

The Great Wall of Los Angeles Park Master Plan



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OVERVIEW & HISTORY

History of Tujunga Wash Greenway and the Great Wall of Los Angeles

The Tujunga Wash channel is a 13-mile tributary to the LA River. It holds environmental significance with regards to the area's water flow and flood control, particularly during the months of November - April. The Tujunga Wash was channelized in the 1950s in an effort to reduce flooding in this developing urban area, but this resulted in limiting its natural function. A section of the wash recently underwent a restoration project to help restore the area's aquafir, riparian ecosystems, and natural habitat.

The Great Wall of Los Angeles is a cultural landmark representing the history of California's ethnic populations, beginning in prehistoric times up until the 1960s. The Great Wall of Los Angeles is located on the west wall of a section of the Tujunga Wash flood control channel in Valley Glen, California. Due to its location in the channel, which is the main water flow from the San Fernando Valley to the Pacific Ocean, the site can only be worked on during the three dry months of summer when there is low risk of water flow.

The project has developed over many years, beginning in 1974 when artist Judy Baca was commissioned to transform this section of the wash into a mural. Shortly thereafter, in 1976, Judy teamed up with Christina Schlesinger and Donna Deitch to form the Social Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), which then took on the Great Wall project. The wall initially included California's history from prehistoric times through the 1950s, and was completed by a group of artists and at-risk youth over several summers from 1976-1983. In 2013, the project received a grant to expand the development of the mural through the 1990s and later received more funding for the expansion through 2020.

The artwork on the mural was unique for its time in that it depicts the narrative of marginalized and indigenous communities, and was a counter-narrative to the traditional focus on the history of Caucasian men in America. The project has been nationally recognized over the years and placed on the National Registry of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of Interior. In addition to its expansion, the mural is undergoing continuous restoration efforts to clean and treat the mural to restore its original color, which has been affected by the water flow and L.A.'s intense weather over the years.



SITE HISTORY

TIMELINE

2500 BCE

The indigenous Tongva tribe settles in California and the Los Angeles Basin. They live in villages along what is now known as the Los Angeles River. The Tongva are the original settlers of this area before Spanish colonization.

1938

The Los Angeles River is channelized for flood control.

1950

Tujunga Wash is channelized

1976

Judy Baca establishes the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) which heads the Great Wall of LA project. The first 1,000 feet of mural is completed during the summer of 1976 by Baca, 10 artists, five historians, and a group of 80 youth referred by the criminal justice department. The first segment of the wall includes prehistoric times up until 1910.

2000-2001

SPARC receives national recognition for the mural from Ford Foundation Animating Democracy: The Role of Civic Dialogue in the Arts initiative and from the Rockefeller Foundation Partnerships Affirming Community Transformation initiative.

2011- 2013

Restoration of the Great Wall begins. This involves the cleaning, examination, and color treatment of the wall. In 2013, SPARC receives a \$90,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to continue working on the Great Wall project. This money is put toward planning the remaining decades of the 20th century (1960s-1990s).

Mid-1800s

Four more decades are added to the mural (350 feet per decade) during the summer months over the course of 5 years by youth



1974

Judy Baca is commissioned to transform a section of the Tujunga Wash drainage canal with a mural. The Great Wall of Los Angeles project is born.



1978 - 1984

Four more decades are added to the mural (350 feet per decade) during the summer months over the course of 5 years by youth groups. In 1984, the mural is completed, with a total of 35 artists and 400 youth muralists involved in the project. It is arranged in 6 sections that tell the story of California's racial history from prehistoric times through the 1960s.



2007

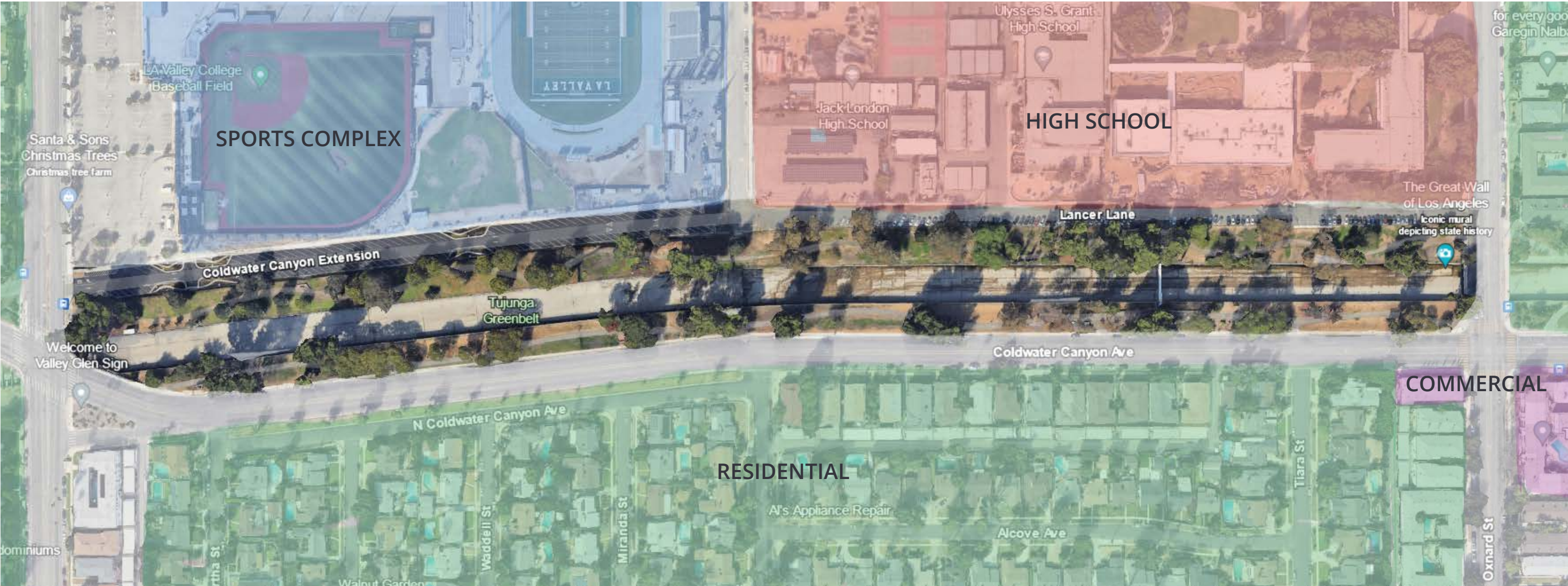
The Tujunga Wash Greenway is completed near the site of the Great Wall. This project includes the development of a 2.5-mile greenbelt, the naturalization of a side river channel which increases water infiltration, and the addition of biking and walking paths. This project positions the Great Wall as more of an attraction for visitors.



2021

The continuation of The Great Wall is announced: The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grants SPARC a three-year grant of \$5 million to support the preservation and expansion of the mural, including the expansion of the mural to one mile, continuing the historical narrative through 2020.

SITE INVENTORY



FLORA + FAUNA

- **Existing Trees:** Quercus agrifolia, Fraxinus uhdei, Schinus terebinthifolia, Platanus racemosa, Eucalyptus sideroxylon, Pinus halepensis, Cedrus deodara, Koelreuteria paniculata
- Native and non-native shrubs
- Grassy turf area runs along sides of river channel



UTILITIES + AMENITIES

- Sewage exhaust pipe
- Concrete light fixtures, enclosed in chain link fencing
- Chain link fence running the length of the river channel
- Water pipe running across river channel
- Concrete picnic table
- Large exposed paved parking lot
- Large concrete beams running across river channel at south end of site

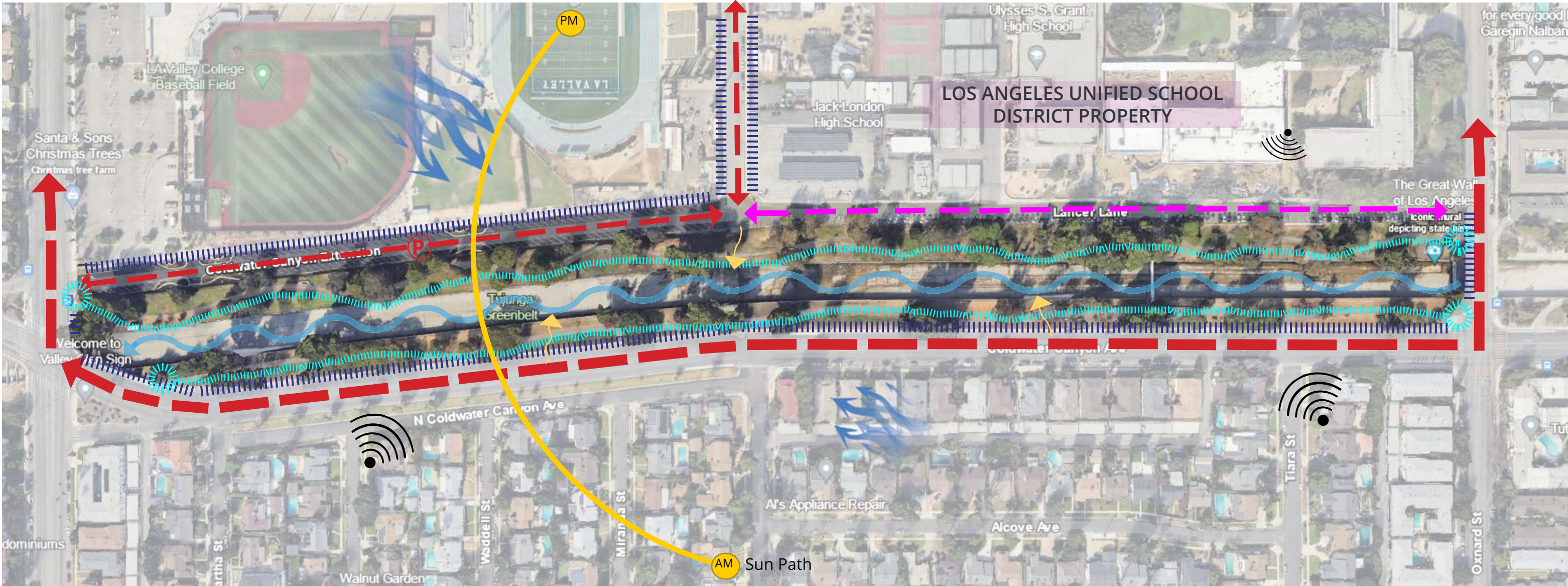


PHYSICAL + ENVIRONMENTAL

- Tujunga Wash channel runs through site
- Topography: slight slope from edges of sidewalk (and roadway) in toward river
- Increasingly hot summers and rainy winters, leading to heavier water flow during wet months
- High sun exposure on site
- 2,754-foot long mural and cultural landmark painted along the walls of the river channel



SITE ANALYSIS



LEGEND

CIRCULATION + ACCESS

- Primary Vehicular Circulation
- Secondary Vehicular Circulation
- Special Vehicular Access: (LA Unified School District)
- Sidewalk Pedestrian Circulation
- On-Site Pedestrian Circulation
- Pedestrian Access Point
- Parking Lot

SENSORY + ENVIRONMENTAL

- Prevailing Winds (from west) and Seasonal Winds (from NE)
- Noise Pollution (from traffic/roadway and neighboring schools)
- Primary Water Flow and Direction
- Slope Direction

SITE CONSTRAINTS



- 01** All day sun exposure and lack of shade cover

02 Safety concerns along river channel due to exposed edge and deep drop

03 Busy roadways and traffic noise surrounding site

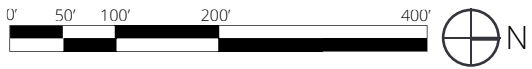
04 Large utility structures (water pipe and concrete beams) obstructing views

05 Unsightly chain link fence running along both sides of channel, which also obstructs views of mural
- 06** Narrow greenway with limited space for development due to site being surrounded by roadways, establishments, and the river running through the middle

07 No passage over river, only way to cross site is to circumnavigate around it

08 Exposed parking lot which radiates heat on hot, sunny days

09 Large concrete light fixtures encased in chain link fencing: unsightly and interrupt flow around site



SITE OPPORTUNITIES



- A** Implementation of shade structures, covered gathering areas, and more plant material to mitigate summer heat

B Create a more immersive mural viewing experience: lookouts at eye level within the channel or suspended over channel

C Planting or structural buffer between roadway and site, creating a sense of safety and protection/ enclosure

D Plant buffer along river channel for increased safety, and allowing for more minimal fencing material
- E** Alternative fencing, more minimal and inconspicuous in appearance, but still providing safety along edge of river

F Expansion and widening of greenway/ pathways either up, across river, or into parking area on the west side of site

G Build walking bridge over the river channel to improve circulation and navigation around site

H Increase seating and gathering areas to encourage visitors to linger and enjoy the park
- I** Improve circulation around site for pedestrians and bikers to create a more interactive visiting experience

J Add gathering platform/ pavilion at south end of site, utilizing concrete beams and also concealing them

K Utilize hot, exposed parking area to generate solar energy -- a covered parking structure would improve the parking area and allow for concealed solar panels on roof

SITE PLAN



CASE STUDY:

ARKINS (RiNo) PARK & PROMENADE

LOCATION

Denver, Colorado, USA

DESIGNER

Wenk Associates

YEAR COMPLETED

2020

SIZE

6.6 Acres

CONTEXT

This project transformed part of an aging industrial neighborhood into a mixed-use park space (with an arts focus), riverfront promenade, and pedestrian/ bike corridor.

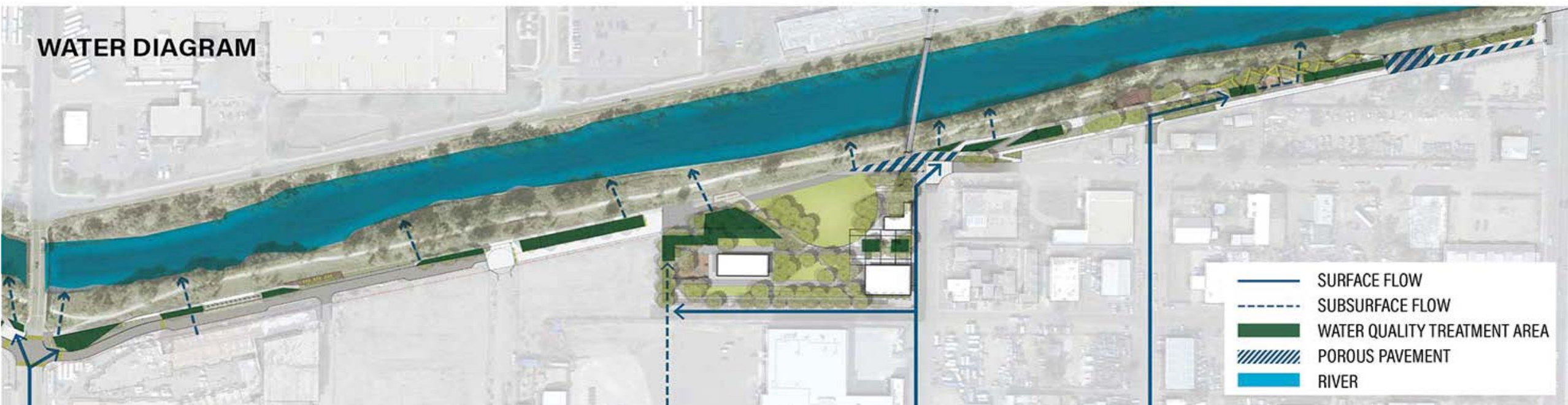
FEATURES

- Pedestrian and bike access
- Elevated walkway with viewing decks
- River theatre and play areas
- Innovative storm water treatment on site

DESIGN SUCCESS + ANALYSIS

This design successfully created a multi-use public space and reinvigorated a previously rundown area of the city and underutilized waterfront. It offers positive environmental impacts with the implementation of storm water treatment for both on-site water and runoff from nearby neighborhoods. The design involves tiered water quality basins and permeable pavers. For design improvements, I'd love to explore the possibility of a more interactive section of the river. There seems to be a plant buffer separating visitors from engaging with the waterfront.

WATER DIAGRAM



Images: Parrish Ruiz de Velasco and Wenk Associates



CASE STUDY:

HOUTAN PARK

LOCATION

Shanghai, China

DESIGNER

Turenscape

YEAR COMPLETED

2010

SIZE

34.5 Acres

CONTEXT

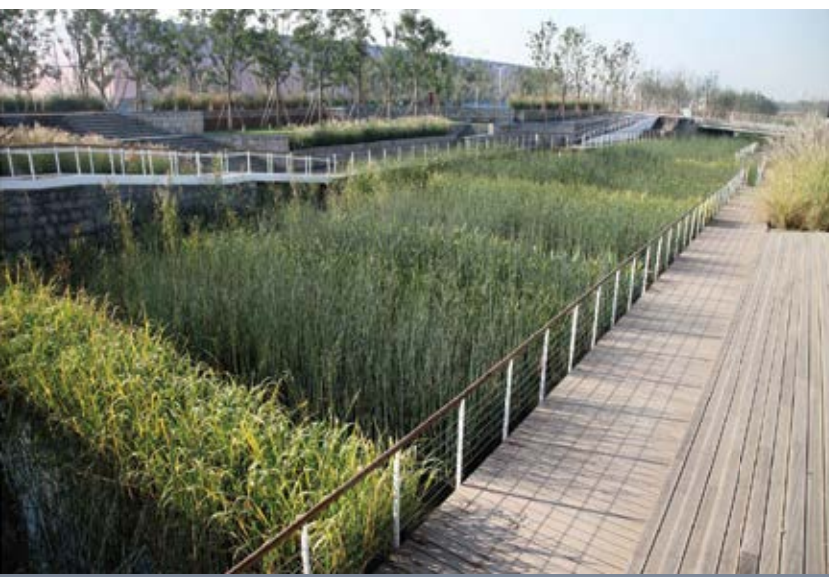
Houtan Park is a regenerative landscape built on a former industrial site (brownfield) along Shanghai's Huangpu riverfront.

FEATURES

- Pedestrian and bike access
- Cleans 634,000 gallons of polluted river water daily using biological processes (which saves \$116,800/ year in water costs)
- 93 plant species, 200+ animal species
- The park's wetlands and plant materials sequester 242 tons of carbon yearly
- Terraced design (18' elevation change) allowing visitors to enjoy access the water in a quiet valley
- Extensive walking paths

DESIGN SUCCESS + ANALYSIS

From a sustainability standpoint, the site is incredibly successful in using reclaimed materials from the former industrial site throughout the park. It also employs ecological flood control and extensive on-site water treatment. The positive environmental impacts of the site are impressive. It also successfully creates quiet and intimate gathering spaces within a large scale park.



Images: Kongjian Yu



CASE STUDY:

MADRID RIO PARK

LOCATION

Madrid, Spain

DESIGNER

Burgos & Garrido, Porrás La Casta, Rubio & A-Sala, and West 8

YEAR COMPLETED

2015

SIZE

296 Acres

CONTEXT

In 2003, Madrid buried 10km of highway (known as the M30). The road was carelessly developed over a 40-year period and eliminated the city's connection and access to the Manzanares River. Once buried, a large space became available and was redeveloped into a greenspace.

FEATURES

- 12 pedestrian bridges, children's play areas, 14.8 acres of sport facilities, art amenities, increased river accessibility
- Restoration of the river's hydraulic architecture and improved water quality
- Flood protection restoration, rainwater collection and filtration

DESIGN SUCCESS + ANALYSIS

This design successfully creates continuity within the city by connecting the northern and southern parts of the city, celebrates one of the city's great natural features (Manzanares River), and provides a huge recreational/ cultural center. The project is comprised of several smaller projects due to the scale of the space. This, in some ways, makes the design and overall aesthetic feel a bit disjointed - but also offers variety and character.



Images: Burgos & Garrido

DESIGN ALTERNATIVE | 1



Meandering Riverwalk | Low-Budget Design

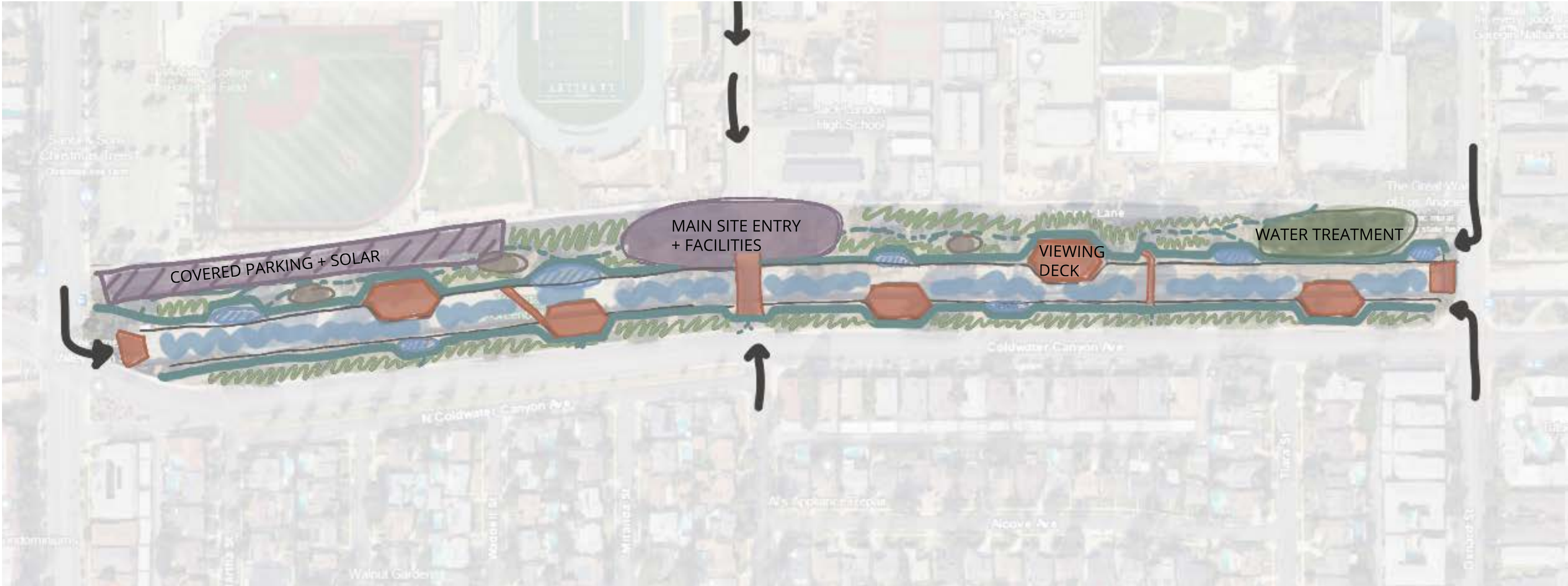
- Passive engagement with space
- Meandering footpaths throughout site
- Intimate seating areas and viewing alcoves along the river channel
- Addition of native plant material to naturalize the park space and create continuity with the naturalized section of the Tujunga Wash to the north of Oxnard Ave

LEGEND



- Walkway
- Boardwalk
- ~ Planted area
- Fence
- Bioswale
- Programmed Area
- Plaza/ Bridges
- ↗ Circulation + Access

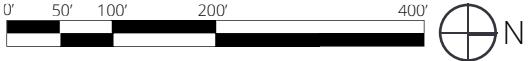
DESIGN ALTERNATIVE | 2



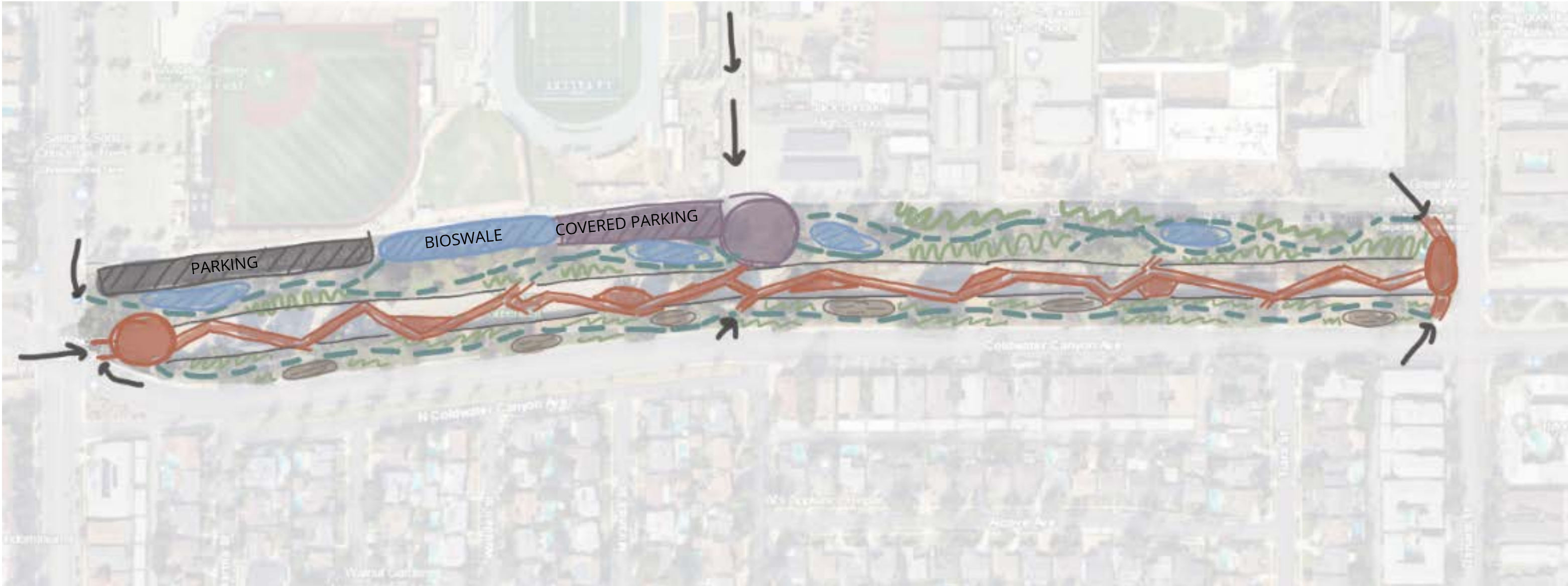
Interactive Viewing | Mid-Budget Design

- Grand boardwalk, creating two main arteries on either side of the river channel
- Large viewing decks along river that extend over the edge of channel, elevating viewer above river
- More developed, less natural and organic than design concept 1
- Three bridges to create better circulation around site - one main multi-use bridge and two smaller foot bridges
- Bioswales and dry creeks throughout site

LEGEND



- Walkway
- Boardwalk
- Planted area
- Fence
- Bioswale
- Programmed Area
- Plaza/ Bridges
- Circulation + Access



Connection Hub | High-Budget Design

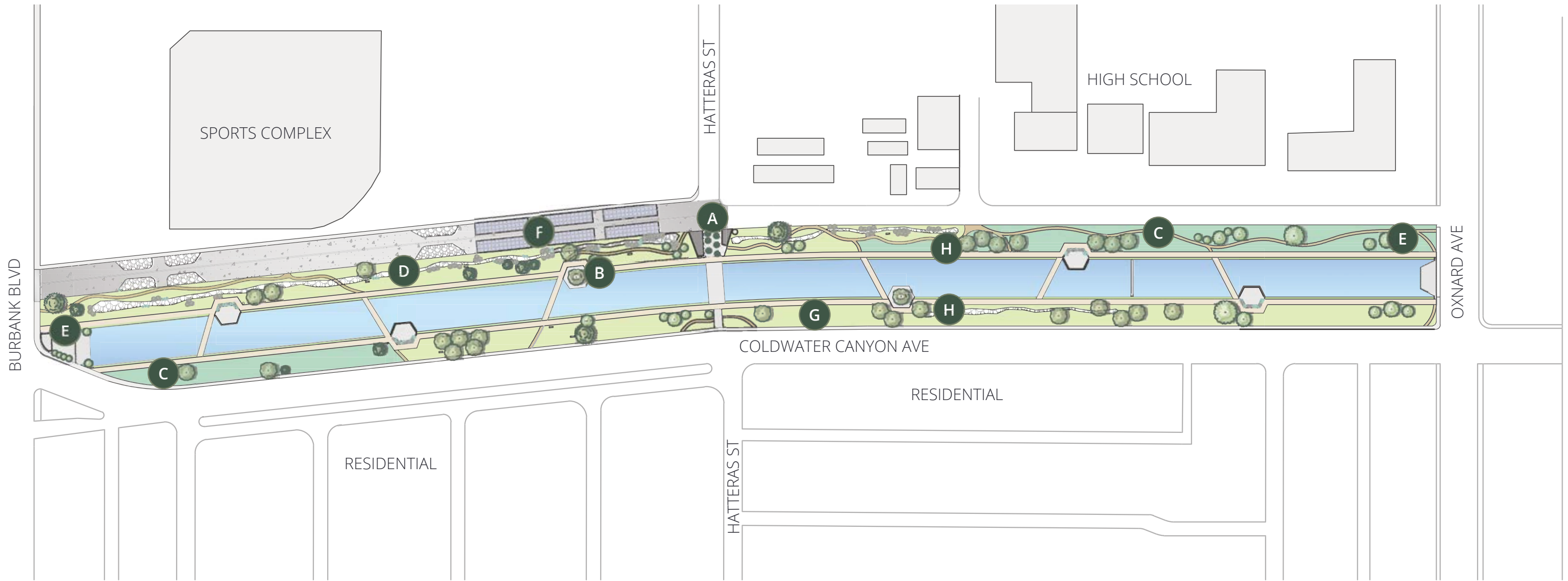
- Two entry plazas on either end of site, elevated above channel and creating long lines of sight down river channel
- Elevated bridge walk with viewing decks, extending the length of site
- Multiple points of entry to site, creating better connection to the surrounding area
- Bioswales staggered throughout site to infiltrate runoff

LEGEND

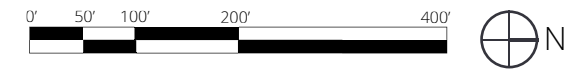
0' 50' 100' 200' 400' N

- Walkway
- Boardwalk
- ~ Planted area
- Fence
- Bioswale
- Programmed Area
- Plaza/ Bridges
- ↑ Circulation + Access

MASTER PLAN

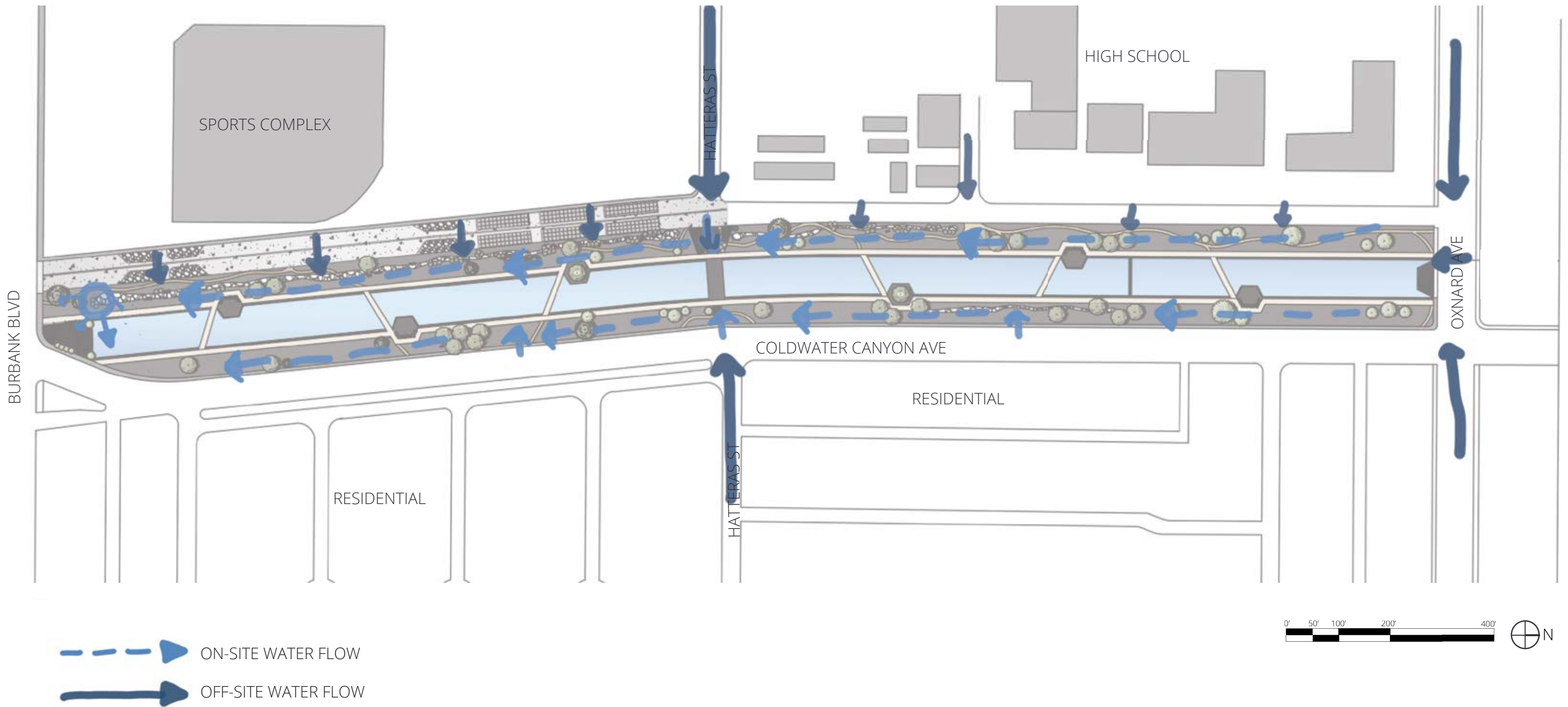


The final master plan aims to improve **connection, circulation, and engagement**. With the addition of cantilevered seating decks and a boardwalk running along the river channel, visitors can engage with the mural, and gather and relax on-site. Connection between the two sides of the river is improved by a series of footbridges and one larger bridge artery, improving the ability to navigate around the site on foot. The rest of the landscape is rewilded through a series of bioswales, rain gardens, and native plant meadows, as an ode to and continuation of the Tujunga Wash Greenway project to the north of Oxnard Avenue.

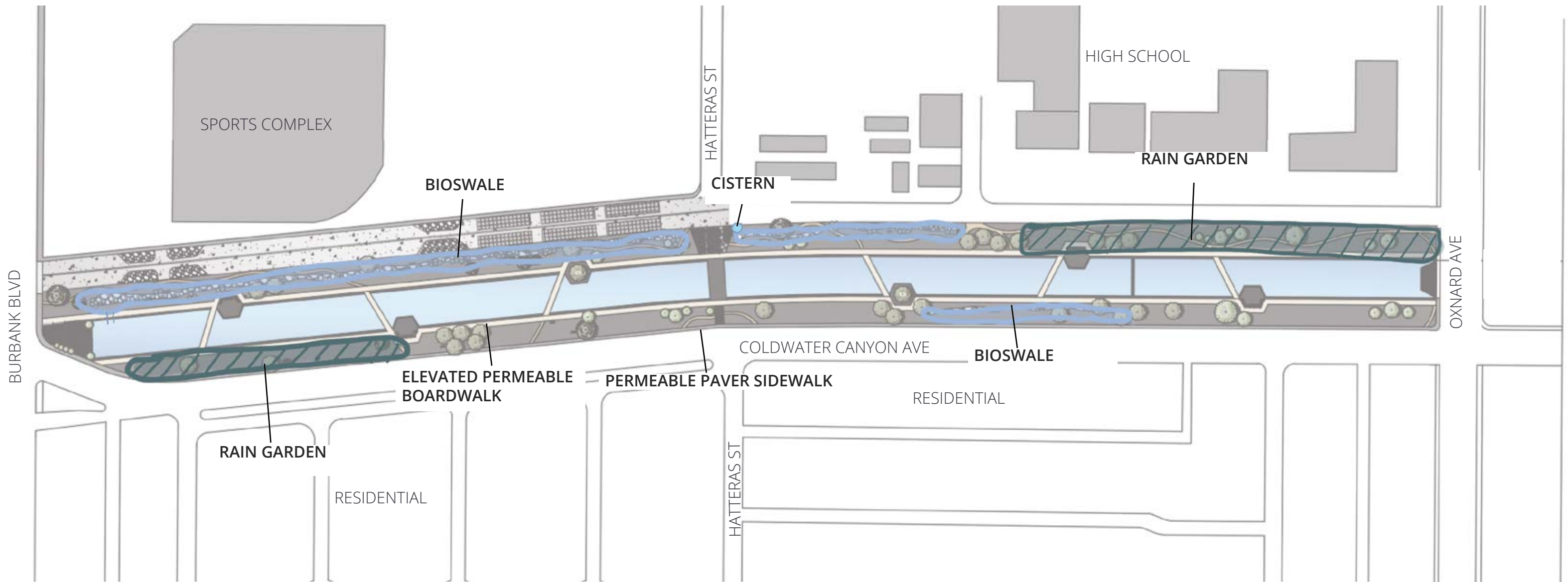


- A** Entry plaza and visitor center with museum and facilities
- B** Cantilevered viewing decks staggered down the channel, providing seating and mural viewing opportunities
- C** Rain garden and native plant infiltration areas
- D** Bioswale running the length of site to direct water flow on site, treat water, and promote the infiltration of storm water and runoff
- E** Gathering/ viewing plazas at north and south ends of site. South end plaza includes an on-site cafe and recessed seating area overlooking the river
- F** Solar panel covered parking area, producing energy to be used on site and providing shade coverage
- G** Native planting areas throughout site, increasing on-site water infiltration. Water fountains and benched seating placed throughout planted areas, improving comfort and access to amenities for visitors.
- H** Slightly elevated permeable boardwalk running the length of the channel on east and west sides, allowing for plant material and water infiltration underneath

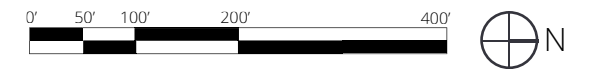
LID DIAGRAM | ON-SITE WATER FLOW



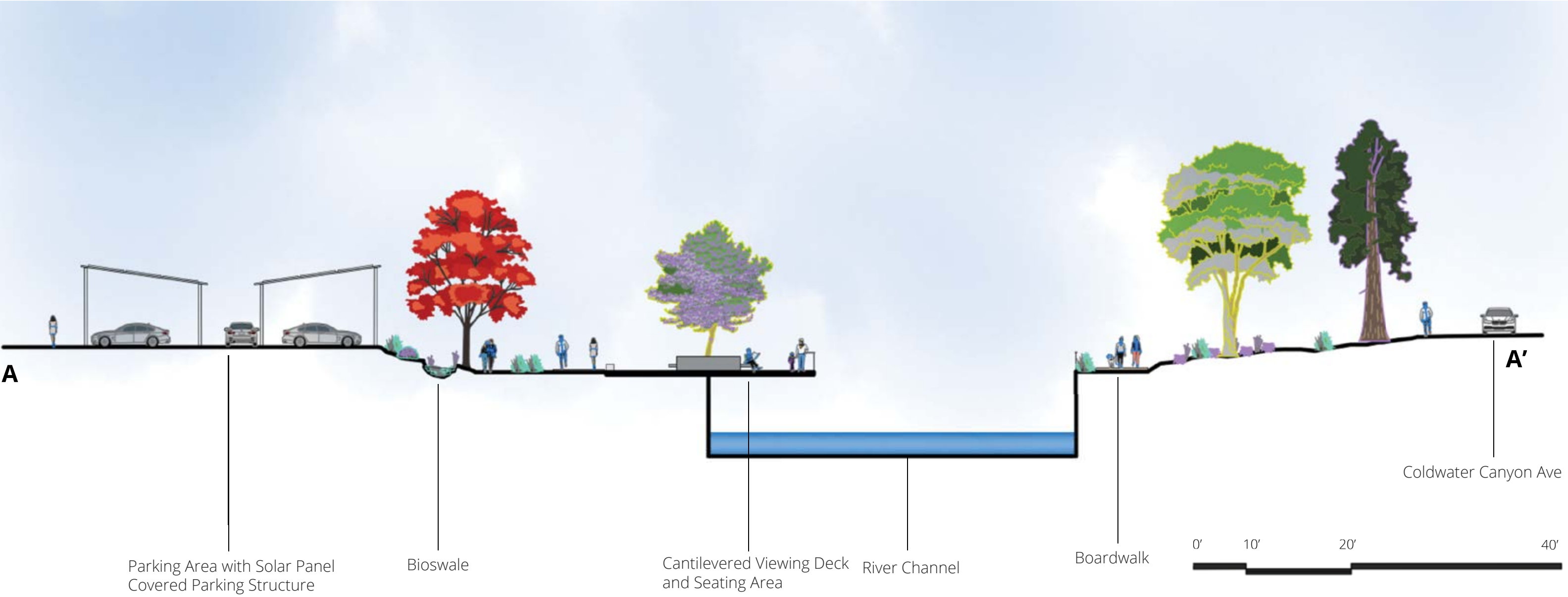
LID DIAGRAM | ON-SITE WATER MANAGEMENT



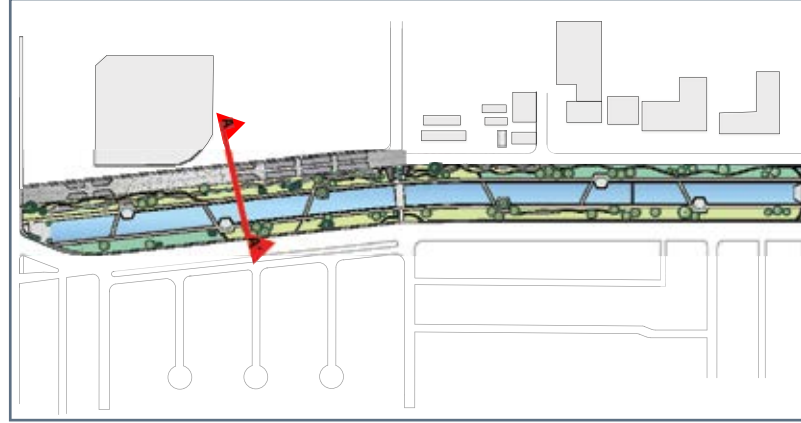
Water is being managed on site through a series of rain gardens and bioswales that direct water along the existing contours of the site. These water management techniques allow for infiltration of the runoff water entering the site from surrounding impermeable surfaces. With these more natural/ low-impact water management techniques, we are aiming to clean and infiltrate the bulk of the stormwater that enters the site. For excessive rain events, there is a pipe that runs from the end of the bioswale (south end of site) into the channel, to prevent on-site flooding. Additionally, a cistern is placed next to the central entry plaza to capture rain from site structures and the large paved entry plaza.



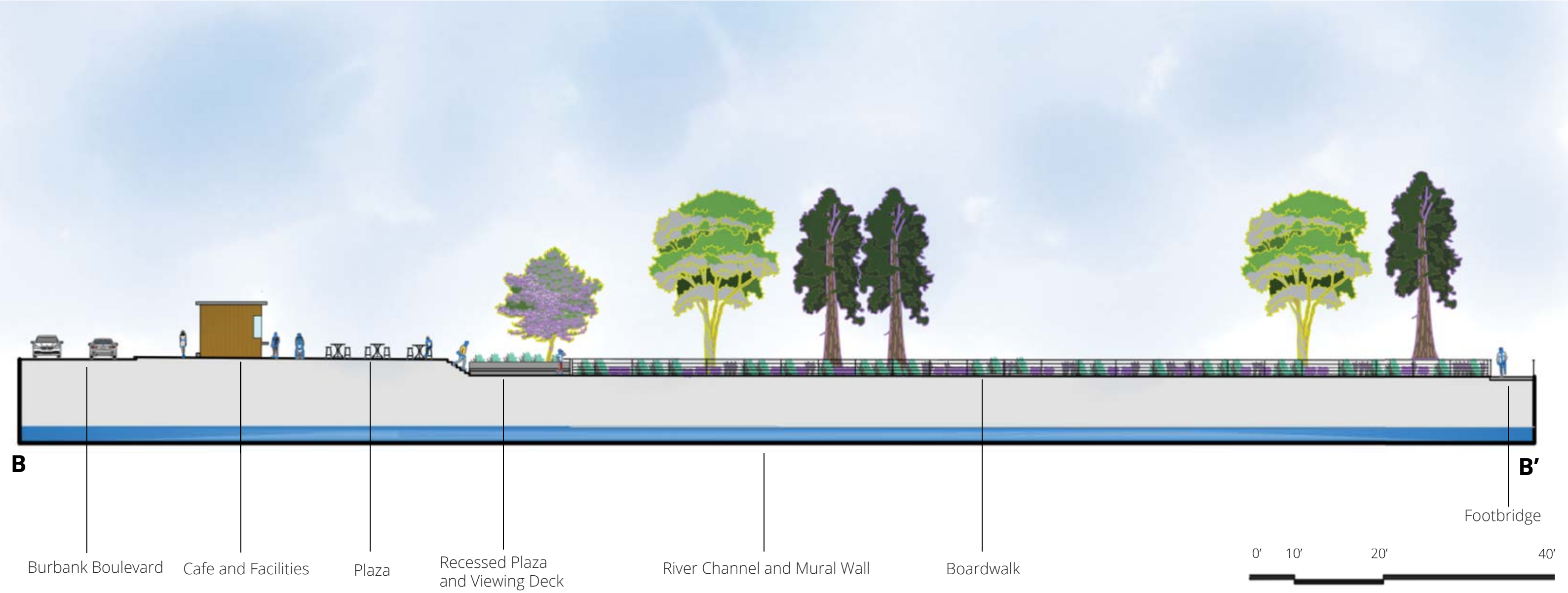
SITE SECTION A



KEY MAP



SITE SECTION B



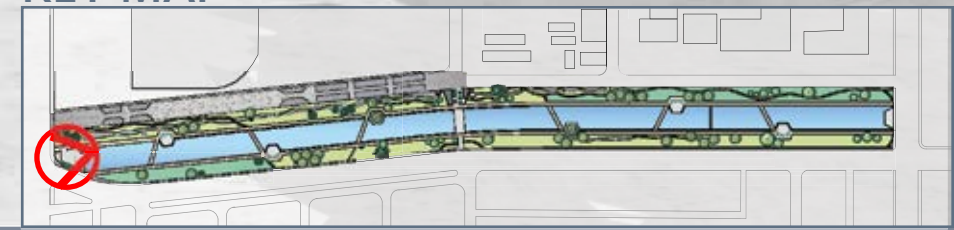
KEY MAP



PERSPECTIVE | CAFÉ/ ENTRY PLAZA



KEY MAP



PERSPECTIVE | VIEWING DECK



KEY MAP



PERSPECTIVES

VIEWING DECK + PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE



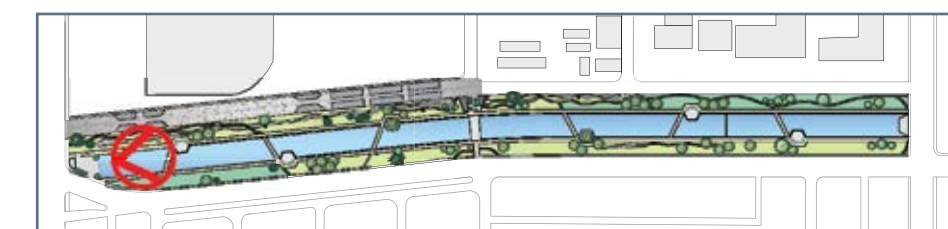
KEY MAP



ENTRY PLAZA + CAFÉ



KEY MAP



PERSPECTIVES

BIOSWALE + FOOTPATH



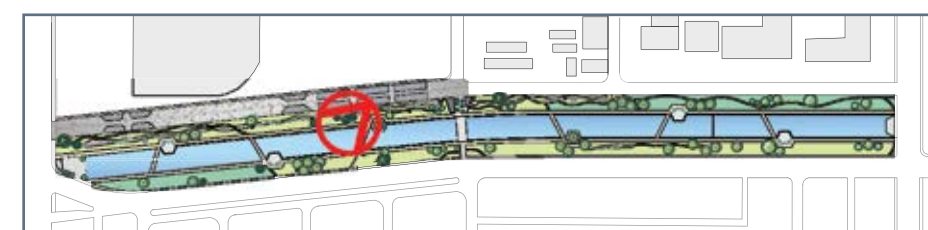
KEY MAP



BOARDWALK + SOLAR PARKING STRUCTURES



KEY MAP



VIDEO WALK-THROUGH



Resources:

<https://sparcinla.org/>

<https://planning.lacity.gov/blog/great-wall-los-angeles>