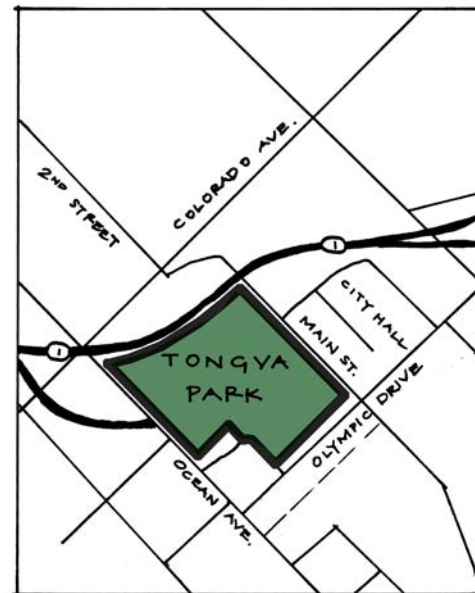
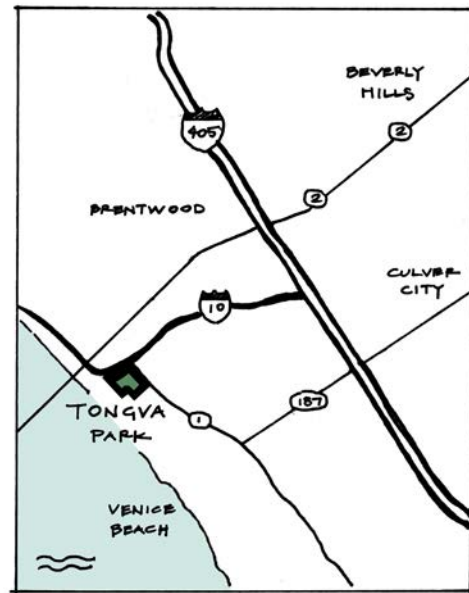


# Tongva Park

A Study into the History, Site Design,  
and Sustainable Practices



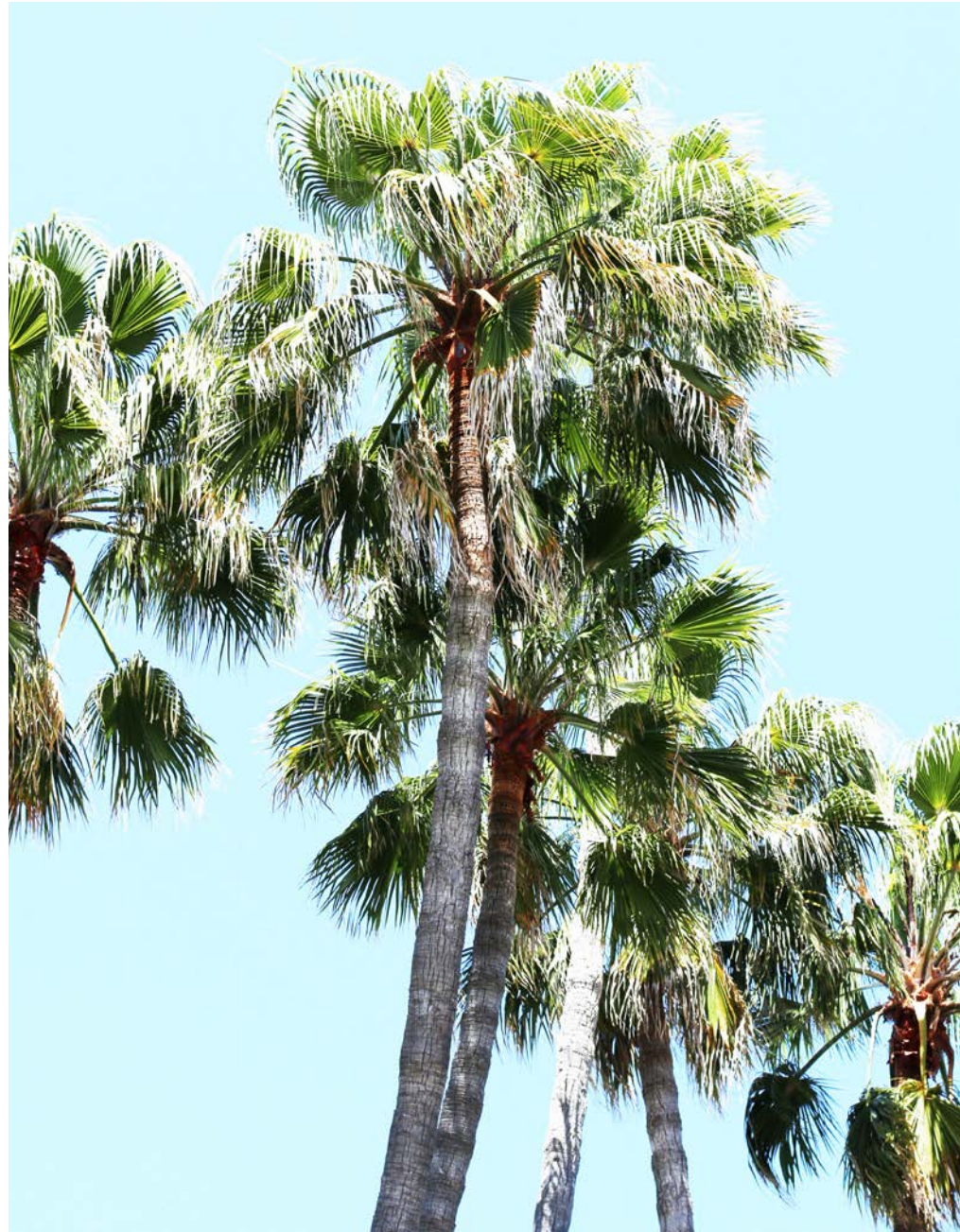


NTS   
NORTH

# Tongva Park

A Study into the History, Site Design,  
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# Table of Contents

Historical Timeline	04
The Site	06
The Concept	08
Plan View	10
Section View	12
Plant Palette	14
Water Systems	16
Quote	18
Acknowledgements	20
Sources	21

# Historical Timeline

## EARLY HISTORY

The land on which Tongva Park now sits was originally inhabited by the Tongva people, also known as the Gabrielino. The Tongva are the indigenous people of the Los Angeles Basin and the Southern Channel Islands. They lived in the region for thousands of years before European contact, utilizing the area's natural resources for their subsistence.

## AMERICAN ERA

Following the Mexican-American War, California became part of the United States in 1848. The land went through various ownership changes and was developed as part of the growing city of Santa Monica. The site that would become Tongva Park was used for various purposes over the years, including as part of the city's infrastructure and transportation systems.

## SPANISH AND MEXICAN ERA

In the late 18th century, Spanish missionaries established the Mission San Gabriel Arcángel in 1771. The Tongva people were relocated to the mission, and their traditional way of life was significantly disrupted.

After Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821, the land was secularized and divided into ranchos. The area that is now Santa Monica became part of Rancho San Vicente y Santa Monica.

## EARLY 2000

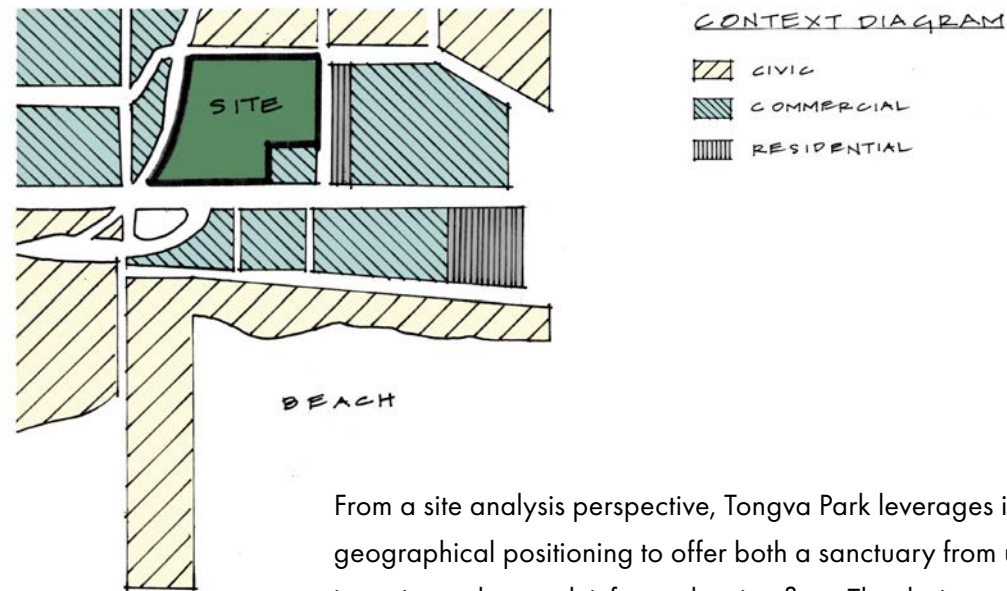
The transformation of the site began with the city's vision to create a vibrant public space. Renowned landscape architecture firm James Corner Field Operations, known for their work on the High Line in New York City, was selected to design the park.

Construction began in 2011, with a focus on sustainability, community engagement, and honoring the heritage of the Tongva people.

Tongva Park officially opened to the public in October 2013

TONGVA PARK

# The Site

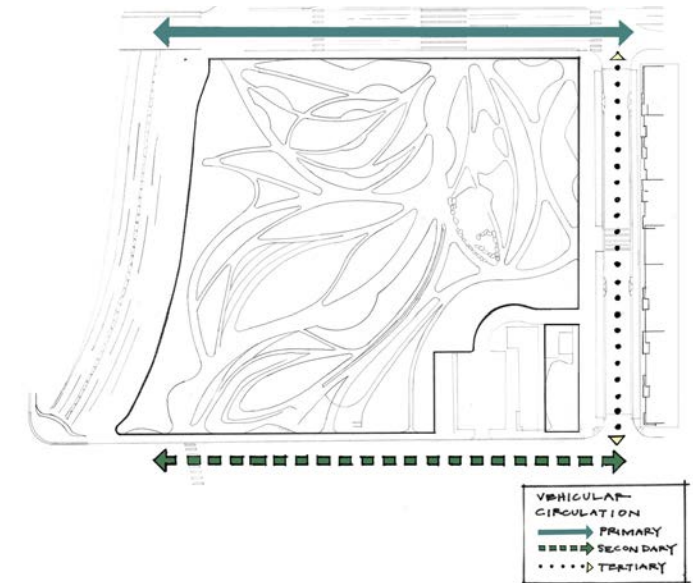


From a site analysis perspective, Tongva Park leverages its unique geographical positioning to offer both a sanctuary from urban intensity and a conduit for pedestrian flow. The design capitalizes on the natural gradients and vistas available, incorporating undulating terrains, strategic viewpoints, and a mix of open and intimate spaces. These elements are not just ornamental but are instrumental in guiding visitors' movements, drawing them from the ocean's edge at the pier, through the verdant tranquility of the park, and onwards to the civic realm of City Hall.

The park's pathways are more than mere routes; they are experiential threads that weave through diverse plantings, interactive water features, and sculptural elements, each contributing to the narrative of transition from natural to urban landscapes. This journey is underscored by the use of native flora and sustainable landscaping techniques, which reinforce the ecological ethos of the site and mirror Santa Monica's commitment to environmental stewardship. In essence, Tongva Park's strategic design and site-specific interventions not only enhance the physical and visual connectivity between the Santa Monica Pier and City Hall but also embody the city's broader aspirations for sustainability, community engagement, and urban harmony.

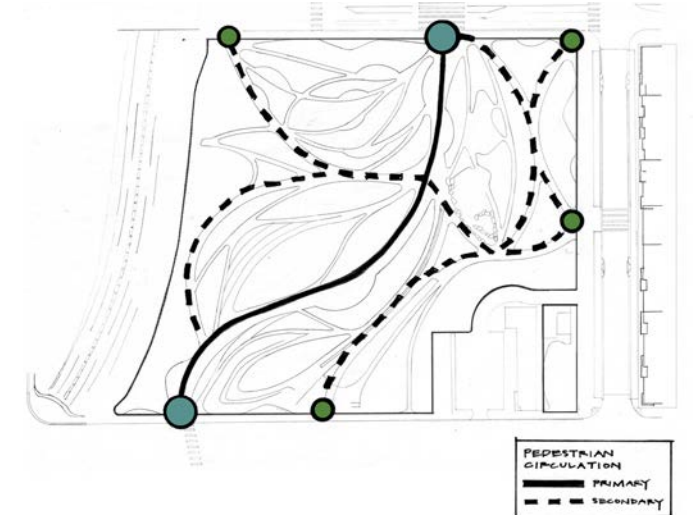
## Vehicular Circulation

The park is bordered by three main roads: Main Street, Ocean Ave, and Olympic Drive. These roads play distinct roles in providing access and connectivity to the park, and they can be categorized as primary Main Street), secondary (Ocean Ave), and tertiary (Olympic Drive) based on their significance and the nature of traffic they handle.



## Pedestrian Circulation

The park features a network of curved pathways that guide pedestrians through various thematic areas, promoting exploration and discovery. There are several entry points around the park, allowing easy access from different directions and integrating the park with the surrounding urban environment.



## Existing Trees

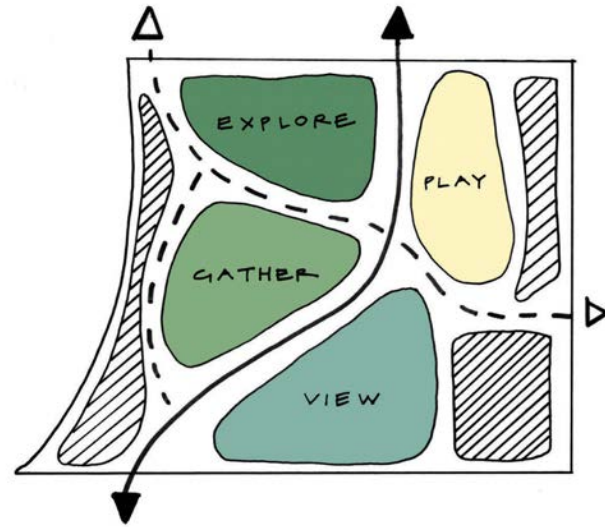
The thoughtful preservation and integration of existing trees into the landscape design of Tongva Park reflect a commitment to environmental stewardship and design excellence. By maintaining mature trees, the park offers a mature, verdant environment that benefits both visitors and the local ecosystem.



TONGVA PARK



# The Concept



Tongva Park, nestled in the heart of Santa Monica, California, represents a transformative leap in urban landscape design, turning what was once a flat, nondescript parking lot into a vibrant, green oasis. This transformation began as part of a broader revitalization effort for the Santa Monica area, aimed at enhancing public spaces and providing the community with a much-needed green retreat amidst the urban sprawl.

The park's inception was driven by a desire to reconnect the city's fabric to its natural coastal roots, while also offering a dynamic space for relaxation, play, and community gatherings. Named in honor of the indigenous Tongva people, who have lived in the Los Angeles Basin

for thousands of years, the park pays homage to the area's original inhabitants through its thoughtful design and cultural sensitivity. The design of Tongva Park was executed by James Corner Field Operations, a renowned landscape architecture and urban design firm known for their innovative and forward-thinking approach to public spaces.

The firm's vision for Tongva Park was to create a series of interconnected and diverse garden rooms, each offering unique experiences and environments within the park's overall landscape. Utilizing the concept of "arroyos," naturalistic pathways mimic the flow of water through the landscape, guiding visitors through various plantings, terraces, and water features that evoke the native Southern California ecosystem.

Through Tongva Park, James Corner Field Operations has provided Santa Monica with a landmark that not only serves as a model for urban park design but also as a cherished community asset that enriches the social and environmental fabric of the city.

James Corner described the project as "creating a new heart for Santa Monica – a new destination and gathering place of great social, ecological, and symbolic value."





# Plan View

EXISTING MORETON BAY FIG

LAWN AMPHITHEATER

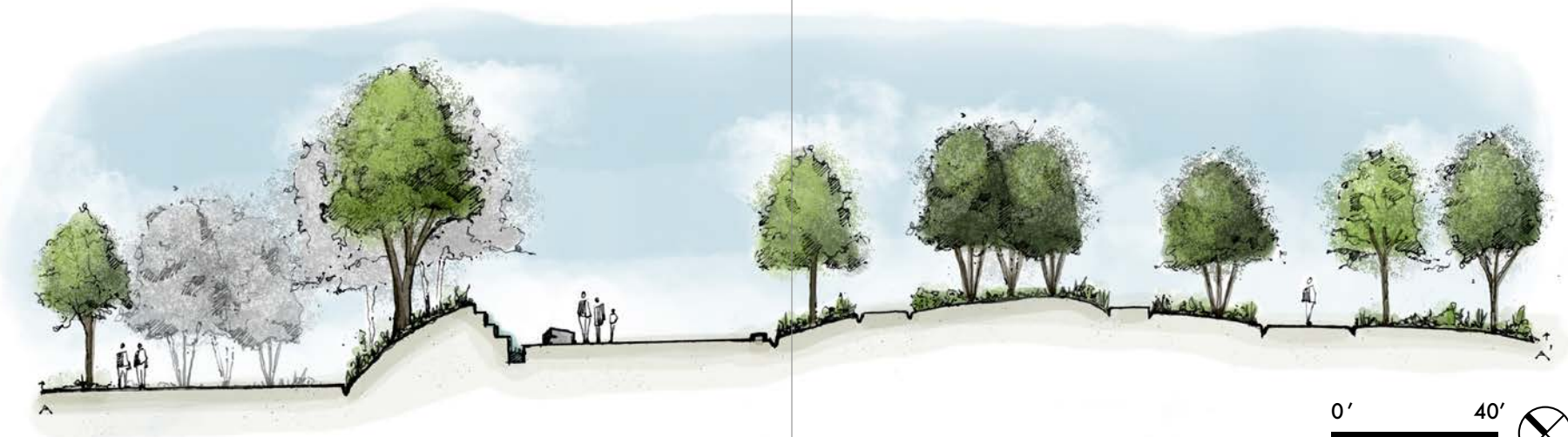
RESTROOMS

WATER FEATURE





# Section View



0' 40'  
1" = 40'





# Plant Palette

Tongva hosts more than 30,000 plants of more than 170 species, and more than 300 trees from 21 species, most grown in nurseries from Southern California. A Moreton Bay fig tree, a group of ficus trees, along with several palms, were preserved and rearranged on the site to fit into the new landscape. The park mixes native and non-native drought-tolerant species in zones modeled on three California ecological communities -- coastal scrub, chaparral, and riparian. \*



TONGVA PARK

## DROUGHT-TOLERANT SPECIES

### Succulents and Cacti:

Incorporates species like agaves (*Agave spp.*) and yuccas (*Yucca spp.*), which are highly drought-tolerant and add unique textures to the landscape.

### Mediterranean Plants:

Includes lavender (*Lavandula spp.*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) and Bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea spectabilis*), which thrive in similar climatic conditions.

## PERENNIALS AND GROUNDCOVERS

### Flowering Plants:

Includes California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), and various wildflowers that provide seasonal color and support pollinators.

### Groundcovers:

Features plants like creeping sage (*Salvia sonomensis*) and California fescue (*Festuca californica*), which help stabilize the soil and reduce erosion.

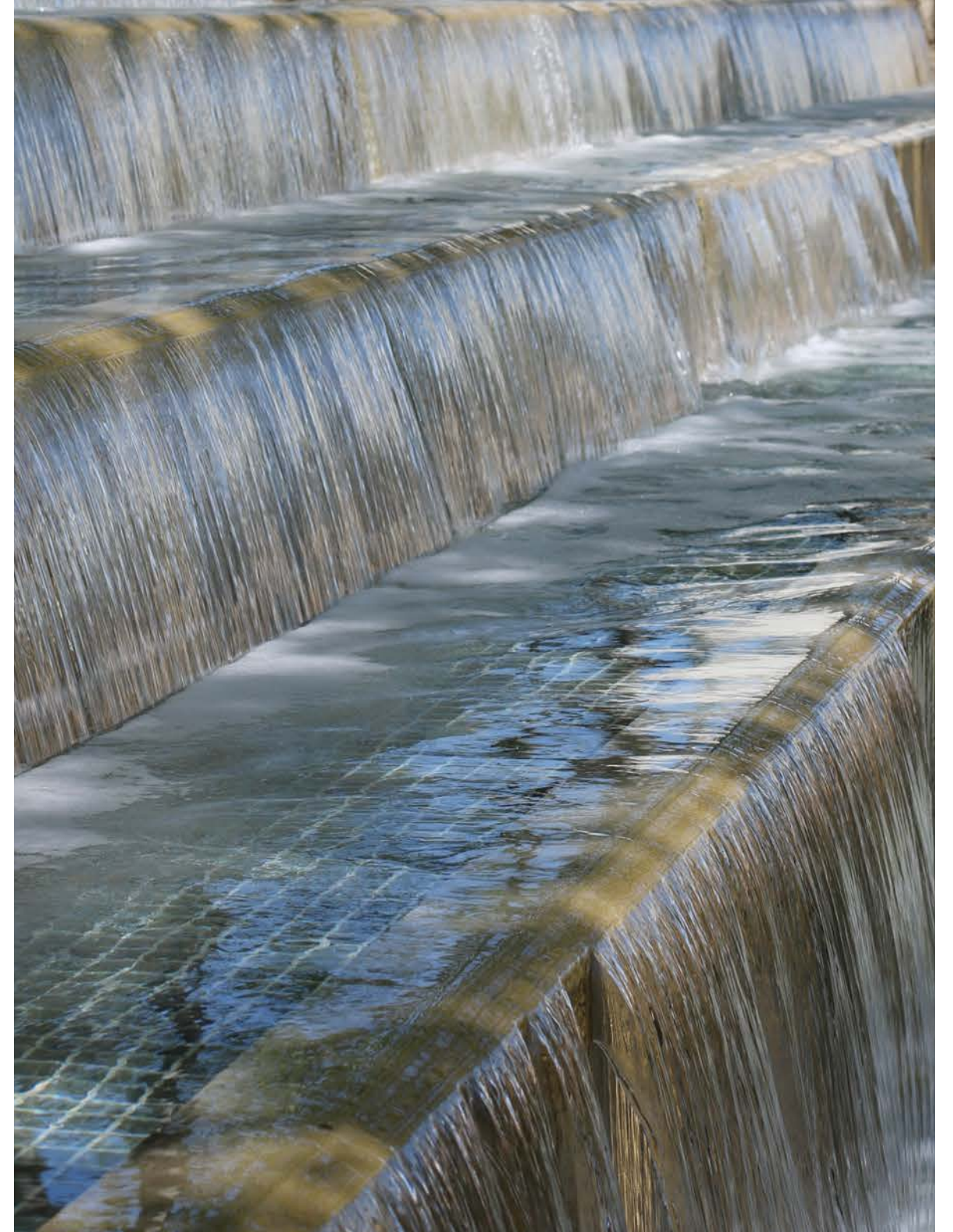
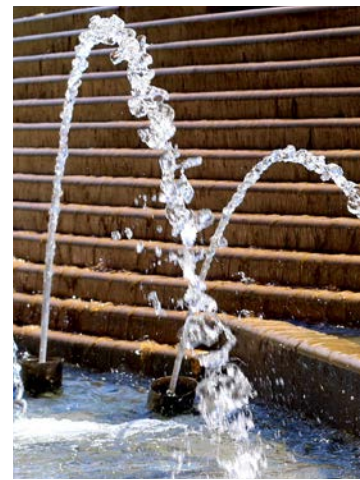


# Water Systems

Plants in Tongva Park are irrigated using water from the Santa Monica Urban Runoff Recycling Facility (SMURRF). This facility treats urban runoff and recycles it for non-potable uses such as irrigation and flushing toilets. \*

The park incorporates bioswales, which are landscape elements designed to capture, filter, and infiltrate stormwater. These vegetated channels slow down runoff, allowing it to percolate into the ground and be naturally filtered by the soil and plants.

The water features recirculate potable water in closed systems. This means that the same water is continuously filtered and reused, minimizing water waste and the need for additional water input.





Tongva Park is a real-life  
reversal of Joni Mitchell's  
familiar lyric,  
“They paved paradise  
and put up a parking lot.”

“Tongva Park: A New Heart for Santa Monica.” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 13, 2013



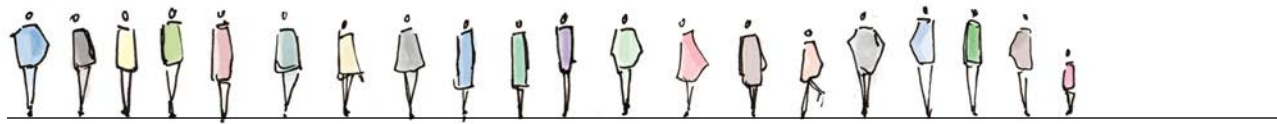


# Thank You

Thank you to my Design Graphics instructors, David Squires, Rebecca Schwaner, and Laura Razo. 33 weeks, 99 hours of class, and countless hours of homework taught me the visual language I have aspired to learn since I was young. You pushed me to expand my thinking and crafted my skills in ways I didn't think possible and I will continue to "practice, practice, practice."

Thank you to my fellow students for your support and encouragement every week. Watching our skills develop has been an inspiring experience and I enjoy being a part of this entourage.

Thank you Marty, Charles, Sam and Kate for your love and support on this new journey of mine. You are my north arrow.



# About

## California Native. Best in part shade.

Joan Grasser lives in Marin with her husband, three children and their gentleman dog. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Bates College and works as a graphic designer.

Joan views landscape architecture as a unique problem-solving tool that serves to improve environmental and human well-being through creative and thoughtful design. Her interests include botany, soil health, water management, residential garden design, and outdoor community spaces.



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All photos and digitals rendering by Joan Grasser