

An aerial photograph of a lush green hillside. The foreground is filled with dense, vibrant green vegetation, including several tall palm trees. The hillside slopes upwards towards the right, where a cluster of buildings is visible in the distance. The sky is a pale, clear blue. Two thin, curved lines, one yellow and one white, sweep across the image from the bottom left towards the top right, framing the text.

# ASCOT HILLS: RE-ENVISIONING A COMMUNITY NATURE PARK

JINA PARK  
UCLA Extension  
Landscape Architecture  
Capstone Summer 2023



JINA PARK  
Capstone Project  
Instructor: Meg Coffee  
UCLA Extension  
Landscape Architecture Program  
Spring/Summer 2023



# PERSONAL STATEMENT

From a longstanding desire to make a meaningful impact in the world, I've harbored aspirations of returning to school. However, as a devoted mother to three young children, the notion of advancing my education felt nearly insurmountable. This changed in 2020, amidst the challenges of the pandemic. It was during this period that my fondness for gardens, design, and crafting beautiful spaces crystallized into an interest in landscape architecture—a field I hadn't considered previously.

My academic foundation in sociology from UCLA, coupled with a passion for community service and my experience as the CEO of a trade show, marketing, and branding company, attuned me to the potential of landscape designs that not only beautify, but also serve the deeper needs of communities.

One place that particularly resonated with me was Ascot Hills Park. As a significant asset to the El Sereno community, its expansive 93-acre expanse was underutilized, often only used for hiking. Challenges such as safety concerns, vandalism, and a lack of child-friendly amenities were evident. Given the proximity of educational institutions, this park had the potential to offer so much more.

I was heartened to discover dedicated groups, including the Park Advisory Board and various non-profits like North East Trees, who deeply valued Ascot Hills Park. Their regular meetings and initiatives focused on revitalizing, preserving, and enhancing the park. However, a persistent hurdle they encountered was budgetary constraints.

Through my capstone project, I aim to envision the transformative potential of this remarkable park, emphasizing its capacity to cater to the distinct needs of the El Sereno community. I hope to illuminate what this treasured green space could truly become.

This Capstone Project and book is dedicated to  
Jaden, Brendan and Alexandra - and David, my biggest  
cheerleader and supporter.

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# PROJECT STATEMENT



*Ascot Hills, a unique nature park spanning 93-acres is the pride of residents in **El Sereno, California**. This project proposes to renovate the existing park by making it more accessible to the surrounding community, protecting the natural landscape, and optimizing protection and enhancement for all users alike - both human and non-human.*



# PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

“For as long as I can remember, El Sereno has been a complicated place frozen in time, a bucolic expanse sporadically littered with incongruent but charming homes rendered inconspicuous by hillside foliage and treetop canopies.”

Benito Solis, El Sereno resident & lecturer at CSULA



## PRESERVATION & RESTORATION

Ascot Hills Park is a thriving sanctuary for diverse native plants and wildlife, sustained by a vital natural water stream that plays a crucial role in maintaining the park’s ecological equilibrium.

Recognizing the significance of this delicate balance, separate assessments and goal-setting for each plant community or association are essential to ensure their preservation and promote a harmonious coexistence within the park’s vibrant ecosystem.



## RECREATION FOR CHILDREN

Ascot Hills Park attracts a significant number of young visitors, predominantly toddlers and children. Presently, the prevailing aspiration within the local community revolves around the establishment of a natural play area, providing an opportunity for their little ones to engage in play and immerse themselves in the wonders of nature. Introducing a dedicated play area would inherently foster an environment conducive to the holistic development of children, both physically and cognitively.



## ACCESSIBILITY

Ascot Hills Park’s road and trail network requires deliberate design to prioritize accessibility for visitors, maintenance, and emergencies, while preserving its tranquil environment. By thoughtfully utilizing existing roads and making necessary additions, the park must aim to provide convenient access without compromising its peaceful atmosphere. The trail system should offer a variety of experiences while effectively managing wildlife conservation and giving due importance to ADA accessibility.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

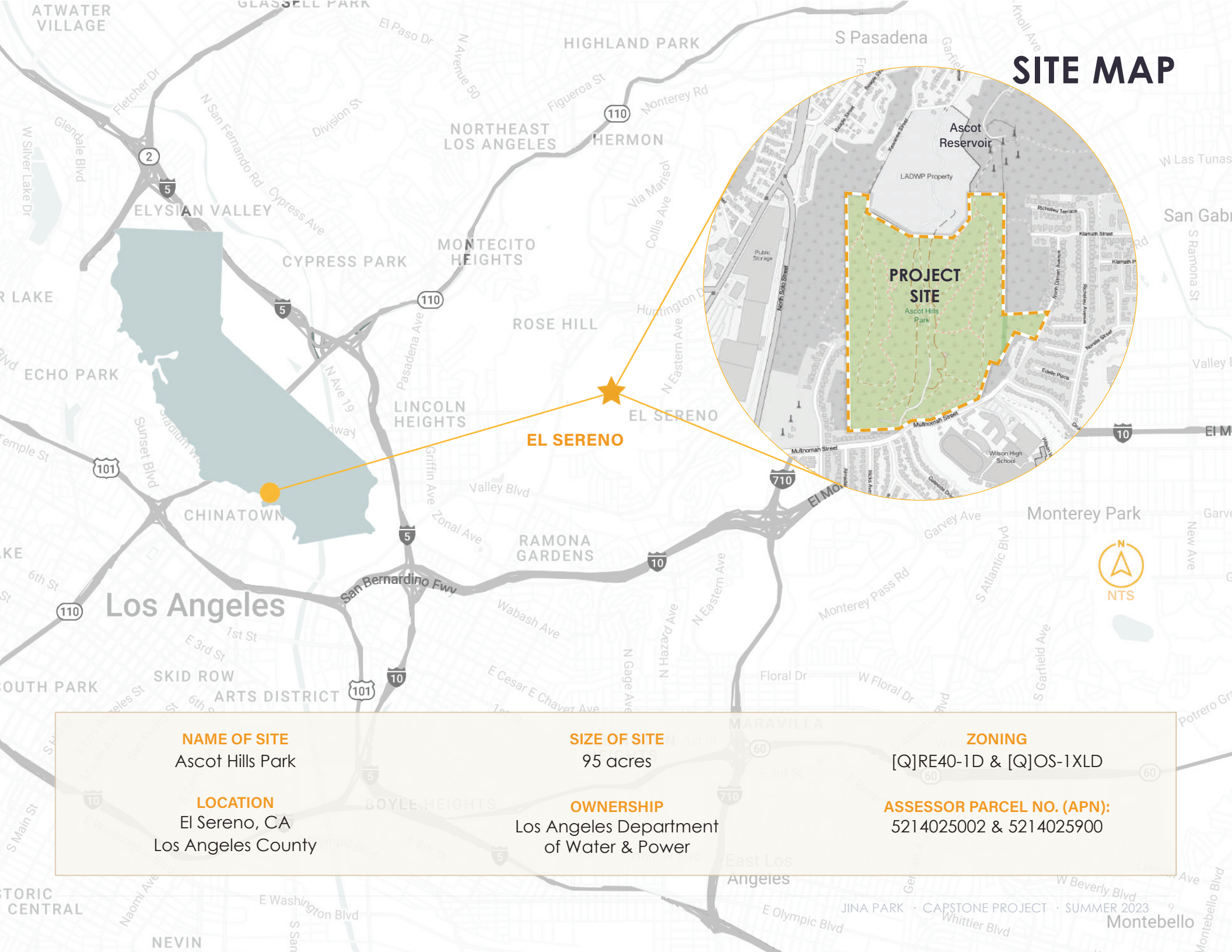
Landscape design becomes a pivotal catalyst for community engagement and the holistic well-being of the park. By meticulously crafting well-designed trails, purposeful work areas, such as a nursery, and informative signage, the design can seamlessly support and amplify the efforts of volunteers and visitors that it needs.

Additionally, the creation of versatile spaces fosters a sense of community, encouraging vibrant gatherings and engaging events.

# LOCATION / ABOUT THE SITE



# SITE MAP



<b>NAME OF SITE</b> Ascot Hills Park	<b>SIZE OF SITE</b> 95 acres	<b>ZONING</b> [Q]RE40-1D & [Q]OS-1XLD
<b>LOCATION</b> El Sereno, CA Los Angeles County	<b>OWNERSHIP</b> Los Angeles Department of Water & Power	<b>ASSESSOR PARCEL NO. (APN):</b> 5214025002 & 5214025900

# ABOUT THE SITE / THE NATURAL LANDSCAPE



Trail & hilltop views



Trail - bottom



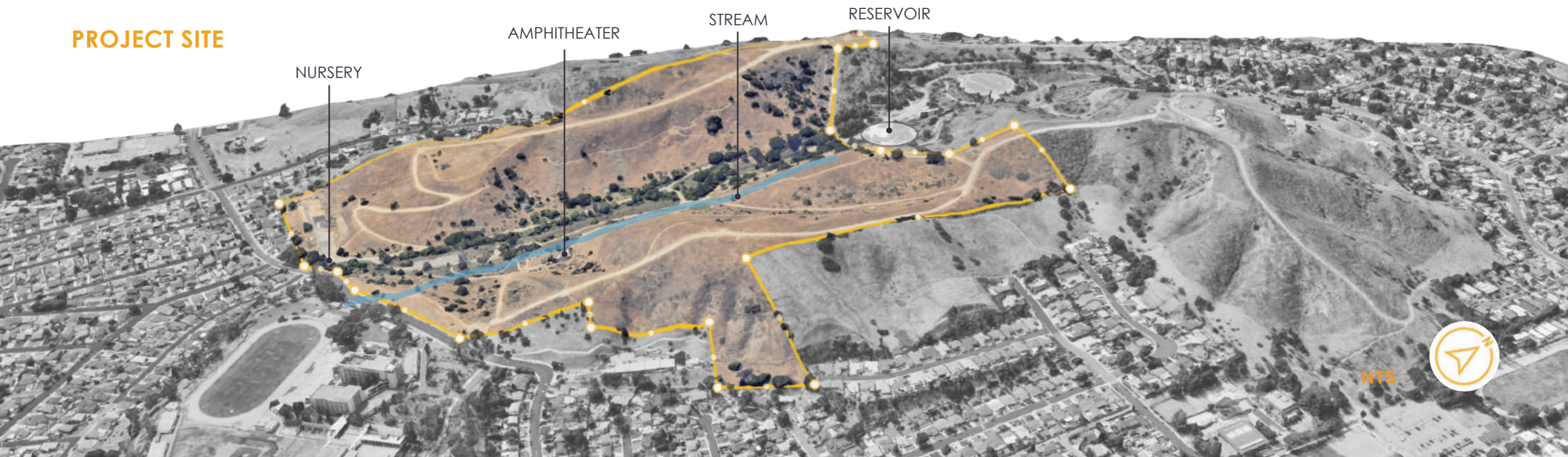
Stream

**Ascot Hills Park** is an open space natural urban park in Los Angeles, California, situated in a historically impoverished low-income neighborhood with high demand for parks. It features two parallel ridges running north-south on either side of a central valley and seasonal stream. The park's elevation has a difference of about 300 feet above sea level, and its soil mainly consists of silty clay or sand silt composition derived from marine sedimentary bedrock. A steel reservoir, replacing a 1910 earthen dam,

lies just beyond the park's northern boundary to mitigate earthquake risks, which previously hindered housing development in the area. The park was established in 2006 after local opposition to housing and sports fields development. Amenities include a small stone amphitheater, picnic tables, a toilet structure, and two 20-vehicle parking lots. Additionally, the park offers approximately 3.7 miles of unpaved hiking trails. Over the years, Ascot Hills Park has been degraded by livestock grazing, aggressive brush

clearance for fire mitigation, and haphazard excavation for city utility training. The vegetation is mostly non-native grasses with a combination of planted non-native and native California trees and plants. Since 2011, efforts have been made to re-vegetate sections of the park, with these areas being irrigated by fixed sprinkler heads and rest of the park by rainfalls. (Wilson and Willette). Some of the recent community efforts include development of a nursery and a micro-forest restoration project by non-profits.

## PROJECT SITE



# EXISTING FEATURES & BUILT AMENITIES



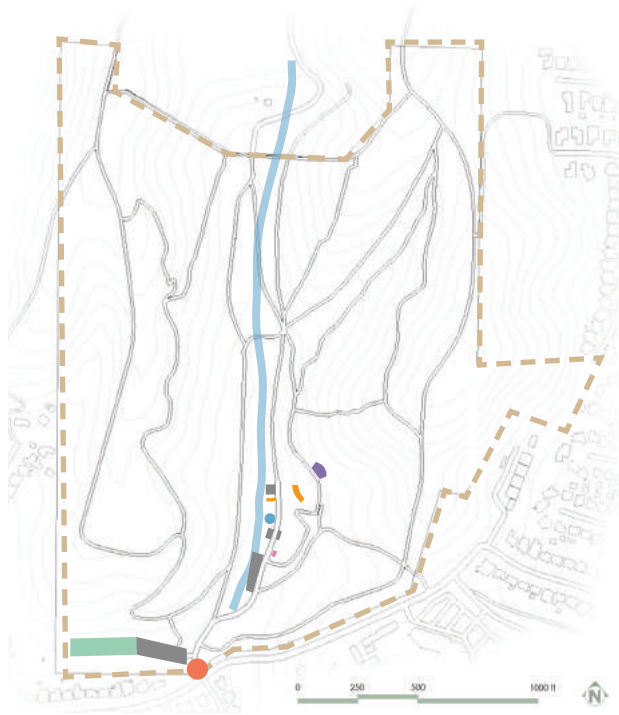
Parking lot



Nature Center



Nursery



## LEGEND

- Parking lots
- Nature Center
- Nursery
- Entrance gate
- Amphitheater
- Picnic tables
- Restroom



Amphitheater and event space



Picnic tables

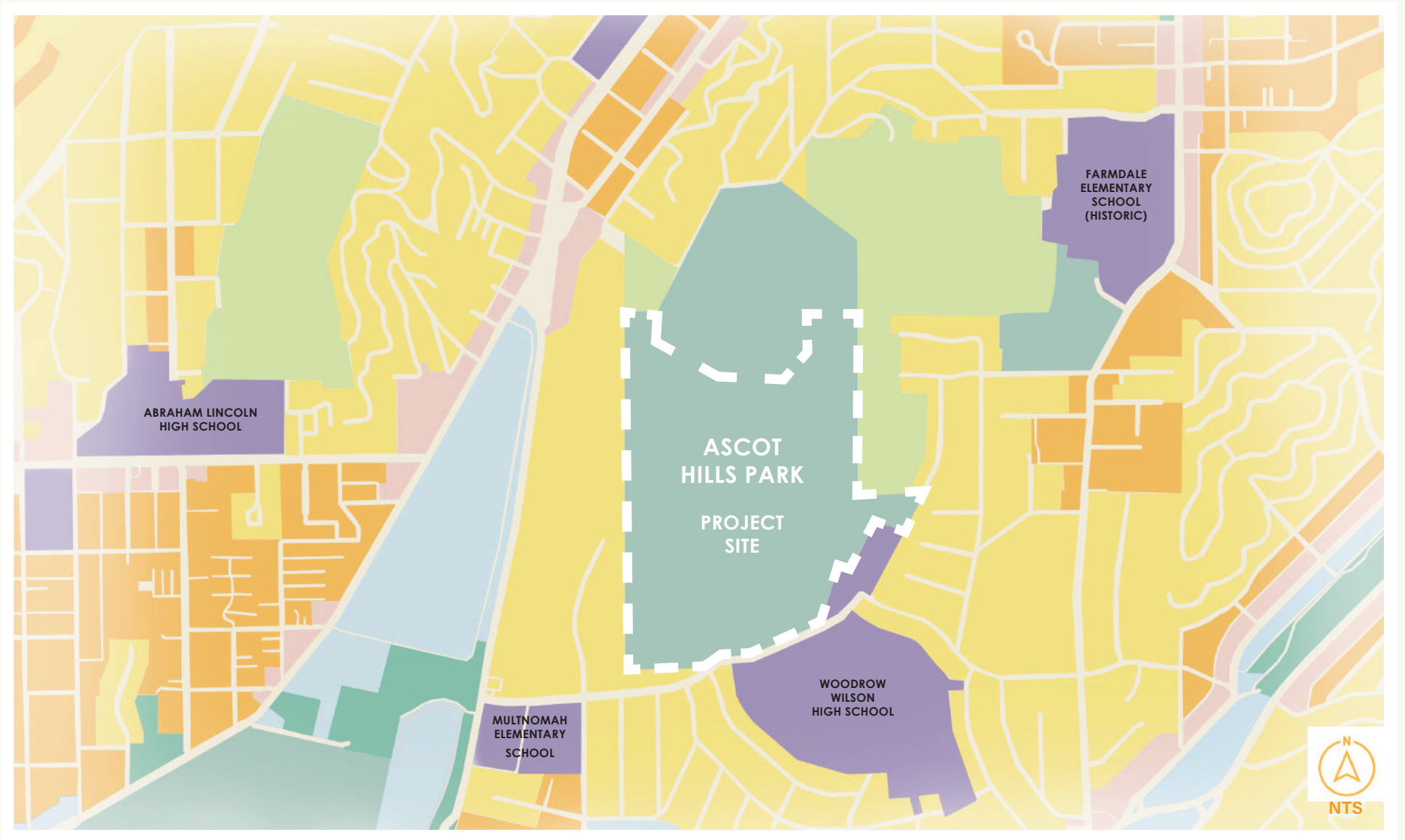


Entrance gate











Restroom

# CONTEXT / ZONING & LAND USE



## LEGEND

 Open Space	 Low Residential/ R1	 Commercial	 Light Manufacturing
 Residential Agriculture	 Med Residential/ R2-R5	 Schools	 Public Facilities

# CONTEXT / EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES



**ABRAHAM LINCOLN  
HIGH SCHOOL**

**PROJECT  
SITE**



**LAC+USC  
MEDICAL CENTER**



**MULTNOMAH  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**



**WOODROW WILSON  
HIGH SCHOOL**

**FARMDALE  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
(HISTORIC LANDMARK)**



**CALIFORNIA STATE  
UNIVERSITY,  
LOS ANGELES (CSULA)**

# CONTEXT / SKYLINE VIEWS



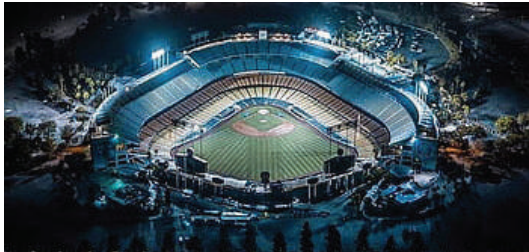
Hollywood Sign



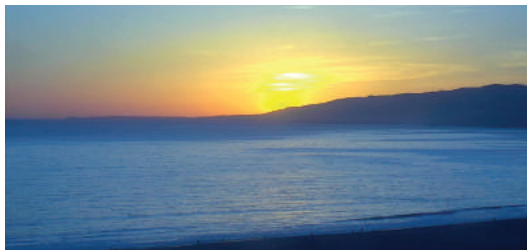
Griffith Observatory



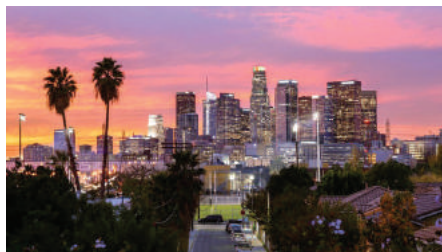
San Gabriel Mountains/ Mt. Baldy



Dodgers Stadium



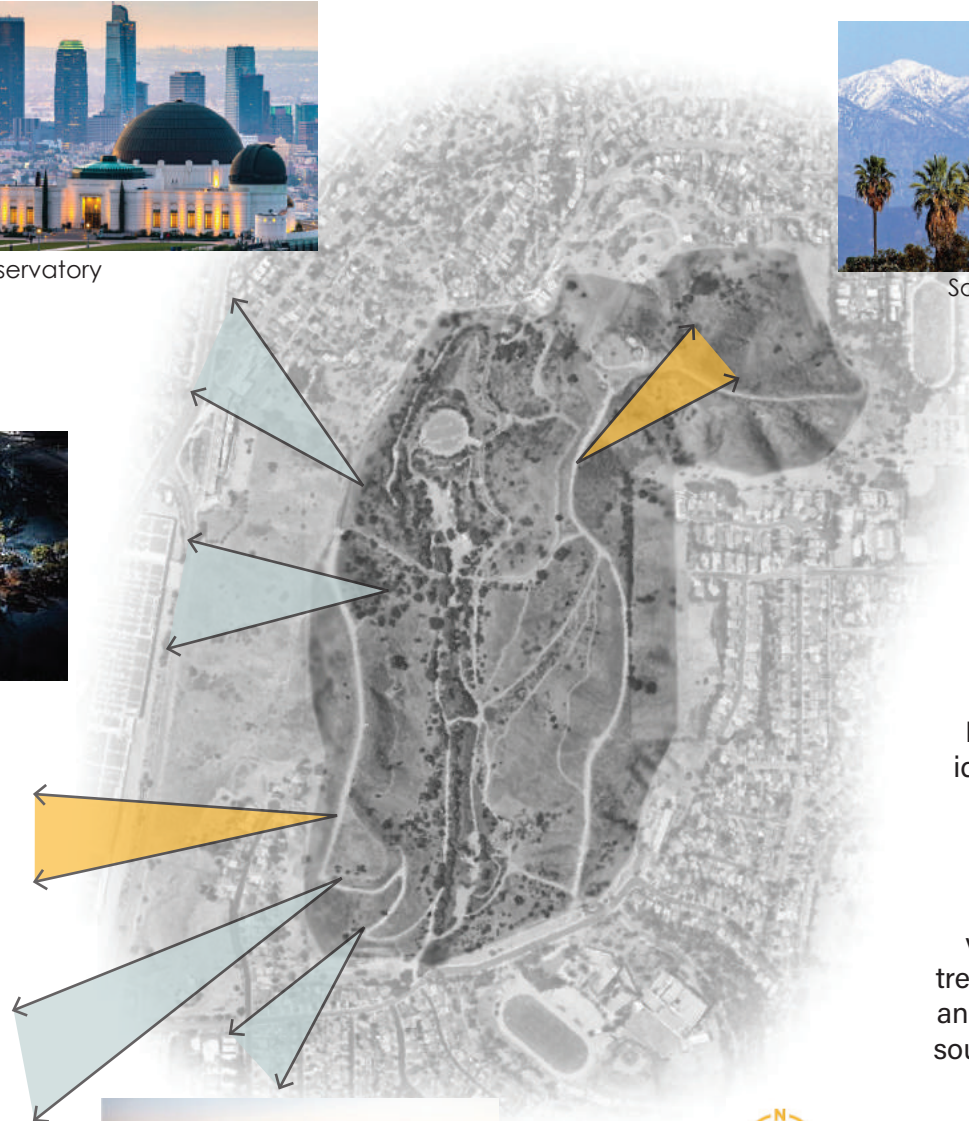
Pacific Ocean



Downtown LA Skyline



LAX planes



Ascot Hills Park's hilltop area boasts magnificent panoramic views of Los Angeles, making it an ideal spot to enjoy stunning sunsets, sunrises, and birdwatching.

Positioned at an elevated vantage point, visitors are treated to the beauty of nature and the captivating sights and sounds of various bird species.

This serene sanctuary harmoniously blends natural splendor and tranquility, providing a memorable and immersive experience for all.

# HISTORY & THE PEOPLE

# HISTORY OF EL SERENO

## 1769 - Gasper de Portola

His expedition camps south of Ascot Hills. Journal chronicles the native roses along streams as reminding them of Roses of Castila.

## 1769-1834 - Mission Period

Founding of Mission San Gabriel. Park's west boundary is Western boundary of mission lands - hills used for grazing of livestock.

## 1852 - Batz Family

Title for Rancho Rosa de Castila passed to Jean-Baptiste Batz and his wife, Catalina, from Spain.

1882- After the passing of Jean and Catalina Batz, the land was divided between six of their eight children. The southernmost 700 acres passed to the third oldest son Jose Domingo Batz. Three generations of the Batz family raised sheep, cattle, and grew barley and hay.



## <10,000-1542 - Tongva's Land

Locally, the Tongva, meaning people of the earth, inhabited the San Gabriel Valley. The Spanish called them "Gabrielino" after the Mission.

## 1784-36 - Land of Ranchos

California missions secularized. Mission lands granted to individuals as privately held ranchos who raised cattle & sheep. Lands became a part of Rancho Rosas de Castilla establishing the oldest community in Los Angeles.

## 1901-1961 - Pacific Electric, RedCar

Henry E Huntington builds an interurban rail system called Pacific Electric that spurs the development of suburbs.

1821 - Mexican Independence from Spain.

1852 - Title for Rancho Rosa de Castila passed to Jean-Baptiste Batz and his wife, Catalina, from Spain.

1879 - The City of Los Angeles was incorporated.

The Pacific Electric Railway Company, nicknamed the Red Cars, was a privately owned mass transit system in Southern California. Lines ran through Huntington drive as well as many other main streets.



# ASCOT HISTORY

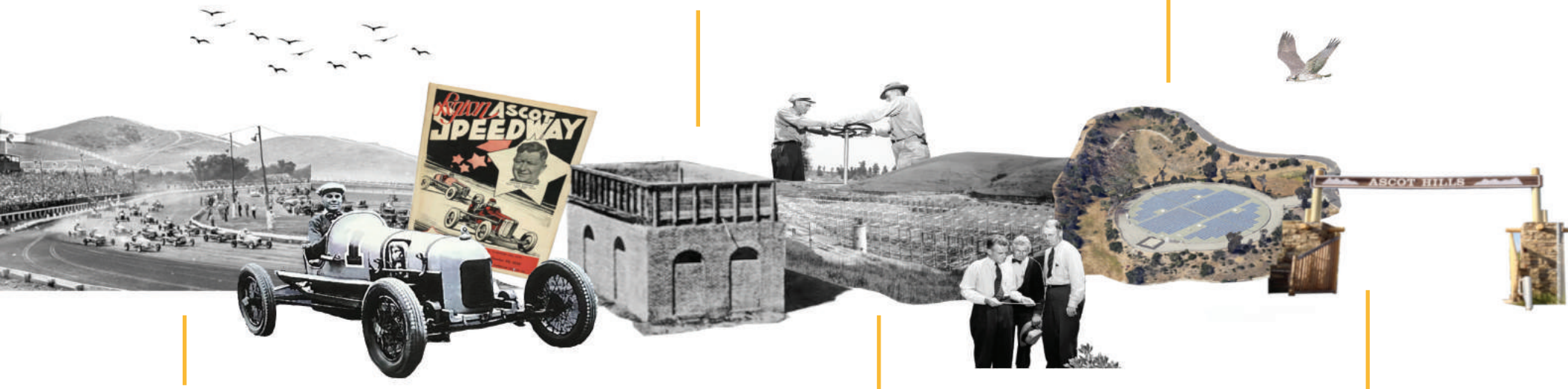
## 1926 - The Reservoir Project

City of Los Angeles water system purchases land for reservoir in Ascot Hills in 1910.

El Sereno, then called Baird's Town, is annexed to city of Los Angeles to assure water for a growing population. Metropolitan Water District of Southern California constructs pipelines to deliver water from Colorado Aqueduct.

## 1980s - Ascot Hills Reservoir

Ascot Hills Reservoir earth dam is taken out of service as it does not meet earthquake safety standards. A new steel tank is constructed inside the reservoir area and earth from the dam is placed around it.



## 1924-1936 - Ascot Speedway

The speedway originally opened in 1924 and was taken over by the American Legion Post 127 of Glendale in 1927. Legion Ascot was the most famous of several Ascot speedways. The first Ascot was named after England's Ascot horse track. In its 13 years of operation it laid claim to 24 fatalities making in it infamous as "the killer track".

Legion Ascot Speedway ended its run in 1936 when it burned down. Torched by a former employee claiming he did not want to see anymore of his friends die.

## 1941 - First Ascot Reservoir

Seven acres of roofing was constructed to insure the purity of water supply. The reservoir is 1,000 feet in length and 400 feet in width.

## 2005 - Ascot Hills Park

City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Park (DRP) is granted funds for State Proposition 40 to construct park infrastructure and LADWP leases land to DRP.

2006 - Initial park facilities opened to the public

2011 - Park infrastructure completed and park is fully opened to public.

# USERS / COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY HIKERS & VISITORS



EL SERENO RESIDENTS & FAMILIES



STUDENTS



## CURRENT DEMOGRAPHICS

CURRENT POPULATION



45,298

MEDIAN AGE



36.5

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME



\$65,761

MEDIAN HOME VALUE

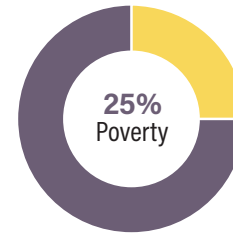


\$605,400

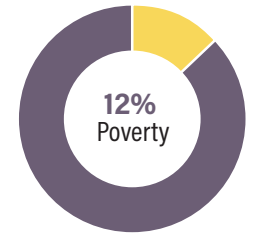
POVERTY

16.2% persons below poverty line

25% higher than other LA area



Children (Under 18)

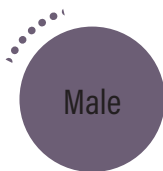


Seniors (65 and over)

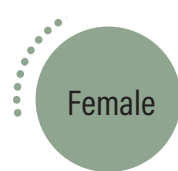
HOUSEHOLD BY TYPE



54%



12%

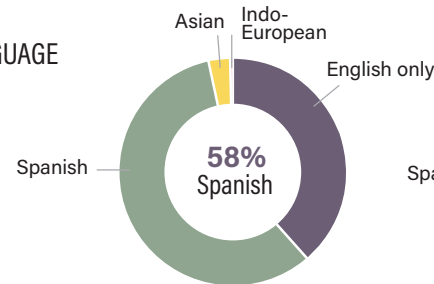


22%

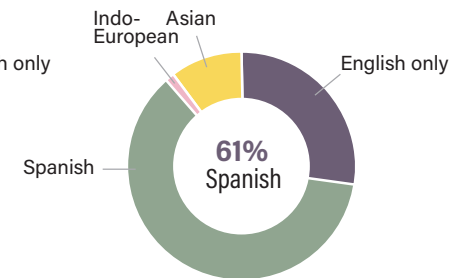


12%

LANGUAGE



Language at home children 5-17



Language at home adults 18+

El Sereno is a predominantly Latino neighborhood, characterized as a lower-middle-income neighborhood, below the average income level.

# STAKEHOLDERS



PARK ADVISORY BOARD



EL SERENO HISTORICAL SOCIETY



CITY OF LA DEPT OF RECREATION & PARKS



EL SERENO RESIDENTS

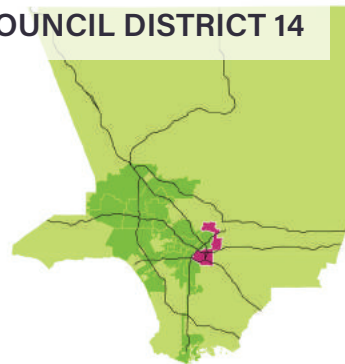


NORTH EAST TREES

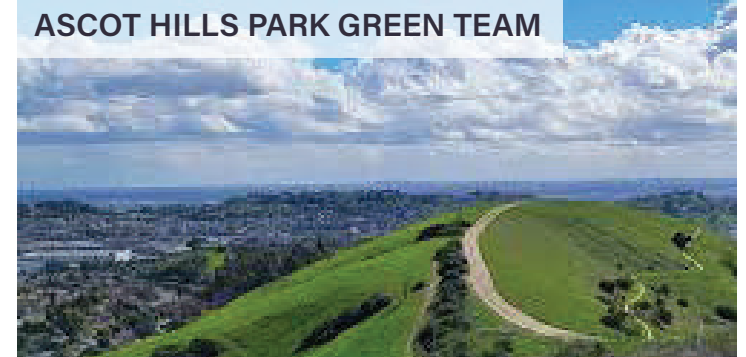


**North East Trees**  
Bringing Nature Back

COUNCIL DISTRICT 14

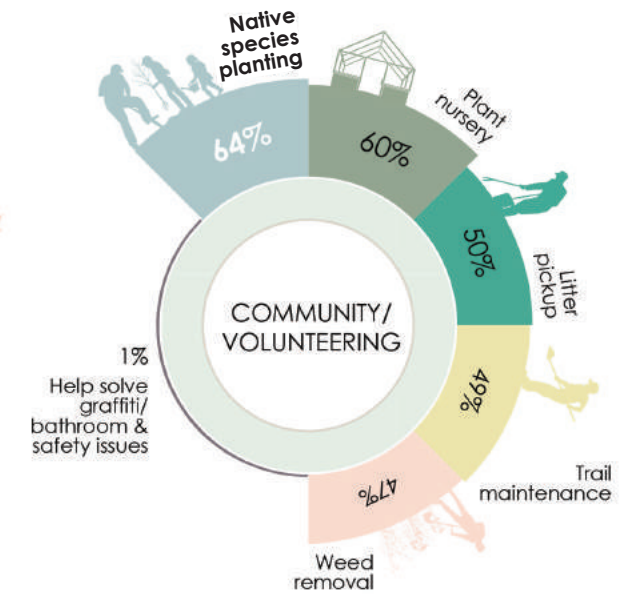
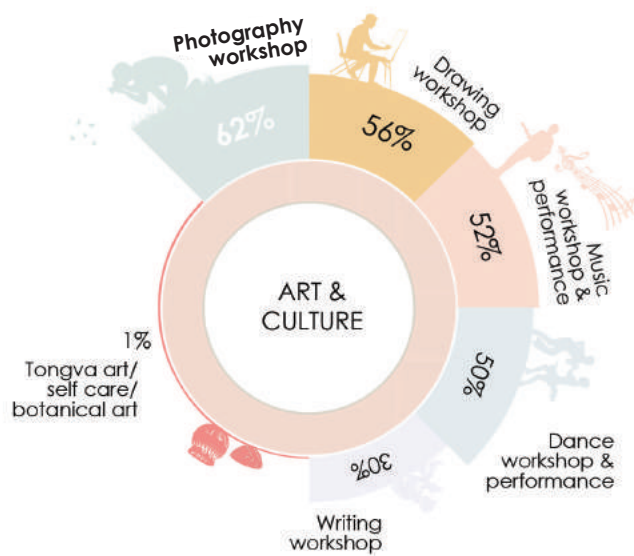
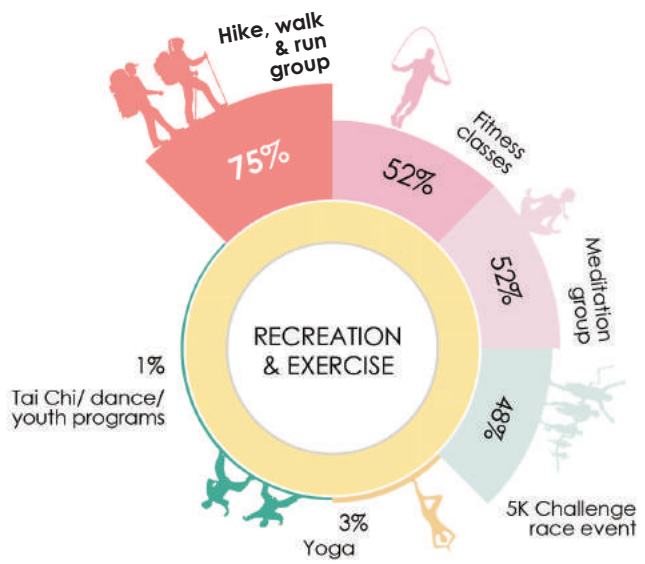
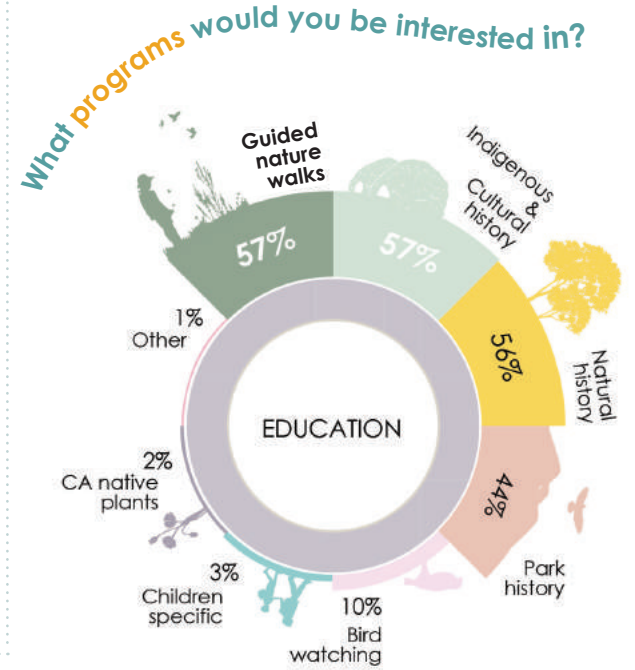


ASCOT HILLS PARK GREEN TEAM



# 2021 USER SURVEY RESULTS

## RESPONSES TO COMMUNITY SURVEY FROM 110 PARTICIPANTS



# **METHODOLOGIES & CASE STUDIES**

# DESIGN METHODOLOGY

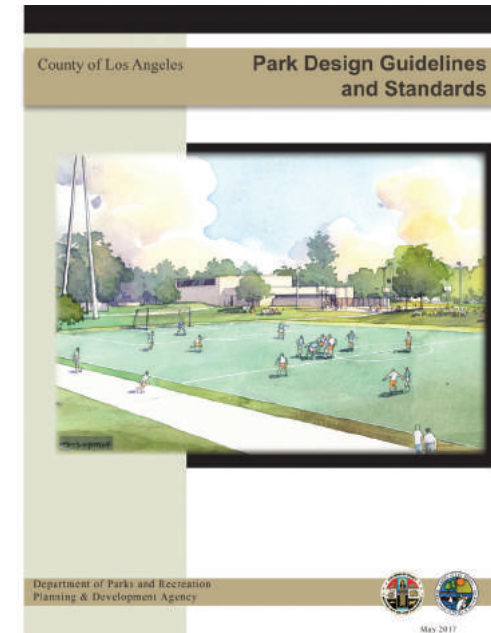
## PROJECT GUIDELINE:

Follow City of Los Angeles Park Design Guidelines



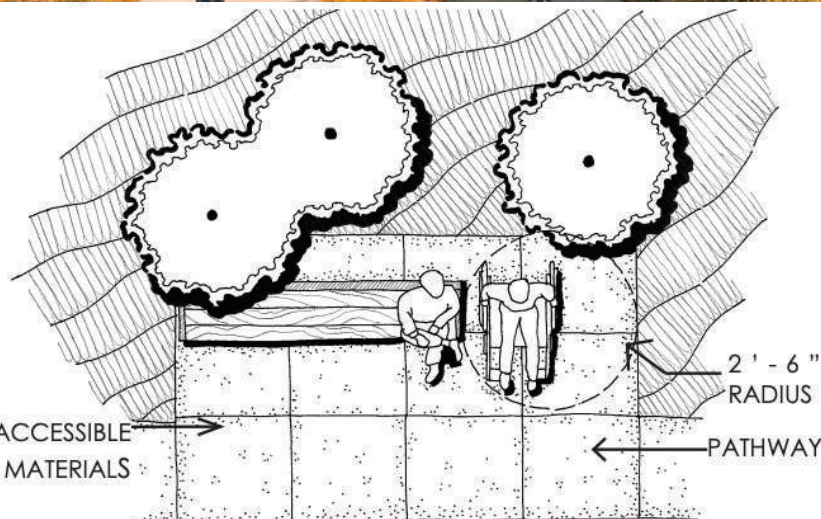
*Park Design Guidelines and Standards*

by County of Los Angeles



**“By creating parks that provide gathering places, welcoming all residents to socialize, recreate, and share their lives, while providing a nurturing and safe environment for children and youth.”**

**“Activities shall be grouped to maximize desirable effects (accessibility, control of participants, multi-uses) or separated to minimize conflicts including noise and degree of physical activity.”**



**Exhibit 33: Park Bench with Adjacent ADA Companion Seating**

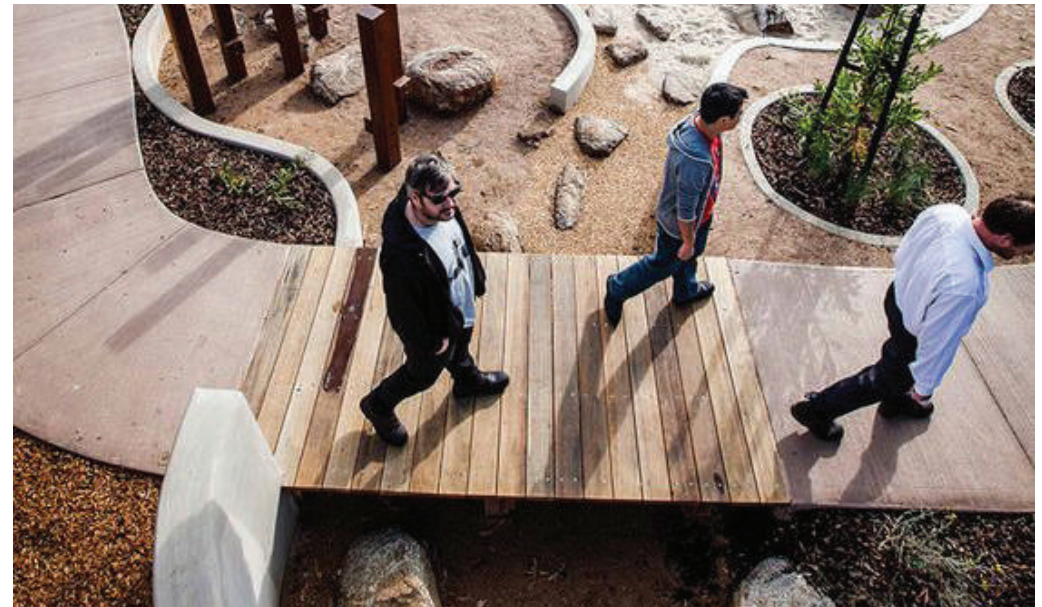
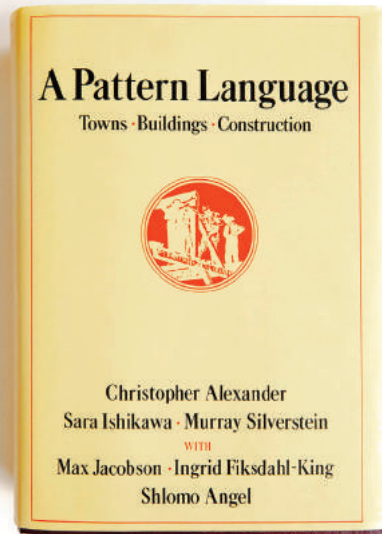
# DESIGN METHODOLOGY

## *A Pattern Language*

by Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa & Murray Silverstein

## PROJECT GOAL:

Create a flexible, adaptable and responsive space



**“A garden growing wild is healthier, more capable of stable growth, than the more clipped and artificial garden. And for the people too, the garden growing wild creates a more profound experience.”**

**“Set up a playground for the children in each neighborhood. Not a highly finished playground, with asphalt and swings, but a place with raw materials of all kinds - nets, boxes, barrels, trees, ropes, simple tools, frames, grass, and water-where children can create and re-create playgrounds of their own.”**

# DESIGN METHODOLOGY

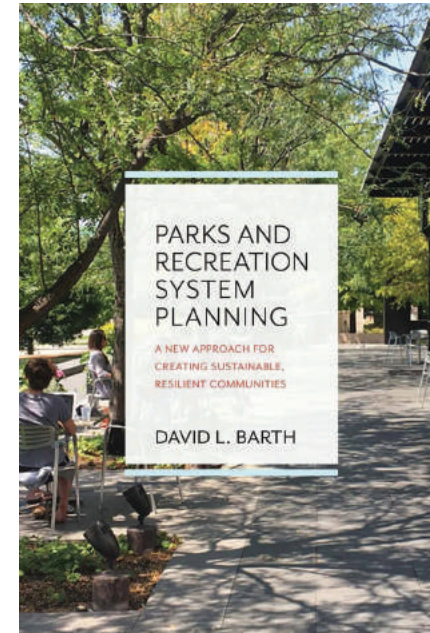
## PROJECT GOAL:

Sustainability & resiliency



*Parks and Recreation System Planning*

by David L. Barth



**“High Performance Public Spaces (are) publicly accessible spaces that generate economic, environmental, and social sustainability benefits for the local community.”**

**“Potential sustainability and resiliency dimensions (include) health determinants, income inequality, educational opportunities, environmental conditions, gentrification, neighborhood stabilization, homelessness... and social cohesion.”**



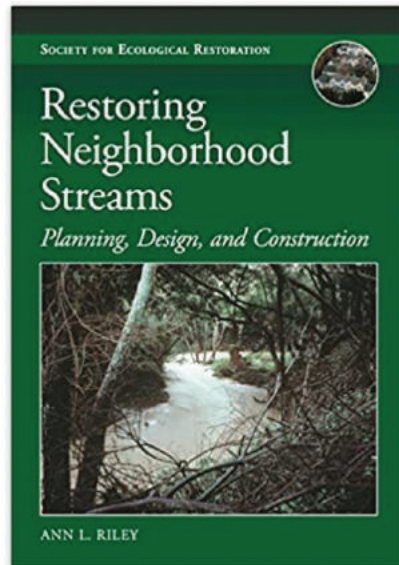
# DESIGN METHODOLOGY

*Restoring Neighborhood Streams: Planning, Design & Construction*

by Ann L. Riley

**PROJECT GOAL:**

Storm water, green infrastructure & stream restoration



**“Restoration, in fact, may not be aesthetic to some people and can entail fallen trees, willow thickets, downed wood in streams, and other features that may cause concern to a neighbor looking at the stream in a local park.”**

**“Urban streams can and do reach equilibrium after the development phase is largely completed and after impervious surfaces and the artificial drainage network (usually denser) have stabilized so that the runoff and sediment regimes reach a new equilibrium.”**



# DESIGN METHODOLOGY

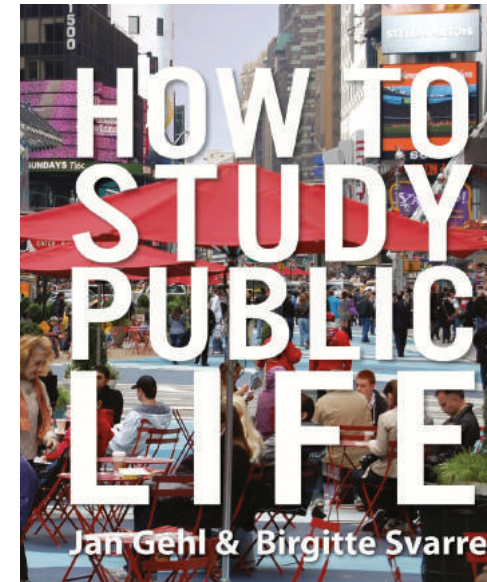
## PROJECT GOAL:

Community engagement and education



*How to Study Public Life*

by Jan Gehl & Birgitte Svarre



“Successful public life studies are built on engagement with communities: involving residents, businesses, workers, and visitors in the research process. It is through dialogue with local people that the insights and nuances of public life can be captured, and meaningful recommendations for improvements developed.”

“Public life is an important site for education, both informal and formal. Public spaces are a stage for learning about people, the city, and ourselves.”

# CASE STUDY 1 - THE BATTERY PLAYSCAPE



**NEXT STEPS:**

## Location:

New York City, United States

## Size of Project:

25 acres

## Ownership:

The Battery Conservancy

## Designer:

BKSK Architects/ Starr Whitehouse

This contemporary design promotes environmental and cultural awareness through sustainable and water-conscious features. The playscape is divided into five ecology zones: Bluff (with five granite slides), Riverbed and Marsh (with elevated tree houses, and sand/water play), and Dune and Meadow. The Battery Urban Farm engages visitors in sustainable farming techniques and urban agriculture's significance, showcasing historic public park's evolution.



# CASE STUDY 2 - DOWNTOWN CARY PARK



**Location:**

North Carolina, United States

**Size of Project:**

7 acres

**Ownership:**

Town of Cary

**Designer:**

OJB Landscape

The park boasts an elevated skywalk and botanical gardens for a bird's-eye view of the plants. Water features such as a spray-ground and dancing water add to the park's allure. There's a nature-based children's play area named "The Nest" and a dog-friendly "Bark Bar" and park with a fire pit. Over several years, public input and natural topography have been used to create the design, which includes four accessible slides.



# CASE STUDY 3 - MAGGIE DALEY PARK



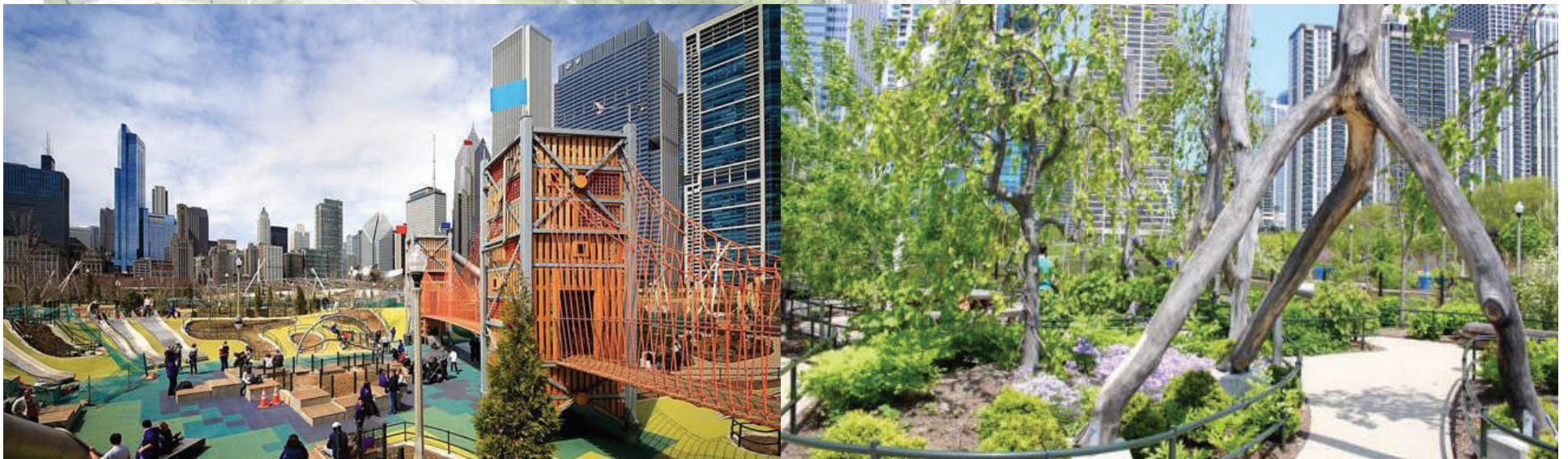
**Location:**  
Chicago Illinois

**Size of Project:**  
20 acres

**Ownership:**  
Chicago Park District

**Designer:**  
Michael Van Valkenburg Associates

Maggie Daley Park incorporates public feedback and key design principles to create a diverse and accessible space. It blends programmatic ambitions, offers a range of experiences, and features curvilinear pathways and seasonal plants. The park's redesign affects neighbouring areas while preserving the Cancer Survivors' Garden. It utilizes two axes—the park axis and the play axis—to provide varied landscape experiences and scenic views of the lake and city.



# GOALS & OBJECTIVES

## GOAL 1: HABITAT PROTECTION & MANAGEMENT

### OBJECTIVES & PROGRAMS



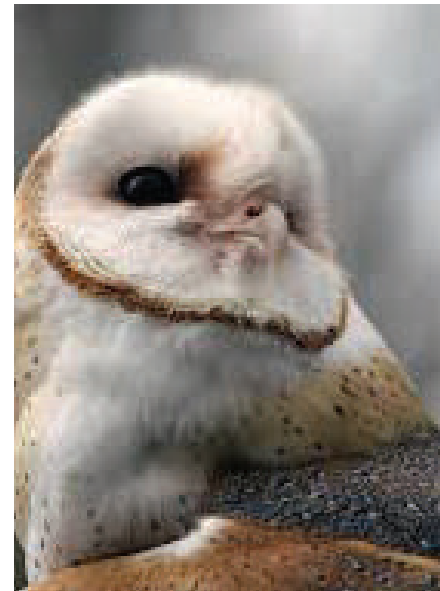
#### PRESERVE THE STREAMBED

- Be mindful of stream bank erosion & preserve riparian ecosystems - 2 acres
- Storm water and runoff capture



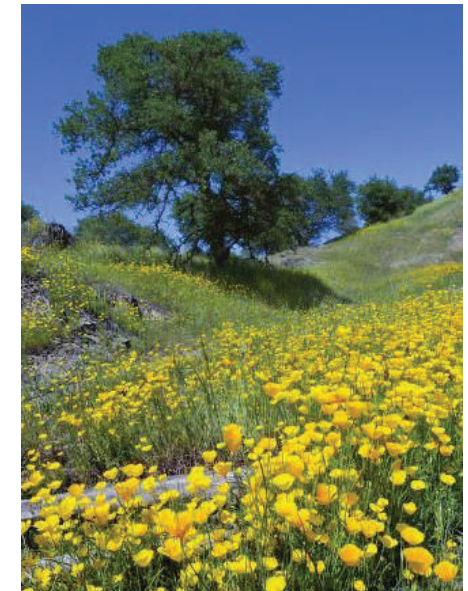
#### PROTECT FROM THREATS

- Identify fire fuel management zones & create defensible spaces
- Removal of invasive species
- Overall design intent should minimize the disruption of wildlife habitat



#### RESTORE & PRESERVE ECOSYSTEMS

- Planting design should benefit park restoration plans - 35 acres
- Categorize the different flora/fauna communities
- Identify areas for development and areas for preservation - 93 acres



#### ADD MORE CALIFORNIA NATIVES

- Incorporate suitable native plants for the various ecosystems - 20 acres
- Remove non-natives and invasive plants from current site

# GOALS / OBJECTIVES

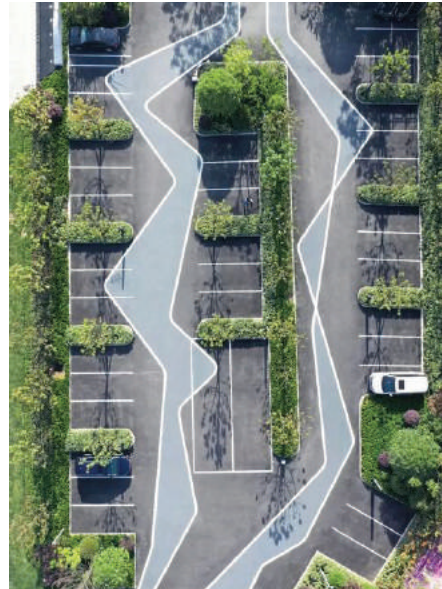
## GOAL 2: ACCESSIBILITY / UNIVERSAL & ADA

### OBJECTIVES & PROGRAMS



#### ENSURE EASY ACCESS FOR EVERYONE

- Easy to read signage at entrance, trail map and educational signage
- Bridges for easy crossing
- Park entrance visibility
- Separate pedestrian access



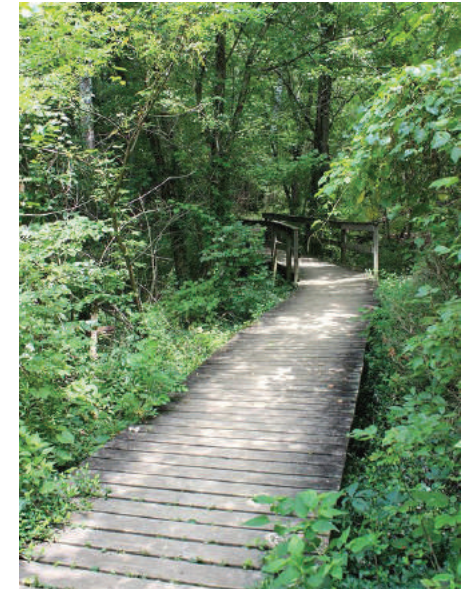
#### CREATE ADDITIONAL PARKING AREAS

- Parking lot in various locations - 0.45 acres
- Family vehicles and stroller parking lots in designated areas
- ADA parking adjacent to program areas - at least 6



#### INCREASE FACILITIES & WATER STATIONS

- Additional restroom and other facilities in various locations for easy access
- Water stations throughout the park
- Increase trash cans & add information kiosk



#### IMPROVE TRAILS TO BE ACCESSIBLE

- Hiking trail - 2.5 miles
- Easy stroller and wheelchair pathways and connections
- Easily accessible trails to all program areas



# GOAL 3: CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

## OBJECTIVES & PROGRAMS



### CREATE A PLAY AREA FOR TODDLERS

- Natural play equipment suitable for ages 2-4 yrs - 1200 sq ft
- Seating area for care-takers
- Stroller parking



### INSTALL A PLAYGROUND FOR AGES 5 & UP

- Play equipment for ages 5 and up - 2000 sq ft
- Easy to access & near restrooms & parking
- Sitting & eating area for caretakers and kids



### ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY ADA & UNIVERSAL

- Play equipment to have sensory experiences for all children
- All children's areas must include ADA equipment
- Enclosed areas to give safe feeling



### ESTABLISH AREAS FOR ART & CREATIVITY

- Arts and crafts area for mommy & me activities - 800 sq ft
- Art installations by local artists and schools

## GOAL 4: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & VISITOR EXPERIENCE

### OBJECTIVES & PROGRAMS



#### PROVIDE AMPLE SHADING

- Create shaded areas for respite throughout the park - 3000 sq ft
- Flexible space for art, education & yoga



#### IMPROVE PICNIC AREA & AMPHITHEATRE

- Larger and more versatile amphitheater - 0.18 acres
- Picnic areas - 2,000 sq ft



#### DETERMINE OPEN ACTIVITY SPACE

- Annual events like kite flying or 5k run
- Farmers market/ trade events
- Total open space - 0.38 acres



#### CREATE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES




- Information booth
- Educational signage throughout the park
- Nature walk and bird watching

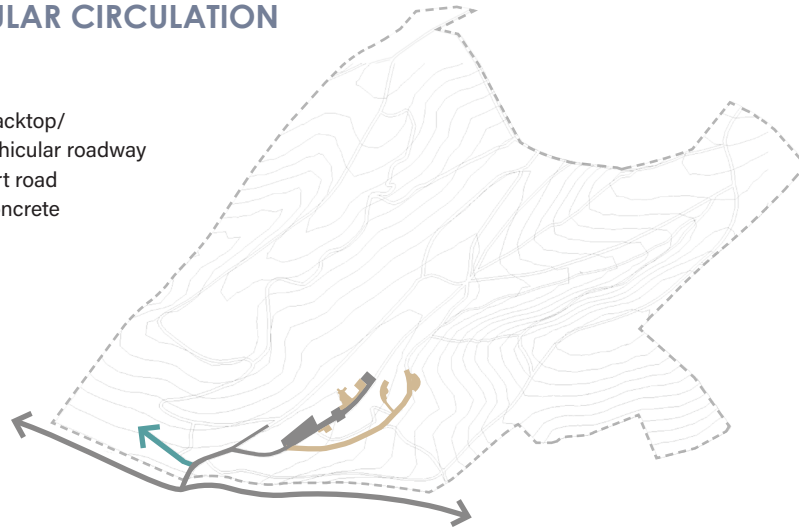
# SITE ANALYSIS

# SITE ANALYSIS

## HARDSCAPE & VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

### LEGEND




-  Blacktop/  
Vehicular roadway
-  Dirt road
-  Concrete



Due to the park's elevation, vehicles can only enter from the south end.

## DIRT TRAILS & ACCESS

### LEGEND

-  Dirt trails/  
Pedestrian walkway
-  Dirt parking lot
-  Access point

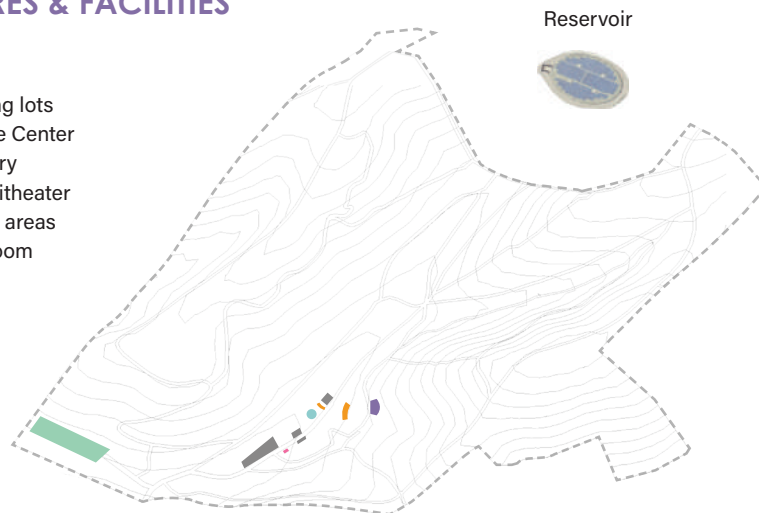


Natural dirt material for trails and parking w/ access point at south.

## STRUCTURES & FACILITIES

### LEGEND

-  Parking lots
-  Nature Center
-  Nursery
-  Amphitheater
-  Picnic areas
-  Restroom

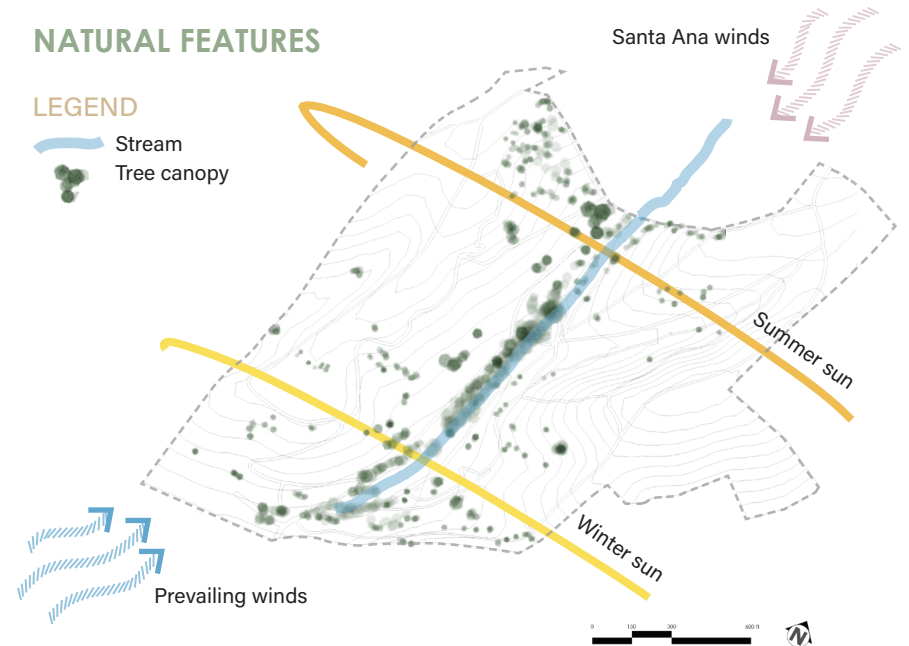


Built structures and facilities are located generally in one area of the park.

## NATURAL FEATURES

### LEGEND

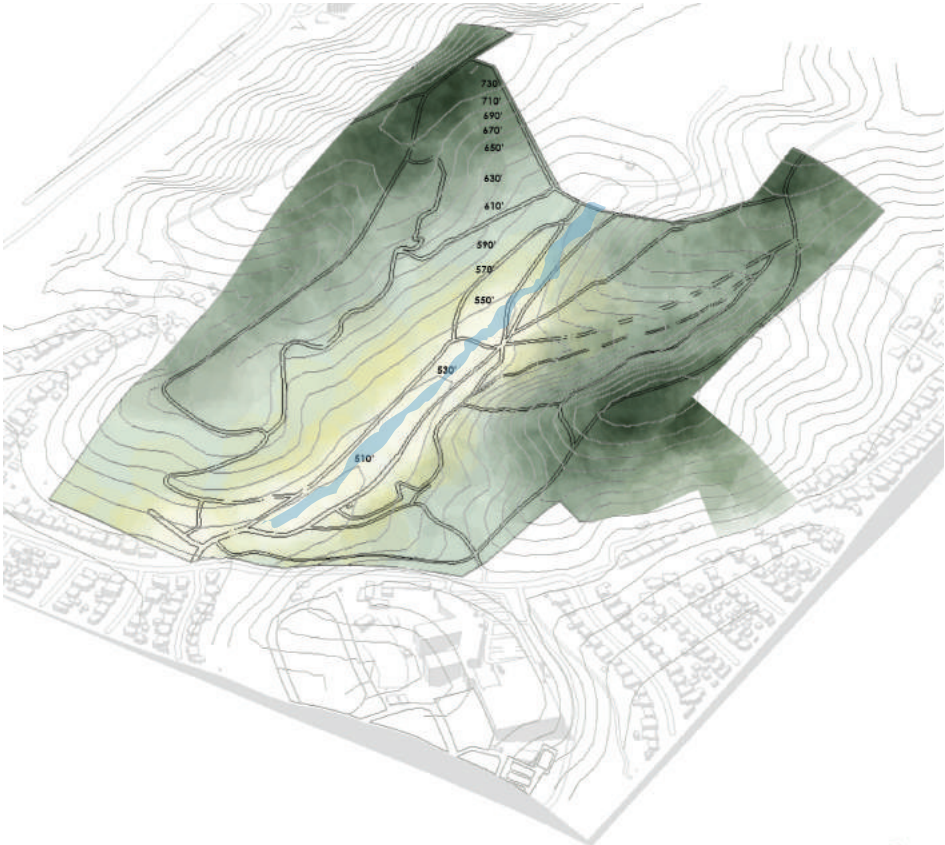
-  Stream
-  Tree canopy



Open space with stream at the valley with a lot of heat from sun.

# SITE ANALYSIS / TOPOGRAPHY

Ascot Hills Park's terrain comprises two north-south parallel ridges, located east and west of a central valley and seasonal stream. Elevation ranges from a low of 460 ft to a high of 755 ft above sea level. (source: Wilson and Willette) Although pedestrian access can be possible from other areas of the park, vehicular and ADA access outside of the current main entrance at the south of the park could be challenging.



# SITE ANALYSIS / EXISTING HABITAT COMMUNITIES



## LANDSCAPE HISTORY & ITS IMPACTS

Historical human activities have diminished species diversity in the park, but ongoing exploration reveals clues to these impacts and the survival of native species in less disturbed areas. Pioneering native species are gradually returning, especially since plowing was limited in 2007. However, some irreversible changes caused by the introduction of non-native species and alteration of landform will limit complete restoration to pre-human settlement conditions. Landscape development and fragmentation have impacted larger-scale resources and hinder the return of faunal species. Despite these challenges, understanding past landscape history guides realistic restoration goals (source: Schneider).

## LEGEND

- THE VALLEY GRASSLAND** (ideal location: **S & W**)  
The Valley Grassland association struggles to reverse the impact of introduced species, as open spaces between perennial bunch grasses enable the coexistence of both annual species and invasive weeds. Ongoing studies suggest that while restoring the grasslands to their original state may be impractical, establishing a stable community of native and non-native species can still provide viable habitat improvement. On warmer and drier southerly and westerly slopes, grassland is a viable option.
- BLACK WALNUT WOODLAND** (ideal location: **N & E**)  
Restoring densely canopied woodland stands in the Black Walnut Woodland association is feasible on northerly and easterly slopes. However, complete restoration of the understory may be impractical due to historical land use and grazing, resulting in species loss and incomplete records. Successful understory establishment depends on establishing the overhead canopy for shade and leaf litter, which are vital to the survival of understory plants.
- COASTAL SAGE SCRUB** (ideal location: **S & W**)  
The Coastal Sage Scrub association, despite being highly impacted and fragmented, can be significantly restored through active and ongoing management practices. To achieve success, restoration should begin with a manageable nucleus and gradually expand outward in phases. Controlling non-native annuals, which outcompete native seedlings for resources, is a crucial step in Coastal Sage Scrub restoration. Sustained weed control efforts are necessary until native species reach maturity in the restored areas. On warmer and drier southerly and westerly slopes, Coastal Sage Scrub is a viable option.
- RIPARIAN**  
Restoring the existing stream in the valley, which differs from its original state, is challenging due to its limited watershed tributary. Leakage from upstream water infrastructure sustains the stream, making it unlikely to support more than a temporary watercourse. Restoration goals should aim to establish a riparian community associated with a perennial stream in the park's northern portion and a perennial subsurface or high water table in the southern portion. It is crucial to evaluate and address the presence of non-native species, implementing removal and replacement plans as needed.

# SITE ANALYSIS / EXISTING FLORA & FAUNA

Ascot Hills Park is enjoyed by many kinds of land and sky species. On any given day, visitors can find creatures, such as the Red Tailed Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Barn Owl, Great Horn Owls, Coyotes, Cottontail Rabbits, and possibly Bobcats, to name a few.

It is almost guaranteed that one will see butterflies whenever they visit this nature park.



# SITE ANALYSIS / WATER UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY



Ascot Hills Park

The history and role of the site in water supply have evolved over time, reflecting shifts in both technology and urban demand. During the rancho era, the upper valley harbored a modest reservoir, collecting runoff and potential spring flows. By 1910, the Los Angeles City Water System saw an opportunity in this landscape, erecting an earthen dam in the upper valley to meet the water needs of burgeoning urban locales. Supporting this endeavor, ancillary structures, including a pumping station, chlorination facilities, and a residence for a caretaker, were developed. This dam, constructed primarily with mule-driven soil compaction, fell short of contemporary seismic safety standards by the 1970s, leading to its decommission. By the 1980s, an innovative approach led to the construction of a large steel tank at the reservoir site, camouflaged by the surrounding earth, leaving only its roof visible. Vegetative efforts, primarily using native species like the California Buckwheat, were employed for erosion control. However,

the presence of several non-native trees and shrubs, introduced over time by LADWP staff, remains evident.

The Metropolitan Water District (MWD) further bolstered the site's significance by embedding main trunk lines that relay water from the Colorado River Aqueduct across the LADWP property. Distinct pipelines, namely the Palos Verde Feeder and the Garvey-Ascot Feeder, crisscross the region, with their trajectories illustrated in Figure 3. Various architectural signatures of these pipelines, from access shafts to vent systems, punctuate the landscape, safeguarded by security measures like chain-link fences.

LADWP also leveraged the southern valley stretch for training, using modular structures for educating their heavy machinery operators. Early park development visions toyed with the idea of repurposing these structures into potential park facilities. However, bureaucratic roadblocks deterred

this trajectory, culminating in their eventual demolition during a subsequent phase of park development. Vestiges of LADWP's training imprint, such as excavations at the east hillside, now enhance the park's character, with features like an amphitheater.

Echoes from the past linger across the park. Utility poles, once functional, now serve aesthetic purposes, forming retaining walls or encircling picnic spots. Relics of bygone structures, from concrete foundations to remnants of potential warehouses, pepper the landscape. One intriguing sight is a concrete debris field at the west ridge's southern draw, remnants from past infrastructural undertakings left undisturbed due to the monumental effort required for removal. (source: Schneider, Jerry. *AHP Framework Plan*. 2023.)



# SITE ANALYSIS / FIRE FUEL MANAGEMENT STUDY



Ascot Hills Park

In the AHP Framework Plan on Fire Fuel Management, the plan underscores the paramountcy of aligning with Fire Department standards, emphasizing the demarcation and maintenance of fire-fuel zones. These designated areas are pivotal for safeguarding structures by establishing defensible perimeters and ensuring unobstructed access for emergency vehicles. The guideline stipulates a 200-foot radius from any habitable structures for fire mitigation. This involves systematic clearing, mowing, and strategic pruning of indigenous flora.

Emergency vehicle paths also warrant attention. They mandate at least a 10-foot clearance on each side. Notably, the Fire Department has occasionally demanded broader clearances, especially on critical routes like the western ridge, adjusting the breadth from 50 feet in 2008 to 20 feet in 2010.

Addressing vegetation encroachment, the manual pre-

scribes a mix of chemical treatments and mechanical interventions. Commonly, herbicides like glyphosate variants (e.g., Roundup) are employed, typically applied manually post the germination phase in winters. Yet, challenges arise with persistent species like the Russian Thistle and Tocolote, requiring concerted measures documented in subsequent sections about invasive plant management.

Historically, mechanical means, notably 'disking' using tractors, were favored. However, due to its documented ecological repercussions, the technique's use became more restrained over time, focusing mainly on road-adjacent areas. Disking's drawbacks, such as narrowing access routes and creating unstable road shoulders, initiated discussions on potential alternatives like hammer knife mowers, though their deployment remains sporadic.

Given these insights, the framework plan advises a cautious approach to diskings, urging a transition to alternatives

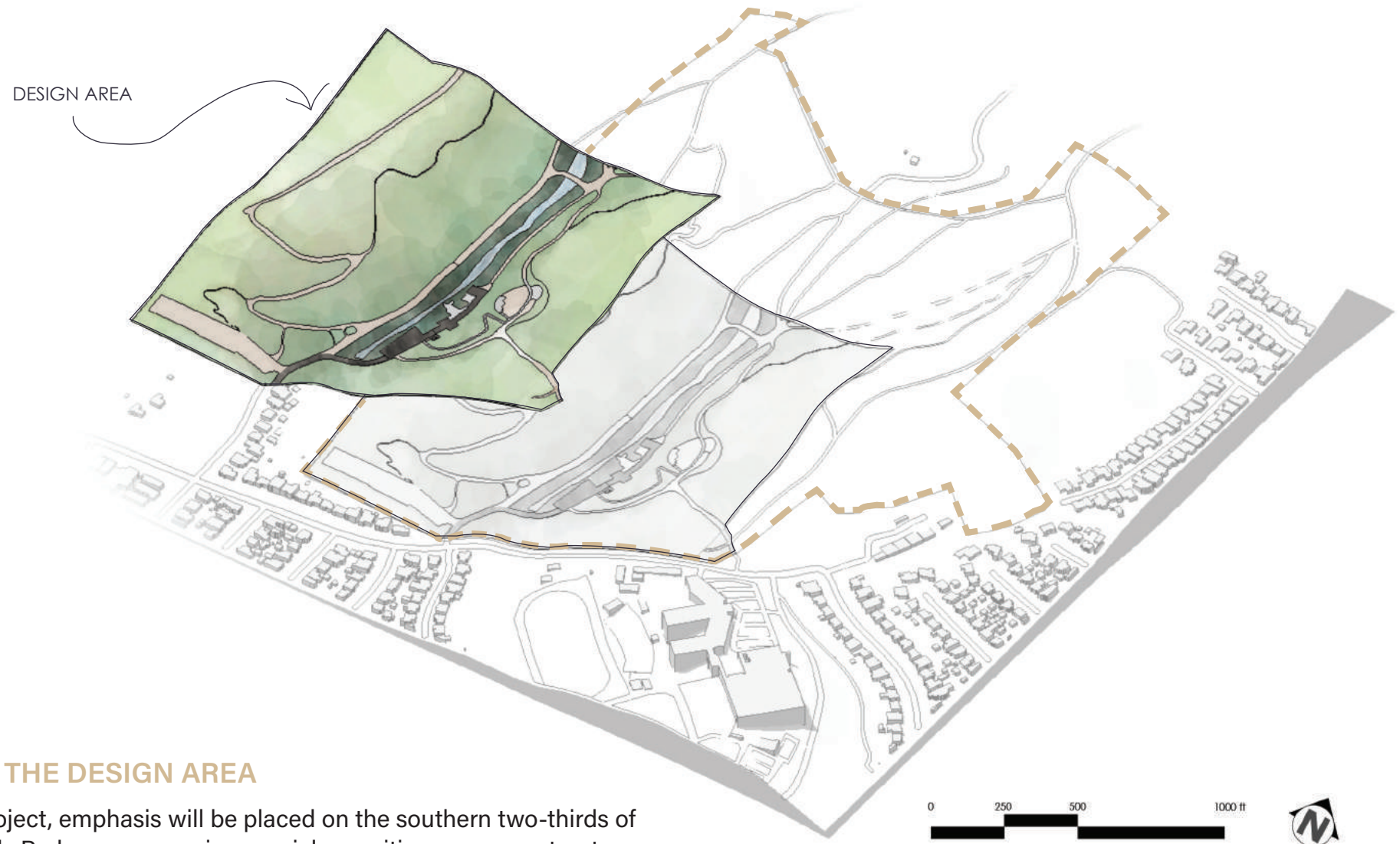
like the aforementioned mowers or weed whips. The latter, effective on sloping terrains, is deployed post the growth phase of annual weeds, mitigating regrowth. However, environmental variables, like unanticipated rains, might necessitate additional interventions.

A significant merit of weed whipping lies in its precision, allowing for the conservation of native species, ultimately fostering a balanced ecosystem. The guidelines also underscore the importance of judicious pruning, ensuring safe spaces between plants to curtail potential fire hazards while bolstering the park's aesthetic.

In summation, the manuscript accentuates the vital role of adhering to Fire Department mandates, advocating for thoughtful vegetation management that both safeguards and preserves the park's ecological richness.

(source: Schneider, Jerry. *AHP Framework Plan*. 2023.)

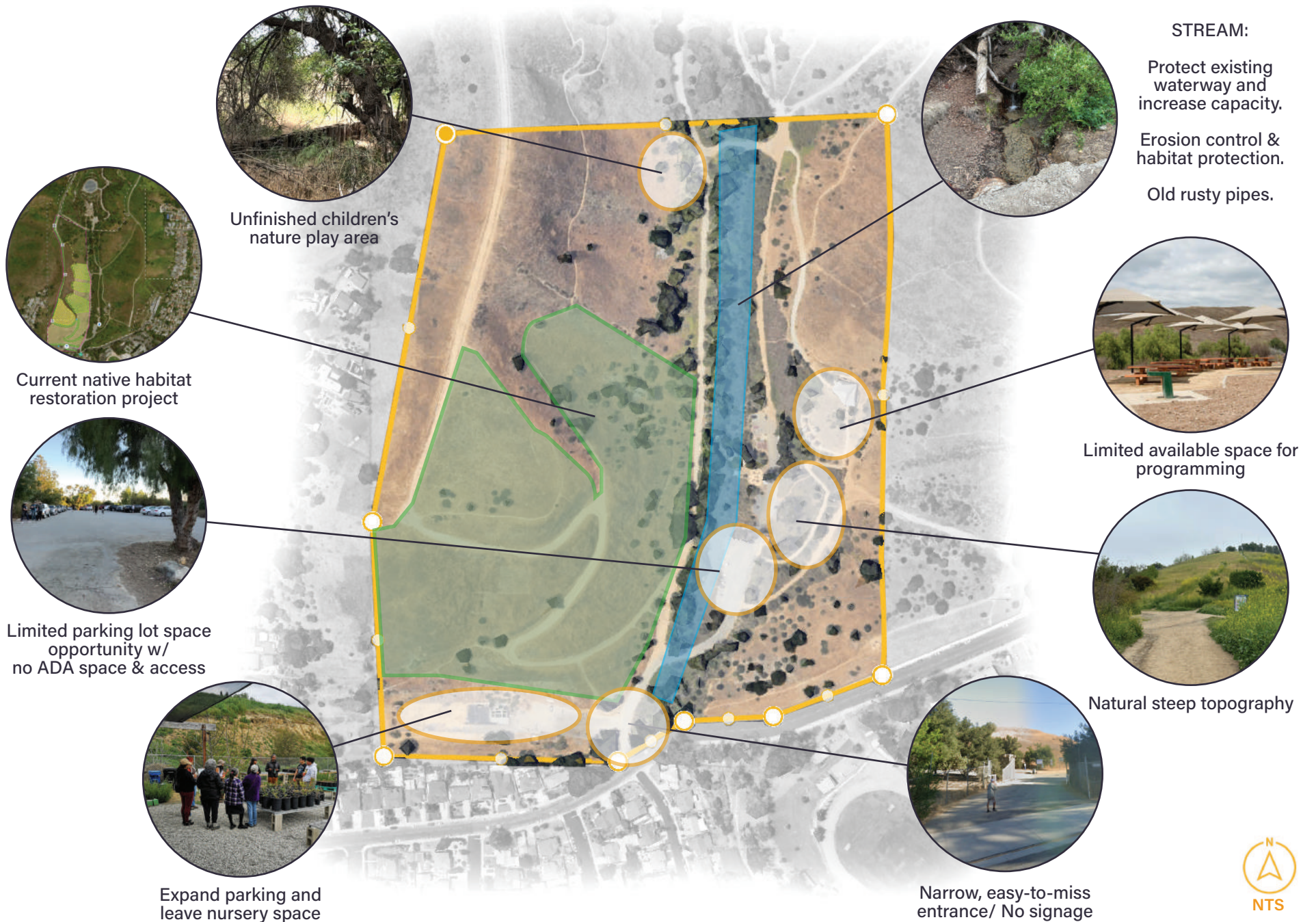
# THE PROJECT SITE



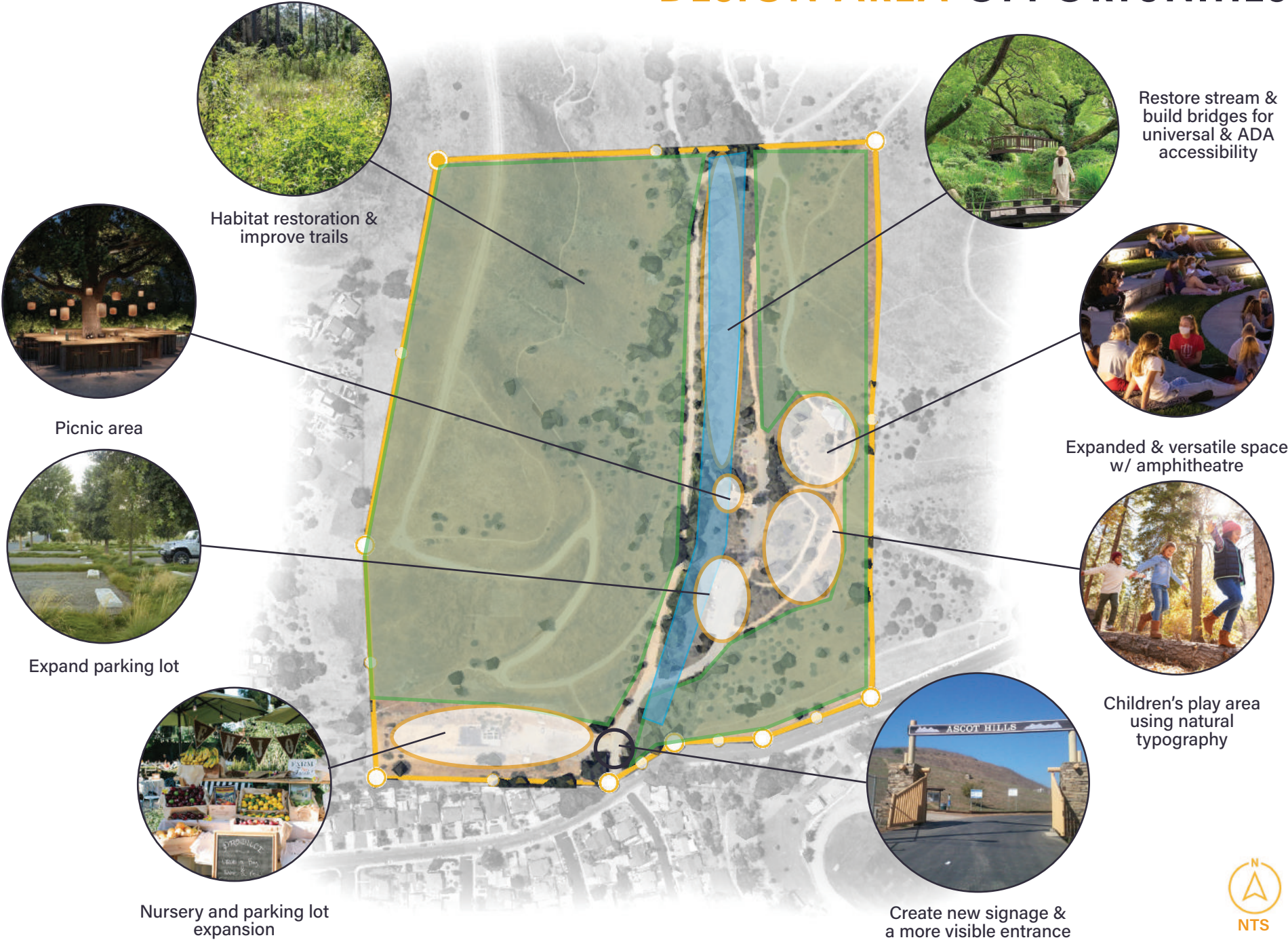
## ABOUT THE DESIGN AREA

In this project, emphasis will be placed on the southern two-thirds of Ascot Hills Park, encompassing crucial amenities, program structures, the primary entrance, parking facilities, and the extant nursery. The bulk of the vegetated terrain will remain unaltered, both within and beyond the design scope, with a deliberate intent to safeguard and foster the flourishing of diverse habitat communities.

# DESIGN AREA CONSTRAINTS



# DESIGN AREA OPPORTUNITIES

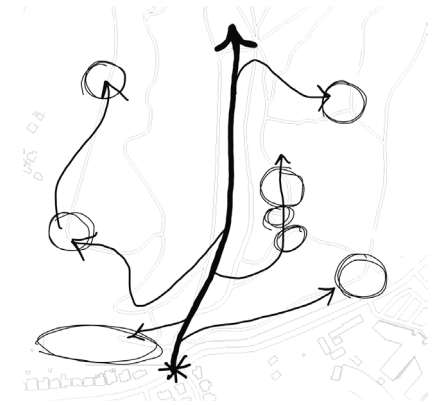
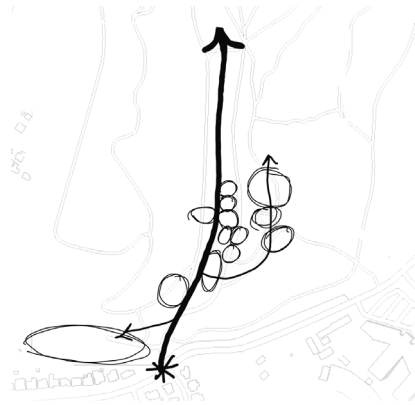


# DESIGN METAPHOR & CONCEPTS

# THE BUTTERFLY

Butterflies are a captivating symbol of interconnectedness, conservation, and resilience. Despite facing challenges like habitat loss and climate change, they remain a vital pollinator and hold cultural and spiritual significance. Observing this beautiful creature sparks wonder and invites us to delve into its fascinating story.

# DESIGN METAPHOR + CONCEPTS

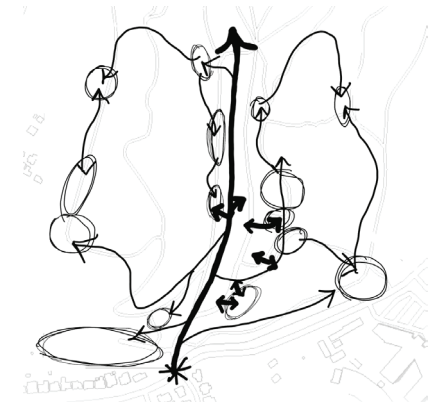
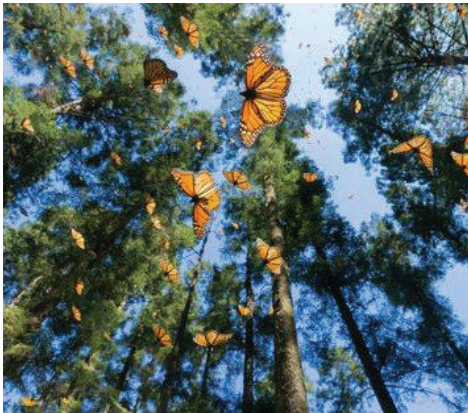


## CONCEPT 1 PUDDLING

"Puddling" is a fascinating behavior observed in butterflies, where they seek nutrients and replenish fluids beyond their usual source of flower nectar. While these insects primarily rely on nectar for nutrition, puddling offers an additional means to acquire essential nutrients.

## CONCEPT 2 HILLTOPPING

"Hilltopping" is a butterfly behavior of concentrating or patrolling around mountain summits or ridges. While males are more inclined to engage in this "King of the Mountain" behavior, females also seek out these elevated areas for mating purposes.



## CONCEPT 3 MIGRATE

Butterflies often undergo long-distance dispersal, relocating from one area to another to enhance their reproductive and feeding opportunities. In certain cases, individuals undertake round-trip journeys. However, for most butterflies, "migration" is unidirectional, occurring only in one direction.

## CONCEPT 4 BASK

Butterflies engage in basking, which involves sun-bathing to raise the temperature in their wing muscles, enabling them to take flight. They achieve optimal flight conditions between 24°C and 32°C, allowing them to maintain wing warmth without pausing.



HILLTOP



BASK

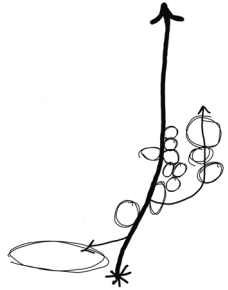


PUDDLE



MIGRATE

# CONCEPT 1 / PUDDLING



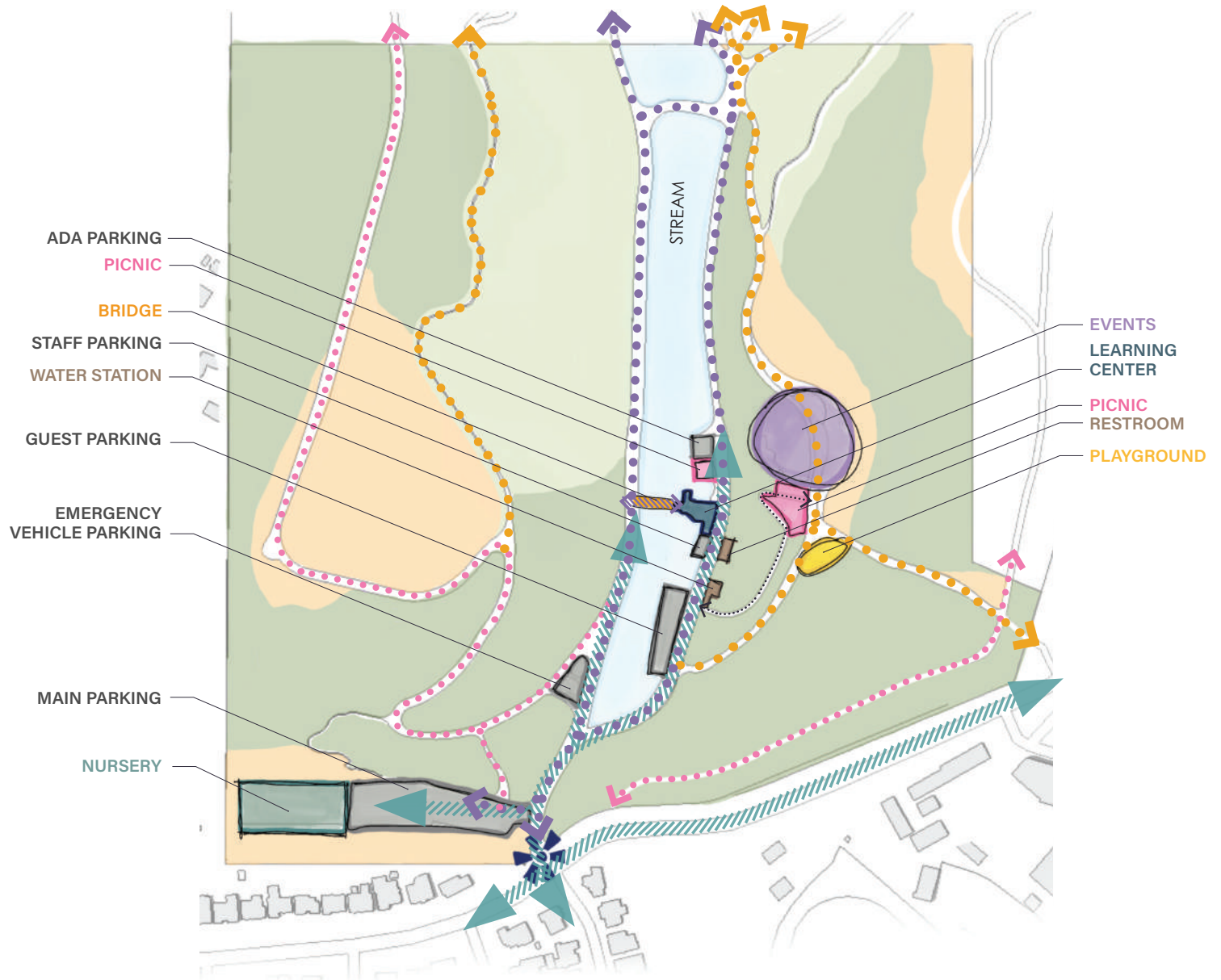
## PROS

Users would have an easy way of finding programs.

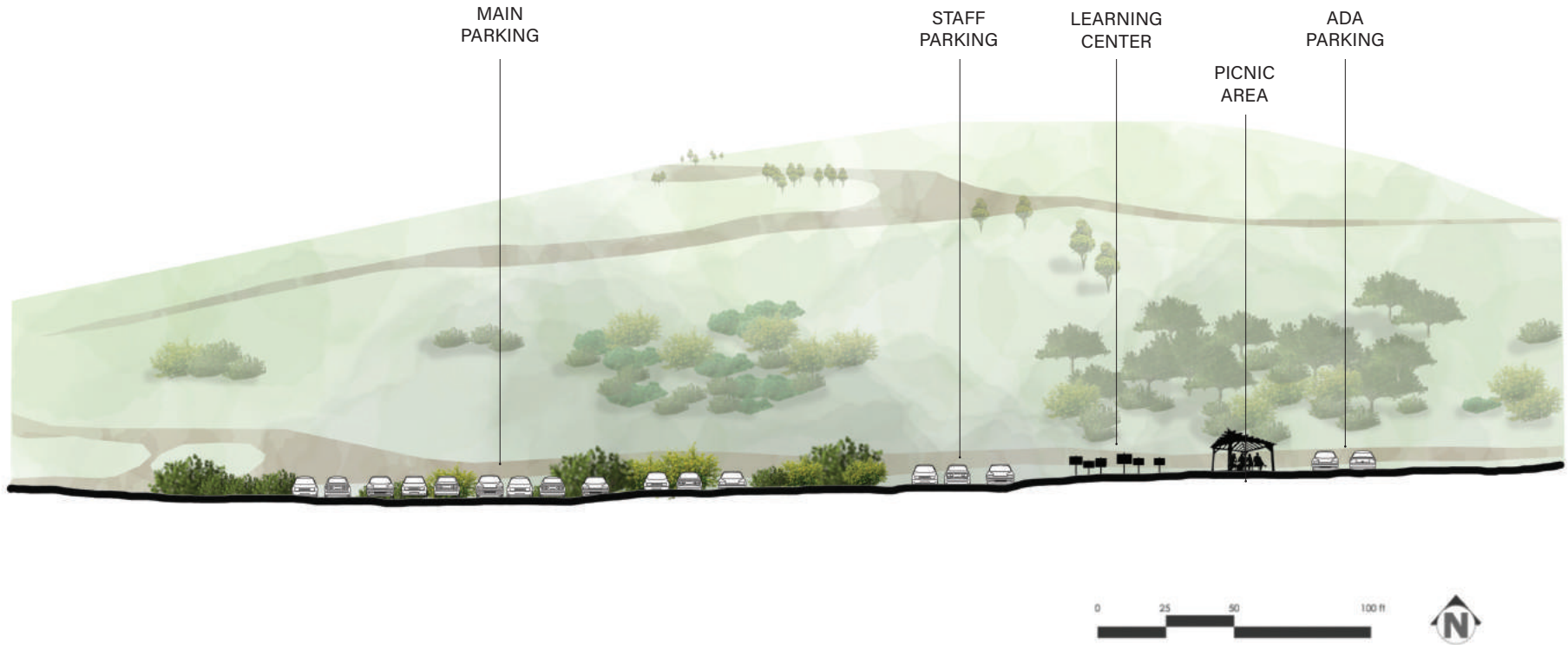
Most of the park would be untouched with programs and events, keeping it pristine.

## CONS

Users are limited to exploration of the park, unless they are hiking. This would be especially difficult for strollers and ADA accessibility.



# CONCEPT 1 / PUDDLING



## INSPIRATION

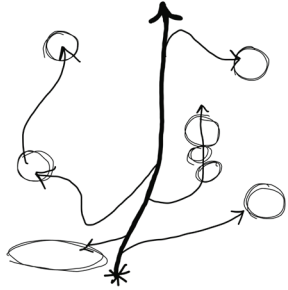


Parking lots to be structurally organized with safe access to walkways.

Learning Center with hands on experience for developmental growth.

Nicely shaded picnic and rest areas.

# CONCEPT 2 / HILLTOPPING



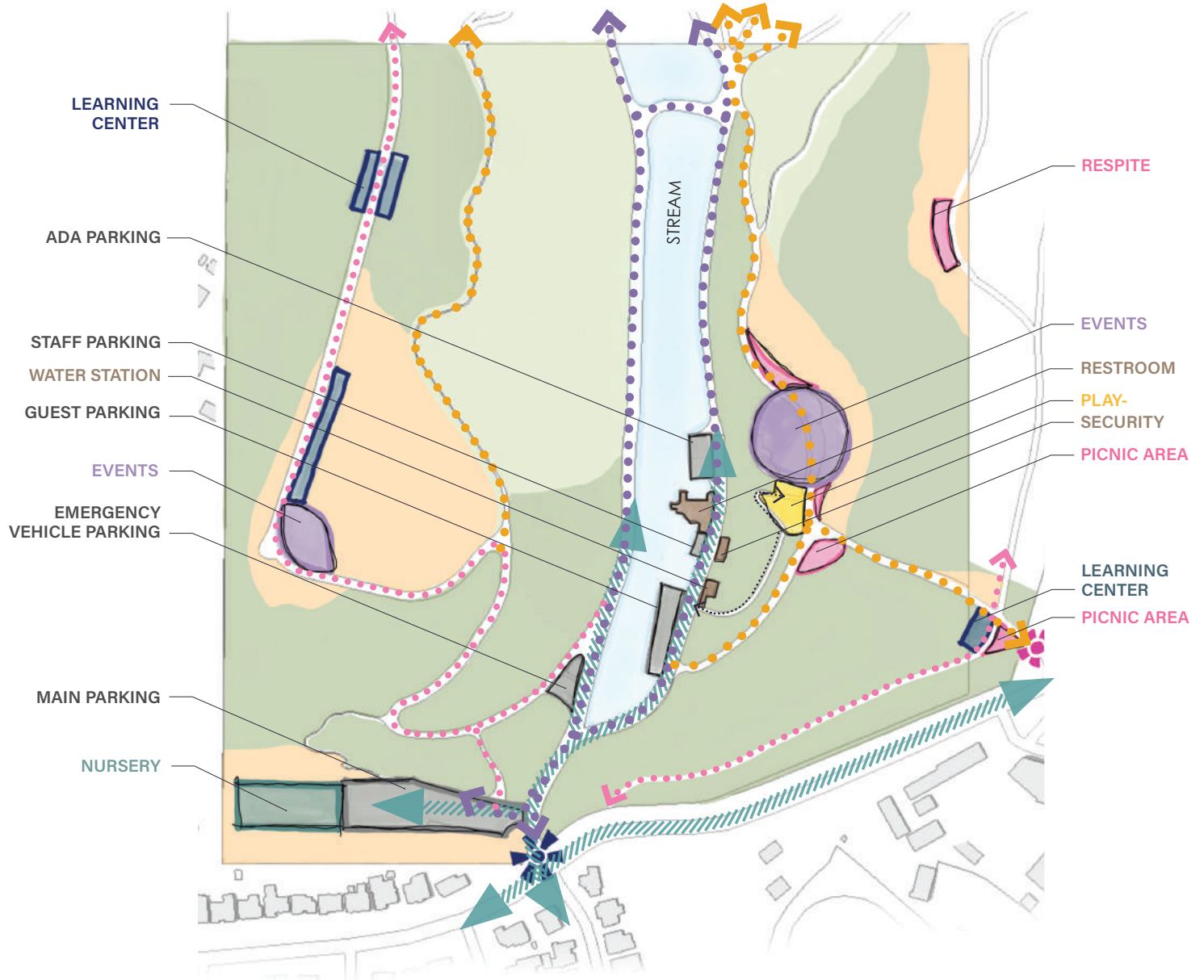
## PROS

Users can enjoy the magnificent views of the park by finding respite and educational opportunities on top of the hills.

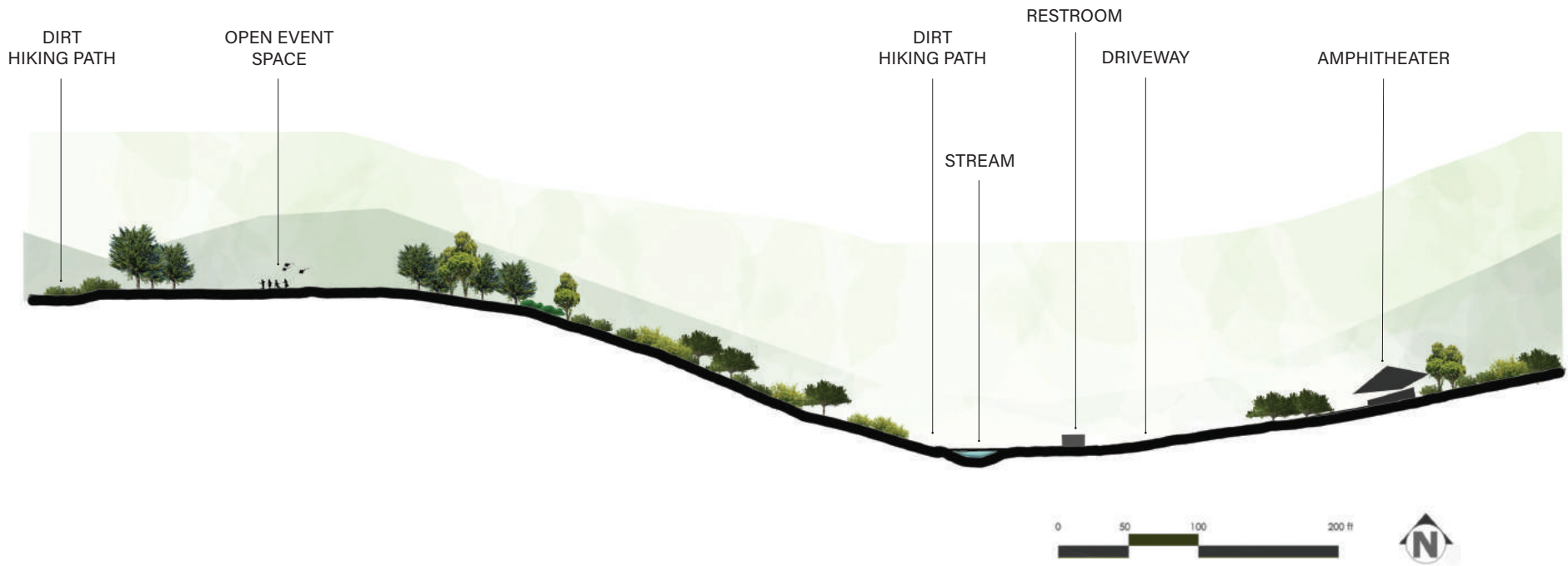
Unique experience that is rare Los Angeles, and truly creates a destination.

## CONS

Hilltop may be difficult for many visitors of the park, thus, not totally equitable.



# CONCEPT 2 / HILLTOPPING



## INSPIRATION



Hilltop event space that makes you feel you're on top of the world.

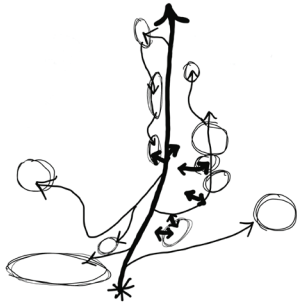


Secret areas along the dirt path for respite and fun.



Beautiful restrooms and wash stations.

# CONCEPT 3 / MIGRATE



## PROS

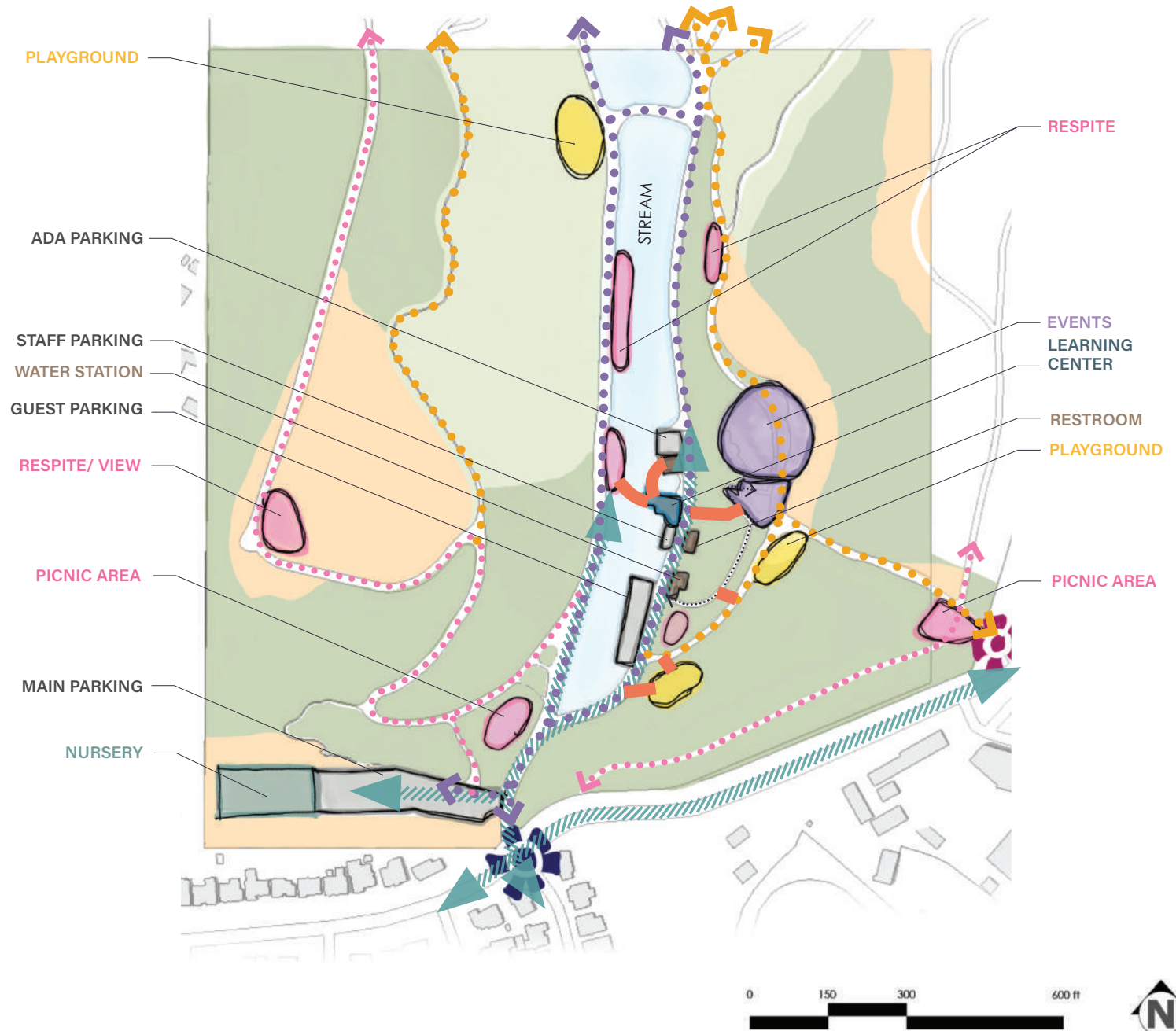
Pathways and bridges connect the park making it an experience throughout.

Users can find their "place" and explore new experiences.

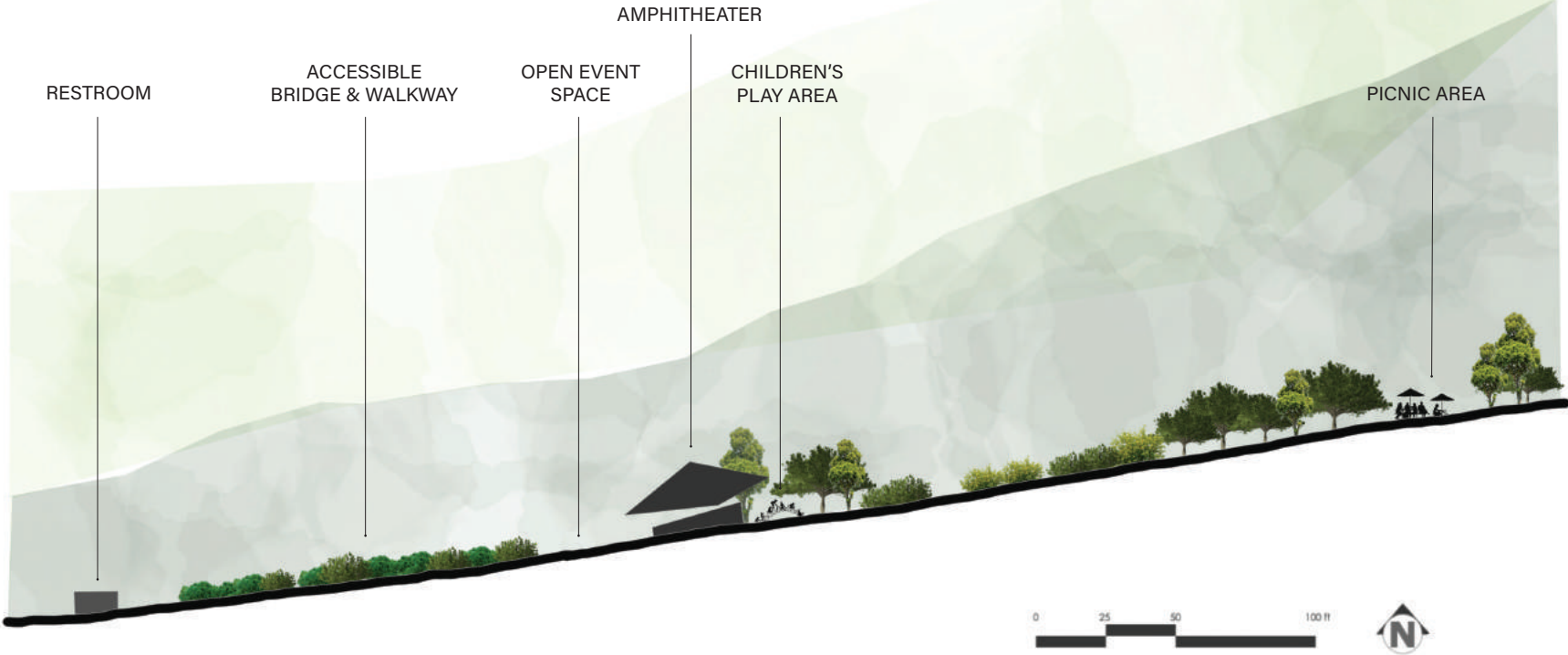
## CONS

Some visitors may not get to fully experience all that the site has to offer.

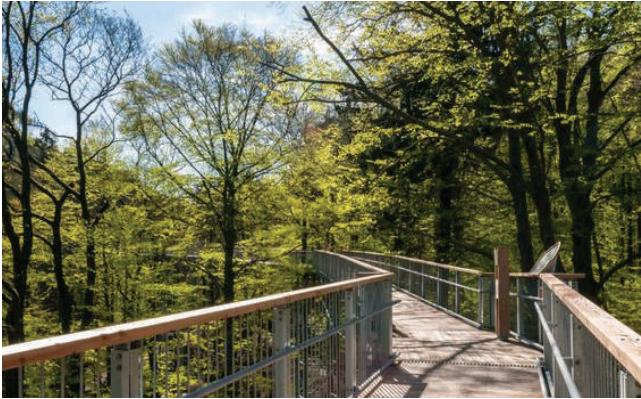
Groups may find themselves separated instead of together.



# CONCEPT 3 / MIGRATE



## INSPIRATION



Walkway to get to the top event area that is also ADA compliant.

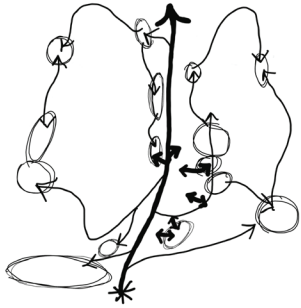


Play area that blends with nature.



Well shaded amphitheater.

# CONCEPT 4 / BASK



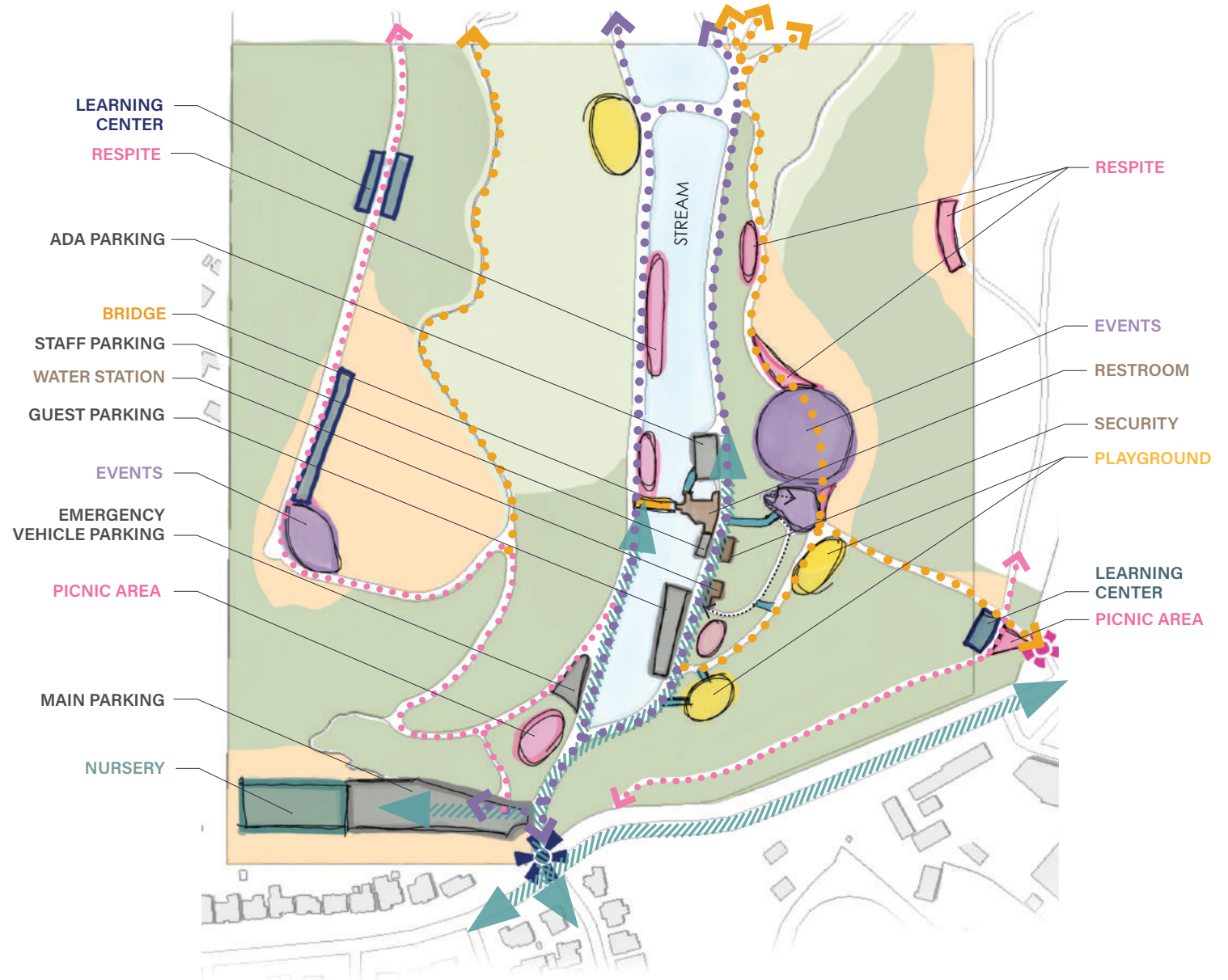
## PROS

There are many types of programs offered throughout the park which may make it interesting every visit.

Visitors may find unique healing in a variety of ways, keeping each visit exciting every time.

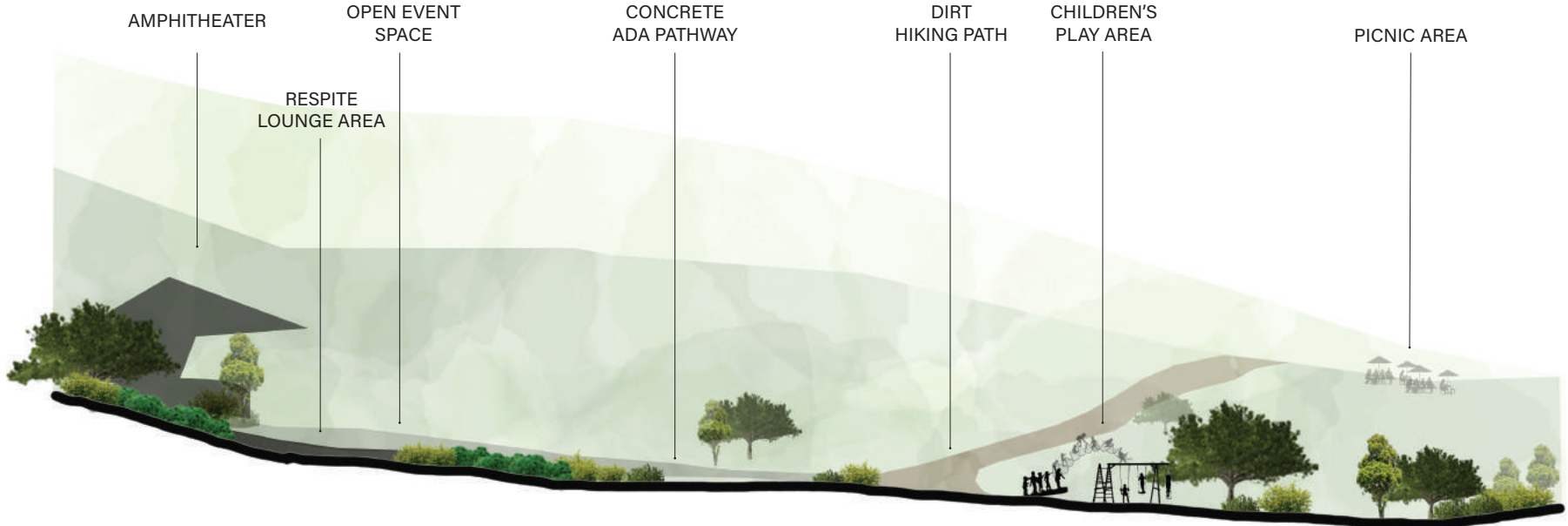
## CONS

No longer a nature park, but can easily be destroyed due to multiple programming.





# CONCEPT 4 / BASK



## INSPIRATION



An area to enjoy, relax and bask in the sun.



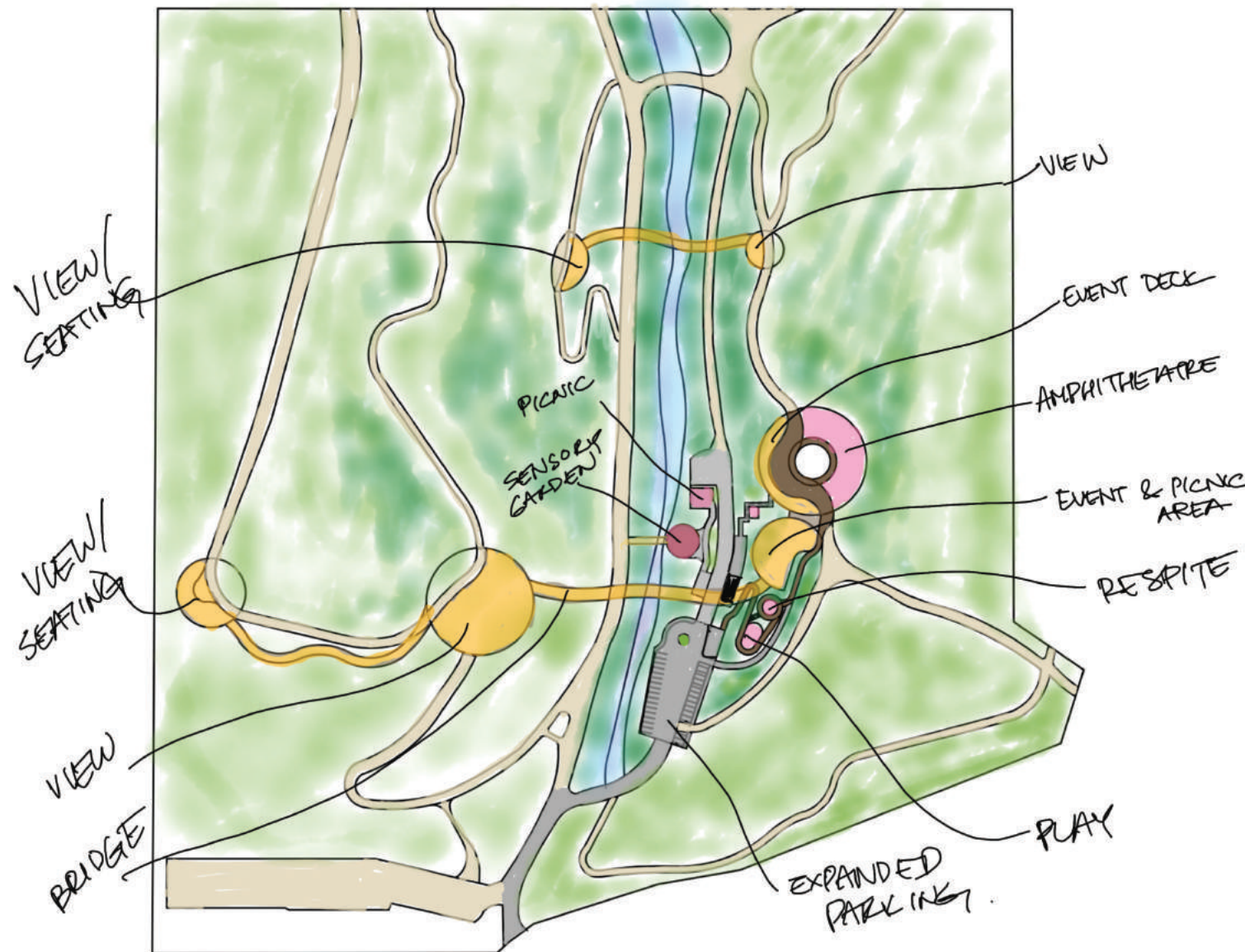
Utilize the current concrete to create beautiful and accessible spaces.



Creative structures for children that blends in with nature.

# CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

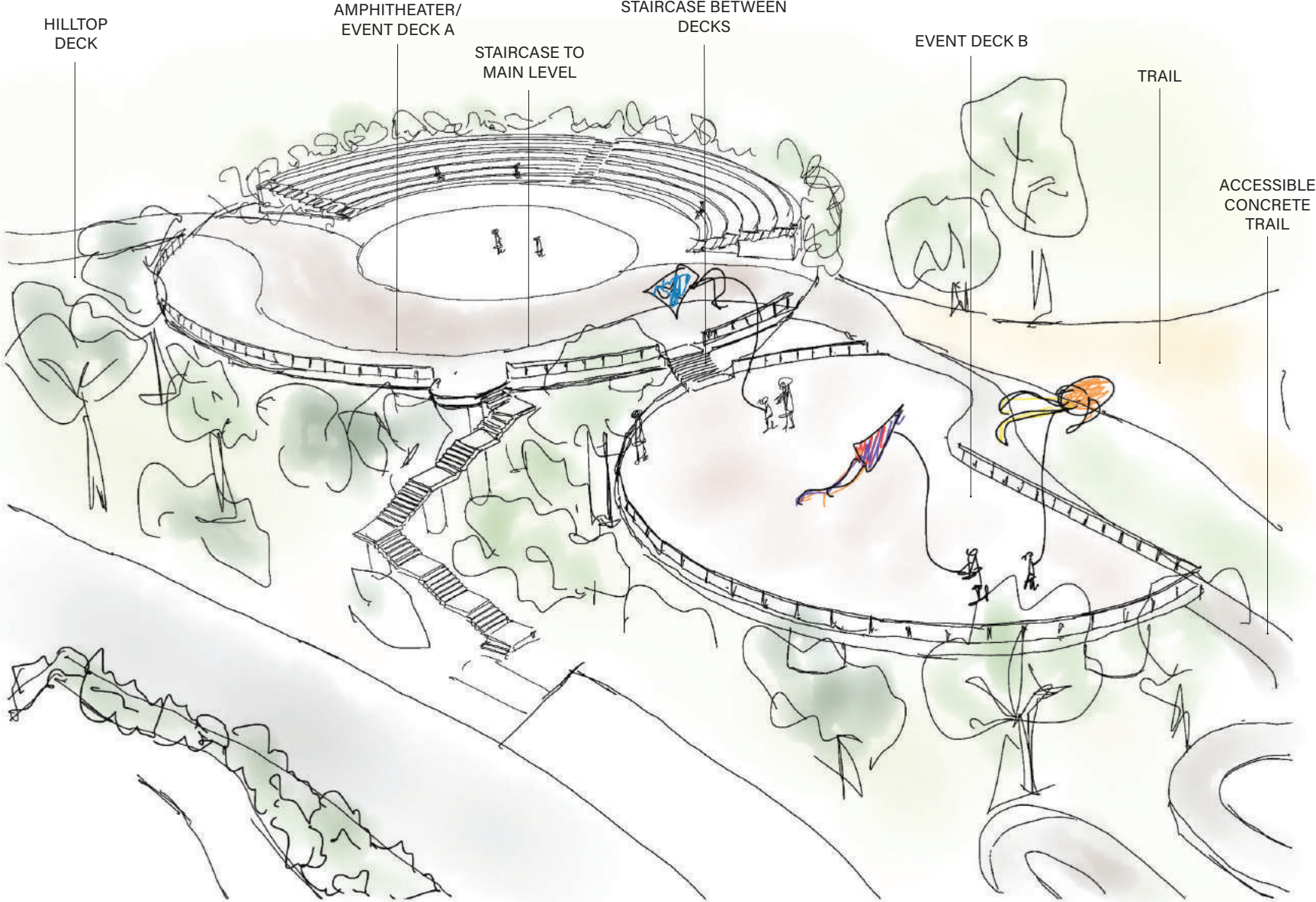
## COMBINATION OF ALL 4 CONCEPTS



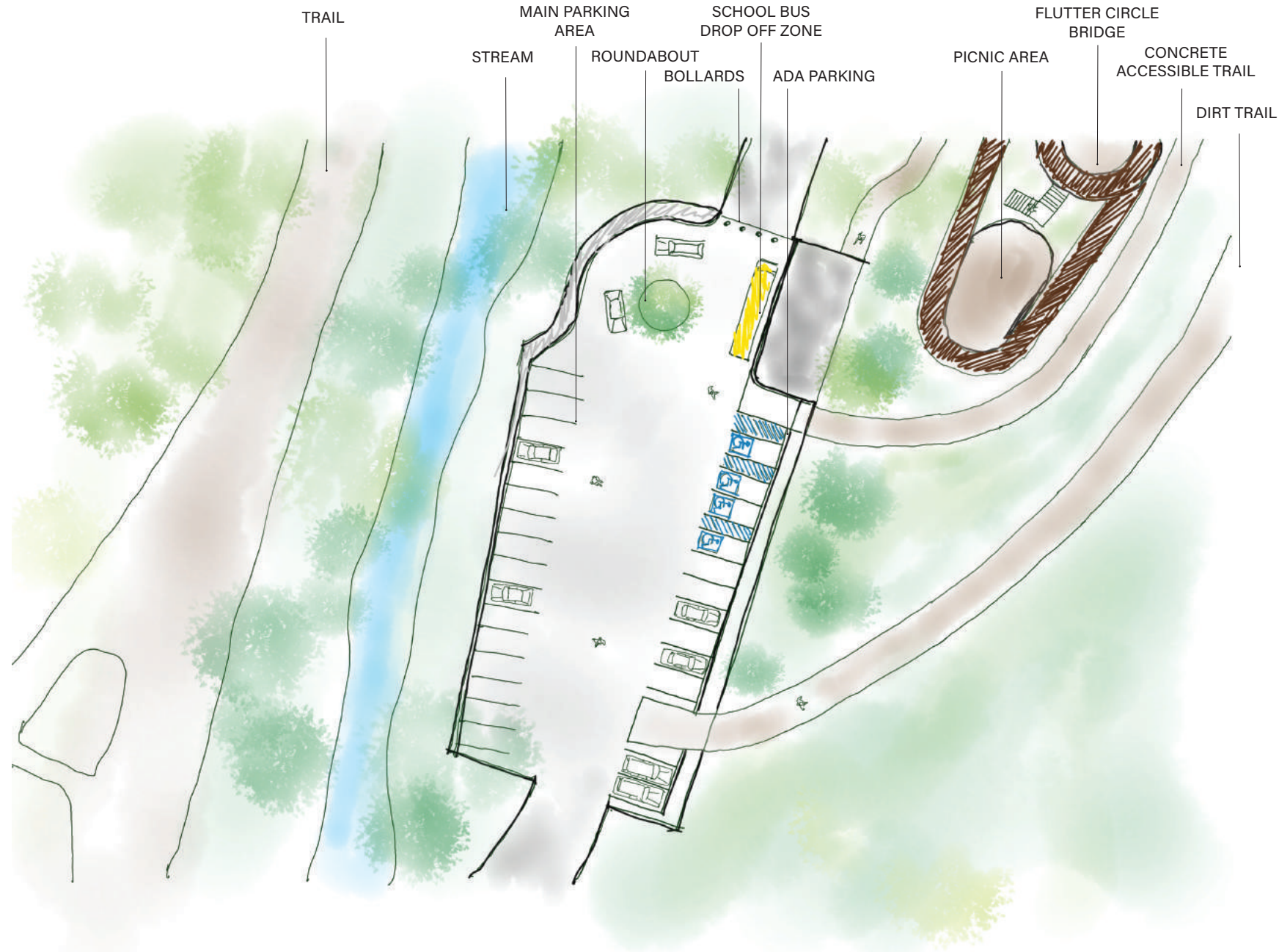
Goals & problems to solve:

1. larger tent set up area for trade events
2. student gathering area
3. ADA trail to event space and views
4. kids play area near restroom
5. ADA parking connection to trail
6. nursery - no rest area for volunteers & no amenities
7. protect & respect habitat areas
8. more parking
9. shading
10. lighting (solar)

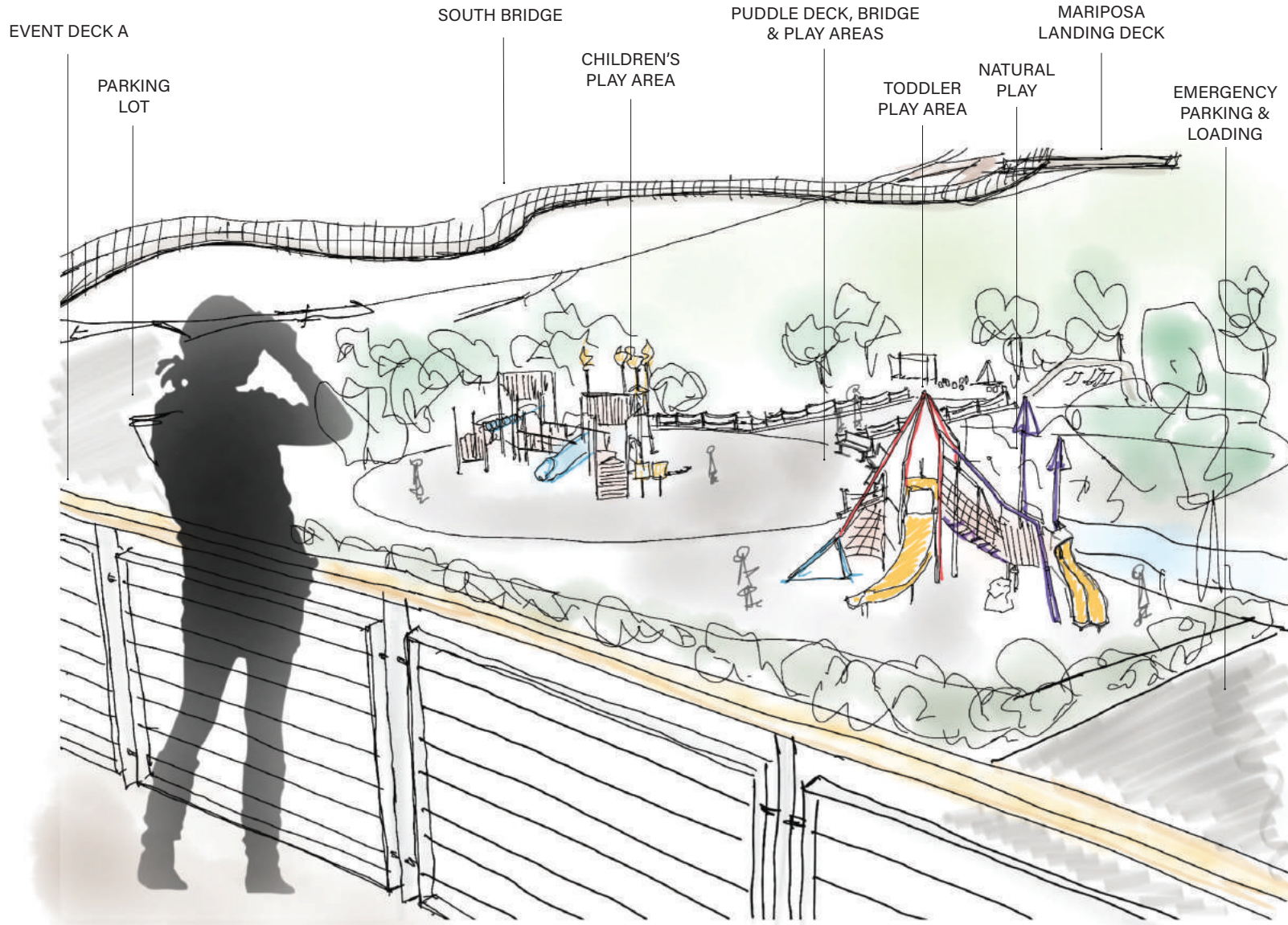
# SKETCH 1 - TWO DECKS



# SKETCH 2 - PARKING LOT



# SKETCH - TOP DOWN VIEW



# FINAL DESIGN

# MASTER PLAN



SPRING AZURE DECK

NORTH BRIDGE  
CLOUDLESS DECK

PICNIC AREA  
PUDDLE PLAYGROUND & BRIDGE

FLUTTER BRIDGE

EMERGENCY PARKING & LOADING AREA

AMPHITHEATER/ EVENT DECK A

CONNECTING STAIRCASE

EVENT DECK B

CIRCLE DECK & PICNIC AREA

RESTROOMS

MAIN PARKING LOT W/ ROUNDABOUT

PICNIC AREA

PEDESTRIAN ENTRANCE

MAIN ENTRANCE

SOUTH BRIDGE

MONARCH DECK

ADA ACCESSIBLE SKY BRIDGE

HILLTOP DECK

OVERFLOW & NURSERY PARKING

EXISTING NURSERY

# MAIN ENTRANCE



The MAIN ENTRANCE is no longer hidden, and can be viewed easily with a brand new signage that is visible and placed next to the entryway.



# MAIN PARKING LOT



The MAIN PARKING LOT is widened with more handicap parking and direct, easy access to three trails that lead to the main event area. Children's playground and the main trail entrance are located at the north end of the lot. The roundabout makes it easy for pick ups & drop offs and the lot is now big enough to accommodate school buses for field trips. Information booth and a larger restroom also nearby.



# AMPHITHEATER & EVENT DECKS



## LEGEND

- |   |              |   |                        |
|---|--------------|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Event Deck A | 4 | Circle Bridge & Picnic |
| 2 | Amphitheater | 5 | South Bridge           |
| 3 | Event Deck B | 6 | Restroom               |



KEYMAP

The Amphitheater and Event Decks on this enlargement shows how 10x10 pop up tents can be placed with ample space left for entertainment. You can see that there are now 6 ways to get to the amphitheater, from all sides of the park.

# THREE TRAILS TO MAIN EVENT DECKS



## LEGEND

- |   |               |   |                               |
|---|---------------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Event Deck B  | 4 | New Wood Trail (ADA)          |
| 2 | Circle Bridge | 5 | Existing Concrete Trail (ADA) |
| 3 | Picnic Area   | 6 | Existing Dirt Trail           |

0 10 20 40 ft



KEYMAP

This enlargement of the Circle Deck and picnic area shows a view of the three trails - wooden, concrete and dirt that lead up to the main area. The wood and concrete pathways are both ADA accessible, with tree canopy providing shade.

# TRAIL TO AMPHITHEATER AREA

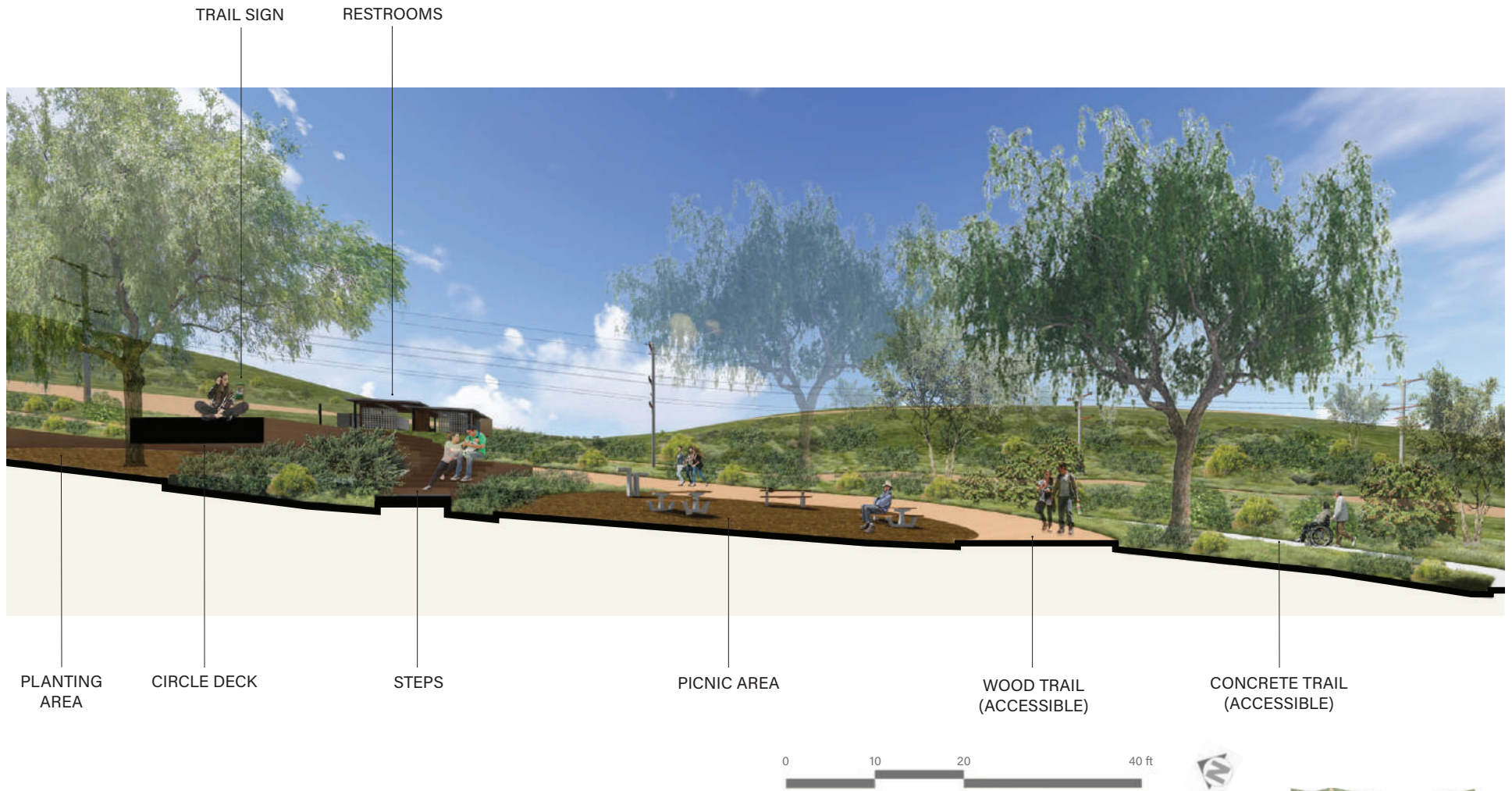


Here is a perspective view of the 3 trails leading to the amphitheater and event decks.



KEYMAP

# SECTION ELEVATION / CIRCLE DECK & PICNIC



And a section elevation where you can see location of an added restrooms close to the main event areas, as well as the three trails with the wood and concrete pathways being ADA accessible.

# AMPHITHEATER & DECK A



This is a view looking south from the Amphitheater & Deck A which shows the South Bridge and the Monarch Deck with an orange shading structure. One can look down to the playground area, as well as the stream.



KEYMAP

# FLUTTER BRIDGE



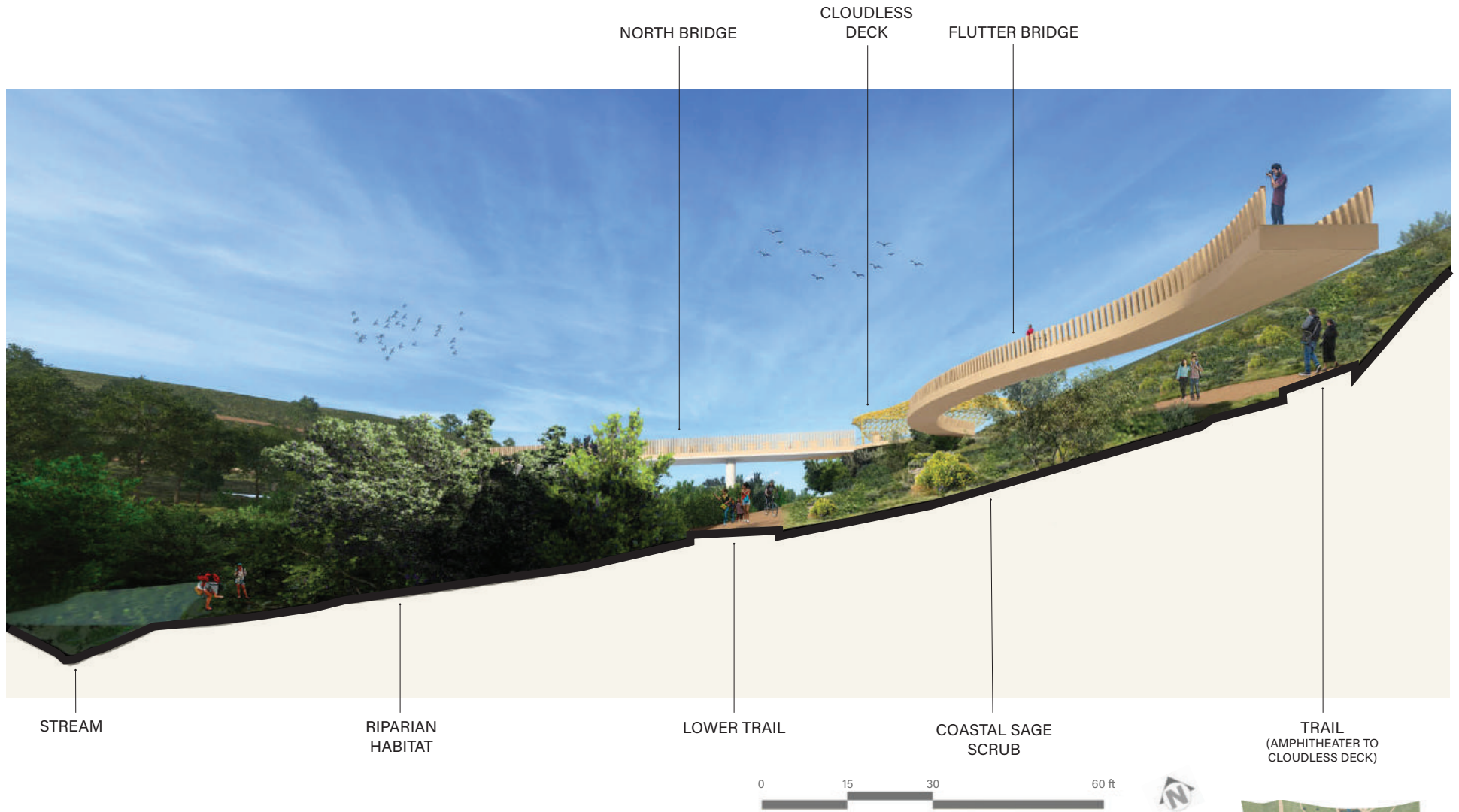
Looking north from the Amphitheater is the Flutter bridge that floats alongside the dirt trail that leads to the two decks - Spring Azure (blue) and Cloudless (yellow). Visitors can travel to Cloudless via the existing dirt trail or the accessible Flutter Bridge.

## BEFORE



KEYMAP

# SECTION ELEVATION / FLUTTER BRIDGE & TRAILS



Section elevation facing North, which includes the Flutter bridge down to the main trail and even lower - the stream. We will now take a circular journey around this southern part of the park exploring these chrysalis shaded decks!



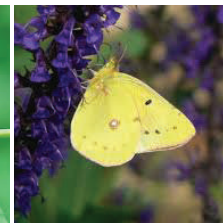
# CLOUDLESS DECK



We are now at Cloudless Deck, named after the beautiful yellow butterfly called Cloudless Sulphur. This Bench is designed to resemble a caterpillar and is color coded to match the bright happy yellow. Educational signs & water fountains will also be found on every deck.



Cloudless Sulphur caterpillar



Cloudless Sulphur butterfly



KEYMAP

# SPRING AZURE DECK



This view of the Spring Azure Deck (named after a beautiful blue butterfly) is facing south. This new accessible dirt trail continues to the Monarch deck. On this deck, one can also see educational signage on the history of El Sereno.



Spring Azure caterpillar



Spring Azure butterfly



KEYMAP

# MONARCH DECK



The Monarch deck (named after the Monarch butterfly) is the largest of the four and has direct pathways and bridges connecting visitors to the main event area's Deck B via the South Bridge, and also to the Hilltop Deck via the Sky Bridge. This deck is connected to the existing, steep dirt trail.



Monarch caterpillar



Monarch butterfly



KEYMAP

# ACCESSIBLE SKY BRIDGE



**LEGEND**

- 1 Sky Bridge
  - 2 Hilltop Deck
  - 3 Monarch Deck
- 4 South Bridge
  - 5 Driveway to Main Lot
  - 6 Stream



KEYMAP

This enlargement captures the ADA accessible Sky Bridge connecting from Monarch Deck and Hilltop Deck that has an elevation difference of approx. 25ft. With this bridge, anyone can access the highest point of the park and enjoy the views.

# PUDDLE PLAYGROUND



**LEGEND**

- 1 Flutter Playground
- 2 Toddler Play
- 3 Picnic Area
- 4 Bike Rack
- 5 South Bridge
- 6 Stream



Enlargement of the Puddle Playground area with a bridge leading to the other side of the stream. Puddle Playground is located at the main level of the park and has separate ADA accessible toddlers and children's areas.

# PUDDLE PLAYGROUND & PICNIC AREA



In this Perspective view, you can see that the existing picnic area is conveniently located next to the toddler playground and is perfect for parties and gatherings. The parking lot for emergency parking & loading is closed off with bollards for visitors to use. The playground is surrounded by soft lomandras and salvias.



# FINAL HABITAT PLAN

## LEGEND



DESIGN AREA



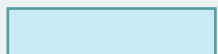
COASTAL SAGE SCRUB



NATIVE WOODLAND



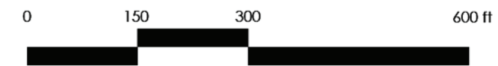
NATIVE GRASSLANDS &  
BUTTERFLY MEADOW



RIPARIAN

## DESIGN INTENT

In response to the interplay of environmental factors, the optimization of the four distinct habitats within the park has been calibrated, taking into account pivotal variables such as solar orientation. This deliberate approach ensures that each habitat thrives to its fullest potential in its designated location, ultimately enhancing the overall ecological equilibrium and visitor experience of the park.



# PLANT PALETTE

## WALNUT WOODLAND



*Baccharis salicifolia*  
mulefat



*Sisyrinchium bellum*  
blue-eyed grass



*Asclepias fascicularis*  
narrow leaf milkweed



*Frangula californica*  
coffeeberry



*Ribes aureum*  
golden currant



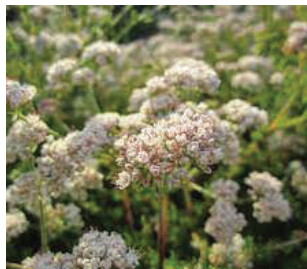
*Heteromeles arbutifolia*  
toyon



*Quercus agrifolia*  
coast live oak



*Juglans californica*  
California black walnut



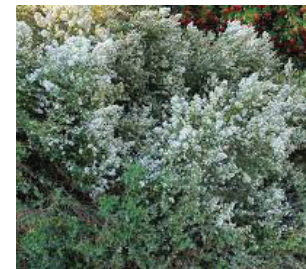
*Eriogonum fasciculatum*  
California buckwheat



*Isocoma menziesii*  
coastal goldenbush



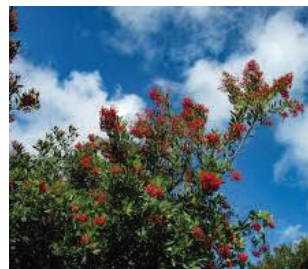
*Artemisia californica*  
sagebrush



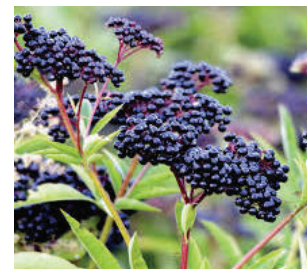
*Baccharis pilularis*  
coyote brush



*Acmispon glaber*  
deerweed



*Heteromeles arbutifolia*  
toyon



*Sambucus caerulea*  
blue elderberry



*Malosma laurina*  
laurel sumac

## COASTAL SAGE SCRUB





# PLANT PALETTE

## RIPARIAN



*Eriophyllum confertiflorum*  
golden yarrow



*Vitis californica*  
California wild grape



*Rosa californica*  
California wildrose



*Baccharis salicifolia*  
mulefat



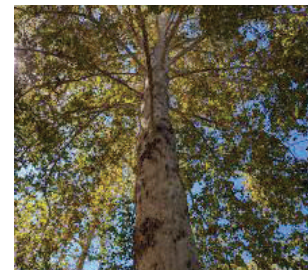
*Artemisia vulgaris*  
mugwort



*Populus fremontii*  
fremont cottonwood



*Alnus rhombifolia*  
white alder



*Platanus racemosa*  
california sycamore



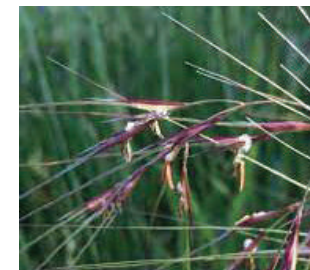
## VALLEY GRASSLAND



*Eschscholzia californica*  
California poppy



*Asclepias fascicularis*  
narrow leaf milkweed



*Nassella pulchra*  
purple needlegrass



*Bromus carinatus californica*  
brome grass



*Lupinus succulentus*  
arroyo lupine



*Bloomeria crocea*  
common goldenstar



*Stephanomeria virgata*  
wand chicory



*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*  
blue-eyed grass

# IN SUMMARY

These plans have been designed to create a park that offers accessibility, community engagement, and a natural haven. These designs cater to El Sereno's unique needs with children's play areas, program spaces, and preserve the park's natural beauty. This metamorphosis promises not just an improved park, but a better everyday life for the El Sereno Community, uniting people and nature in a lasting masterpiece.



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# NOTES

