schools to area parks. In addition to fostering community cohesion this can encourage residents to walk more, and drive less thus further reducing their vehicle trips and improving air quality. **H**istorically, the early parks in the City of Los Angeles were primarily modeled after picturesque, garden style parks. These parks today represent many of the landmark parks that continue to delight Angelenos. Notable

parks from this era include Elysian Park, Griffith Park, MacArthur Park and Echo Park Lake. During the early 20th Century when these spaces were developed they included no supervised recreational activities and children at that time typically played in empty lots or streets. In response to concerns about the lack of recreational spaces, especially for youth, the city established the Los Angeles Playground Commission and Department. This shift in interest to recreational activities continues to the present. Over the last 80 years the city has been recognized as a leader in developing playground programs but did not continue to acquire and/or develop park spaces in proportion to its growing population. The result is that while many residents have access to a recreational facility they lack access to the more leisure style park space - such as those that defined the city's original parks- that offer trails and walking paths. These early parks today constitute 1/3 of the city's park space but because they are not distributed evenly across the city many residents do not live within easy access to these parks and the varying amenities that they offer.

Interestingly, the City's 2009 Citywide Community Needs Assessment found that there was a very popular demand for trails and walking paths that was currently not being met. The study noted that it is important to have a balanced system that includes a variety of park types and sizes. In addition to loops and trails some commented that they would like to see nutrition, cooking and physical activity classes. Others asked for more open space, and improved bikeway and transportation connections. Some of the other feedback reflected the need to maintain and improve much of the infrastructure within the city's parks including the sports fields as well as natural areas, irrigation systems, restrooms, parking areas and playgrounds. Noted as well was the need for graffiti removal and security lighting. Other comments referred to the “cookie cutter” design of most of the parks and noted that they would like to see more creativity and innovation put into the overall design of the parks. Despite the conclusions of this 2009 study the Recreation and Parks Department continues to emphasize playgrounds and other

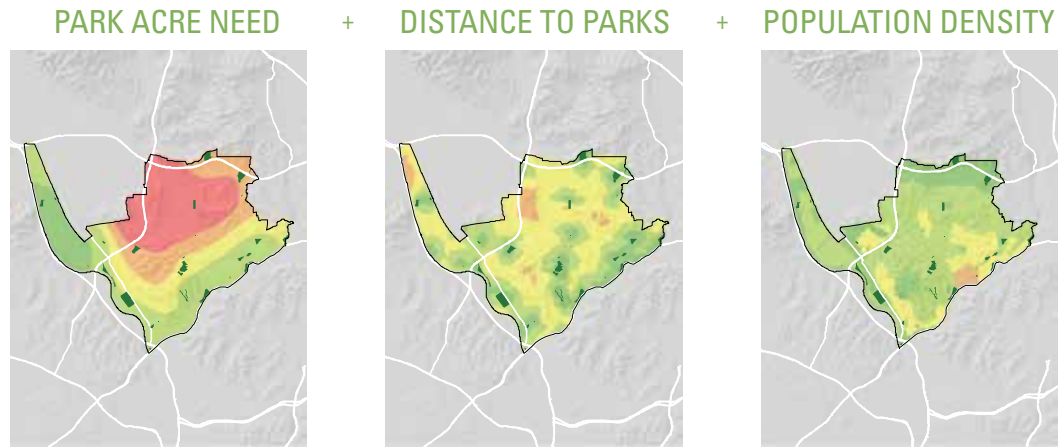
recreational amenities to the exclusion of other park types and amenities. Numerous synthetic soccer fields in particular have been installed in the last two years. Little has been done to address the overall maintenance problems. Within the Eagle Rock Neighborhood there are two park facilities owned and maintained by RAP. Both of these are referred to as recreation centers and include the 23 acre Eagle Rock Recreation Center and the 10 acre Yosemite Recreation Center (YRC). Residents are fortunate to have more naturalized open spaces such as the Ernest E. Debs Regional Park 4.5 miles away but it is truly only accessible via car and doesn't offer the immediate access of a neighborhood parklike space.



Park Accessibility

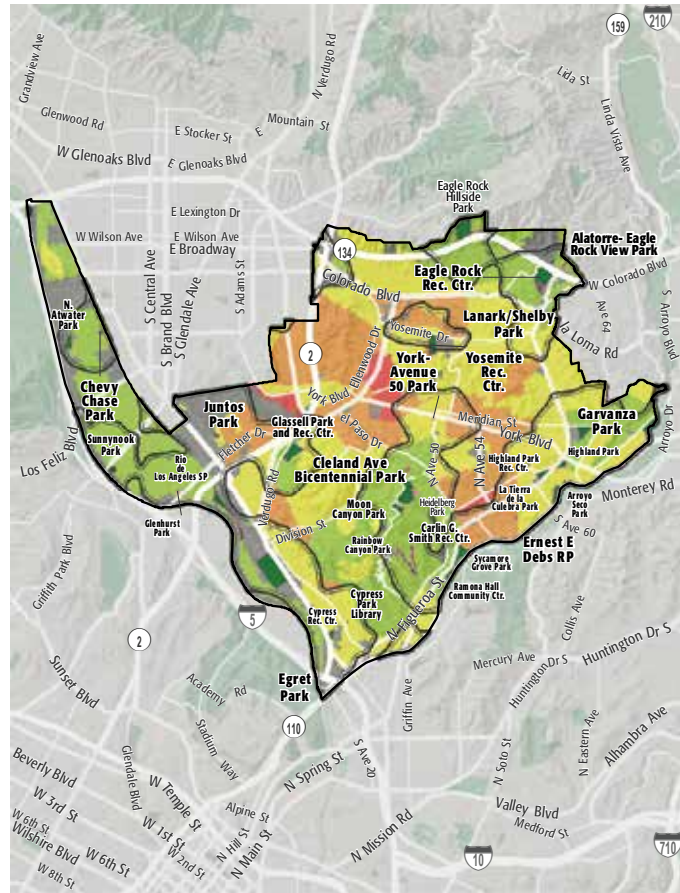
Figure: Los Angeles Countywide Comprehensive Park and Recreation Needs Assessment, Appendix A

WHERE ARE PARKS MOST NEEDED?



= PARK NEED

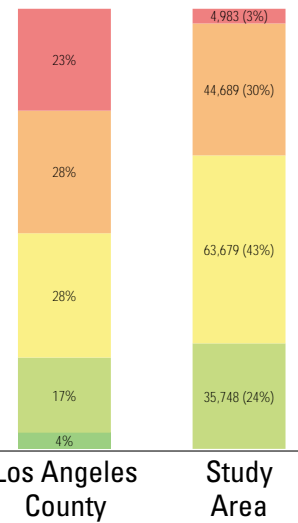
\*Calculated using the following weighting: (20% x Park Acre Need) + (20% x Distance to Parks) + (60% x Population Density)



PARK NEED CATEGORY

- Very High
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Very Low
- No Population
- Area within 1/2 mile walk of a park

HOW MANY PEOPLE NEED PARKS?



PARK LAND: Is there enough park land for the population?

223.6 PARK ACRES within study area | 149,099 POPULATION | 1.5 PARK ACRES PER 1,000

318.6 REGIONAL PARK ACRES within study area | 2.1 REGIONAL PARK ACRES PER 1,000

The county average is 3.3 park acres per 1,000

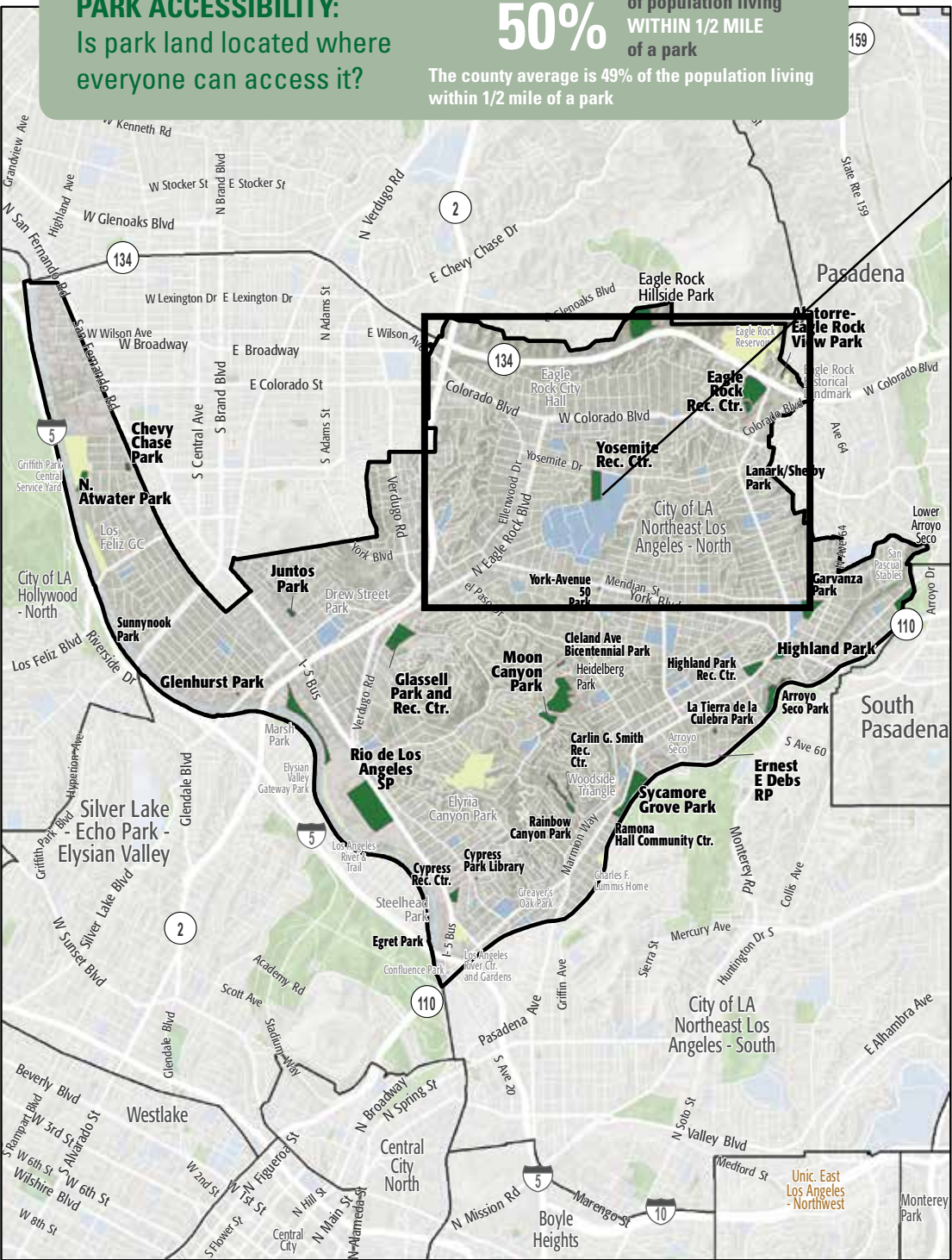
\*This section does not include the 57.1 acres of regional open space, nature preserves, or State and National Forest land in this Study Area.

PARK ACCESSIBILITY:

Is park land located where everyone can access it?

50% of population living WITHIN 1/2 MILE of a park

The county average is 49% of the population living within 1/2 mile of a park



.75 park acres/1,000 persons

City of LA Northeast Los Angeles - North

- Existing Park
- Existing Park Outside Study Area
- Existing School
- Other Open Space



Existing Site Utilization, Management and Existing Features

The intention of this project is to both expand the number and variety of users to the park while enhancing and expanding the offerings that the park can deliver for both existing as well as new users. The changes that have already occurred at the park due to Covid-19 are not inconsequential. Families with young children that in the past limited their visit to the tot lot are now gathering on blankets at the edge of the ball fields to play and chat. Parents are playing catch with their children as opposed to standing at the perimeter of the tot lot and observing their child at play.

The area around the amphitheater -which until Covid-19- was the domain of high school kids cutting across the area on their way to school, drug deals or as a campsite for persons experiencing homelessness- is now the location for active workouts or informal gatherings of a game of frisbee.

The potential users for this site include middle and high school students, college students, young families, adults and seniors. The expanded variety of active and passive recreational and community offerings will encourage area residents to

spend more time at their local park, enjoying nature, getting exercise, and gathering with family and friends. The expanded new pathways within the park and proposed green street network will invite residents to walk and bicycle more in their community and leave their car behind.

Volleyball swimming and other after school classes bring large number of youth between the ages of 5-12 to the park. Weekly day summer camps are a particularly popular program that include 100 students each week. Girls Volleyball is a very popular activity and during the season there are 28 teams that rotate practice at the park. Basketball, with 41 teams is arguably the most popular sport. Soccer and softball teams use the multi-purpose field during the fall and spring seasons respectively.

The center has a full-time director and several staff who are on site daily to oversee the site's activities. Other security, maintenance and supervisory staff frequent the site as needed.

The site map illustrated here provides an overall glance at the existing park layout and the use of space for the different activities. The front portion of the site between Yosemite Drive and the pool is flat. The site begins to rise at

the poolhouse. The entryway at Campus Road has an elevation 20' higher than that of the pool area. The top of the hillsides surrounding this terraced area climb to another 70' in elevation. The park is open between 5:30am and 10pm each day and a fence circumnavigates the park. Lighting in the park is uneven but floodlights are left on all night in the pool area.



Community

Historically, the Eagle Rock area was an all-white community but over the last 60 years it has transformed into a culturally diverse population. Today's population includes an almost even distribution of asian, latino and white peoples. At only 2% of the population black persons though continue to be underrepresented in the area. This may stem largely from the vigorous racist activities that took place in the first half of the 20th Century. The article by Mathew Fleischer in the Los Angeles Times this past summer highlights this ugly, not too distant past.

While today's population mix may not be perfectly representative of the city's population at large it does represent progress and is indicative of the ways community's can change over time. Park spaces that provide a range of flexible, programmable and interactive spaces can contribute in positive ways towards facilitating a collaborative and cohesive community. Spaces that segregate users and constrain physical and social interactions can be inhibiting. The diverse range of ages present in the community speak also to the need for a wide variety of spatial types and uses.

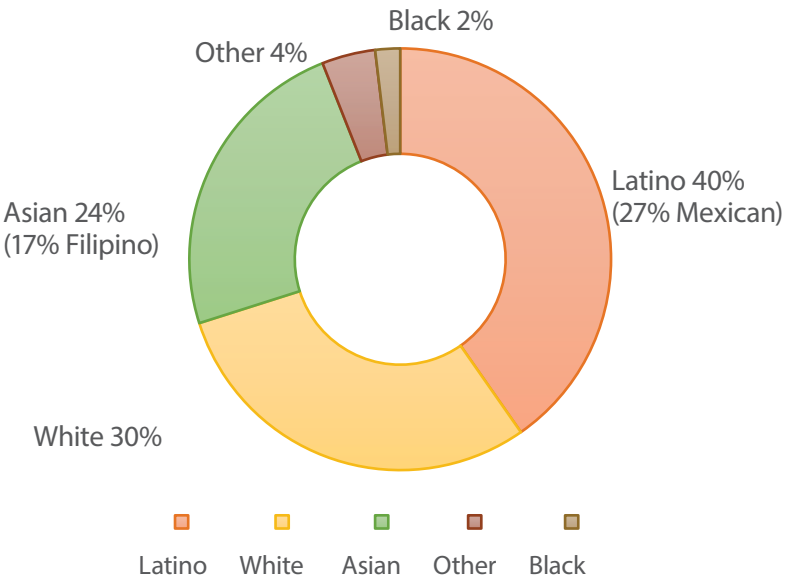
By MATTHEW FLEISCHER | SENIOR DIGITAL EDITOR  
AUG. 11, 2020 | 12:26 PM

In the summer of 1948, [more than 60 residents](#) of the all-white community of Eagle Rock descended upon a home that was poised to sell to a Black family, breaking the neighborhood's color barrier. The group contained some of the area's most esteemed businessmen and homeowners, as well as a uniformed police officer. But this was no welcoming party. Upon arrival, the mob [set a 12-foot cross aflame and watched it burn](#).

The timing of the cross burning was not coincidental. It happened shortly after the Supreme Court's [Shelley vs. Kraemer](#) decision made racial covenants — which barred Black, Latino and other people of color from living in certain homes by deed — unenforceable by law. A key legal protection for state-sanctioned segregation had fallen.

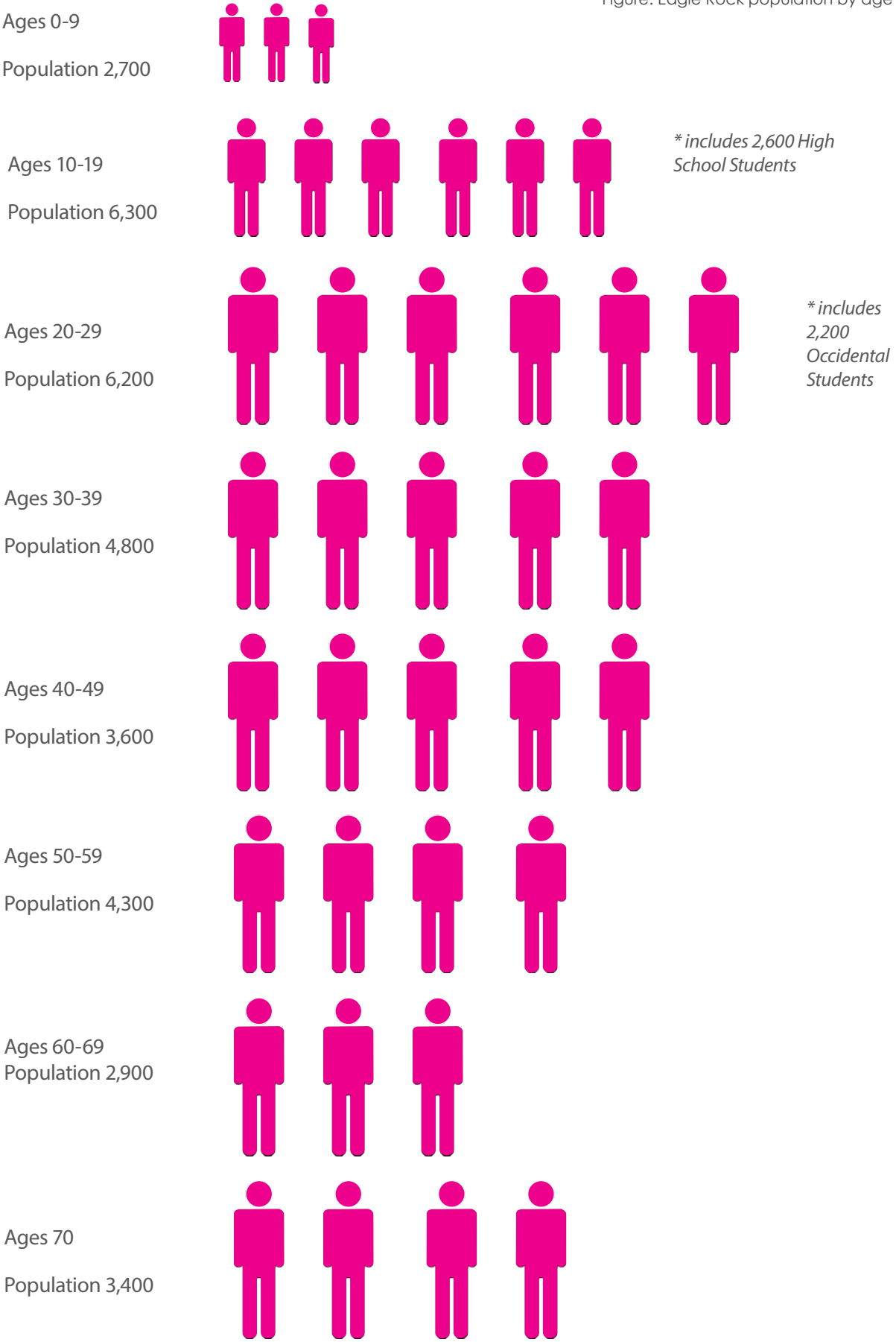
Eagle Rock's message to Black people looking to integrate exclusively white neighborhoods in the wake of the decision was clear: You are not wanted, and the law will not protect you.

Figure: Percentage of Eagle Rock population by ethnic groups



<http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/neighborhood/eagle-rock/>

Figure: Eagle Rock population by age



Census Information- 2018 American Community Survey at [Censusreporter.org](https://censusreporter.org)



Circulation

The City of Los Angeles has made strides over the past decade to provide safer and more comfortable walking and biking spaces. Unfortunately, given the city's initial love affair with the automobile and the ample infrastructure that was provided to support vehicle movement change will take time and considerable resources.

Parking areas within the park and the streets around the park continue to reflect the cars dominance. Given the ample opportunity for parking on the surrounding streets as well as the availability of shared parking at the adjacent high school there is no need for cars to occupy any of the park area- especially in light of the very limited park space there is in this community.

Yosemite Drive is a relatively fast moving street and more needs to be done to slow vehicular travel speeds on this corridor. This is particularly important as this street is the only through street that provides connection to the park and therefore many visitors must traverse or cross this busy street to access the park. There is interest on the part of some members of the community to see bicycle lanes added along this road but the roadway width is limited and would require the removal of a parking lane to allow for a bicycle lane. The city's new slow streets

program has “opened” up portions of local streets immediately to the north of the park for pedesrian and bicycle activity but these do not currently connect to the park. It is though a positive reflection of the changes that are currently underway. Pedestrian access is also limiting as the perimeter fences and gates along Yosemite and La Roda are less than inviting. The southern end of the park that joins with Campus Road is even more restrictive as it does not offer an accessible pathway into the park.

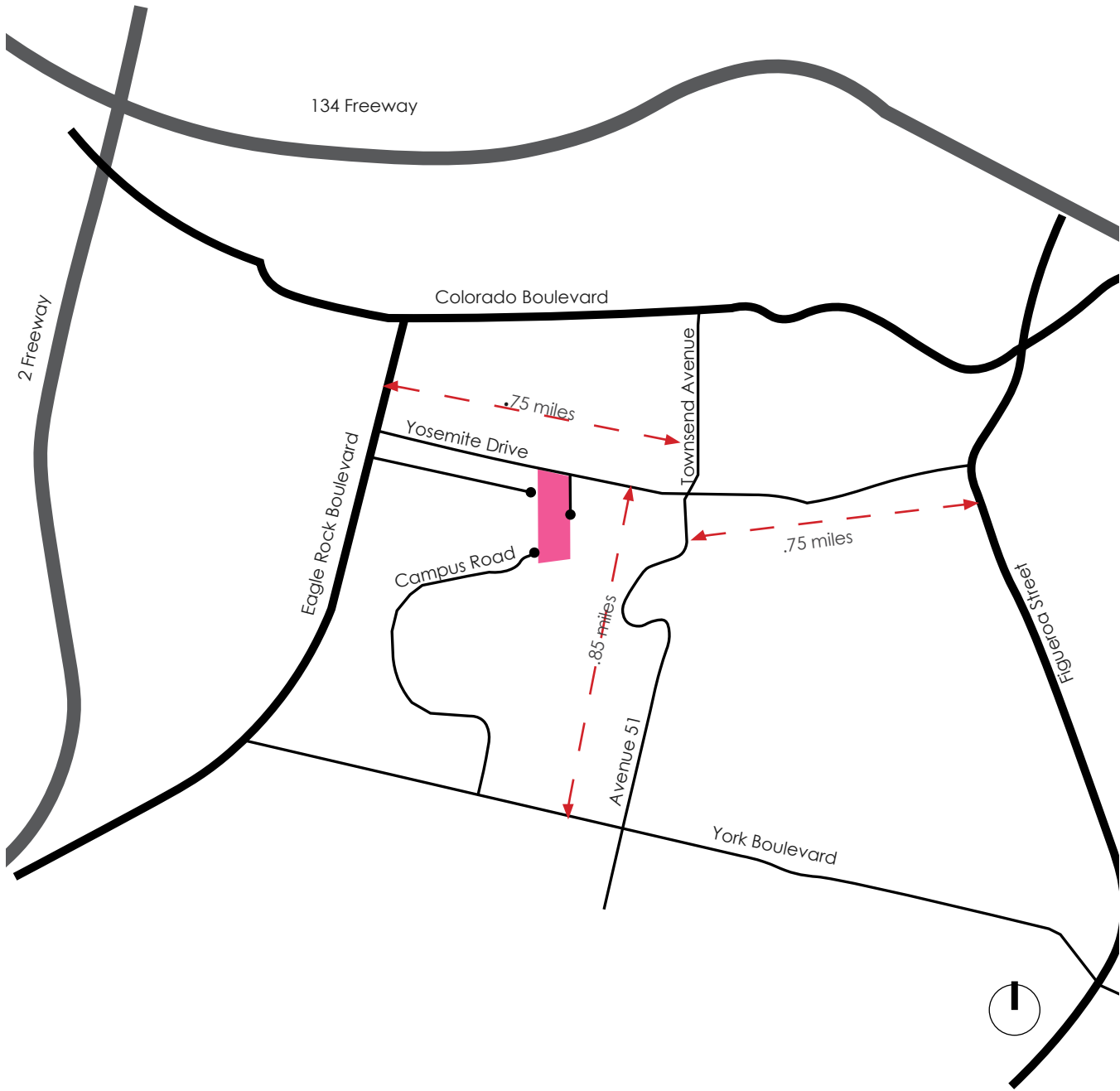


Photo: Gated entrance to park off of La Roda



Photo: Pool staff parking in park

Figure: Map of Freeways and Major Roadways within Eagle Rock



Watershed

The Eagle Rock area was originally settled because of the predominance of springs and streams in the area. Unfortunately, like much of the Los Angeles area, the springs have long been paved over and the streams have been relegated to underground pipes rendering them all but invisible.

Despite these constraints there has been concerted effort by environmental activists over the past 50 years to nudge the city and others large bureaucracies such as the Los Angeles County Public Works Department and the Army Corps of Engineers to consider new “green” stormwater approaches that celebrate and make visible or “daylight” the flow of stormwater within a watershed area.

The hills at the southern end of the park once fed the very active stream that ran alongside of Yosemite Drive. This stream, like many others met its concrete fate in the 1930's when it was channelized into a 102" diameter pipe. As seen in the photo to the right the stormwater flows within the park have been poorly considered and therefore leave deep ruts along the southern pathway areas.



Source: David Roscoe, The Waters of Eagle Rock, 3.14.11

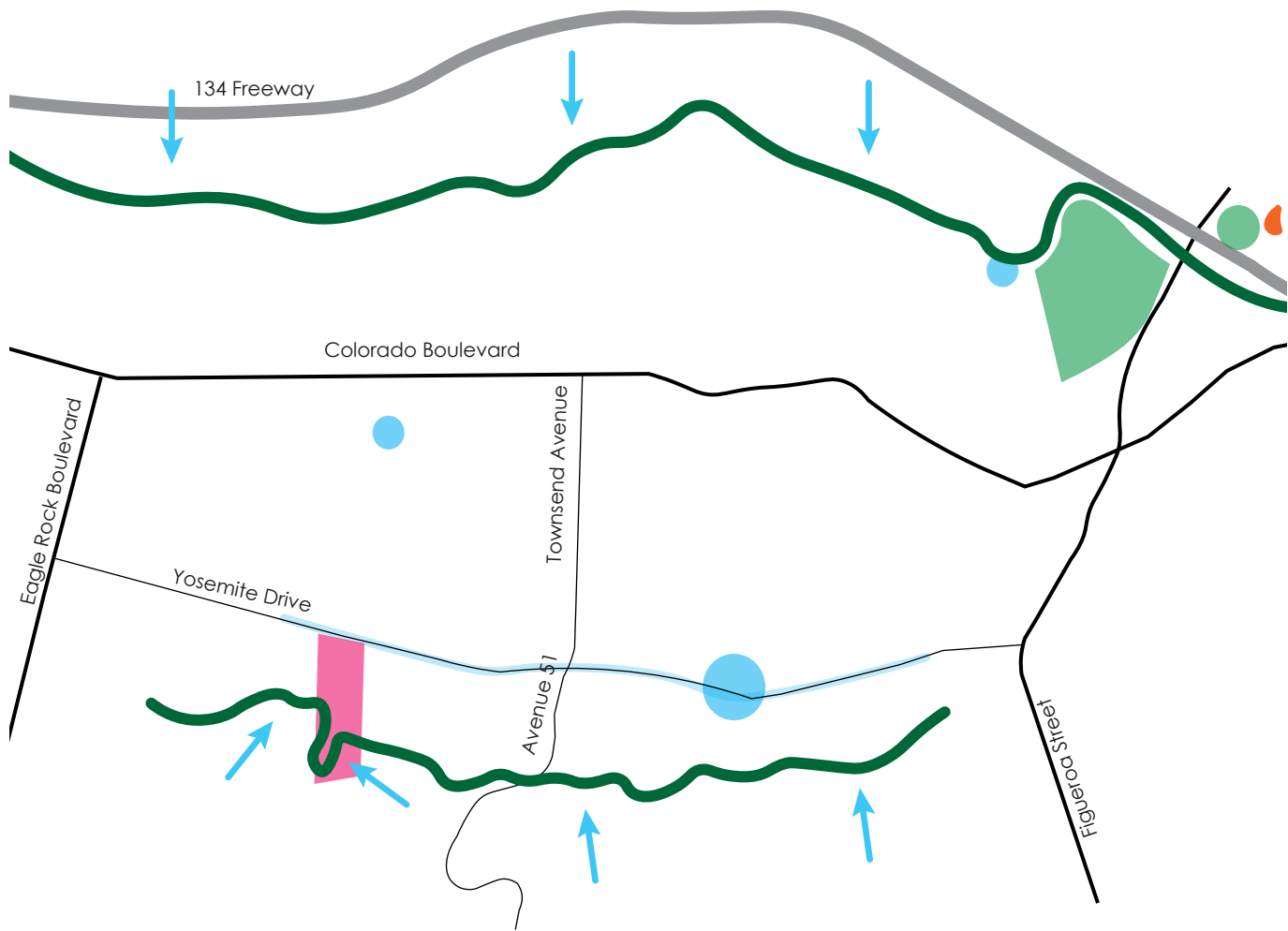


Image: 1934 flood along Yosemite Creek, Source: Jane Tsong, LA Creek Freak Blog, 10.20.12



Photo: Ruts in path in southern end of YRC caused by heavy rainfall

Figure: Map of Freeways and Major Roadways within Eagle Rock



Legend

- Yosemite Recreation Center 90' elevation change
- Historic Springs
- Site of Yosemite Creek
- Area Parks
- Toe of Hillside
- Downward direction of Slope
- Eagle Rock







Photo: YRC during fall

There are a number of departments and agencies that have interest in this site. The primary jurisdiction for the site lays with the Recreation and Parks Department (RAP). This department is responsible for the operations and maintenance of the site. They operate the **pre-school** as well as a number of **recreational** and **educational classes** for youth and adults. RAP is managed by a general manager but the Board of Recreation also has a central role in making large budgetary and policy decisions. **Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)**, through an agreement with the City, utilizes the pool for the students at the Eagle Rock Middle/High school next door. The City's **Bureau of Street Services** is primarily responsible for the maintenance of the City's streets while the **Department of Transportation** oversees the utilization of the roadway system. Both of these departments would have primary roles if any changes to the street network are considered as part of this project. While the paths to the naturalized area commence on RAP land they continue on to land that is predominantly the domain of Occidental College. Some of the area is

also owned by LAUSD. Both of these organizations would need to be consulted should any substantial changes to these areas be considered. The area is located within **Council District 14**. As of the most recent election, Kevin DeLeon, the former speaker of the California assembly, will be the councilman for the area. **The Eagle Rock Neighborhood Council** and TERA, **The Eagle Rock Association**, play active roles in the community. The Center for the Eagle Rock Arts, located near the intersection of Colorado and Eagle Rock Boulevards has used the Sylvan Theater (amphitheater) for performances and activities in the past.



Photo: Crosswalk at La Roda between YRC and High School



Research and Inspiration

During the research phase of this project a number of resources were consulted for guidance and inspiration. The research centered around several recurring themes that resonated from initial conversatoinis with area stakeholders as well as from reading several local policy documents. These themes focused on the design qualities that supported healthy community interactions, sustainability, children's creative play and management strategies.

Two books in particular had a strong influence on some of the initial design strategies. The books included *A Pattern Language and Design For Ecological Democracy*. Together these books provided insight on the first two themes of community interaction and sustainability.

As a child who grew up with woods in my backyard I have long understood the value of explorative play that is unencombered by single purpose elements such as a slide or swing. While I enjoyed visiting parks that had those elements research has borne out the benefits of "nature" play in promoting creative and critical thought. An article in *Places* magazine almost 20 years ago provided me with the first evidence of these benefits that I had naturally enjoyed as a child. More recent research has continued to bear out the overwhelming

benefit of playspaces that allow children to explore and create their own narrative within a space. This growing body of research has of course spawned a number of parks around the country that have provided such creative playscapes. Oftentimes these spaces are set aside within a larger park context. Some notable examples include the Chicago Botanic Garden and the work being done by play:groundNYC in New York City.

A number of terms have been applied to varying iterations of these play spaces including: Child Directed Free Play, Nature Playground, Anarchy Zones or the one I have chosen to use here which was quoined by Isamu Noguchi is playscapes.

Over the winter holiday I had the pleasure of visiting the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden that had invited several designers to create play spaces in and around the garden. As there were a number of children visiting the garden that day It was particulary interesting to observe which designs attracted children to play and linger. The two designs towards which children were drawn were those that allowed them to touch, pick up and interact with small scale elements. In one setting, defined by several large logs laying prone, two

children were enthusiastically engaged in playing a game they had invented with sticks picked up from the ground. Another space included a rough-hewn shelter of woven branches that included a waist-high shelf on which tin plates had been left. Here children were involved in a lively discussion about what to make for lunch. The other sites which included interestingly shaped sculptural elements- some of which you could enter- had not attracted the attention of children at all. While attractive looking the sites provided no objects that a child could interact with. There were no objects to pick up or boulders to hop between. This was a particularly telling take away for me.

To further expand my research of this topic I found a case study on the asla.org website that highlighted the transformation that took place at the Woodland Discovery Farm. The information on the following page provides some of the highlights of that study and reinforces many of the benefits from these types of play spaces.



Photo credit: ilovememphisblog.org

Woodland Discovery Playground  
at Shelby Farms Park, Memphis, Tennessee

Before

Typical play ground equipment

Woodland overrun by Chinese Privet

After

4 acre park opened in 2011

Designed by James Corner Field Operations

Sustainable Sites Designation

Woodland restoration

Promotes a sense of discovery

Open layout increases opportunity for environmental education

Cultivates children's health

Recycled and permeable material

Encourages physical activity in a natural setting

Children can slide, climb, run, build, find and discover

information from asla.org



Since attending a lecture at UCLA many years ago on the funding and maintenance strategies and efforts that led to the succesful design, completion and on-going maintenance of Millenium Park inChicago I have been intrigued by how similar efforts can be brought to a smaller, neighborhood scale park.

A visit to Bryant Park in New York City several years ago, renewed this interest. I remember this park from visiting the city as a child and its transformation is truly remarkable. Like Millenium Park much of the new success can be attributed to the new layout and design of the park as well as a robust and well-funded organization to oversee regular maintenance and perhaps even more importantly, programming. The variety of rotating programmatic events ensures that the park attracts a variety of regular and occassional users. The new sightlines and flexible spaces further encourages people to come, visit and linger.

A case study of this park was also recently completed on the asla.org website and I have shared the highlights of it on the following page.



Photo credit: Bryant Park, 1984, flickr.com



Photo: Ping pong tables in use in Bryant Park, New York, NY



Photo: Yoga class and moveable chairs in Bryant Park, New York, NY

**Bryant Park, New York, New York**

**Before**

- Overrun by drug use & criminal activity
- Unappealing public gathering space
- Stairs, walls and overgrown greens contributed to small and isolated spaces that prevented positive interactions
- Costly burden to New York

**After**

- Completed in 1992, Designed by Olin Partners
- Removed visually invasive fences, shrubs
- Open layout
- Visually accessible
- Managed by private, non-profit
- Formal programming
- Fosters informal social interactivity and mobility

information from asla.org



In looking a bit closer to home for precedents from which to draw inspiration I looked at both Pan Pacific Park and Echo Park Lake.

Yosemite Recreation Center is by definition a neighborhood park. Because the premise of this project focuses on expanding the significance of the park by increasing the diversity and range of both contemplative and recreational options while also exploring means of enhancing connectivity to the abutting community the Pan Pacific Park in the Mid-City area of Los Angeles was selected as a precedent park that could offer insight on these intended outcomes.

While, at just over 30 acres the Pan Pacific Park is significantly larger than the project site, and therefore is considered a community park- the many parallels between it and the Yosemite Recreation Center nonetheless make it a worthy case study.

In particular the Pan Pacific Park is comparative to the Yosemite Recreation Center in three specific ways. Single

family residential homes closely abut one side of the park. It too experiences a major grade change in a portion of the park and it has a considerable portion of its land area dedicated to recreational purposes. These conditions are informative in that they demonstrate:

1) how proximate access to residential uses need not constrain programming

and other activities; 2) programming throughout the park can reduce vandalism, graffiti and loitering without the need to fence or overly patrol the park; and 3) and how walking paths and other leisure activities can be woven into the overall design layout of the park.

Echo Park Lake offers a completely different park experience than that of the



Photo: Soccer practice at Pan Pacific Park, Los Angeles, CA

Yosemite Recreation Center and yet they are both nestled into, and surrounded by single family and multi-family residences. Because of this similarity I was intrigued by the fact that Echo Park Lake has no fences or gates around it whatsoever whereas the Yosemite Recreation Center is completely barricaded around its perimeter. While I am sensitive to the perception that communities have about the value of fences the reality is that fences do little to reduce crime and/or vandalism and instead, similar to what has been demonstrated at places as diverse of Bryant Park, Pan Pacific Park and Echo Park Lake that creating a much loved and activated park will do more to keep a place safe and inviting than fences and gates.



Photo: Echo Park Lake, Los Angeles, CA



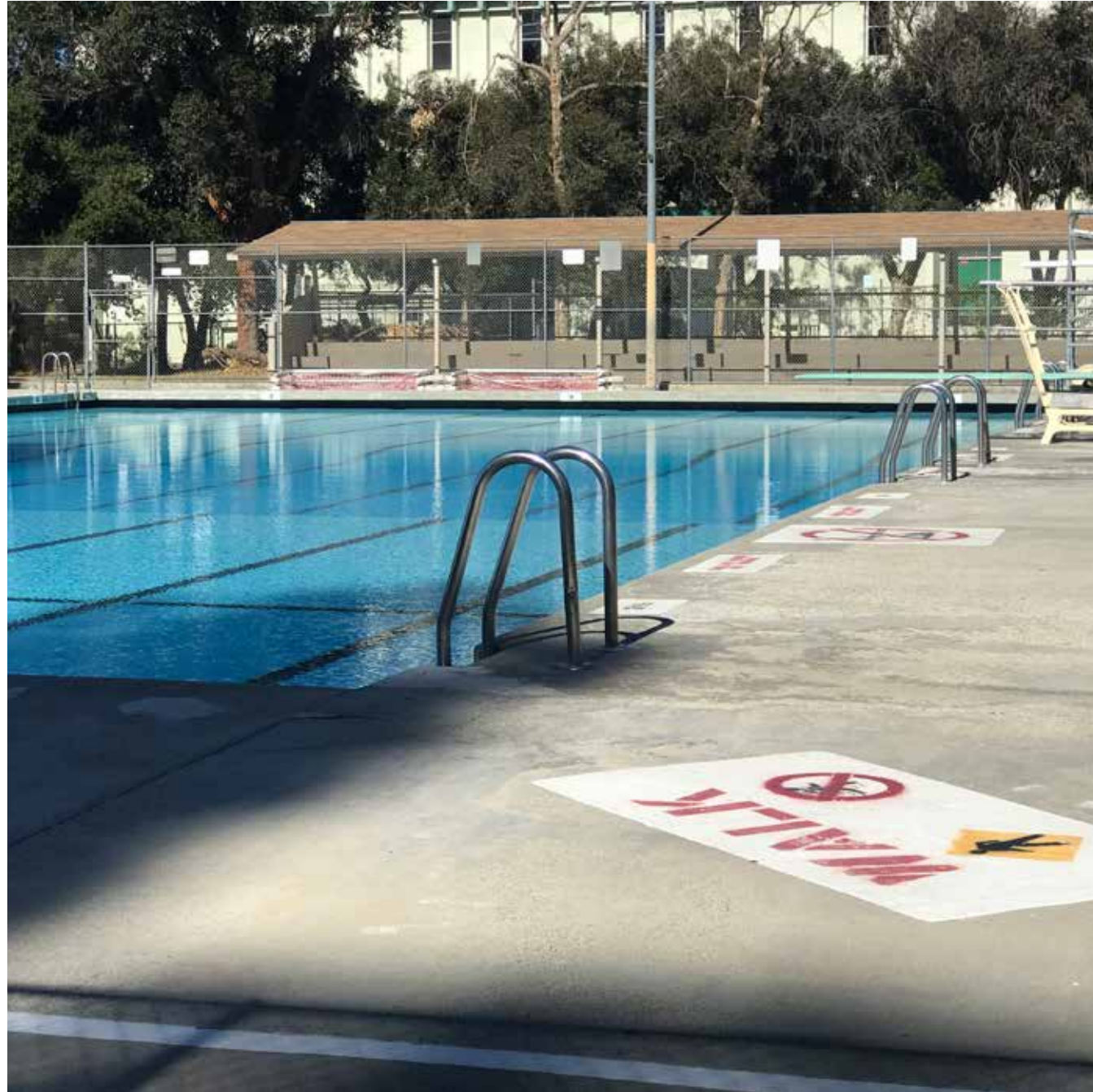


Photo: Unused pool at YRC during Covid-19

## Site Analysis

With a solid understanding of the site's many influences, both historical and contemporary we begin an analysis of the site that identifies the elements that should remain on the site as well as those

that no longer serve the community and which new elements should be introduced. In this next section we identify the three goals and accompanying objectives upon which the site's design will take shape. These

goals both support the principles identified in the introduction as well as reinforce the values of Neighborhood Park 2.0 and the Eagle Rock community today.



Existing Structures

There are five primary structures on the site today. The oldest are the Recreation Center at the northern end, the pool that is located at the base of the adjacent hillsides and the amphitheater that is nestled in the neck of the two slopes at the southern end of the park. These three structures are all historically significant to the site and are worth preserving.

While the pool itself ties its history to the early days of the park the poolhouse was constructed in 1979. This structure has not been well maintained and its location along the southern edge of the pool further constricts access to, and visibility of, the southern sloped area and will be proposed to be replaced.

The most recent structure, the gym, was completed in 2003. This building includes staff offices as well as a basketball court that is almost constantly in use. While the building does not positively contribute to the site it is proposed to be retained in its current condition for the purposes of this project.

2



Photo: Gym at YRC, Built 2003

4



Photo: Poolhouse at YRC, Built 1979



Photo Credit: Recreation Center at YRC, Built 1926, LAPL Archives

1



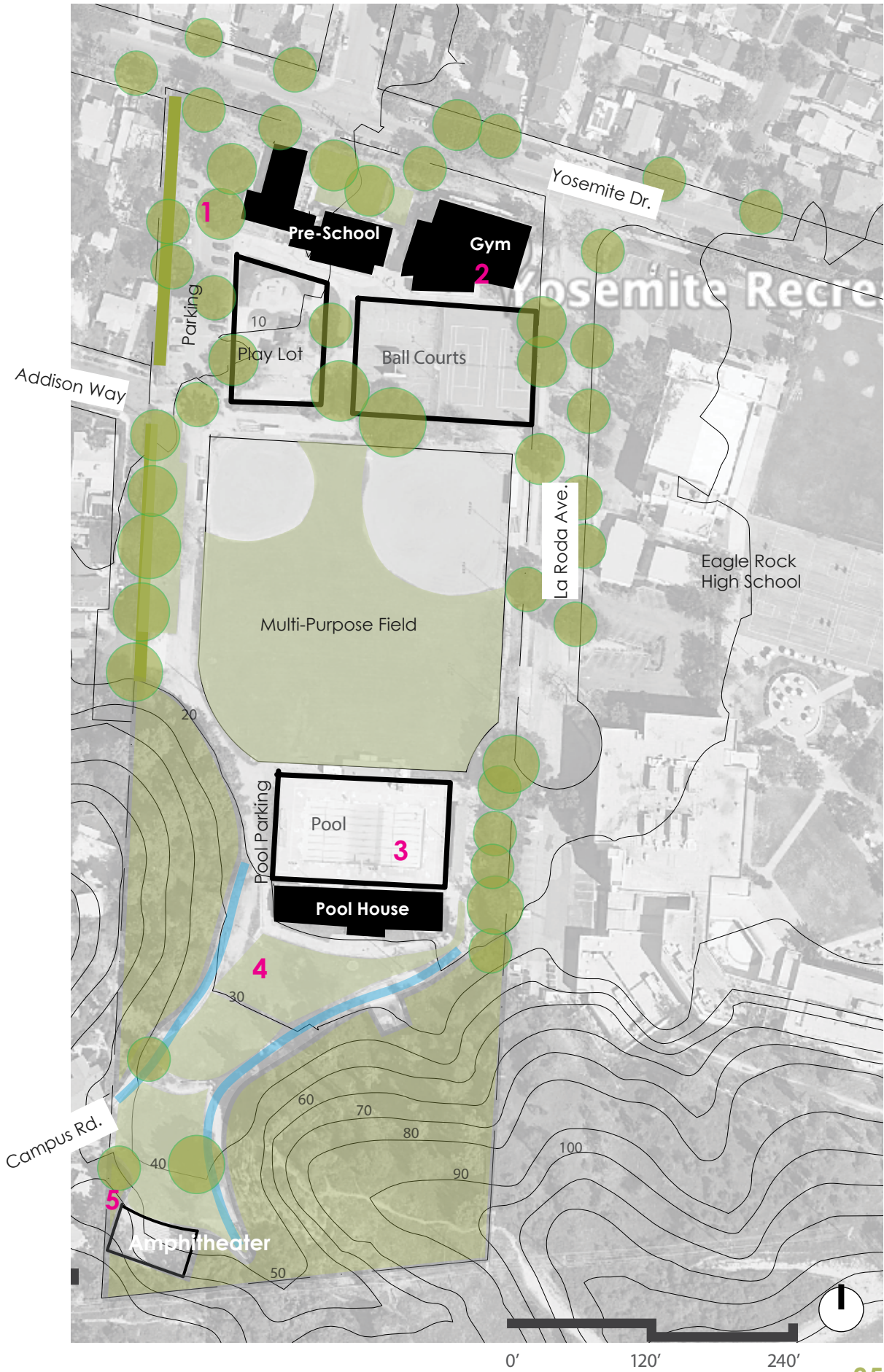
Photo credit: Pool at YRC, Year built unknown, LAPL Archives

3



Photo credit: Sylvan Theater, Built 1934 at YRC, LAPL

5





Initial Observations

Let's start with the **entry area**. The space in front of the historical recreation building is completely unused. The parking lot off of Yosemite Drive reinforces the notion that one must drive to this park and yet it is within a short walking distance to 7,500 persons. The courtyard immediately inside the park as well as the spaces around each of the ball courts and children's play area are cramped and uninviting due to the dominance of concrete and chain link or rod-iron fences.

The fences and tiered-stadium style seating that surround a portion of the **multi-purpose field** reinforce the space for organized recreational purposes and discourages users from utilizing the space at other times. The lack of regularly programmed activities during the Covid-19 period has persuaded some to venture onto portions of the field to play catch or spread a blanket. These are exactly the type of activities that should be further encouraged in the future even once programmed sports resume. The picnic area, according to park staff, is not frequently reserved. As it does provide the only seating within the park, outside of the stadium seats, the benches are frequently used by students and others just happy to enjoy a place to sit and chat in the shade.



Photo: Poolhouse at YRC, Built 1979



Photo: Fences surrounding ball fields at edge of YRC



Photo: Student walking through YRC to school and other students at picnic area in background.



Photo: Entry courtyard of YRC near gym



Photo: Stadium seating outside of pool area at YRC



Photo: Poolhouse at YRC, Built 1979



Photo: Entryway to YRC off of Campus Road

During the school year the **pool** is used exclusively by the high school. The pool therefore is only open to the public during the summer months. It would be nice to see this arrangement modified so that the public could use it during the hours when the school is not using it such as weekends and the morning hours. Pool staff are also known to drive on the walkway area and park in the dirt next to the pool. Bringing vehicles up into the park is not viewed favorably by even department staff and yet the practice continues.

The **pool house** is also frequently tagged by graffiti which provides further evidence of the physical and visual isolation of the southern end of the park. This isolation has contributed to an increase in illegal activities that take place in this portion of the park. Persons experiencing homelessness - in the pre-Covid 19 times- were known to set up camp behind the **amphitheater**. This activity was unsettling to many and discouraged others from utilizing the space. Due to the repurposing of the gym during Covid-19 the homeless camps have largely disappeared. This has encouraged area residents to seek out this area more frequently.

Some perceive cameras and lights as a "solution" to discourage the nuisance activities. This project will

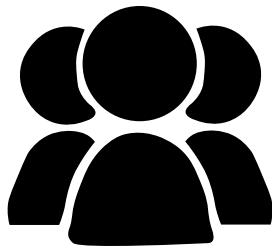
propose instead to revitalize and activate the space to create "ownership" and offer the "eyes on the street" benefits of having the space frequently used.

While residents of Eagle Rock are avid walkers, and can frequently be found walking the neighborhood streets, **walking in the park** is usually done for more utilitarian purposes. High school students coming from the neighborhoods off of either Campus Road or Addison Way will cut through the park to school. Other residents will utilize the park to access the trails on the hillsides of Occidental college or to walk to the shops on York Boulevard. This southern end is completely inaccessible to anyone with limited mobility. Someone living near this "entrance" cannot actually enter the park here and is instead forced to drive around to the north parking area.



The observations made on the previous pages coupled with the community, circulation and watershed topics explored in the Background section played an important role in the development of the goals and objectives that are introduced here. In particular the goals are inherently tied to those three initial topics as they speak most broadly to the transformation opportunities that Neighborhood Park 2.0 strives for and are reinforced by the community's and city's own vision of a healthy, sustainable future.

On the following pages we explore a few constraints and opportunities that highlight the challenges and potential of each goal and its accompanying objectives.



Create Places to Gather

- Flexible Spaces
- Programmable Spaces
- Interactive Spaces



Photo: Yoga class and moveable chairs at Bryant Park,

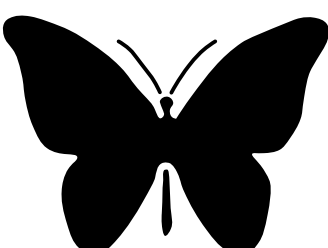


Support Walking + Biking

- Accessible pathways
- Safe Street Crossings
- Increased connectivity



Photo: Bicycle lane, Los Angeles, CA



Celebrate Natural Processes

- Stormwater infiltration
- Habitat
- Shade



Photo: Deukmejian Wilderness Area, Glendale, CA



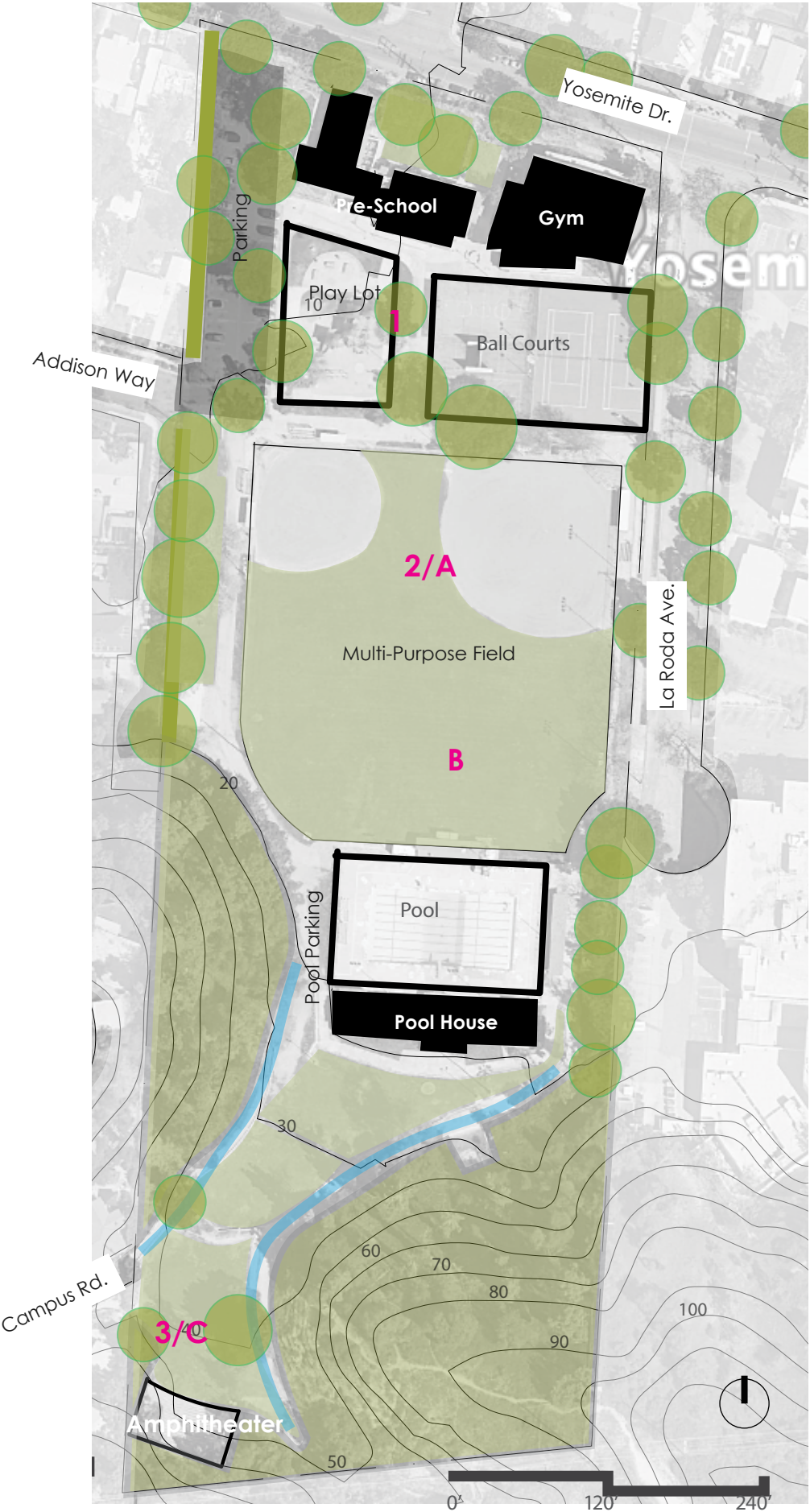
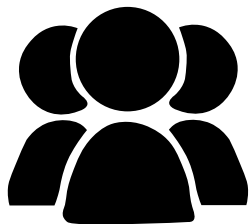
Create Places to Gather

Constraints

- 1 Tot lot and ball courts currently allow for limited interaction and are physically constrained.
- 2 Use of field is limited to programmed activities
- 3 Limited visibility and access to southern end of site facilitates illegal activities and discourages park visitors

Opportunities

- A Provide flexible activity areas for multiple generations and abilities
- B Establish a cafe and community gathering area
- C Restore and activate the amphitheater area with regular programming and events



Eagle Rock High School



Constraints

- 1 Entrances are uninspiring and constricted visually and physically
- 2 Fences are a dominate feature throughout the park and reduce opportunities for interaction
- 3 Entire southern portion of park is not ADA compliant

Opportunities

- A Remove perimeter fencing along La Roda to provide seamless interface between park and school.
- B Create a formally recognized and maintained nature trail through the wooded hillside
- C Provide an ADA accessible continuous walkway throughout park





Constraints

- 1 Stormwater from slope is poorly managed and creates mud and ruts in southern end of park
- 2 Current layout and surface materials impede stormwater retention
- 3 Limited access to habitat

Opportunities

- A Increase habitat value and wildlife connectivity
- B Redesign La Roda as a green street
- C Introduce bioswales at toe of slopes to slow and retain water.



Eagle Rock High School





Photo credit: Eagle Rock Valley, 1906, LAPL Archives



Photo: Deukmejian Wilderness Area, Glendale, CA



Photo credit: Aerial image of Amazon River, New York Times, 7.23.20

Concept Plan + Illustrations

The project’s concept pays homage to the park’s location within the Eagle Rock Valley and the role the site played in originally supplying the area with water that flowed in the Yosemite Creek. A valley by definition is a place that nurtures and sustains life due to its geomorphic characteristics that serve to deliver, spread and retain water.

A valley includes a bottom that the water flows to and therefore enriches the soil, a top or rim as well as the slopes. Cultures have long been driven to valleys for this rich range of environments that they provide. The rim of the valley becomes a destination or pilgrimage of sorts from which one can survey the surrounding area and delight in the views that it affords.

The slopes too offer value as they serve to transport water, grow forests, offer habitat, and provide exercise to those who like to clamber. The program, plan and illustrations on the following pages provide an introduction to the range of uses, places and circulation options that Neighborhood Park 2.0 offers.



Program

The project proposes to retain, and or improve upon a variety of uses while expanding additional offerings. Opportunities to utilize similar recreational

activity spaces at the nearby high school will be explored. This would allow for the reduction of space devoted to some of the recreational activities currently at the park and in turn provide

for increased design layout options for the remainder of the uses. The primary uses have been organized around the three goals and are listed on the facing page.



Photo: Enjoying the shade at Grand Park, Los Angeles, CA



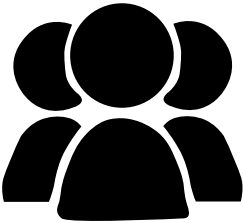
Photo: Woman walking in Bryant Park, New York, NY



Photo: Walkingn path and native plants at Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, Santa Barbara, CA

Create Places to Gather

- Children's play area + PreSchool 3,900 sf.
- Tennis and Basketball Courts - 1/2 acre
- Public Commons for Multiple Events + Activities - 3/4 acre
- Cafe-Central Gathering Area- 5,000 sf
- New Pool House + Restrooms- 5,000 sf
- Casual Seating throughout park
- Restored Theater/Outdoor Classroom - 20,000 sf
- Pool- 18,300 sf.
- Gym/Recreation Office- 6,500 sf



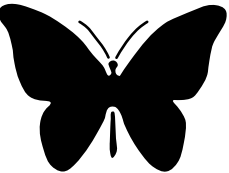
Support Walking + Biking

- Core Circulation Spine
- Easy walking paths
- Bike parking along La Roda Avenue
- Improved west to east flow between Addison Way and High School
- Parking moved off site- 90 spaces
- Accessible Ramp- 300' 20' elevation gain \*5% slope
- 600' circular trail to new viewing platforms- 60' elevation gain
- Pedestrian lighting along paths/trails
- Wayfinding system
- Bulb-outs at Rosemary DDrive
- Scramble Crosswalk at La Roda Avenue



Celebrate Natural Processes

- Entry Butterfly Garden
- Bioswales
- Shade Trees throughout park
- La Roda Avenue improved as Slow, Green Street
- Habitat Gardens





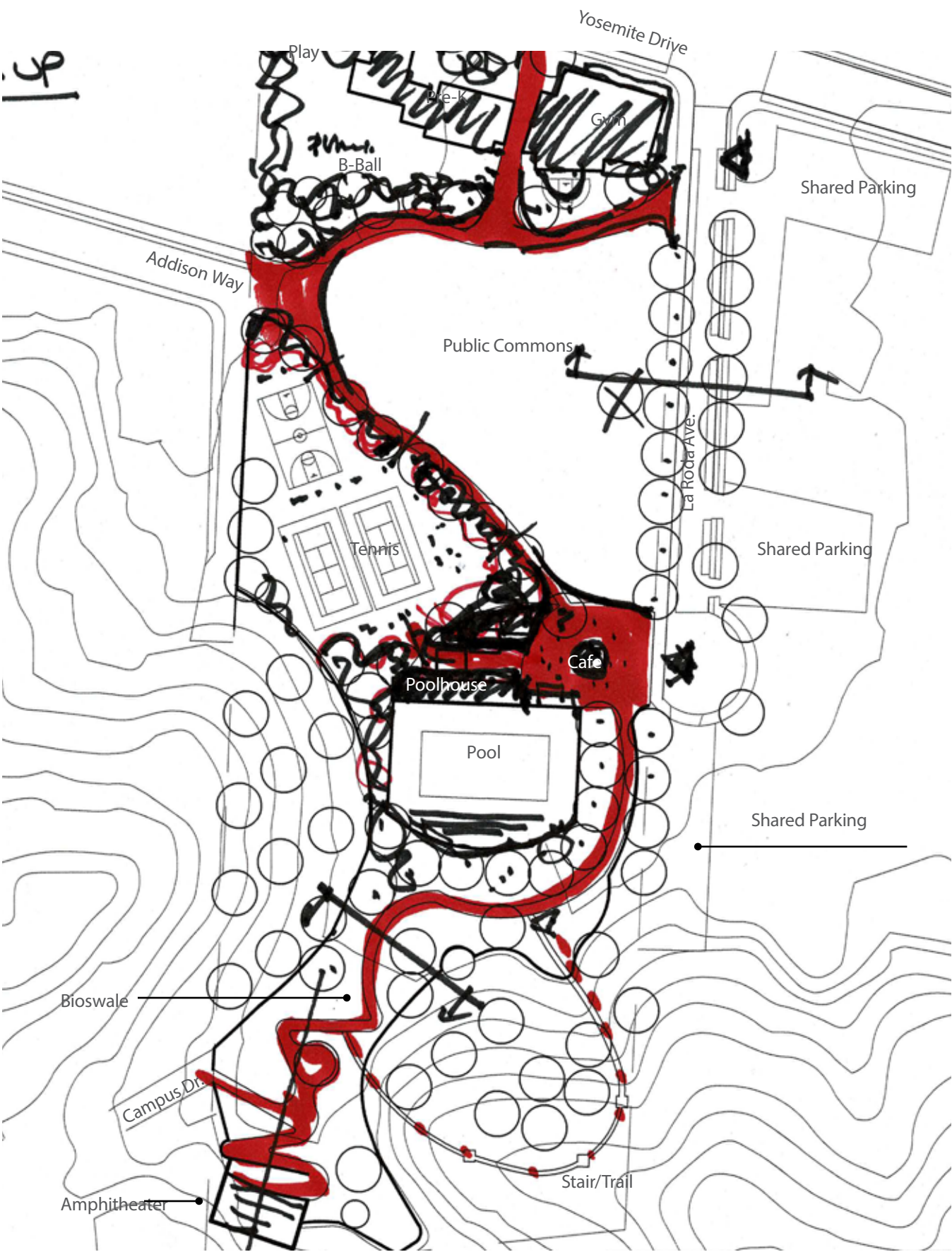
Concept Development



Figure: Early diagram of circulation and spatial allocation of major spaces

In celebration of the principles, goals and objectives of Neighborhood Park 2.0 the concept for this plan puts people, place and sustainability front and center. Some of the key elements that embrace this new approach include activation of the entry area, removal of vehicular parking from the site, the perambulatory nature of the circulation paths, and the transformation of La Roda Avenue as a green street and permeable gateway between the school and the park's public commons area.

Figure: Development of concept plan with circulation highlighted in red





Site Plan

The focus of the area proposed for Neighborhood Park 2.0 is contained within the project boundary line illustrated in the plan to the right. The project area does not include changes to the hillside areas with the exception of the new circular trail and viewing platforms on the eastern hillside.

- Legend
- Trees

Street Trees

Lawn

Play Courts

Cafe Tables

Grasscrete

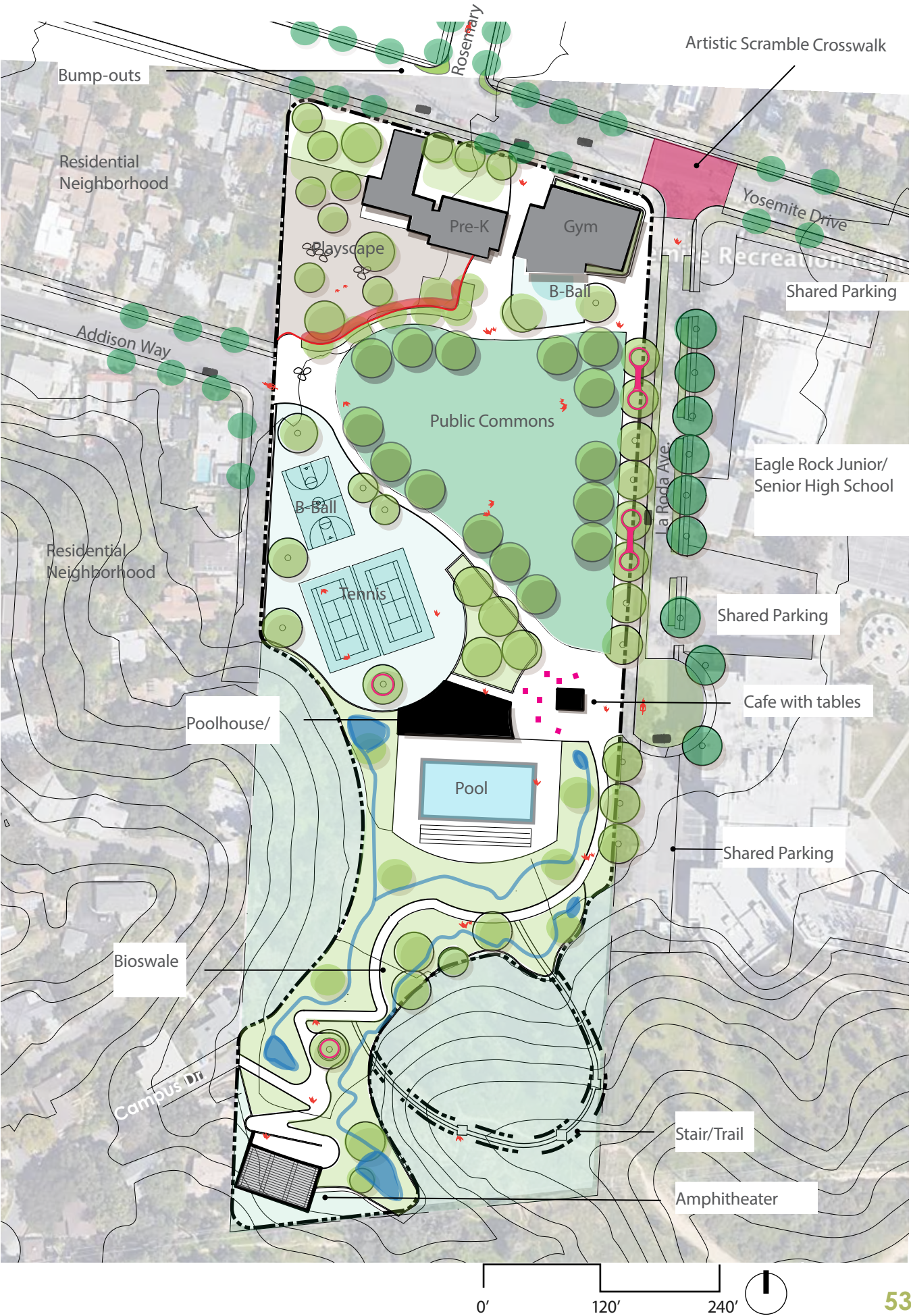
Bench Seating

Existing Buildings

New Buildings

Park Boundary

Boundary of Project Area





Site Circulation

The area in red highlights the new circulation flow. This pathway serves multiple purposes. For some it will provide functional connectivity from their home to the school. For others it will become a place to meet friends and stroll. Others will enjoy sitting alongside the path and watching the variety of activities that are taking place in the park. Active persons will seek out the new stair trail and viewing platforms and enjoy both the workout and the views. The top of the hillside today does include an informal trail that connects with the trails on the Occidental College campus. It is hoped that overtime this connection could be made formal and thus extend access to nature and an increased physical workout.

- Legend
- Trees

Street Trees

Lawn

Play Courts

Cafe Tables

Grasscrete

Bench Seating

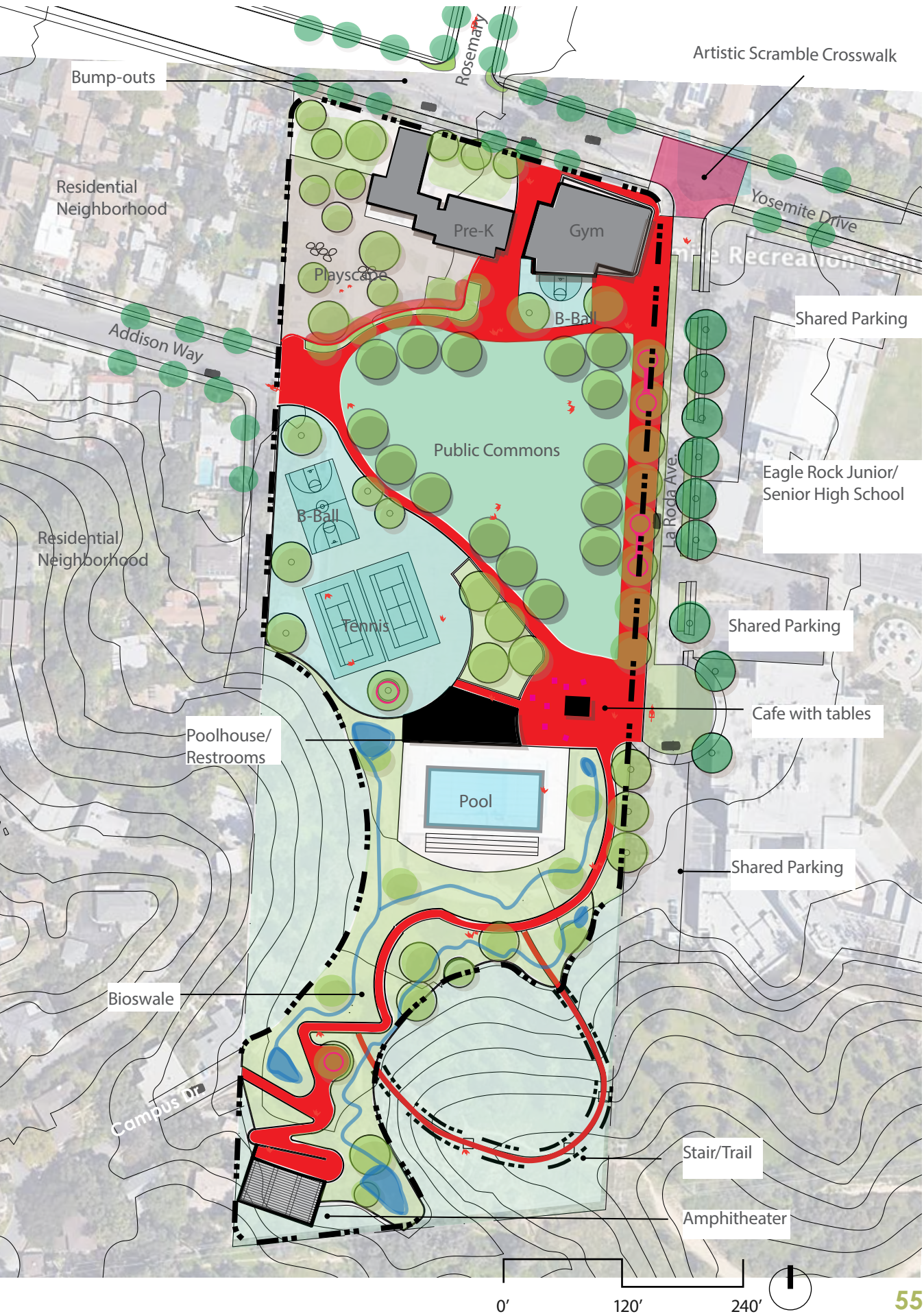
Existing Buildings

New Buildings

Park Boundary

Boundary of Project Area

Pathway



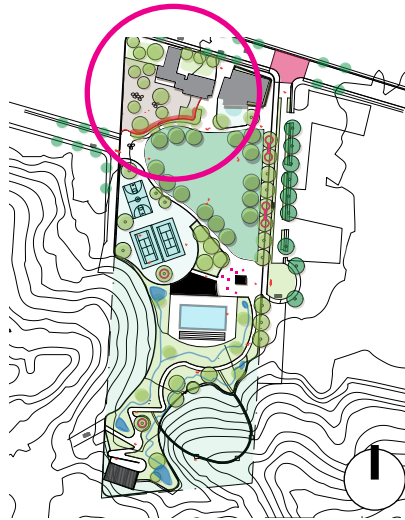


Yosemite Entrance and Playscape Area



The new butterfly garden in the entryway will encourage visitors to stroll into the park to see what other delights await them. The children's playscape area immediately inside the park provides an enclosed play space that encourages active and creative play that draws on a child's sense of curiosity and desire for exploration.

- Plant List:
- Ceanothus minimum*, California lilac
  - Encelia californica*, California sunflower
  - Eriogonum* var., California buckwheat
  - Festuca idahoensis*, Idaho fescue
  - Salvia* var., Sage



The image above highlights the fence style which while offering the security of an enclosed space provides ample visibility between the playspace and the park at large. The new ball court allows space for friends to gather and cheer on the players. The public commons is immediately accessible and will draw users to it

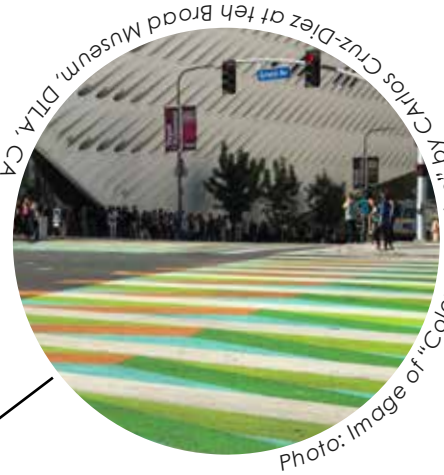
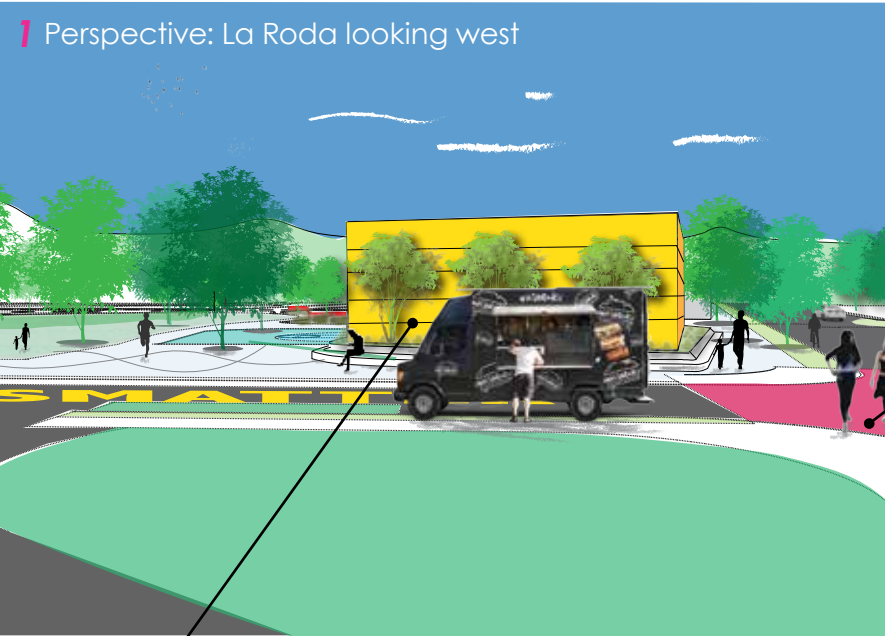


whether for a picnic, a dance class or a pick-up soccer game. The park is designed to encourage users during the evening to take advantage of cooler hours especially during hot summer and early fall days.

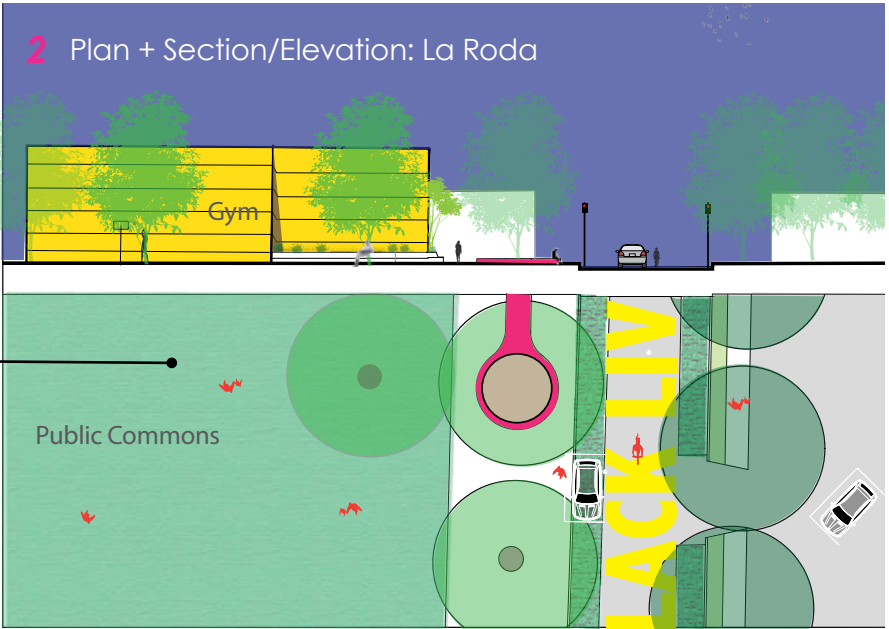
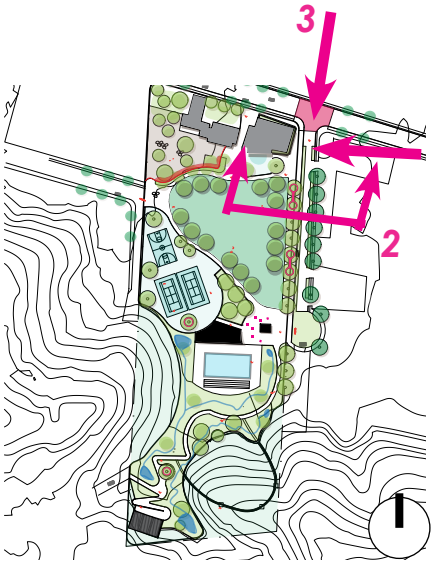




# La Roda Green Street



The new artistic scramble crosswalk and bold mural on the side of the gym will draw attention to the park and encourage users to visit. The new seating around the gym and accessible entryway along La Roda Avenue will facilitate users to move comfortably between the school and the park. La Roda's new design as



a green street will include new grasscrete in the on-street parking areas. A new Black Lives Matter graphic in the new narrower roadway area will serve to further amplify the roadway as a multi-purpose space where pedestrians and bicyclists belong as well as cars while also amplifying the communities commitment to social change. Cars will intuitively move slower and more cautiously in this



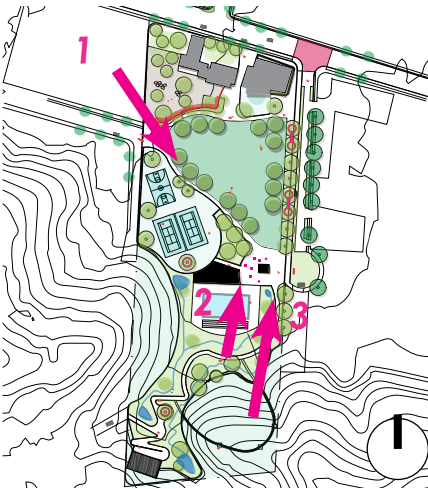


Cafe and New Entry Plazas



The new entry plazas off of Addison Way and at the terminus of La Roda Avenue serve as gateways into the park. The pathway seen above allows a visitor from Addison to stroll towards the many activities within the park whether it is a game of tennis, soccer, basketball, swimming or grabbing a snack at the new cafe.

The pathway includes an embedded metal that weaves through the pathway as a homage to the way that water flows in a river bed. The cafe area includes bright pink and moveable tables and chairs where one can sit alone or in a group. The cafe area is nestled next to a grove of trees and



native plants that provides shade and shelter while still providing views towards the public commons as well as the pool and play court areas. The plaza immediately adjacent to the terminus of La Roda can serve as a gathering place as well as

a natural drop off location for visitors coming to the park. The new restroom and poolhouse provide amenities for the park visitor as well.

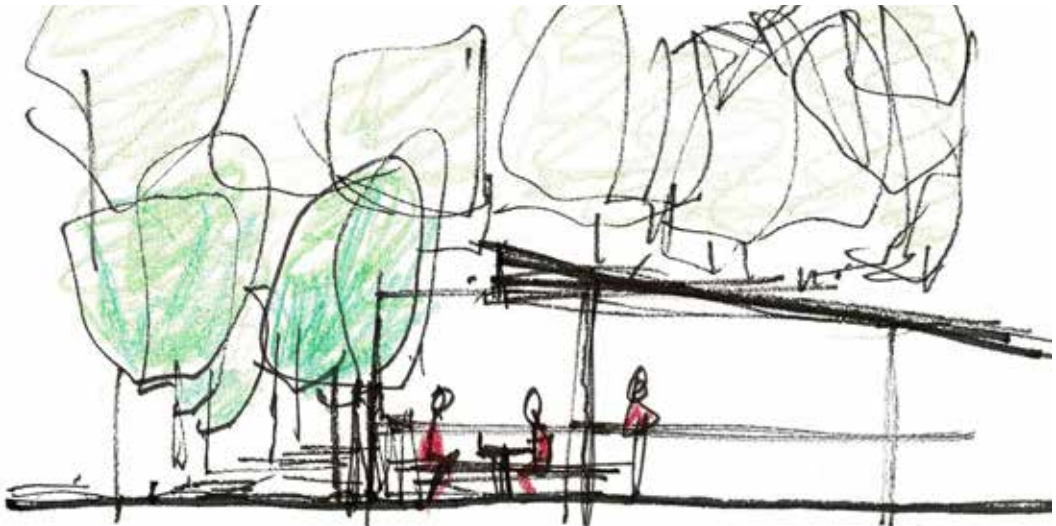


Image: Early sketch of cafe area



Hillside Trails and South End



The new ADA accessible pathway seamlessly connects the active recreational areas of the park with the more sedate, natural hillside areas. In this new space users can take delight in the abundance of native habitat that fills the new bioswale area. Visitors too will learn

Plant List:  
*Baccharis salicifolia*, Mulefat  
*Cercis occidentalis*, Western redbud  
*Chilopsis linearis*, Desert Willow  
*Juncus* spp, Rush  
*Muhlenbergia rigens*, Deer grass

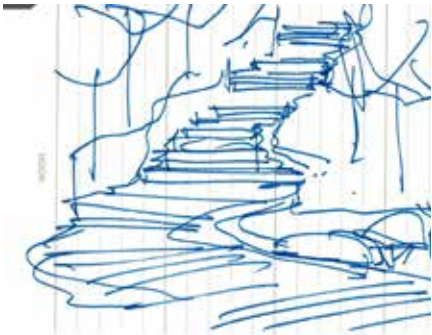
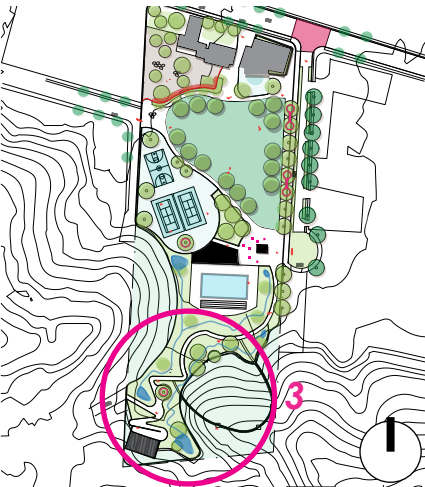


Image: Early sketch of stair/trail



Photo Credit: www.landezine.com



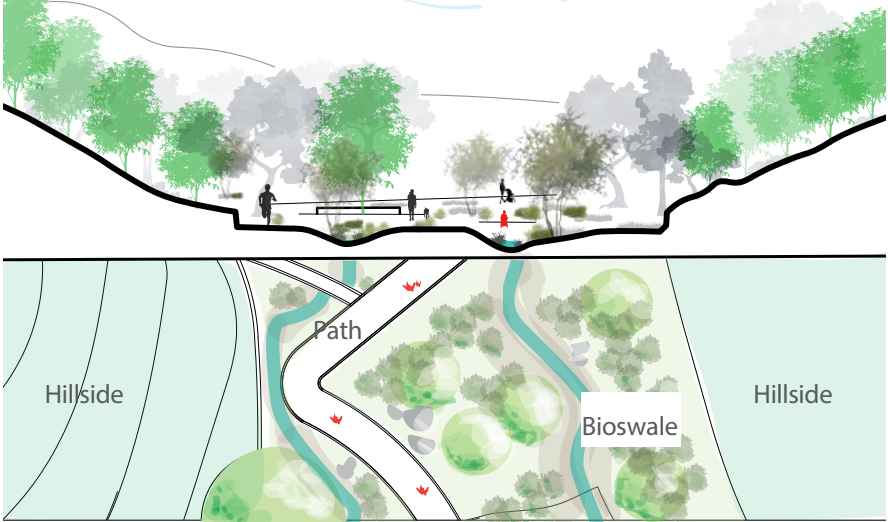
the role of a watershed in both conveying and retaining rainfall and the value of offering unpaved areas that support stormwater infiltration. The new pathway links visitors to the new stair trail where they can enjoy a strenuous workout or a leisure climb. Either approach

will reward the user with views northwards to the San Gabriel Mountains. Visitors will also find it easy to use the pathway to connect to the newly renovated amphitheater at the southern end of the park or to Campus Road and Occidental College.



Hillside Trails and South End

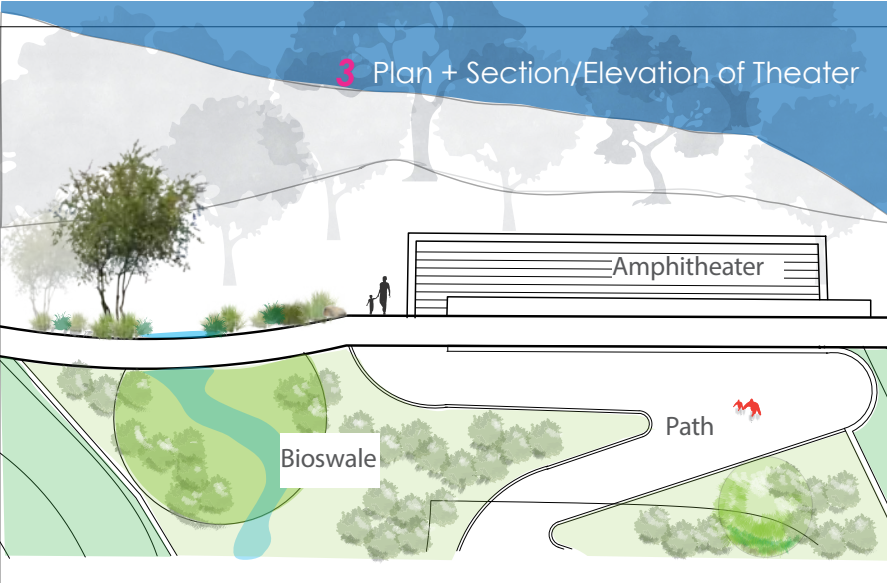
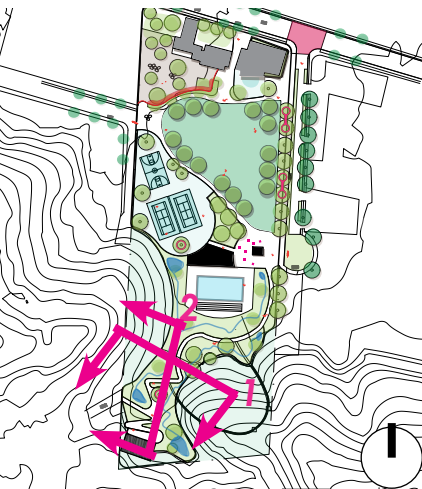
1 Plan + Section/Elevation of Pathway



0' 30' 60' 90' Scale 1"=30'

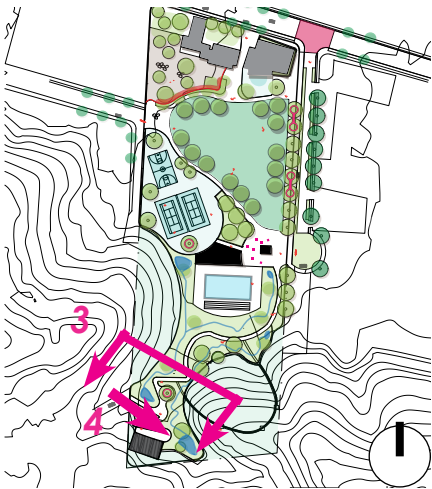
In this southernmost portion of the park visitors can experience a variety of settings, views and events. This area, nestled between two hillside areas embodies the very essence of a valley. The slopes offer a

sense of enclosure while simultaneously offering views northwards towards the open valley floor below. New programming at the amphitheater will allow visitors to experience a local, artisan based theatrical



event or a speaker series focused on current events or topics of local interest or concern. The amphitheater also serves as an inviting destination as a place to meet friends or enjoy a quiet, contemplative moment where one can enjoy the surrounding nature. Tucked off to the side of the theater is a smaller, space, narrowly enclosed between two,

adjacent hillsides. This area receives an abundance of waterfall during a storm event as it is fed directly by the generous hillside on which Mt. Fiji sits. This area in essence marks the first or uppermost floor of the valley as it descends towards Yosemite Drive.



2 Plan + Section/Elevation of Path



0' 20' 40' 80' 120' Scale 1"=40'



4 Perspective: Uppermost portion of bioswale





Implementation Phases

Park funding continues to be a challenge- and especially so for smaller, neighborhood parks. For this reason a three part phasing program is recommended. This will allow for the identification of various sources of funding that can then be used incrementally as they become available.

Phase 1

- Entry-Butterfly Garden
- Prohibit Parking by Pool
- Remove fence along La Roda
- Establish La Roda as a Green Street

Phase 2

- Upgrade southern end with ADA accessible entry and pathway
- Add bioswales to capture stormwater
- Add seating
- Upgrade theater
- Upgrade trail + add viewing platforms
- Construct new Poolhouse/ Restrooms + Cafe Plaza

Phase 3

- Reconstruct multi-purpose field, ball courts and children's play area
- Remove on-site parking
- Complete new pathways
- Add seating around gym
- Extend hillside trail to connect with Occidental College trail system

Legend

Trees

Street Trees

Lawn

Play Courts

Cafe Tables

Grasscrete

Bench Seating

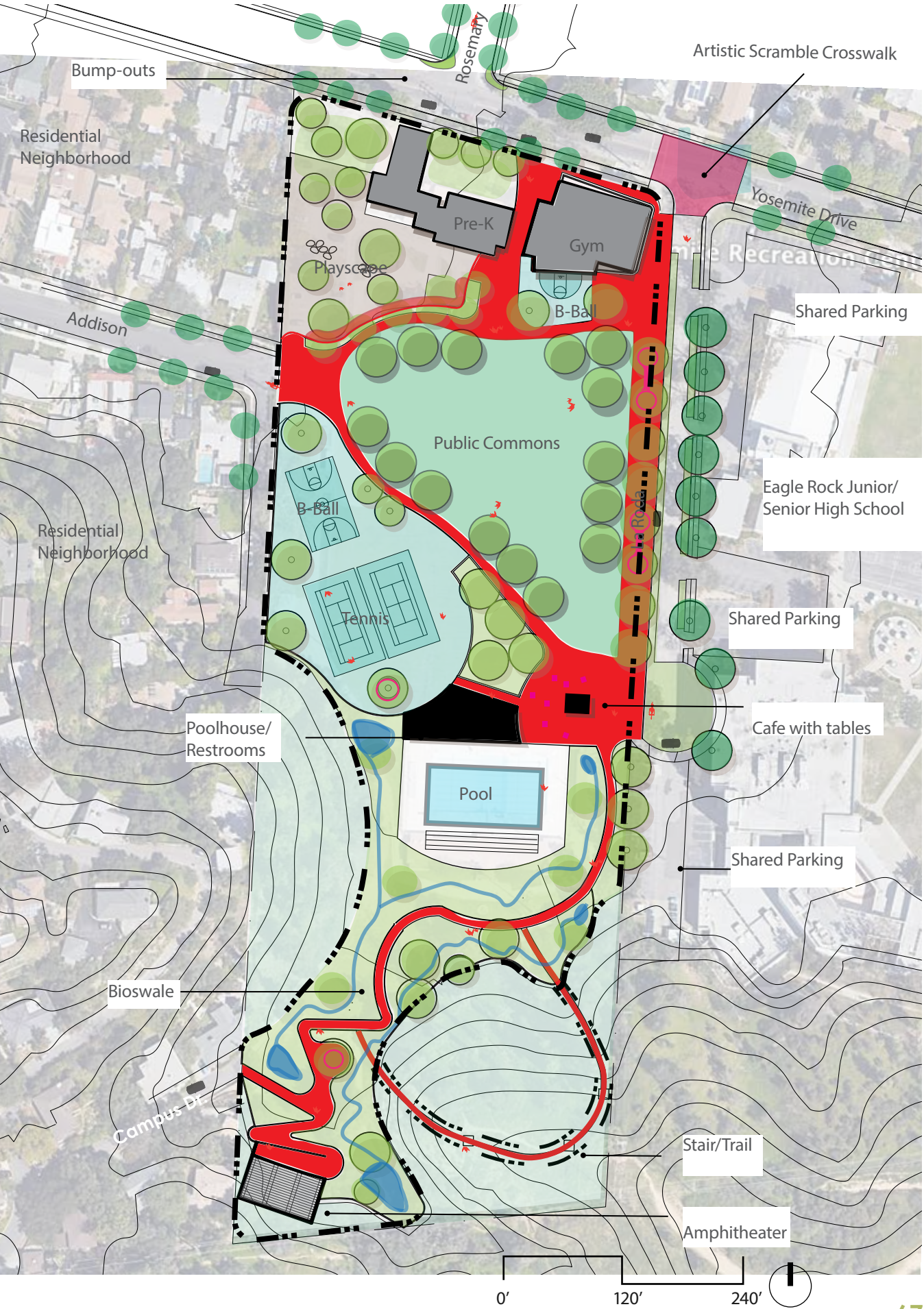
Existing Buildings

New Buildings

Park Boundary

Boundary of Project Area

Pathway





Critical to the success of any park is the sense of collaboration and ownership that is felt by the community. Here we follow in the footsteps of such well regarded places as Bryant Park and Millenium Park in New York and Chicago respectively. While both these parks are large, central parks they provide excellent guidance for setting up and maintaining the types of organizational strutures that could well serve Neighborhood Park 2.0

Phase 1

Entry Butterfly Garden- Identify Community Partner to Design, Maintain, and Provide Educational opportunities

Phase 2

Theater- Collaborate with LAUSD, Occidental and Eagle Rock

Center for the Arts to maintain programming

Trail- Collaborate with Conservation Corps to maintain trail and platforms

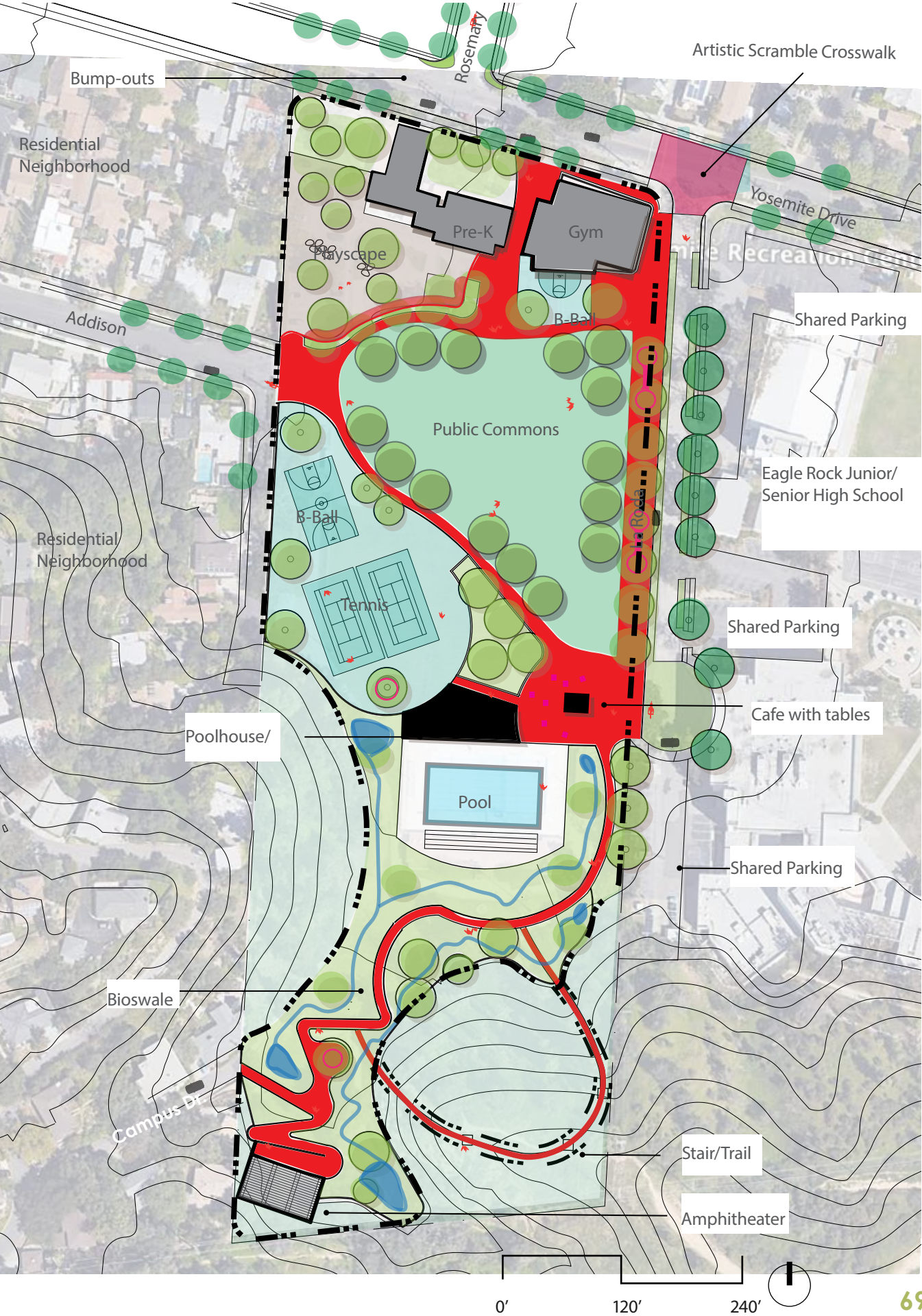
Cafe + Restrooms- Select a vendor to manage cafe + restrooms

Phase 3

Public Commons- Identify a non-profit organization to coordinate monthly events on the Public Commons

Legend

- Trees
- Street Trees
- Lawn
- Play Courts
- Cafe Tables
- Grasscrete
- Bench Seating
- Existing Buildings
- New Buildings
- Park Boundary
- Boundary of Project Area
- Pathways





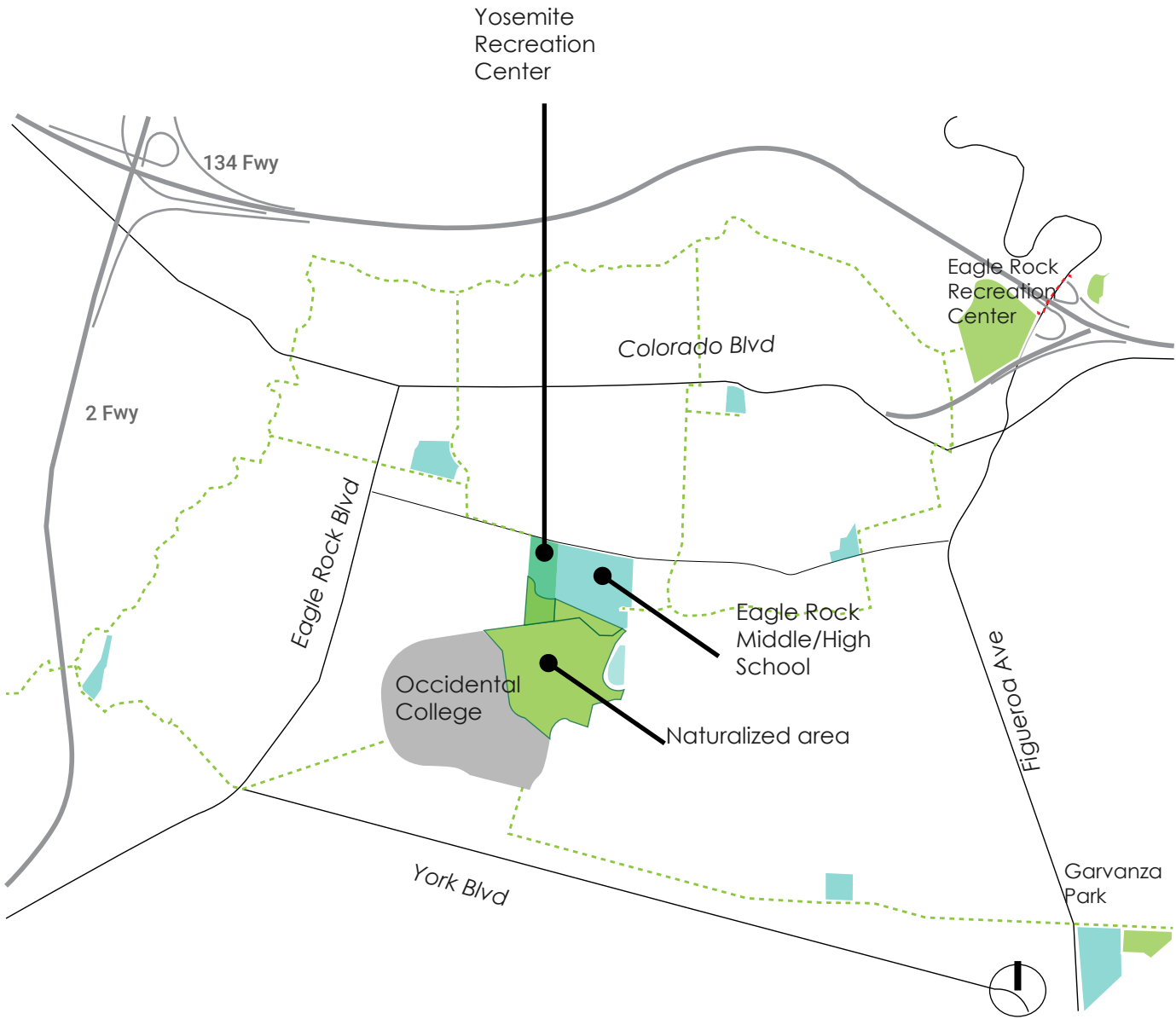
Green Network

In closing we leave you with some potential other projects that could further increase connectivity within the Eagle Rock neighborhood. Improvements to the intersections and streets that are identified on the map could be instrumental in increasing the number of residents who feel comfortable walking and/or bicycling within the neighborhood. At 4.23 square miles the area relatively is relative small and these “green street” improvements could encourage people to walk to a local store or restaurant or facilitate students walking or biking to school or to either of the two parks.

Improvements could include such minor enhancements as bulb-outs, chicanes and enhanced street crossings both of which can slow traffic speeds and improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.



Source: Los Angeles River Revitalization Master Plan, 2009, City of Los Angeles, Bureau of Engineering



The Green Street Network Map here is an example of potential streets that can be identified for wayfinding and other street calming improvements to provide a safe and comfortable pedestrian and walking environment to connect the Yosemite Recreation Center to the nearby schools and parks.



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