

AZUSA

WILDERNESS

PARK

JEN MOODY / LD7 2025





to protect
**WHAT IS
SMALL
AND
WILD**

This 70-acre site is a microcosm of something far greater—echoing the **personal, cultural, and ecological layers of the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument.**

This project is inspired by the legacies that shape how we care for the land, from Indigenous stewards like Kevin and Nathan Nunez and their ancestors, whose ties to this canyon stretch back generations, to everyday lessons passed down in quiet, powerful ways. My own dad grew up in Azusa and loved this canyon. He taught me to notice, to care, and to leave a place better than I found it. That care is a practice. Design can be one of its most lasting forms.

This is a call to protect what is small and wild, and to build something worthy of those who came before us and those still to come.



AZUSA WILDERNESS PARK

Nestled at the foothills of the **San Gabriel Mountains National Monument**, Azusa Wilderness Park serves as an important ecological and cultural gateway between the dense residential areas of Los Angeles County and the expansive wilderness beyond. Managed by the Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA), the park sits at a critical edge, offering a rare opportunity to **restore habitat, improve public access to the San Gabriel River, and strengthen the connection between people and the landscape**. While many currently pass through the area along Glendora Mountain Road, the park's proposed development invites visitors to slow down, engage with the site, and experience the land more deeply.

The park's mosaic of **habitats supports a range of sensitive species**, including the endangered mountain yellow-legged frog, the threatened Santa Ana sucker, the rare San Gabriel Mountains slender salamander, and the cliff-dwelling succulent *Dudleya densiflora*. Their presence highlights the **ecological richness of the San Gabriel foothills** and the importance of protecting them.

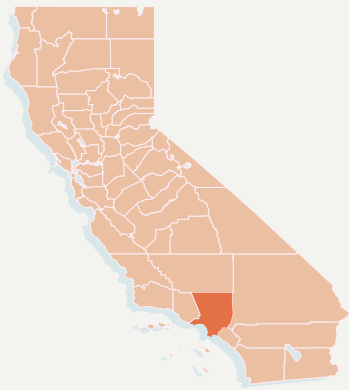
Azusa Wilderness Park also **lies on land with deep cultural roots**. Once home to the **Tongva village of Ashuukshanga**, one of the oldest known settlements in Southern California, dating back over 10,000 years, the area continues to reflect a long relationship between people and place. The name "Azusa" is derived from *Azuk*, the root of *Ashuukshanga*, which means "his grandmother the earth," evoking a deep sense of reverence for nature as an elder and guide. This layered identity—cultural, ecological, and geographic—makes the park an ideal setting for **a design that honors the past while inspiring environmental stewardship for the future**.

SITE

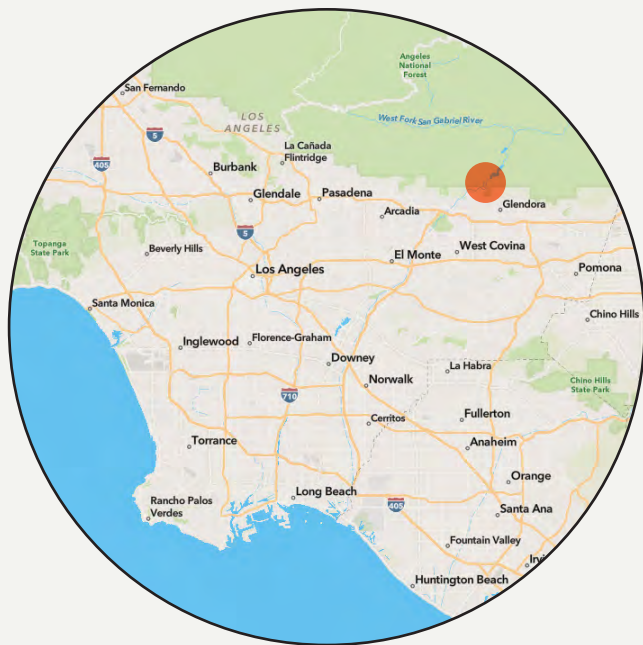
AZUSA
former indigenous village of Ashuukshanga



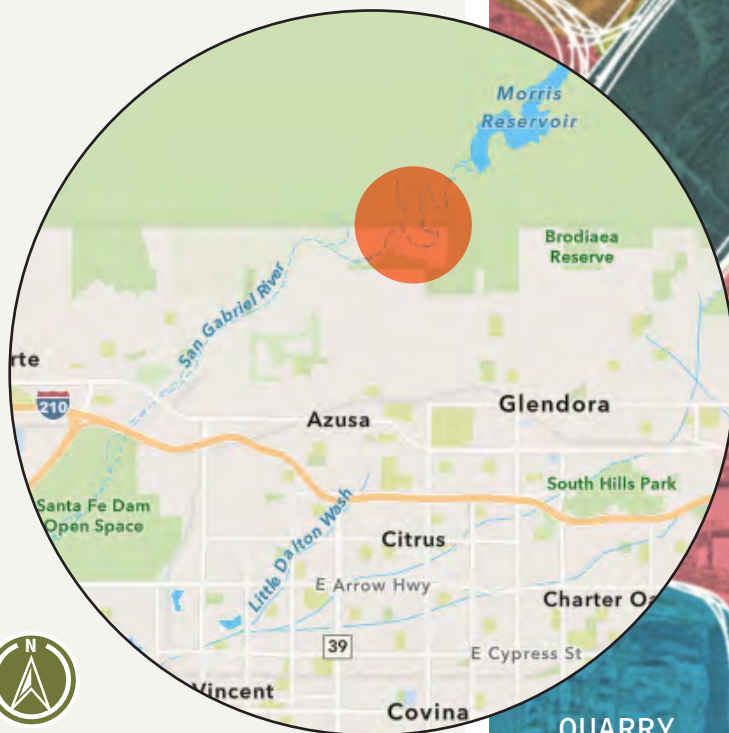
5,000 FT ELEVATION



AZUSA, CA



15 MI



2 MI

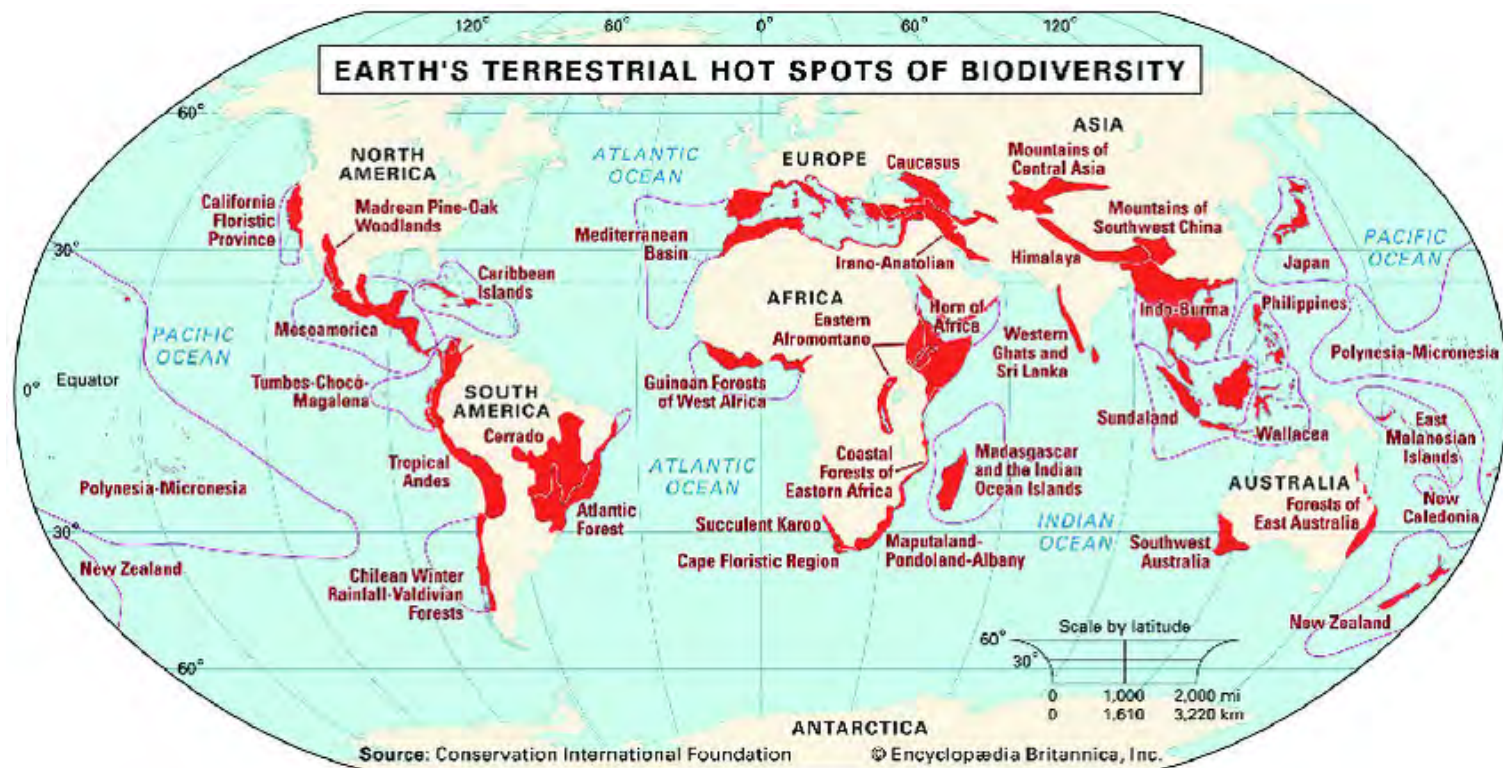


1,500 FT



AS CRITICAL AS A RAINFOREST OR REEF

California is one of the world's 36 biodiversity hotspots — regions with exceptional species diversity found nowhere else, but also facing serious threats. With over 70% of its native habitat already lost or degraded, protecting what remains is both urgent and globally significant. This important biodiversity is part of why the area was designated a National Monument.



In the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, that global urgency becomes local. Azusa Wilderness Park holds small but vital pieces of this threatened ecological mosaic.



This WCA image shows *Funastrom cynanchoides*, a native milkweed vine that is just one example of the area's rich biodiversity.



Seasonal streams and freshwater pools



Oak woodland



Rocky outcrop and cliff zones

PRIMARY HABITATS FOUND IN AZUSA CANYON



Chaparral



Riparian woodland



Alluvial fan and gravel bar



Coastal sage scrub

SPECIES AT HOME IN AZUSA'S WILDERNESS

The species listed here are not hypothetical. They are drawn from ecological surveys, wildlife reports, and documented sightings on or near the site. They are part of this landscape now, or have the potential to return if the right conditions are restored.

By protecting and enhancing their habitats, we help ensure the long-term success of these species and the ecosystems they support.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT



Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog
(*Rana muscosa*)
Habitat need: Cold, clear, slow-moving mountain streams and pools for breeding.



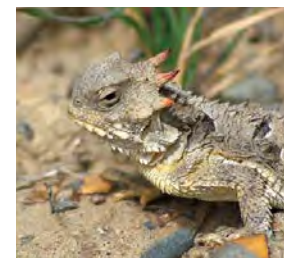
Least Bell's Vireo
(*Vireo bellii pusillus*)
Habitat need: Structurally complex willow-dominated riparian corridors.



San Gabriel Slender Salamander
(*Batrachoseps gabrieli*)
Habitat need: Moist, shaded leaf litter or rock crevices on north-facing slopes.



Monarch Butterfly
(*Danaus plexippus*)
Habitat need: Milkweed for larval stages and nectar plants for adults.



Coast Horned Lizard
(*Phrynosoma blainvillii*)
Habitat need: Open, sandy or loose soil areas in scrubland with native ant populations.



California Harvester Ant
(*Pogonomyrmex californicus*)
Habitat need: Open, well-drained soils in grassland or scrub areas. Need to manage invasive Argentine ant.



Yellow Warbler
(*Setophaga petechia*)
Habitat need: Dense riparian thickets, especially with willows or alders.



Gray Fox
(*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*)
Habitat need: Mixed woodland, chaparral, and scrub with dense understory for cover and denning, plus nearby water sources and minimal disturbance.

STATUS ABBREVIATIONS

- **FE:**
Federally Endangered
- **FT:**
Federally Threatened
- **CDFW SE:**
State Endangered
- **CDFW ST:**
State Threatened
- **CDFW SSC:**
California Species of Special Concern
- **WL:**
Watch List
- **FP:**
Fully Protected (California)

species	status	source	habitat
mountain yellow-legged frog	FE	potential reintroduction (WCA/Flaxington 2023)	cool, clear, slow-moving streams with shallow pools and shaded riparian zones
pacific chorus frog	common	observed onsite (Flaxington 2023)	moist habitats near water, riparian vegetation
western toad	CDFW SSC	observed onsite (Flaxington 2023)	moist meadows, riparian areas, shallow pools
san gabriel slender salamander	CDFW SSC	potential presence (BonTerra 2007)	shaded oak and chaparral slopes with leaf litter and moisture
coast horned lizard	CDFW SSC	potential habitat (BonTerra 2007)	open scrub, sandy soils, ant-rich areas
least bell's vireo	FE, CDFW SE	detected onsite (2023 SWFL/LBVI survey)	dense willow riparian zones, water-adjacent nesting
southwestern willow flycatcher	FE, CDFW SE	not detected, but suitable habitat (2023 report)	dense riparian thickets, especially willow-cottonwood
yellow warbler	CDFW SSC	regional habitat suitable (BonTerra)	riparian woodland and brush for nesting
nuttall's woodpecker	common	regional (Flaxington, site-adjacent)	oak woodland, tree cavities for nesting
lazuli bunting	common breeder	observed near site (Flaxington 2023)	open shrubby habitats and riparian edges
gray fox	common	regional (BonTerra 2007)	woodland edges, brushy slopes
bobcat	common	regional (BonTerra)	scrub, riparian zones, wide-ranging
mule deer	common	regional movement corridor	oak woodland, grassland, chaparral
mountain lion (puma)	CDFW SSC (candidate)	regional sightings, San Gabriel corridor	large, connected territories; multiple habitat types
black bear	common	regional, upper watershed	woodland, riparian, upland slopes
santa ana sucker	FT	documented in San Gabriel River	shallow, gravel-bottomed streams with cool, clean water
monarch butterfly	candidate for ESA	regional, habitat enhancement potential	milkweed patches for breeding, nectar plants for adults
native solitary bees	ecologically significant	expected presence	open ground, leaf litter, flowering native plant zones
western gray squirrel	common	regional (Flaxington, BonTerra)	oak woodland and forest canopy
california ground squirrel	common	observed regionally (Flaxington)	grassland, open woodland, disturbed ground
dusky-footed woodrat	CDFW SSC	regional habitat (BonTerra)	oak woodland, chaparral, dense understory
coyote	common	regional sightings	varied, uses edge habitat, scrub, and riparian zones
two-striped garter snake	CDFW SSC	regional reports (BonTerra)	streams, moist meadows, near water
side-blotched lizard	common	observed onsite (Flaxington 2023)	dry open areas, rock outcrops, scrub
california sister butterfly	ecologically significant	regional (BonTerra)	oak woodland; caterpillars feed on coast live oak
velvet ant (wasp)	ecologically significant	observed onsite (Flaxington 2023)	dry, sandy soils; parasite of ground-nesting bees
orb weaver spider	common	expected presence	shrubland, woodland edges
harvester ant	ecologically significant	observed onsite (Flaxington 2023)	dry, open areas; keystone food source for horned lizards
arroyo chub	CDFW SSC	documented regionally	slow-moving streams, sandy-bottomed pools
santa ana speckled dace	CDFW SSC	documented regionally	cool, well-oxygenated streams
mosquitofish	invasive	noted in site surveys	sluggish, warm water "often competes with native fish"
wilson's warbler	common migrant	regional observation	dense riparian vegetation
orange-crowned warbler	common	observed regionally	shrubland, riparian forest
black-headed grosbeak	common breeder	regional (Flaxington)	riparian woodland
hooded onole	common	regional (Flaxington)	palm trees, riparian forest
swainson's thrush	migrant	expected in riparian habitat	dense, moist woodland understory near water



SAN GABRIEL RIVER WATERSHED



The site sits within the San Gabriel River watershed, a vital corridor connecting mountain ecosystems to the valleys below. Just downstream, the river feeds spreading grounds that **recharge Southern California's groundwater**. This area marks a key transition where mountain runoff meets lower-elevation riparian habitat, **drawing wildlife (and humans)** in search of water, shade, and food. Seasonal pools, river access, and native vegetation make the park a crucial stopover for birds, amphibians, and pollinators, and a **potential refuge for sensitive species** that rely on clean, flowing water.

Azusa Canyon's HUMAN HISTORY



10,000+ years ago

Indigenous stewardship of the canyon begins, including the Xaapchivit village. Ecological knowledge, ceremony, and land care practices define the region.

1771

San Gabriel Mission is founded, initiating the forced relocation, labor, and cultural suppression of Native peoples from the surrounding area.

1898

The City of Azusa is incorporated, following an influx of settlers brought by the railroad boom and gold rush.

1930s

Massive floods lead to the construction of Morris and Cogswell Dams, disrupting native fish and river ecology.

1940s–1990s

Parts of the San Gabriel Mountains are used for military and JPL missile testing.

1940s–1970s

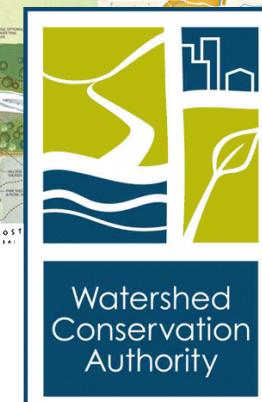
The site becomes home to the Canyon Inn (El Encanto), a rustic restaurant and gathering place. It eventually closes, but the iconic sign remains.

2003

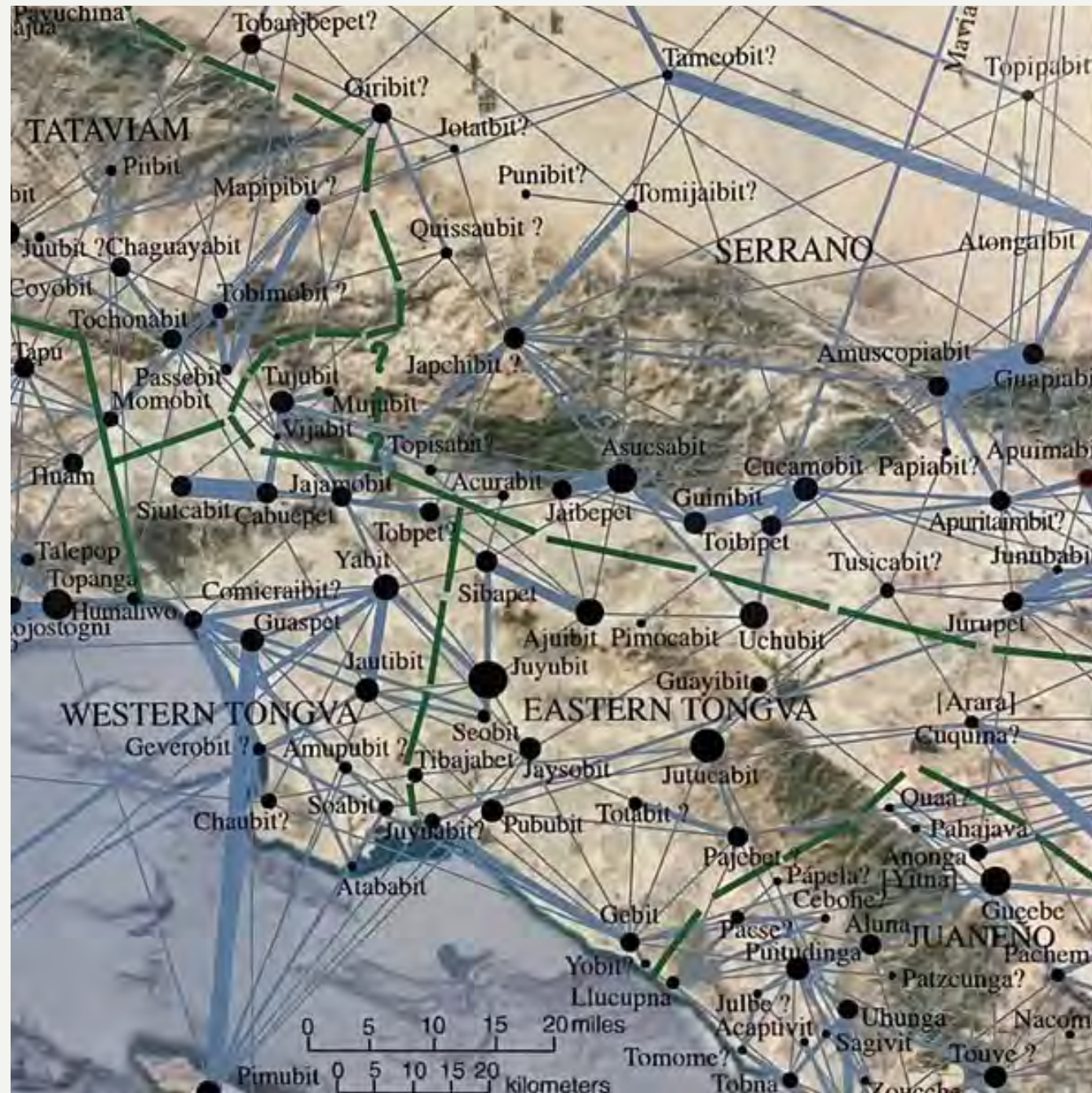
The WCA acquires the site to protect open space and river access. Community planning begins for a future wilderness park.

2014

President Obama designates the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, recognizing the area's ecological and cultural value.



A Landscape of LIVING LINEAGES



For thousands of years, this canyon was part of a vibrant network of Native villages—each with its own language, leadership, and traditions shaped in close relationship with the land. **Anthropologist Chester King** and others helped reconstruct **regional kinship map**, revealing that Southern California was once home to **more than a hundred sovereign communities, not a single tribe**.

One such village, Xaapchivit, is tied to the Nunez family of Azusa. Their ancestors practiced controlled burns, tended native plants, and stewarded water and wildlife with care passed down through generations.

Chief Anthony Morales, of the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians, **has shared a story about how elders protected their culture in the face of erasure.** When the treasure of ceremony, language, and tradition were threatened, **one elder said:**

Much was taken. Some traditions were nearly lost. But others survived, passed quietly from parent to child, elder to youth, through memory, story, and care.

This story echoes across generations—through Nathan and his father, Kevin, through my own father and me, and now, through the children who will one day walk these trails. **What we choose to pass down matters.**

“I know where to hide it. We’ll hide it in the children.”



Resisting Erasure

In 1785, **Toypurina**, a medicine woman from the village of Japchivit, led a coordinated revolt against the San Gabriel Mission. She **united leaders from eight nearby villages in a bold act of resistance against colonization and cultural suppression.** She did not fight with weapons, but with conviction, clarity, and courage.

She should be as widely known as Joan of Arc, her name spoken in schools, her strength remembered in the land that shaped her.

This park offers a chance to honor more stories like hers through interpretive signage, education, and the land itself, ensuring these histories are not lost but seen, shared, and carried forward.

AZUSA DEMOGRAPHICS

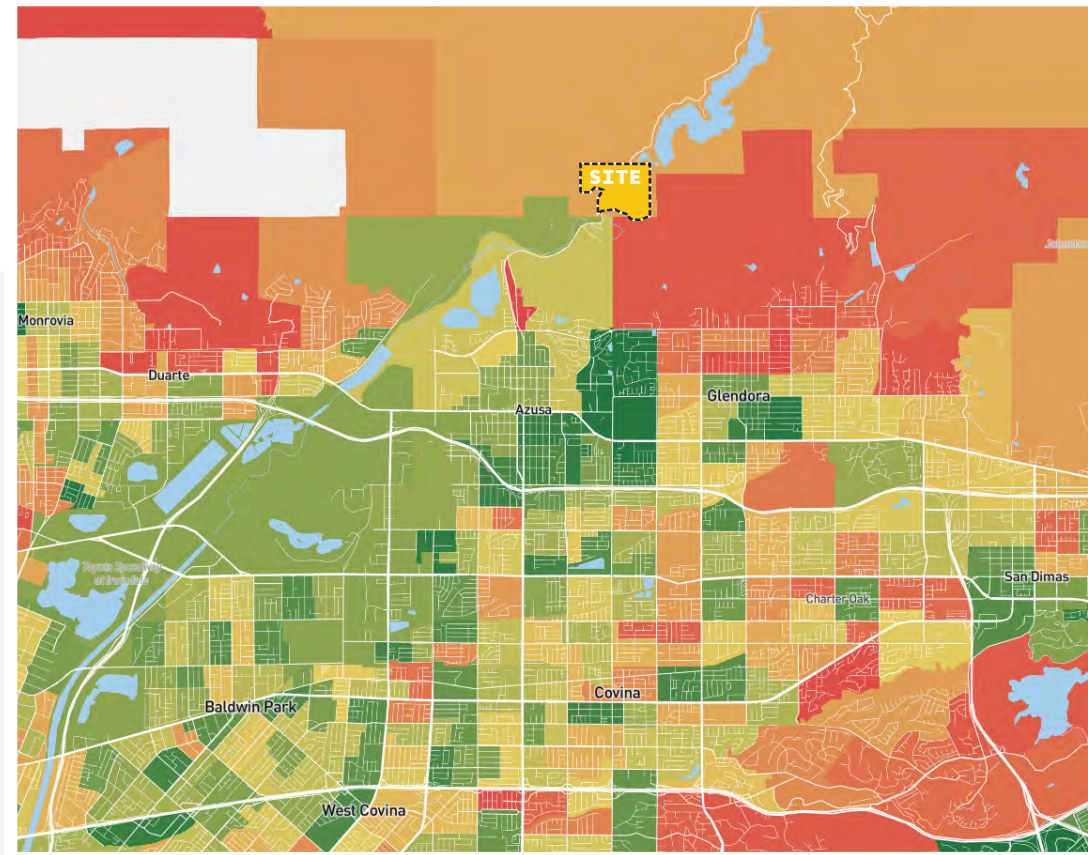
Azusa, California is home to a population of approximately **50,000 people**, according to the 2020 Census. The city has a diverse demographic profile, with **64% of residents identifying as Hispanic or Latino**. The racial composition includes 27.6% White, 14.8% Asian, and a mix of other racial and ethnic groups. The **median age is 31.7 years**, and **31.8% of residents are foreign-born**. Just **over half of the housing units (55.4%) are owner-occupied**. Educational attainment is relatively high, with **80.2% of adults holding at least a high school diploma**. The **median household income is \$85,727**.

Household Age

The median age of residents in Azusa is 31.7. This is younger than the median age of 38.1 in the United States.

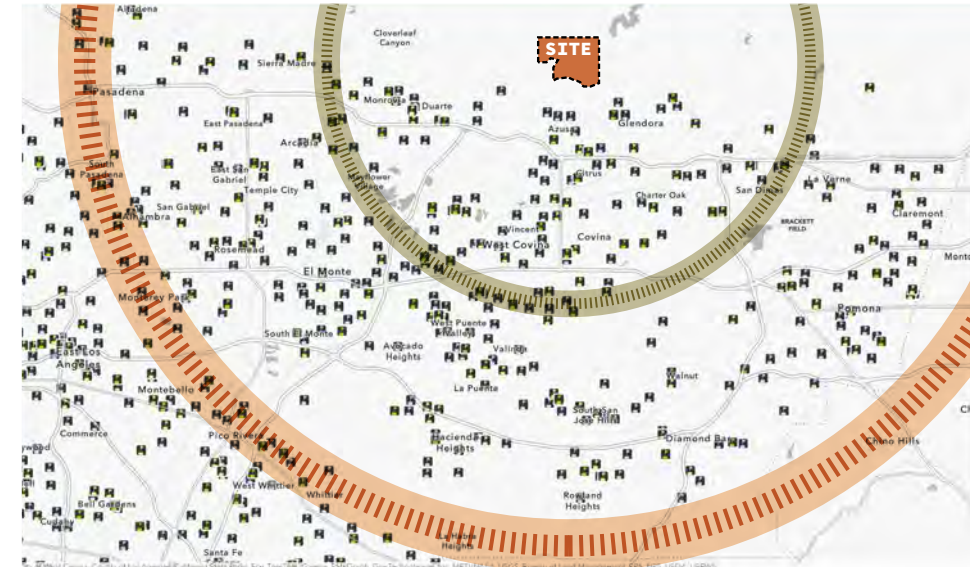
The areas in green are among the youngest areas in the city.

Areas in red show Azusa neighborhoods where the median resident is older, and areas in yellow show areas where the median age is between the late 30s and early 40s.



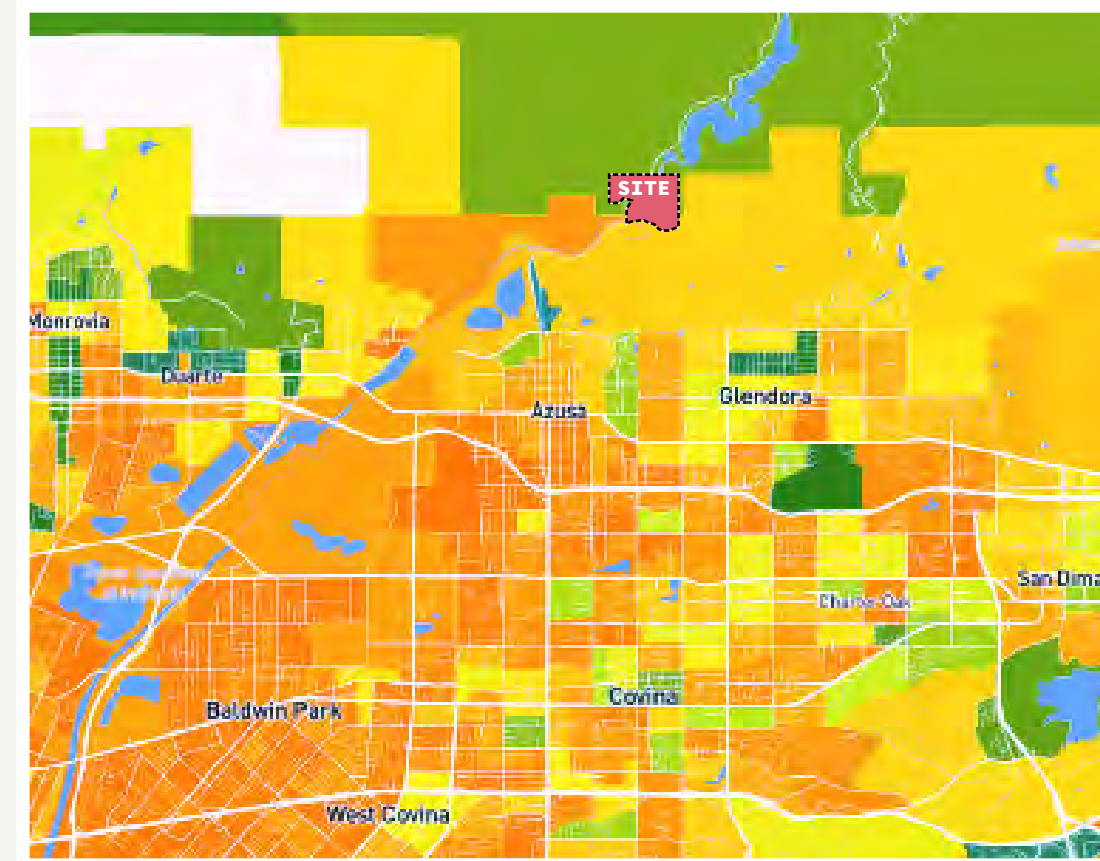
NST

Elementary, Middle, and High Schools



The area is surrounded by a high concentration of schools within a 5 to 10 mile radius, including elementary, middle, and high schools as well as colleges. **These demographics point to a key audience for the park: families and school groups looking for outdoor spaces to learn, play, and connect with nature.**

Household Size



NST

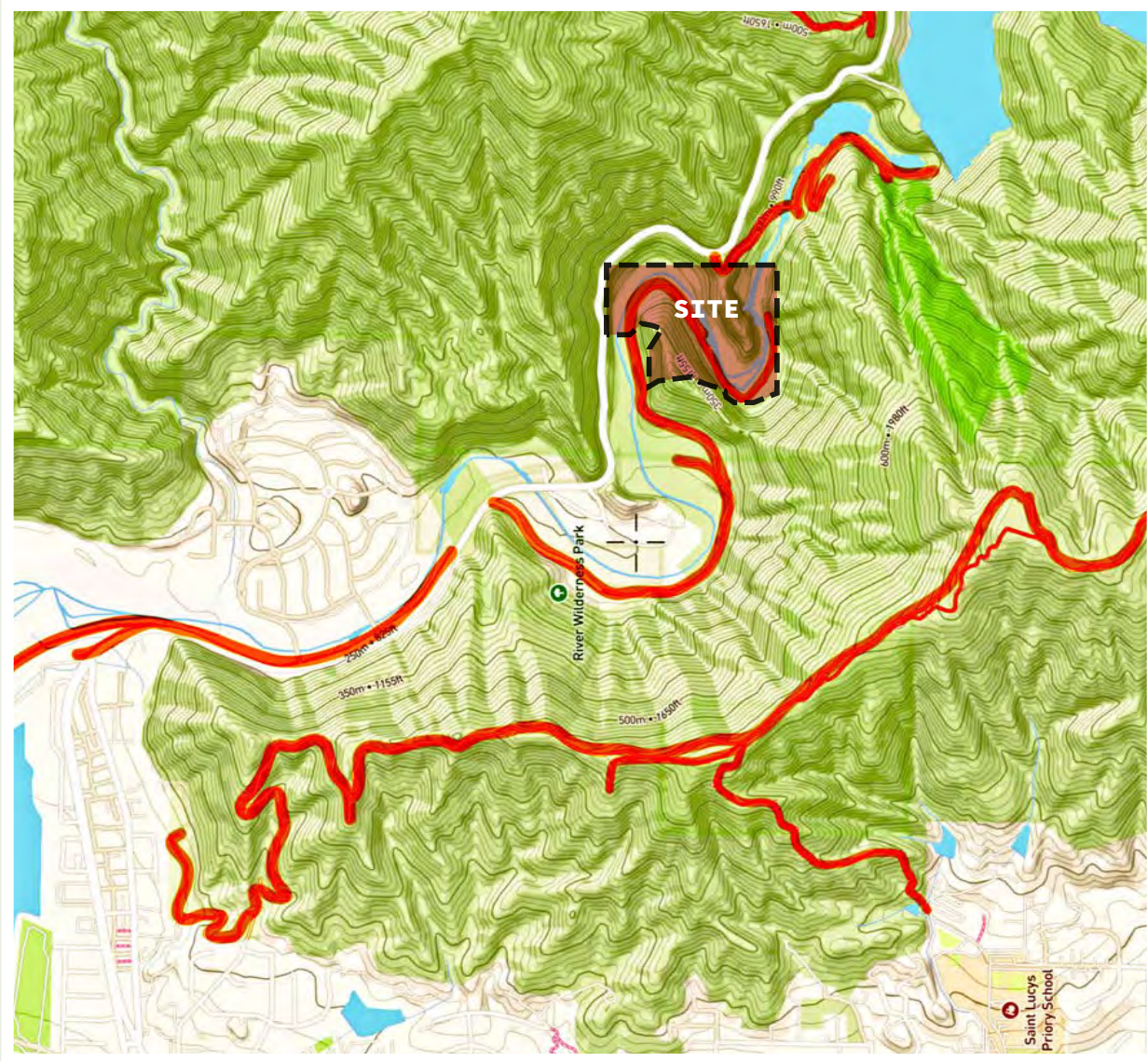
Azusa has an average of 3.26 individuals per household. **Dark orange areas have larger household sizes, which generally means more children.** Dark green areas have smaller household sizes, and there will typically be fewer young children.



GETTING THERE

Access to Azusa Wilderness Park is limited—but full of potential. While several trails, streets, and transit options come close, they stop just short of fully connecting people to the site. Strengthening these links would allow more visitors, especially those without cars, to experience the park. From hikers on the ridge to cyclists on the river trail or families arriving by bus, small improvements could open up meaningful access across the region.

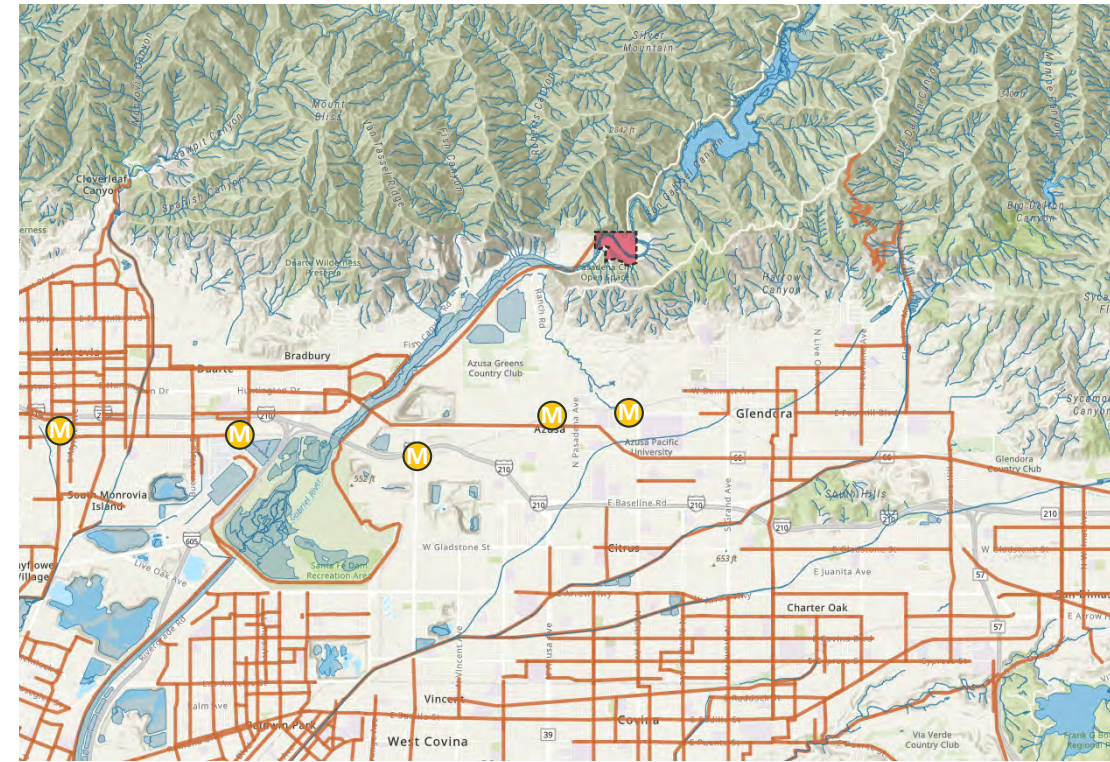
Hiking Trails



NST

This map from the Hikers app shows that existing ridge and foothill trails come close to the site, **offering a clear opportunity to create future connections for hikers.**

Bike Routes

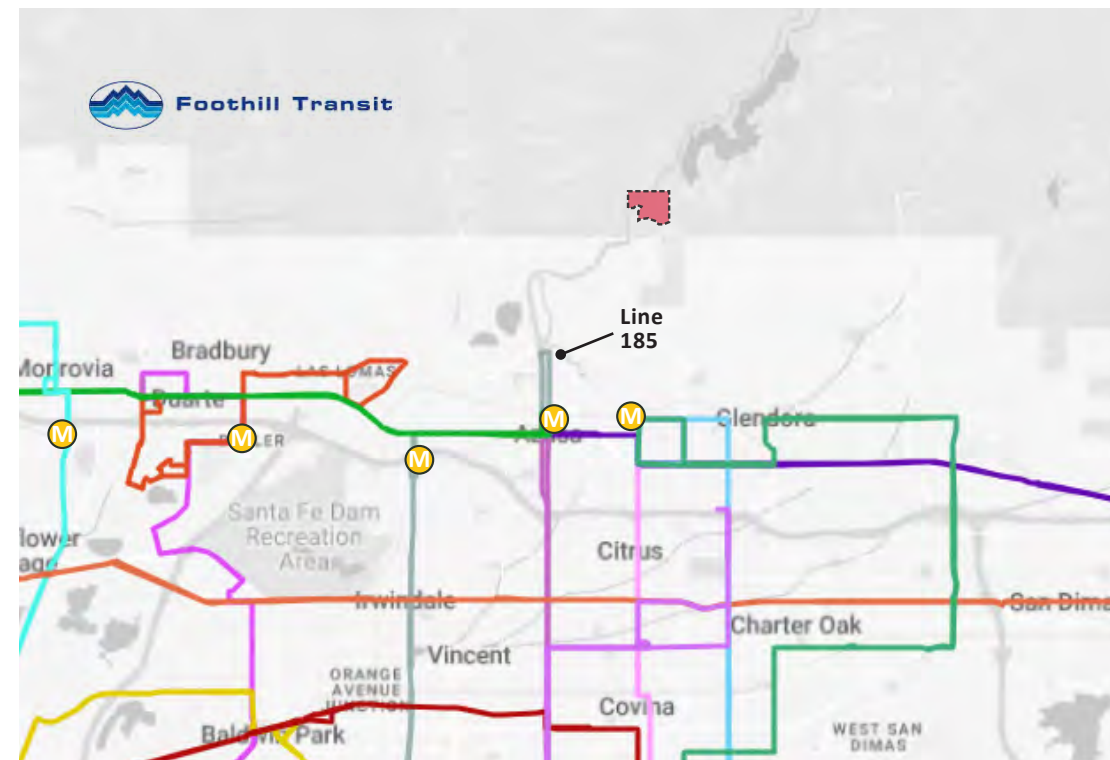


— Bike Safe Streets/Trails M Gold Line/A Line Stops

NST

Azusa has limited bike-friendly streets, but it is connected to the San Gabriel River Trail—a major regional route that runs from Long Beach up toward the foothills, ending just shy of the wilderness park. **Extending the trail and improving local bike infrastructure would allow better access for cyclists.**

Bus Routes



NST

Meanwhile, this map from Foothill Transit shows all of the active lines in the area. Bus line 185 stops 2.2 miles from the site. **Better “last mile” connections would make the park more accessible to transit riders, including students, families, and those without private vehicles.**

BREAKING GROUND, BUILDING MOMENTUM

The Watershed Conservation Authority (WCA) is actively advancing plans to make Azusa Wilderness Park more accessible, welcoming, and ecologically resilient. With funding already secured, they're preparing to break ground on improvements that include grading, utility installation, decomposed granite paths, and a shaded pavilion overlook.

These near-term upgrades will support hiking, programming, and low-impact use while protecting the site's natural systems.

Elements such as the proposed roundabout, intended to slow traffic and define the park's entrance, are part of the current master plan but have not yet received final approval from Caltrans, which oversees the highway. Likewise, the café and visitor center building remains in conceptual design. That structure, located in the area least prone to rockslides, offers a key opportunity to reimagine its use—potentially expanding it to house WCA offices, a flexible nature center, and indoor/outdoor programming space.



Named with Intention



Public artworks like *Danza Indigenas* in Baldwin Park have honored Indigenous history by restoring names such as *Sunigna*, the original village name for that area. As we consider a new identity for this park, we might look to another meaningful name rooted in this

region: *Azuk*, a Tongva word for “grandmother.” It evokes the land itself as a wise elder and a guardian of future generations.

Any naming process should be done in close collaboration with Native leaders and artists to ensure it reflects the deep cultural connections and histories of this place.

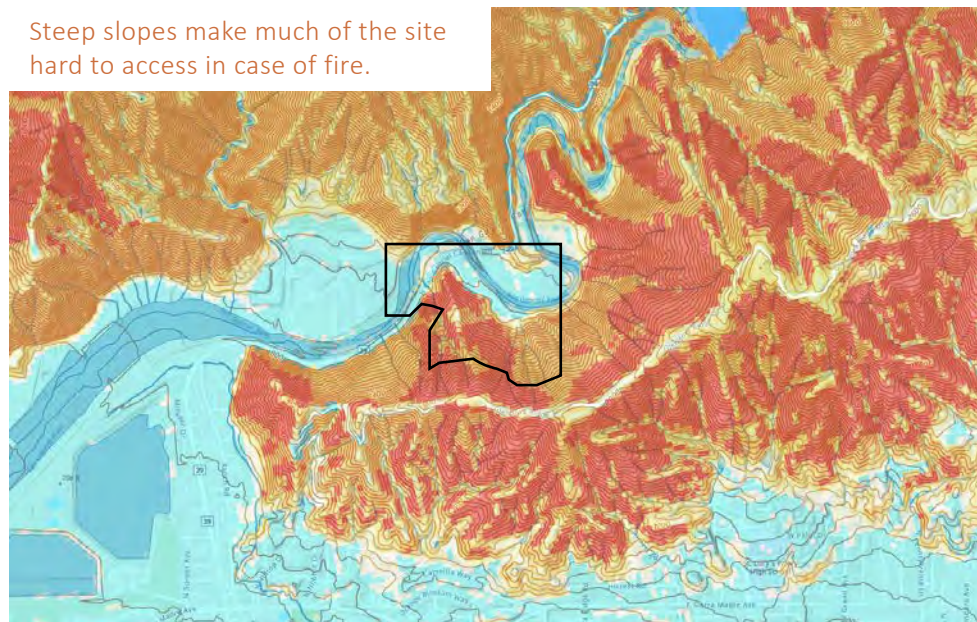
The original El Encanto sign still stands and offers a compelling opportunity for thoughtful reuse elsewhere on site. Celebrating its midcentury character could provide a memorable photo opportunity and subtle nod to local history—while allowing the park's primary identity to evolve, potentially reflecting Indigenous place names and deeper cultural roots.

The diagram at right shows the utility extension and the area of the site expected to see initial construction within the next year.



While the current master plan lays important groundwork, many elements remain flexible. For the purpose of this project, features not yet funded or under construction (such as the roundabout and café) can still be reimaged to better support long-term goals for stewardship, access, and education. One immediate concern is the placement of the natural play area, which is positioned close to Highway 39 in the current concept and may benefit from relocation or additional buffering.

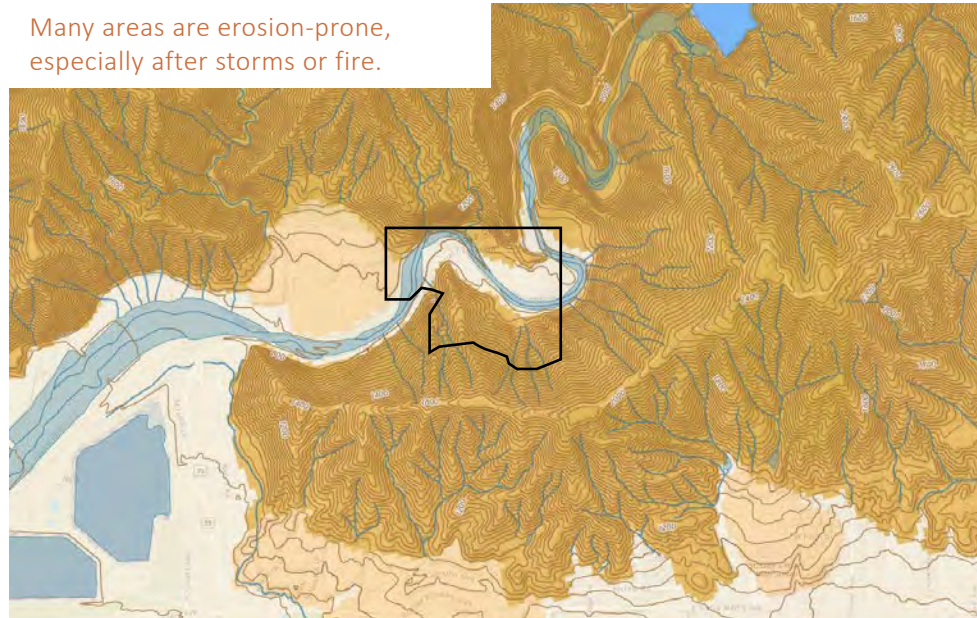
Steep slopes make much of the site hard to access in case of fire.



Wildfire Suppression Difficulty Index 2025



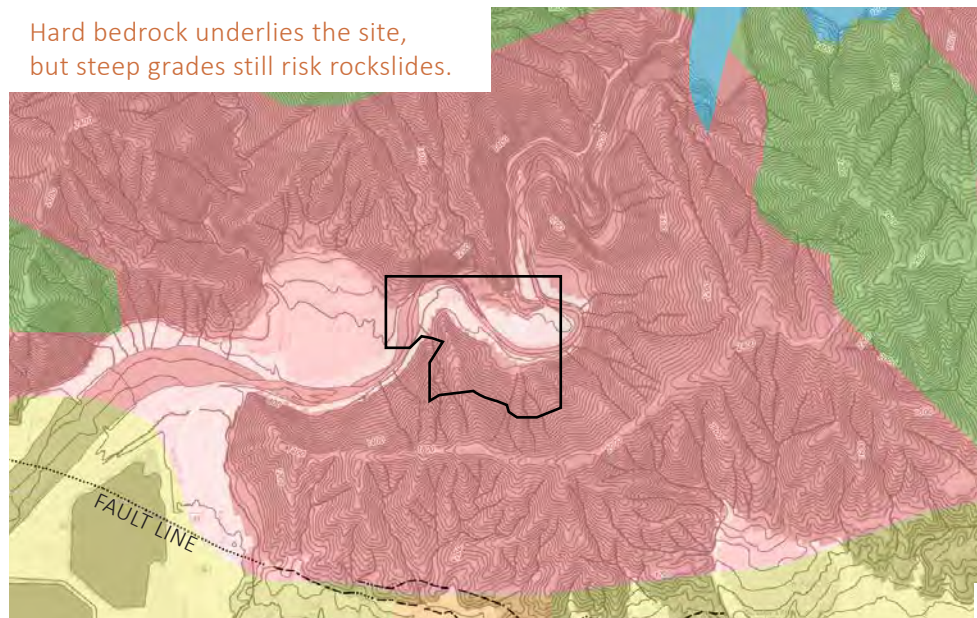
Many areas are erosion-prone, especially after storms or fire.



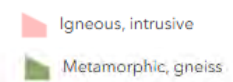
Potential Erosion Hazard



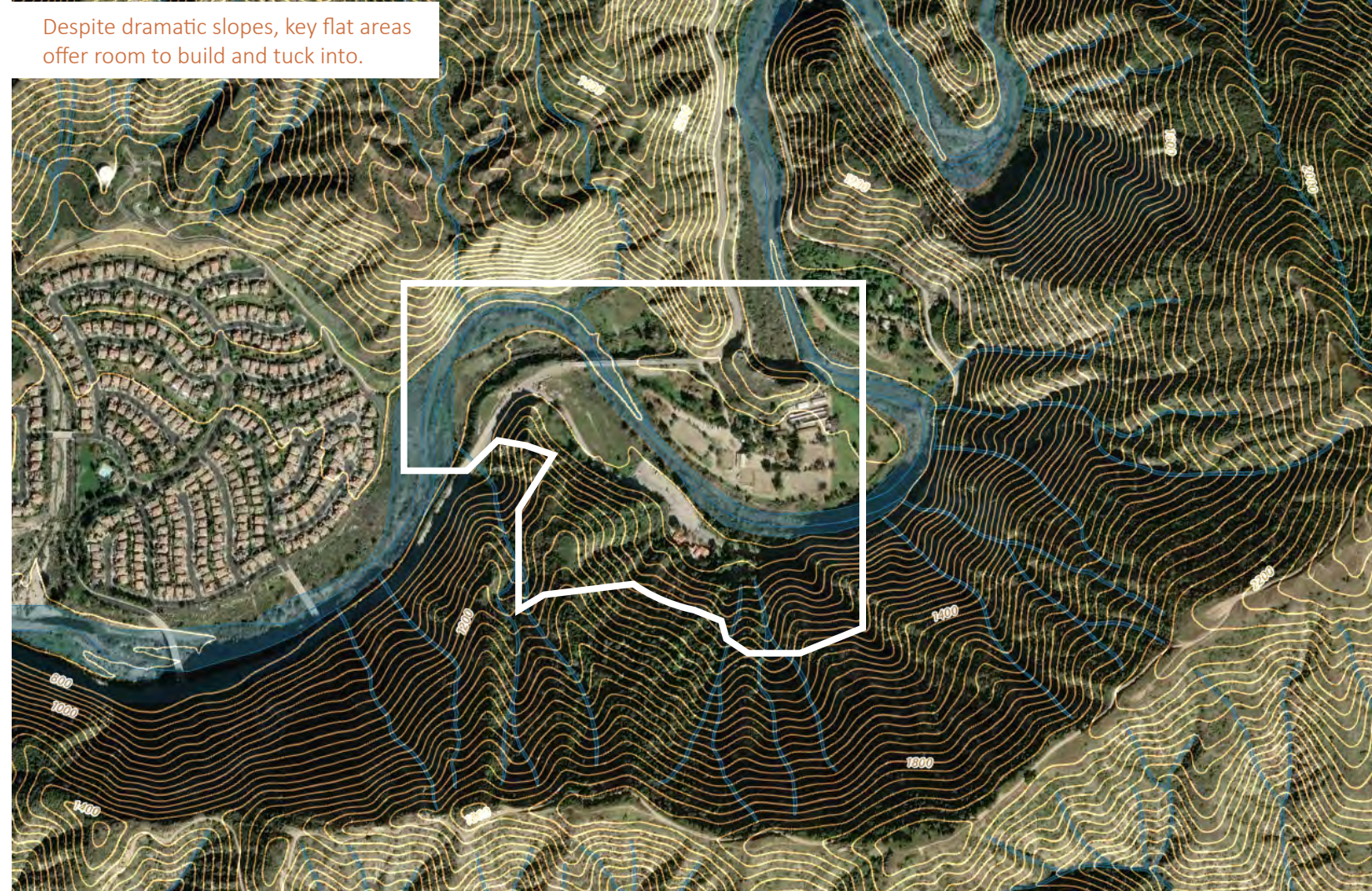
Hard bedrock underlies the site, but steep grades still risk rockslides.



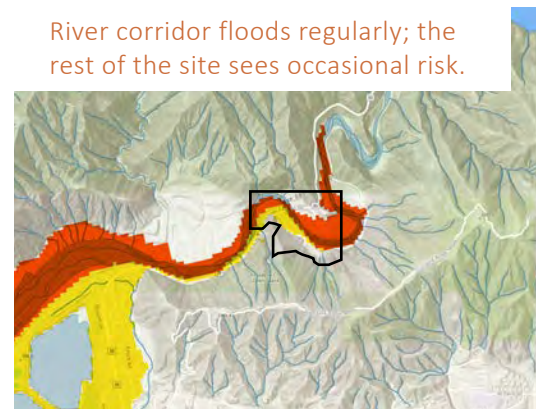
USA Geology Survey



Despite dramatic slopes, key flat areas offer room to build and tuck into.



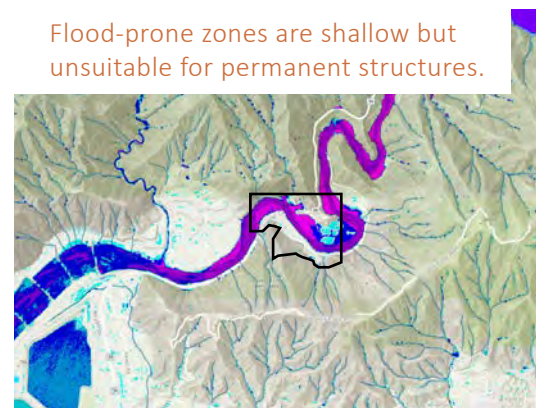
River corridor floods regularly; the rest of the site sees occasional risk.



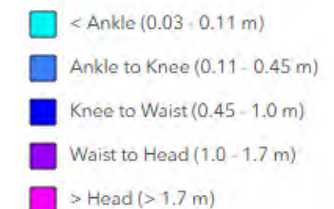
Flood Frequency



Flood-prone zones are shallow but unsuitable for permanent structures.



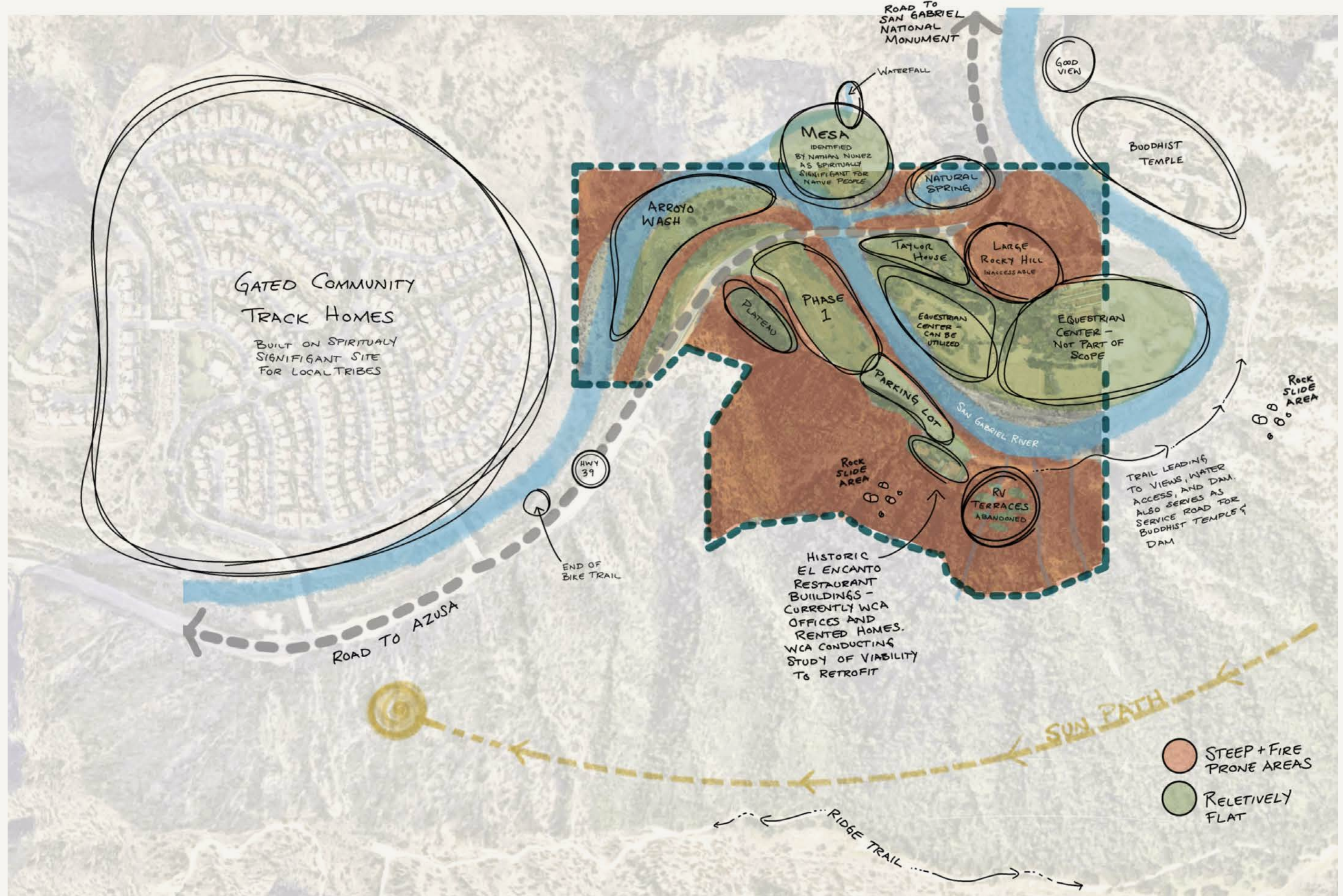
100 Flood Depth



Design SHAPED BY SLOPE, FIRE, AND FLOOD

The conditions of the site shape where we can and should build. With limited flat land, steep slopes, and areas prone to fire or rockfall, thoughtful placement is critical. These ArcGIS maps highlight the environmental factors that must guide every design decision.

EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS



Design
Recommendations for
**SLOPE, FIRE,
FLOOD, AND
HABITAT**

FIRE + VEGETATION

- **Prioritize California native, fire-adapted species** such as Toyon, Lemonade Berry, Deergrass, and Sagebrush that resprout and recover well.
- Remove invasive species like mustard and fountain grass that increase fuel loads and fire spread.
- **Maintain defensible space** around structures by limiting dense vegetation and avoiding trees close to buildings.
- Use low-fuel, widely spaced planting and strategic fuel breaks near built areas and along access roads.

SLOPES + EROSION

- **Avoid placing costly or enclosed structures near steep slopes** or areas with rockfall history.
- Use **lightweight, open-air elements like decks, pavilions, or amphitheater seating in slope-adjacent zones.**
- Stabilize slopes with gabion walls, boulder benches, or terraced native planting that doubles as trail edges or informal gathering spots.
- **Rely on deep-rooted native plants** such as California Buckwheat, Foothill Needlegrass, Giant Wildrye, and Ceanothus **to anchor soil.**
- Combine with erosion control techniques like contour swales, jute netting, or mulch during plant establishment.



FLOODING + EROSION

- **Site permanent infrastructure upslope of 100-year flood zones where possible.**
- In low-lying or riparian areas, use temporary, movable, or permeable elements such as benches, play features, or art installations.
- **Design for seasonal water flow** using vegetated bioswales, rain gardens, and erosion-tolerant planting like Mugwort and Western Goldenrod.
- **Prevent bank erosion and sediment loss with native riparian species** such as Willow, Sycamore, and Cottonwood where appropriate.

SENSITIVE HABITATS

- **Preserve and buffer riparian corridors** to support species like the Santa Ana Sucker, Least Bell's Vireo, and Mountain Yellow-Legged Frog.
- Avoid grading or disturbance in high-slope, erosion-prone, or rockfall-sensitive areas unless stabilization is built into the plan.
- **Restore degraded habitat zones with locally appropriate natives** that provide food, shelter, or pollinator support—e.g., Milkweed for Monarchs or Coast Live Oak for bird and mammal species.
- **Maintain quiet buffer zones near breeding or migration-sensitive areas,** especially along the river and spring corridors.
- **Use raised walkways, overlooks, and wildlife blinds** to allow for close observation of nature without degrading habitats or interrupting wildlife behavior.



CASE STUDIES



OAK CANYON NATURE CENTER

Anaheim, CA

SIZE: 58 acres

CONTEXT: SoCal Nature Park situated within a residential neighborhood of Anaheim Hills and just outside of the Cleveland National Forest

AMENITIES: 8 hiking trails all under 1 mile, year-round stream, oak woodland and coastal sage scrub habitat, small amphitheater, events for up to 200 guests, parking with donation, nature center with museum and live animals, play area, picnic tables, wind caves, scenic lookout

PROGRAMMING: Weekend naturalist-led hikes through the canyon to learn about local flora and fauna, education on Native American traditions, art, and games, nature center rental to school/scouts/other community groups, community service hours for local high school groups, archery lessons, wildlife story reading, monthly night hikes led by naturalists, day camp for 5-12 year olds in fall, winter, and summer

RELEVANCE: This relatively small nature park is a huge community asset due to its urban agency and active programming. The trails all consist of .25-.75 miles with light on the land interventions that allow for easy access to nature while containing people to set areas of travel. The nature center provides a community hub and the flex spaces are utilized by many demographics. This is a wonderful example of a cherished nature park and how to embed within the community.

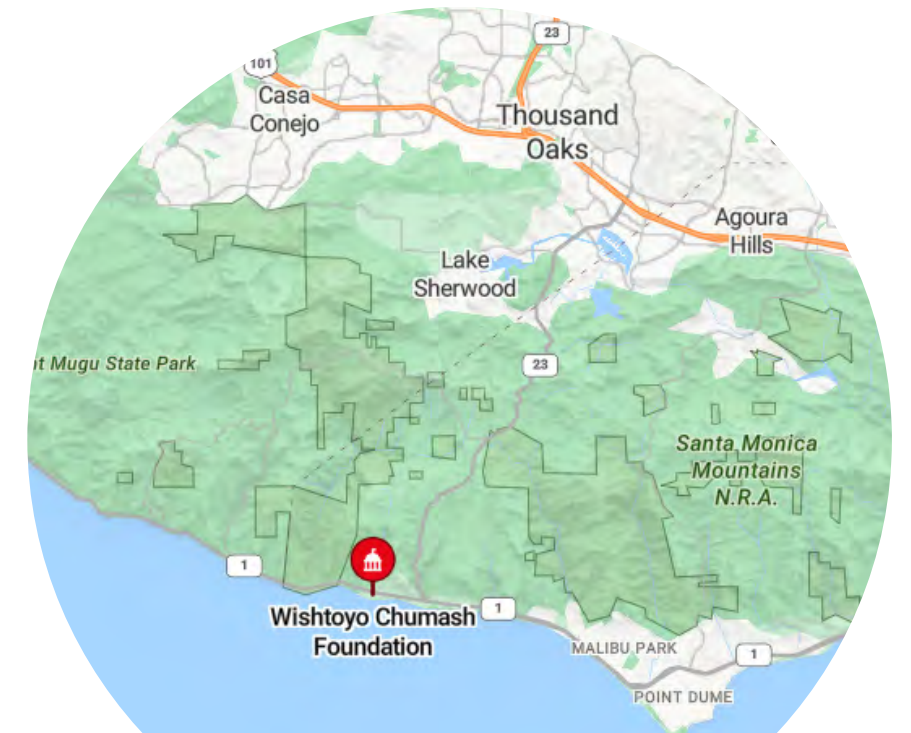
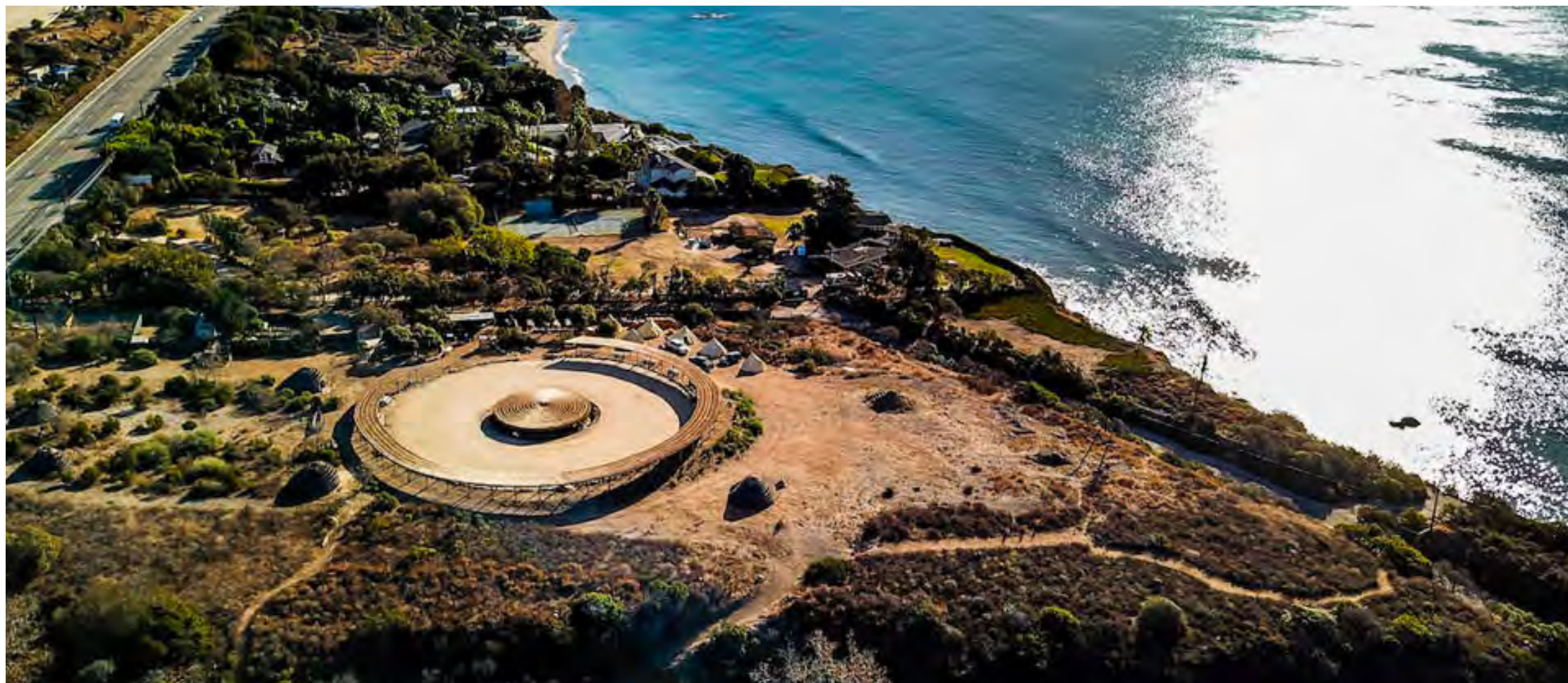


WISHTOYO CHUMASH VILLAGE MALIBU, CA

SIZE: 4 acres

CONTEXT: On the edge of the Santa Monica Mountain and the Pacific Ocean, this site is built on an 8,000-year-old Chumash Village

RELEVANCE: The Village functions as an outdoor classroom, sacred gathering space for people and events in the community, as well as inter-tribal events, and public and private ceremonies and celebrations. and scientific field site. It houses traditional 'aps (tule and willow Chumash homes), a ceremonial circle and dancing grounds, and many material aspects of Chumash culture and lifeways. There is also a welcome center, an outdoor kitchen, and ample camping and classroom spaces. Built upon a historical 8,000-year-old village site, Wishtoyo's Village is a unique, traditional Chumash village. Built by a Native-led organization.



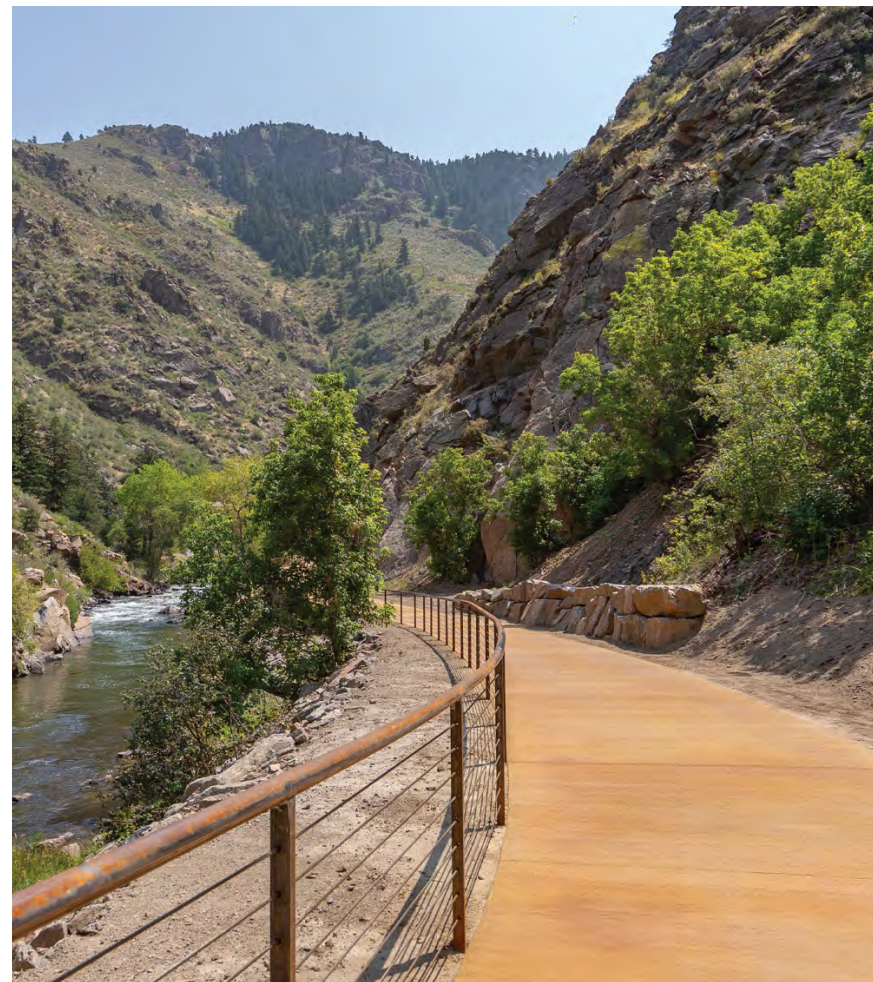
HONORING CULTURE

CLEAR CREEK CANYON TRAIL GOLDEN, CO

SIZE: 6 miles

CONTEXT: Trail head beginning in the suburbs of Denver, directly adjacent to Arapaho, Roosevelt, and Pike National Forests

RELEVANCE: Similar to how Azusa Wilderness Park is the welcome into the San Gabriel Mountains National Monument, this is the first segment of Jefferson and Clear Creek Counties Peak to Plains trail. This six-mile multi-use trail travels through rugged canyon terrain and required extensive retaining walls, bridges, and underpasses. Project challenges include the narrow and steep canyon terrain, a river with variable flow and flood depth, a busy state highway (US 6) adjacent to the river, the presence of endangered species, and geological hazards. Materials are well chosen to blend in with the environment and retain beauty as they age.



MATERIAL SELECTION

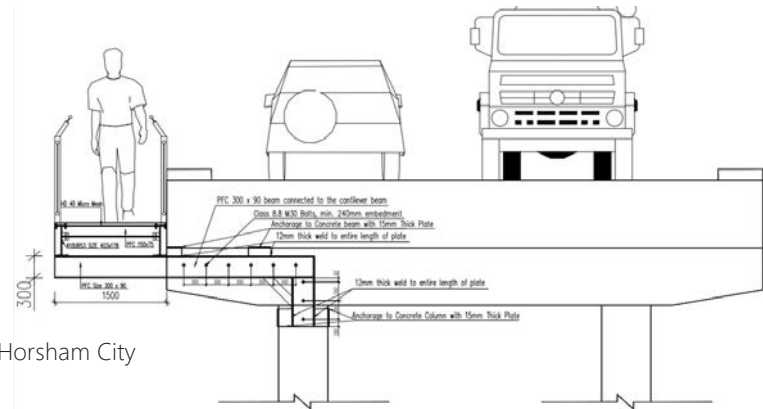
BRIDGE WIDENING RETROFIT

North Carolina

SIZE: 8' 6" wide x 620' long

CONTEXT: Vehicular bridge crossing the Tar River, no immediate commercial or residential surrounding and primarily used as part of a bike path

RELEVANCE: As part of a statewide bicycle planning program, a town in North Carolina needed a wider bridge to accommodate cyclists. Rather than tearing down the existing bridge, they simply added to it, installing a cantilever walkway with aluminum decking, horizontal rails, and kick plates designed by MAADI Group. The bridge widening project provided a safe, separated bike path for cyclists, at a fraction of the cost of rebuilding a bridge. HWY 39's existing bridge could be utilized to safely connect the east and west sides of the Azusa Wilderness Park site.



Similar design concept from Horsham City and the Wimmera River



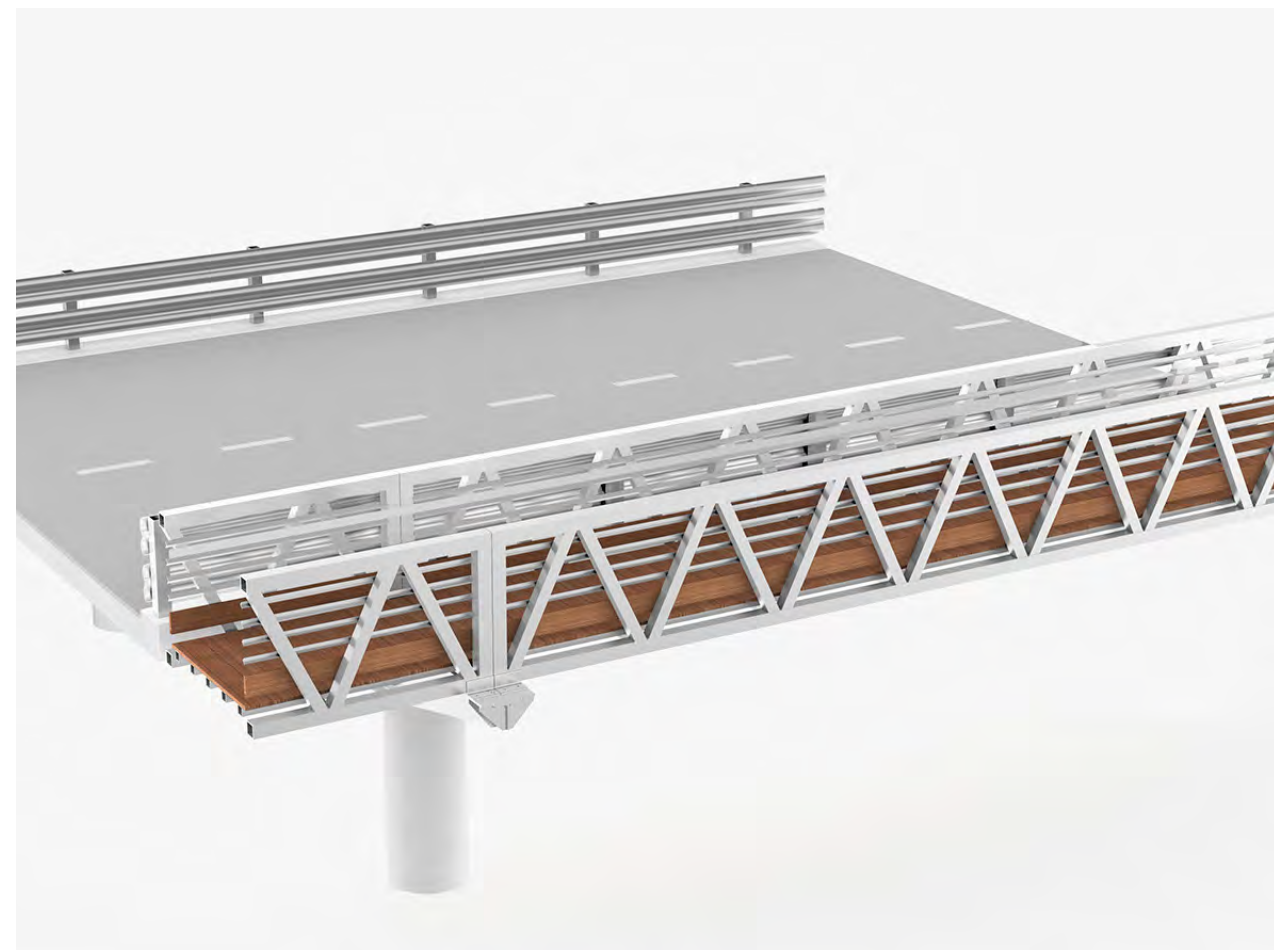
Alternate finish



Cantilevered extension



View from below showing cantilevers



PRACTICAL
CONNECTION

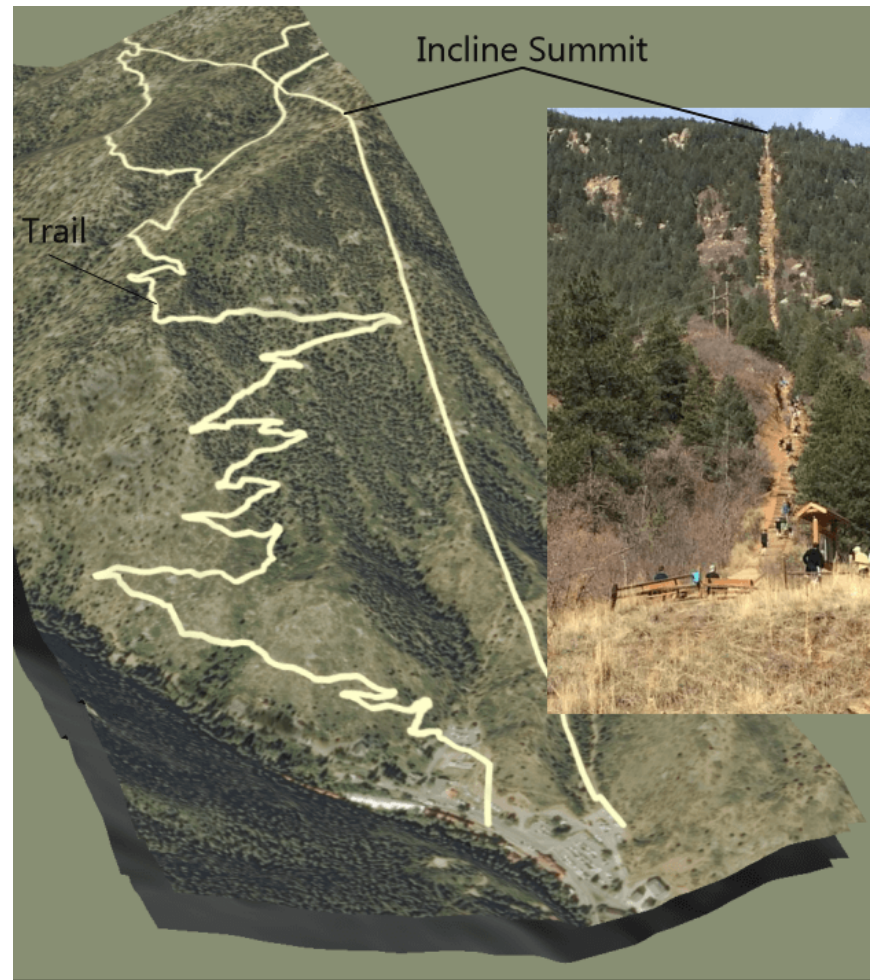
MANITOU INCLINE

Colorado Springs, CO

SIZE: 1 mile, 2,000+ vertical feet

CONTEXT: Adjacent to Colorado Springs and set within the outer edges of the Pike National Forest

RELEVANCE: The Manitou Incline is a strenuous, popular hiking trail in Manitou Springs, Colorado, known for its steep climb and numerous stairs. It's a former funicular railway that gained notoriety as a fitness challenge. The trail climbs over 2,000 vertical feet in less than a mile, with sections as steep as 68% grade. Technical aspects from the stabilization concepts and the construction details, such as the cable-anchored runs of timber steps, steep slope catchment walls, and timber drainage chase that collects cross drainage to direct it away from the Incline steps could all be utilized when envisioning an access trail to the top of the peak on the site. While not as steep an incline as the Manitou Incline, these principals would carry over. This trail has created a draw for outdoor enthusiasts.



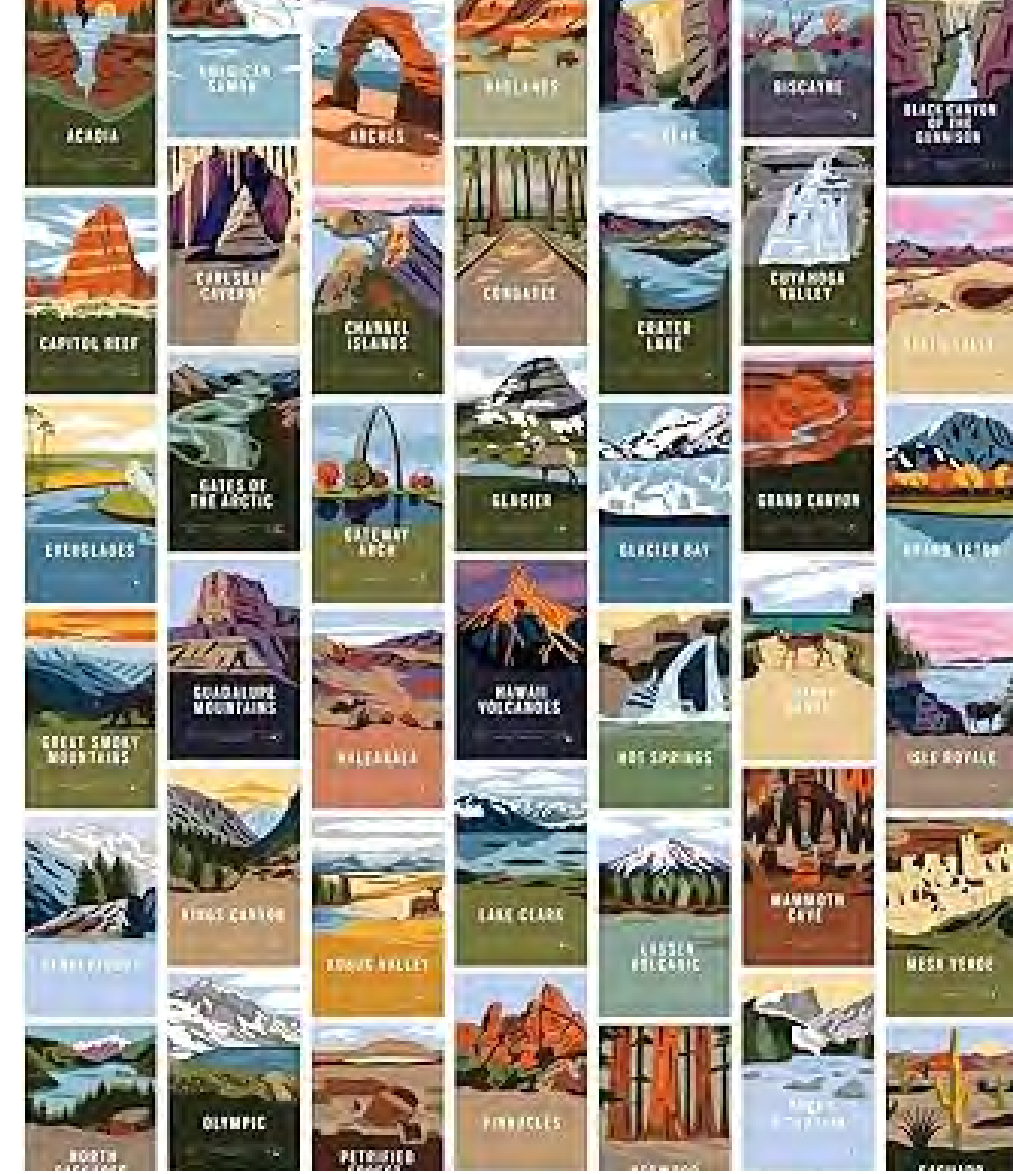
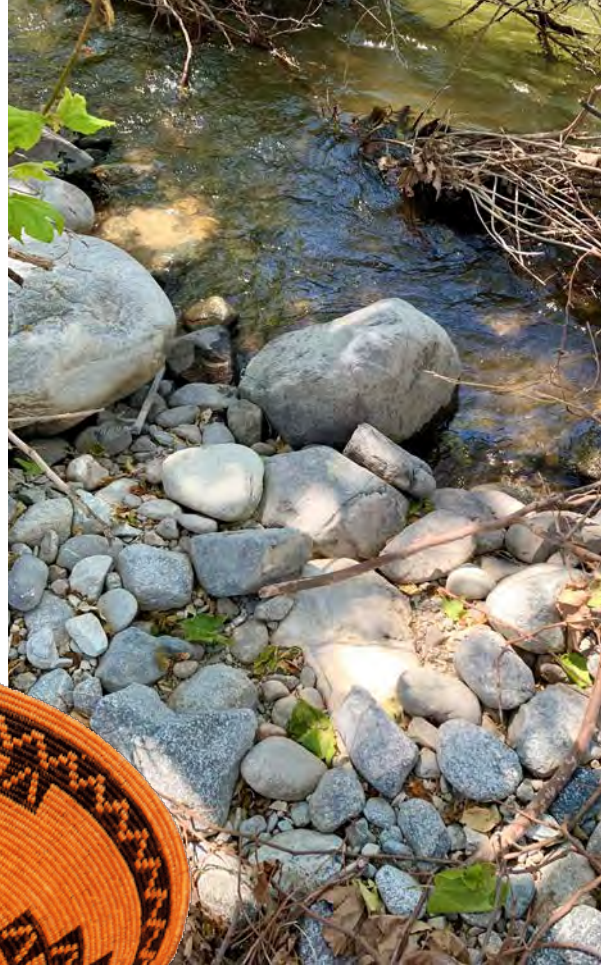
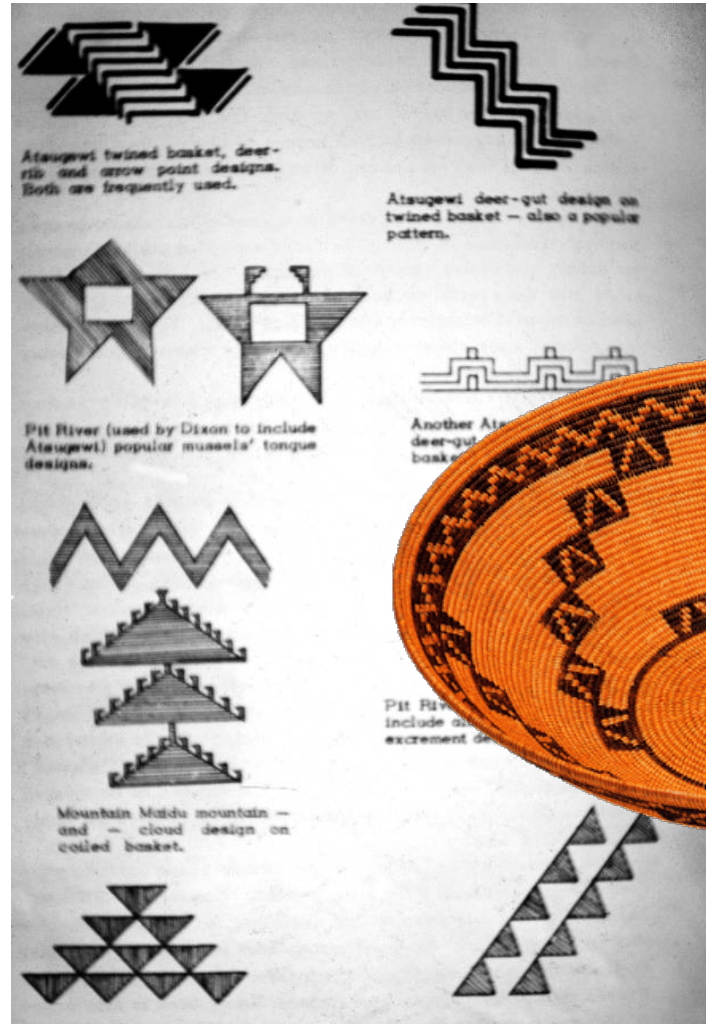
INTENTIONAL LANDMARKS

CONCEPT DESIGN

Handwritten Arabic calligraphy in black ink, flowing diagonally across the top left of the red background.



DESIGN INSPIRATION



The frog sings of water's health, the triangle anchors memory, the circle holds space. Design grows from what nature and culture already know — and invites care, like the best parklands do.



THE AIM: DESIGN A PARK PEOPLE CAN USE WITHOUT USING IT UP!

Help people care

Use signs, stories, and programs to build pride, understanding, and a real sense of connection to this place.



Keep it wild, but let people in

Make it easier to get in and explore, while containing the experience to avoid pushing out wildlife or fragmenting the land.

Make space for ceremony

Designate quiet, respectful areas for Indigenous use, healing, and reflection. Use interpretative signs and Native created art to share Native history and the meaning of this land.

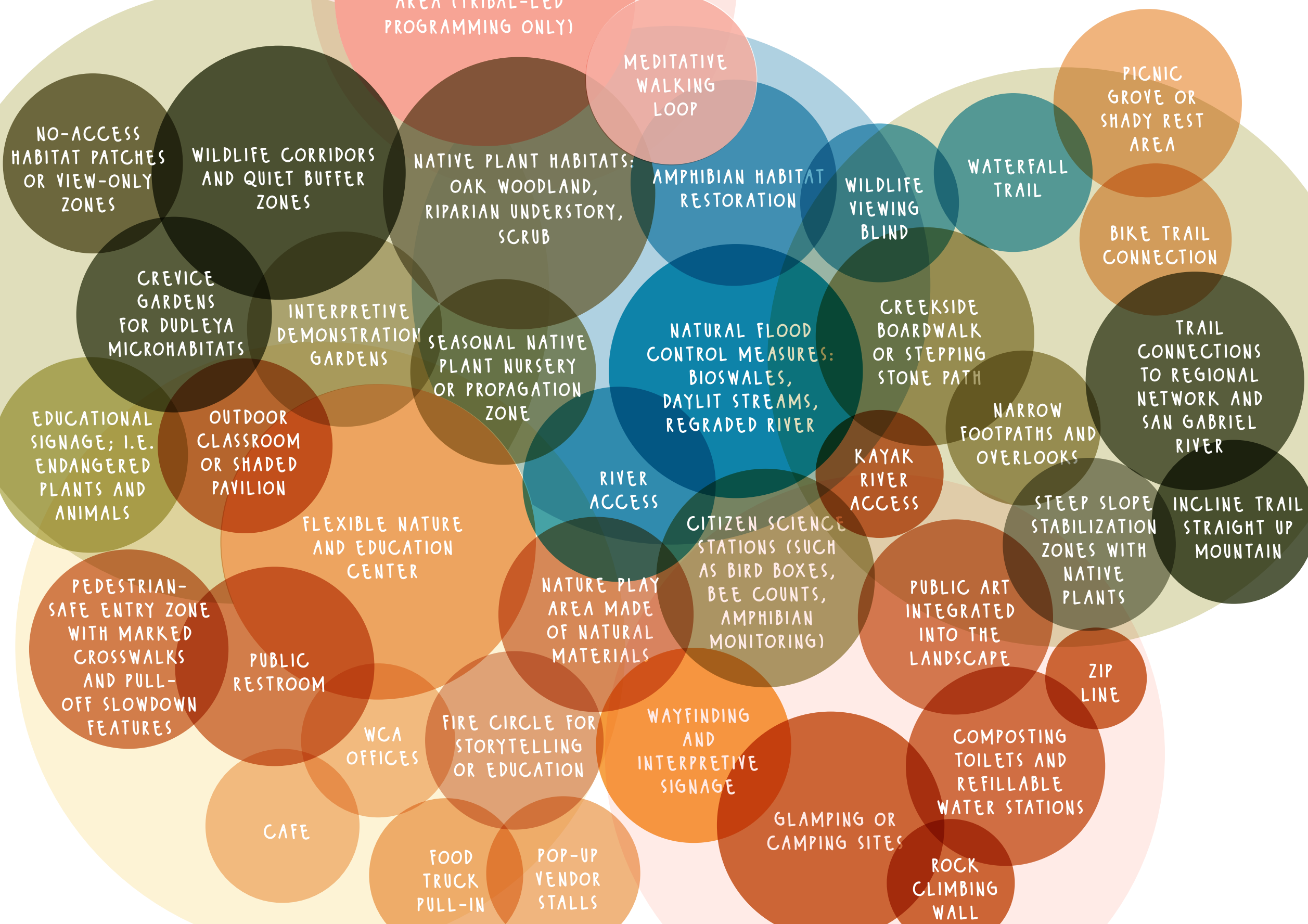


Bring back the frog (and its friends)

Restore native habitat so species like the mountain yellow-legged frog, San Gabriel slender salamander, and least Bell's vireo can thrive again.



PROGRAMMATIC BRAINSTORM



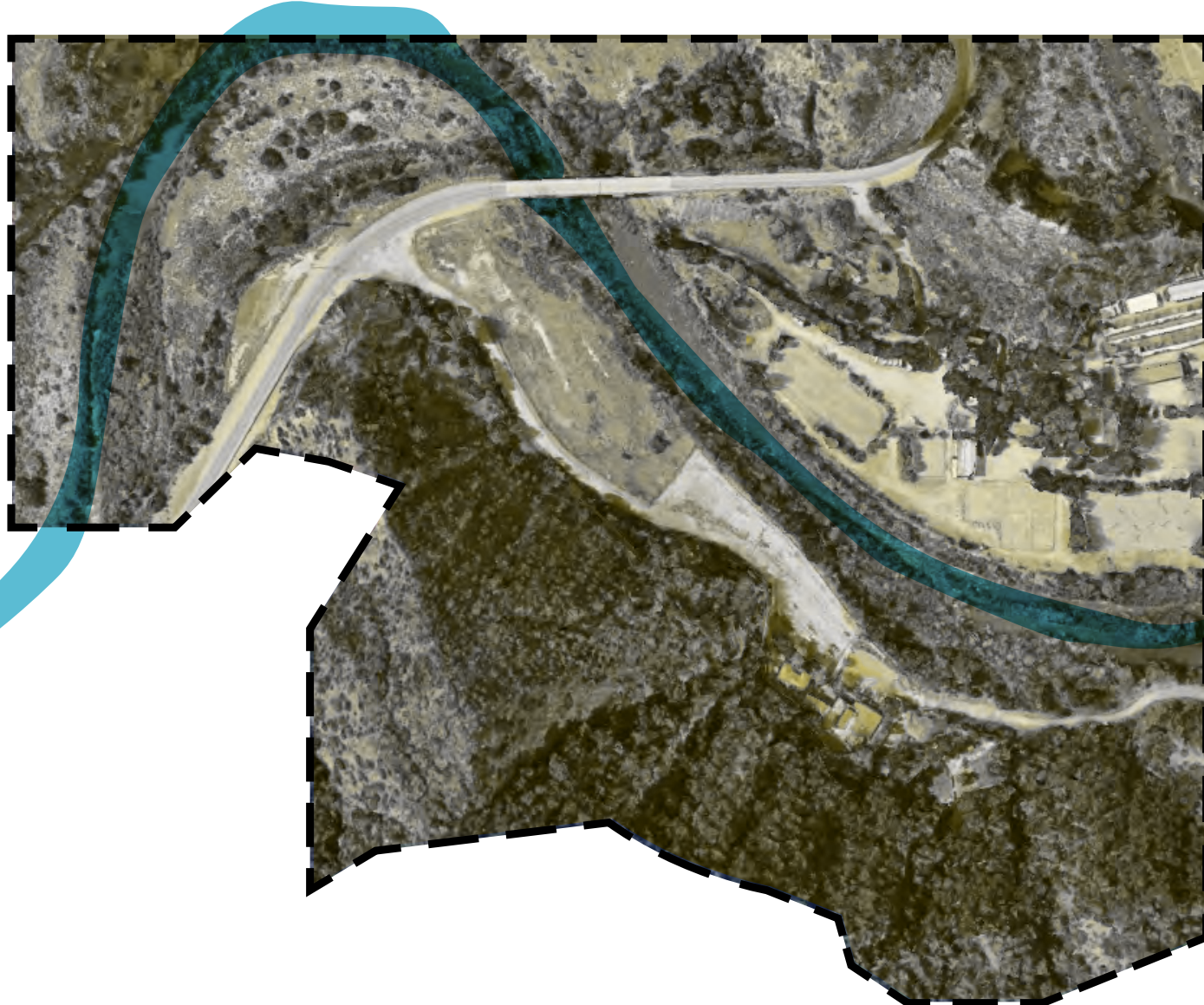
THINGS TO AVOID

1. LARGE SWATHES OF PARKING LOTS OR EXPANDED ROADWAYS
2. ASPHALT-PAVED ROADS THROUGHOUT THE SITE
3. PERMANENT AMPHITHEATERS OR LARGE-SCALE EVENT VENUES
4. EXPANSIVE LAWN OR TURF GRASS AREAS
5. NIGHTTIME LIGHTING ACROSS HABITAT ZONES
6. YEAR-ROUND RESTAURANT OR BAR
7. PERMANENT RETAIL SHOPS UNRELATED TO ECOLOGICAL OR CULTURAL EDUCATION
8. HIGH-END COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OR FRANCHISE PRESENCE
9. FULL RV CAMPGROUND WITH HOOKUPS
10. OFF-LEASH DOG PARK OR UNRESTRICTED PET ACCESS
11. MOTORIZED TRAIL USE (SUCH AS ATVS OR DIRT BIKES)
12. LARGE-SCALE SPORTS FIELDS OR COURTS
13. CONCRETE SPLASH PADS OR NON-NATURALIZED PLAYGROUNDS
14. HIGH-DECIBEL AMPLIFIED SOUND ZONES FOR PARTIES OR EVENTS
15. MISREPRESENTATION OF NATIVE HISTORY OR AESTHETICS (SUCH AS TIPI PLAY STRUCTURES)
16. PUBLIC EVENT USE OF CEREMONIAL AREAS WITHOUT CONSULTATION
17. FENCED-OFF EXCLUSIVE-USE ZONES (NOT ALIGNED WITH INCLUSIVE ACCESS)

WAIT...

HOW MUCH SPACE IS 70 ACRES, REALLY?

Before deciding what kinds of programming and experiences belong on the site, it helps to understand the true scale of 70 acres. With so many possible directions, from habitat restoration to community use, seeing what this amount of land can hold offers helpful perspective. The following examples are not exact matches in shape or use, but each has been scaled to fit within the Azusa Wilderness Park footprint to help us better understand its size and potential.



Disneyland Park

Azusa Wilderness Park could hold just about all of the 85 acre theme park, except for portions of Toontown and Critter Country.



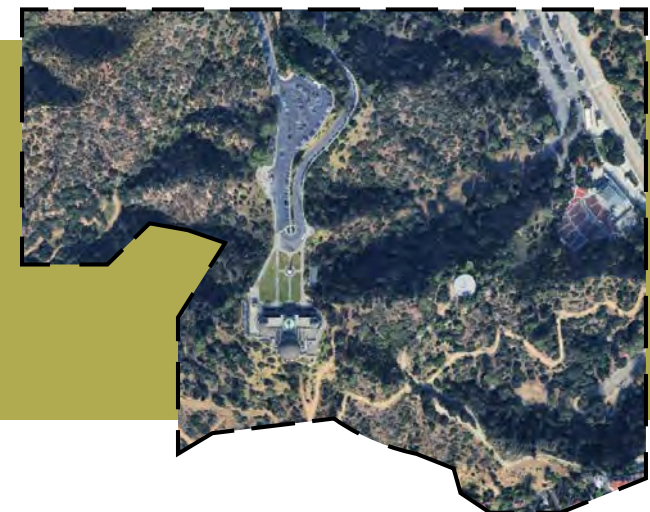
Central Park South

A 70-acre portion of Central Park includes the zoo, several ballfields, Gapstow Bridge, the Pond, and the Plaza Hotel.

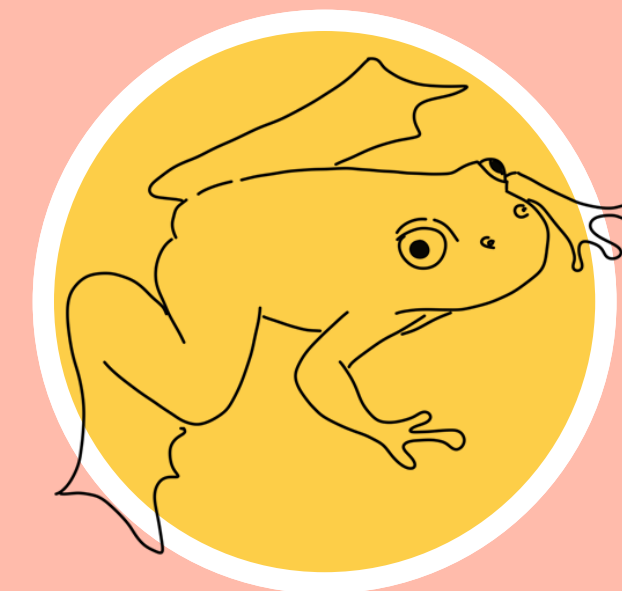
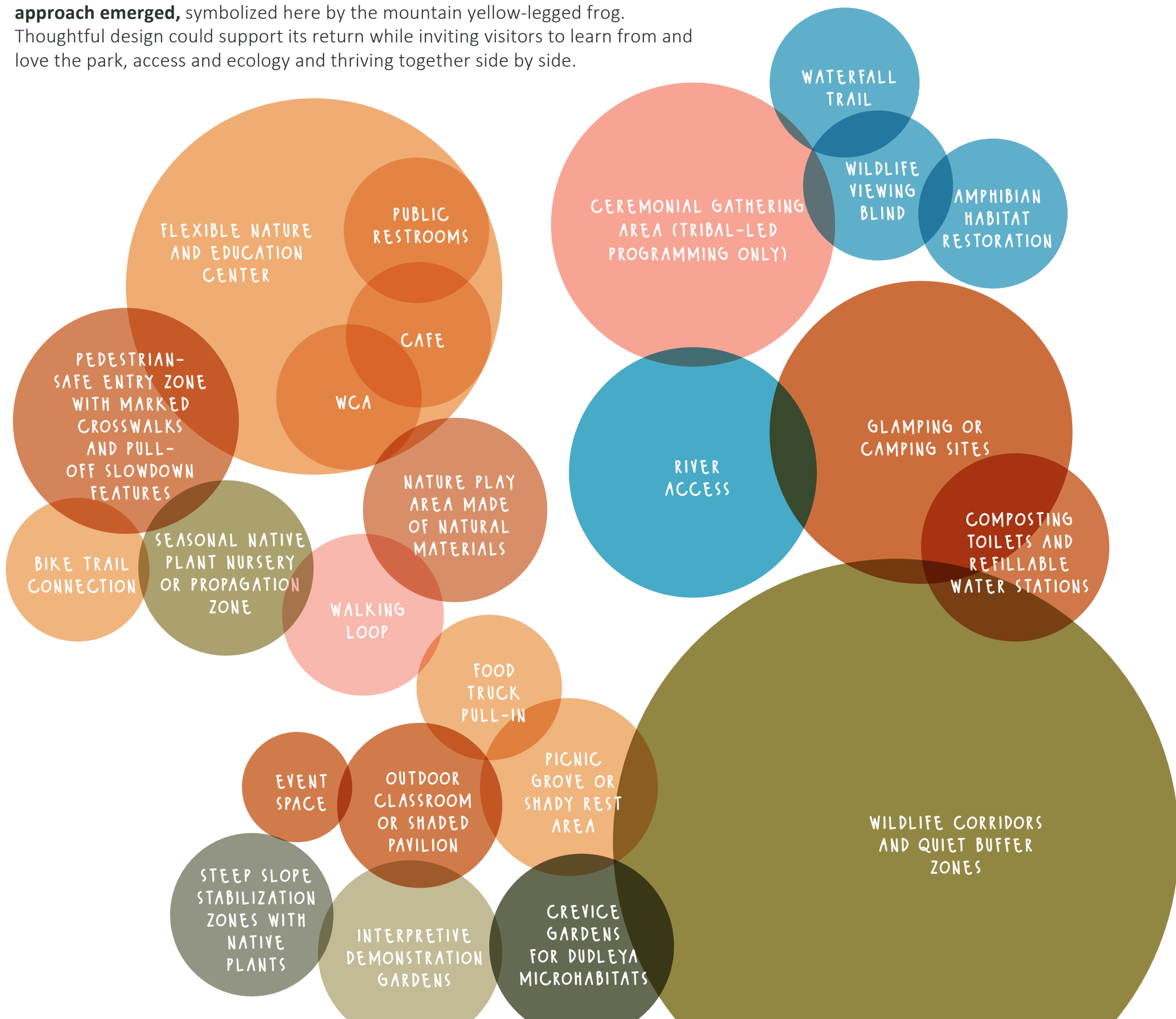


Griffith Observatory

With the Observatory, a large parking lot, the Greek Theatre, and a portion of the surrounding hills and trails, this combines programming and ecology.



With room to welcome people and protect biodiversity, a more balanced approach emerged, symbolized here by the mountain yellow-legged frog. Thoughtful design could support its return while inviting visitors to learn from and love the park, access and ecology and thriving together side by side.



FINAL OPTION

MOUNTAIN YELLOW-LEGGED FROG: RESTORATION + WELCOME

KEY TRAITS:

- Balanced programming
- Restoration-focused with soft public access
- Family-friendly and ecologically meaningful
- Warm, inviting, and habitat-sensitive

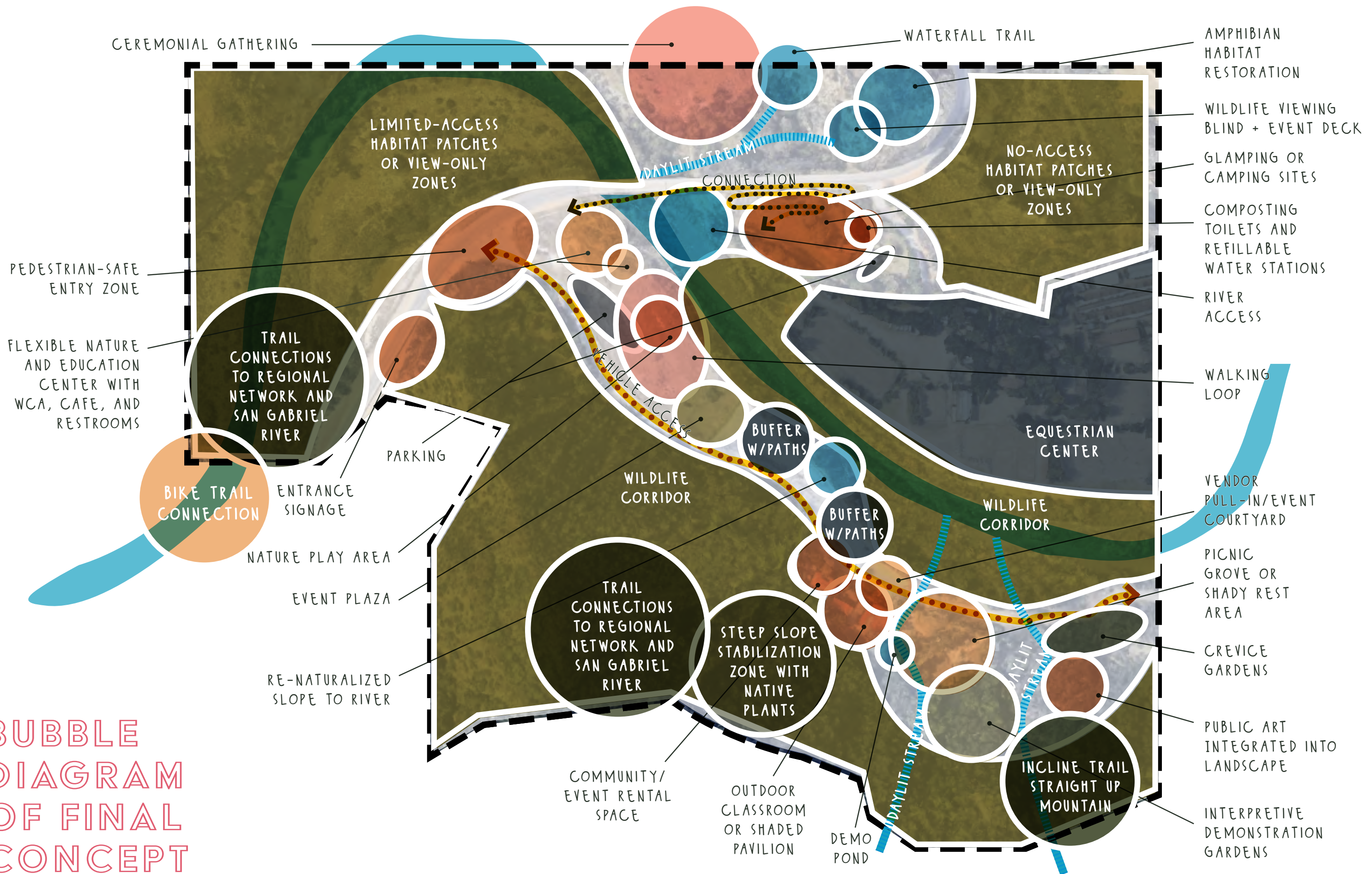
DESIGN FEATURES:

- Nature center with WCA offices, cafe, and restrooms
- Habitat restoration, including frog springs
- Wildlife viewing blinds
- Glamping / camping sites
- River access and habitat corridor buffers
- Outdoor classroom and shaded rest spots
- Cultural education area and gatherings

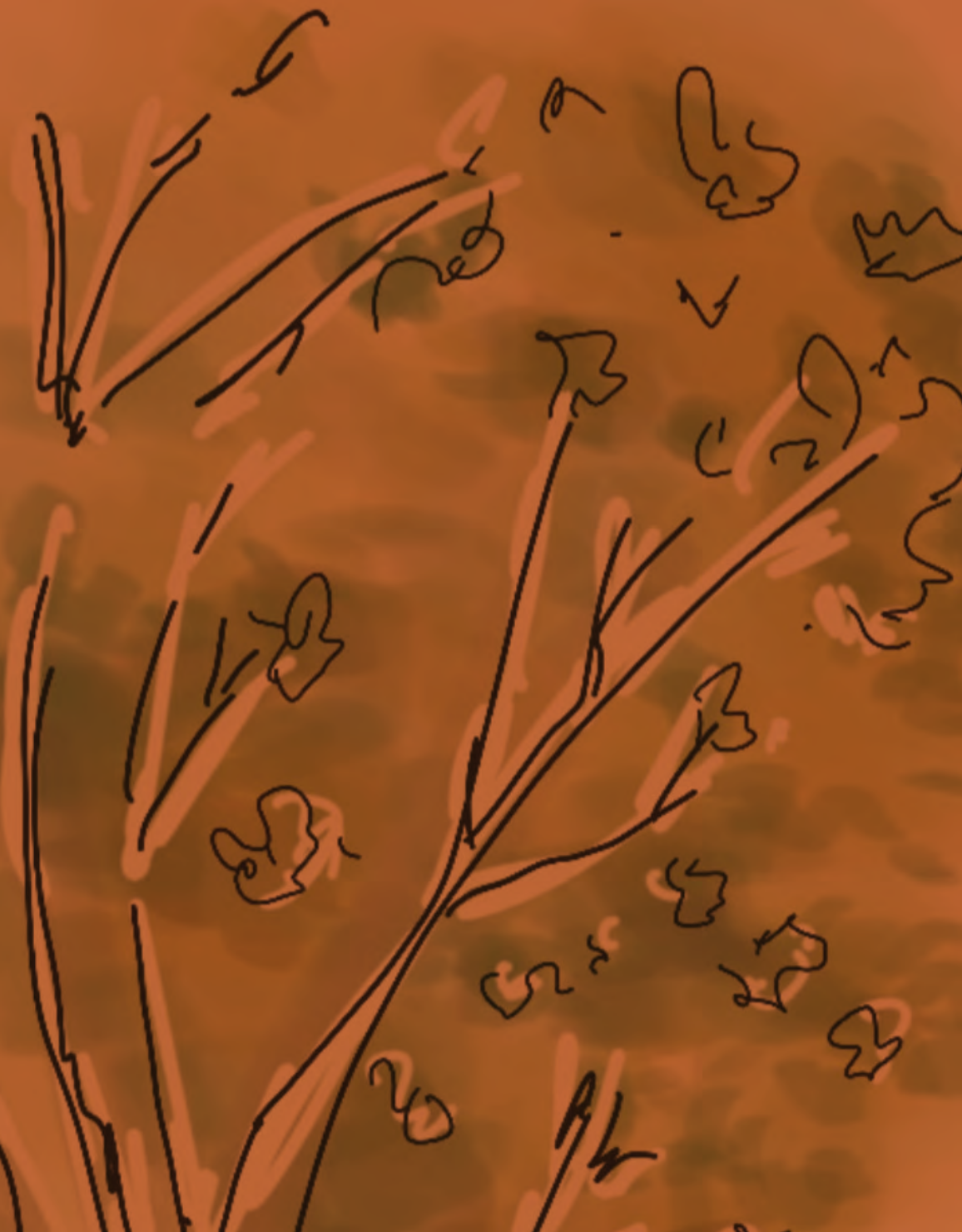
MATERIALITY:

- Decomposed granite, mulch, and permeable paved paths for ada accessibility
- Wood decking and platforms
- Local stone gabion walls and benches
- Large river rock boulders
- Muted natural color palette with pops of color to evoke vibrancy of the surroundings

BUBBLE DIAGRAM OF FINAL CONCEPT



FINAL CONCEPT



PERSONAL

WELCOME ARCHWAY + NEW PARK SIGNAGE: **A, G**

NATURE CENTER, WCA, CAFE, AND DECK: **G**

SUNNY PLATEAU TENT CAMP & PICNIC: **F**

WHERE THE WILD THINGS LEARN: **J**

STARLIT SYCAMORES GLAMPGROUND: **I**

PEBBLE POINT RIVER ACCESS : **H**

MOONLIGHT EVENT PAVILION: **M**

EL ENCANTO WILDS: **N**

RIDGE TRAIL CONNECTION : **L**

FLIGHT OF THE BUMBLEBEE HIKER'S INCLINE: **O**

CULTURAL

NATIVE SACRED GROUND: **C**

KIZH-INSPIRED LIVING WILLOW GATEWAYS: **D**

CULTURAL USE PLANTINGS: **C, D, E, I**

DEMO CEREMONIAL CIRCLE AND KIZH HOMES: **G**

TAYLOR RANCH HISTORIAL MARKER: **I**

EL ENCANTO SIGN AND FOLK WOODLAND ART: **N**

ECOLOGICAL

SMALL GUIDED PATHS: **B, C, E, L**

AMPHIBIAN RESTORATION SPRING: **E**

WOODEN DECKS, WALKS, AND WILDLIFE BLINDS: **E, G, K**

LIVING LANDSCAPES: PROTECTED HABITAT: **P**



250 FT




NEW CONNECTIONS

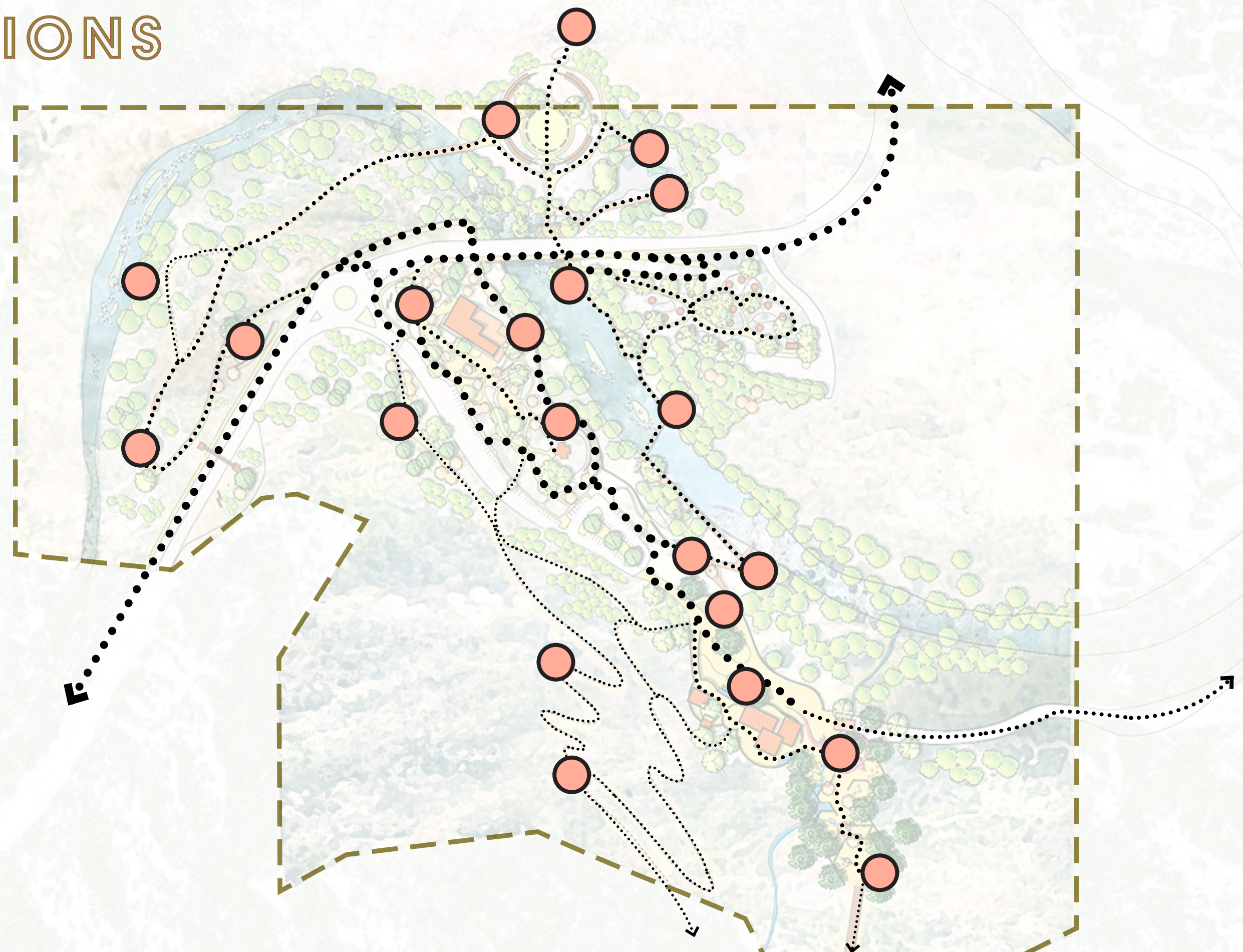
PEDESTRIAN TRAILS

PRIMARY 

SECONDARY 

TERTIARY 

REST AREA /
OVERLOOK 



WELCOMING ENTRANCES



Gateway Marker

A new structure over the road marks the park entrance and helps calm traffic. Made from rammed earth and river rock, it uses materials found on site.



Living Arches

Arches made from living willow mark the entrance into the ceremonial circle space and are meant to remind visitors of the traditional Kizh structures, recognizing the living cultural history of the site.

El Encanto Wilds



The existing El Encanto sign is reused to welcome visitors into a picnic and play area with large wooden sculptures built to resemble native animals, insects, and plants from Azusa Canyon. The area ends in an incline trail that climbs into the steep hillside.



WELCOME CENTER



BIKE LANE AND CONNECTION TO BRIDGE EXTENSION

PROMINENT PARK SIGNAGE

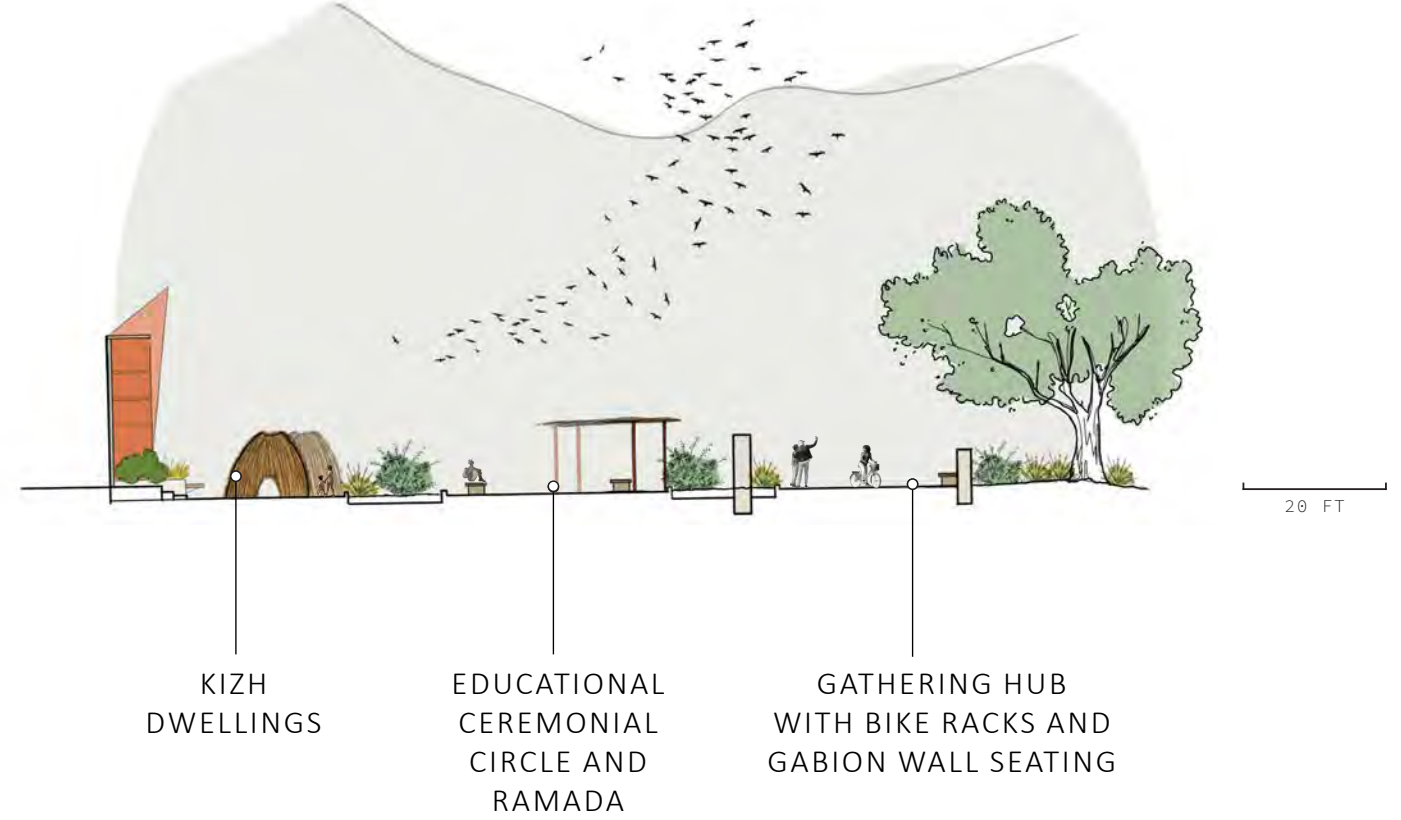
GATHERING HUB WITH BIKE RACKS AND WATER BOTTLE REFILL STATION

CULTURAL CIRCLE WITH RAMADA AND TRADITIONAL KIZH STRUCTURES

FLEXIBLE EVENT PLAZA

WELCOME CENTER, WCA OFFICES, AND CAFE

20 FT



KIZH DWELLINGS

EDUCATIONAL CEREMONIAL CIRCLE AND RAMADA

GATHERING HUB WITH BIKE RACKS AND GABION WALL SEATING

20 FT

A Gateway to Connection

Set at the park's flattest, safest edge, the Welcome Center brings together a nature center, WCA offices, and café—consolidating infrastructure in a sustainable, fire-wise, and accessible location. Bike racks nestle into native gardens shaded by oaks. Inside, flexible spaces host programs, workshops, and exhibits. Just beyond, a small ceremonial circle with a ramada and replica kizh dwellings offers an introduction to the site's cultural significance.



Educational Ceremony Space

The 25-foot circle offers space for small gatherings and ceremony, helping visitors understand the land's living history and orienting them to the larger ceremonial area at the mesa. A similar concept from Curtin University, *Yarning Circle*.



KEY MAP



Welcoming paths and native plants (Santa Barbara Botanic Garden)



Hyperbolic paraboloid and folded plate roofs echo the hills (Glass House, Utah)



Demonstration kizh dwellings (San Gabriel Mission)



Corten steel bike rack compliments surroundings (Velopa)



Mixture of lasting, rustic materials and native plants (Campsite Brewing)



View of Welcome Center, from plateau camping trail looking east



Design Opportunity

Tiles from the original El Encanto roof could be reused in the new structure, linking past and present through material and detail.

FROG SPRINGS

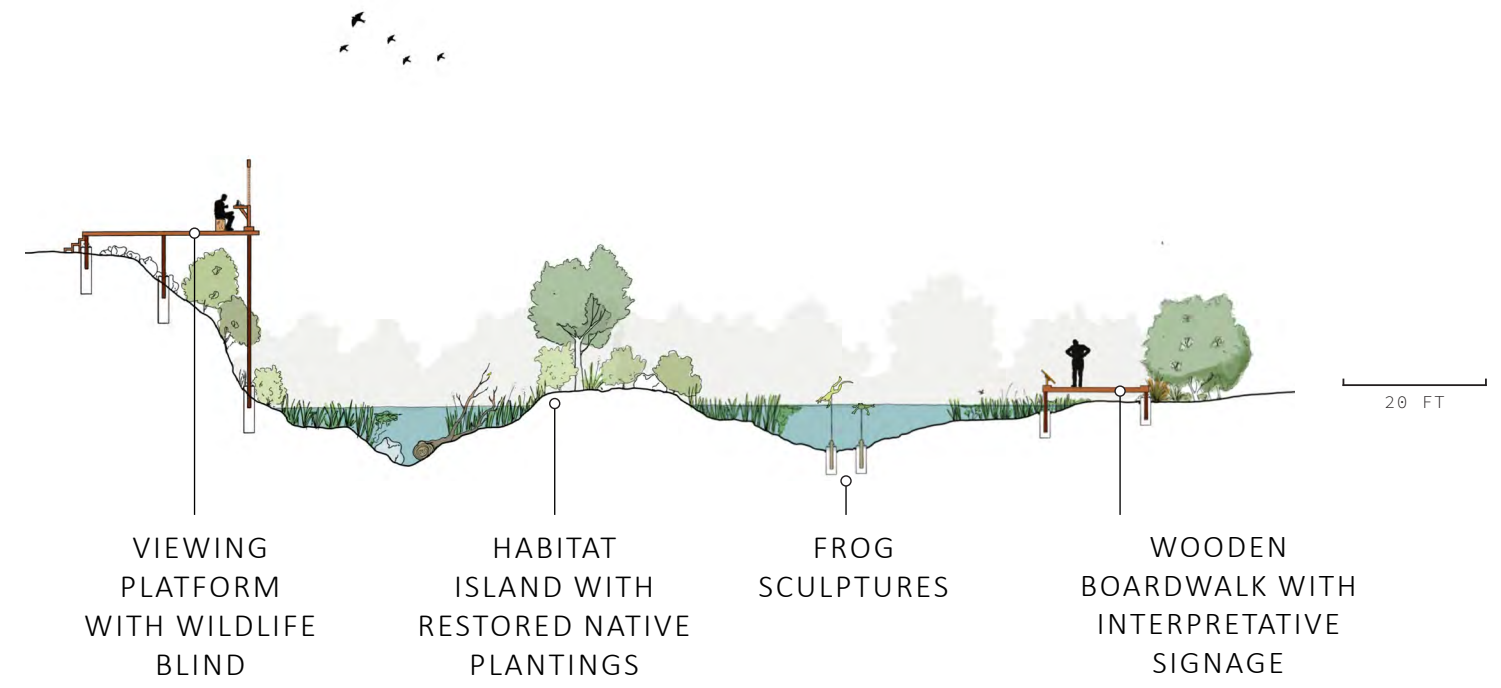


HABITAT ISLAND WITH RESTORED NATIVE PLANTINGS

FROG SCULPTURES

VIEWING PLATFORM WITH WILDLIFE BLIND

WOODEN BOARDWALK WITH INTERPRETATIVE SIGNAGE



VIEWING PLATFORM WITH WILDLIFE BLIND

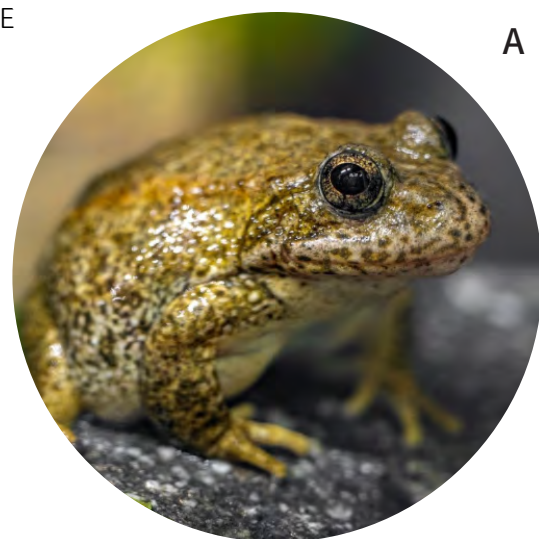
HABITAT ISLAND WITH RESTORED NATIVE PLANTINGS

FROG SCULPTURES

WOODEN BOARDWALK WITH INTERPRETATIVE SIGNAGE

Bringing Back the Frog

By protecting the spring's water health, removing invasive fish species, clearing fire-prone palms, and restoring native plants we can welcome back species that once thrived here, like the mountain yellow-legged frog. Raised boardwalks and quiet overlooks protect fragile habitat while still letting people get close. Frog sculptures and informative signage invite curiosity and care.



A Path to Reintroduction

The mountain yellow-legged frog is on the brink of extinction. The WCA could partner with the LA Zoo's successful breeding program and the U.S. Geological Survey's recovery effort, which together have reintroduced thousands of frogs into local streams.



Stylized frog sculpture (Prague Botanic Garden)



Wide raised wooden boardwalks (LACM)



Wildlife viewing blinds with movable screens (LACM)



Corten screens frame views and offer quiet refuge for wildlife (Lightbox, San Antonio)

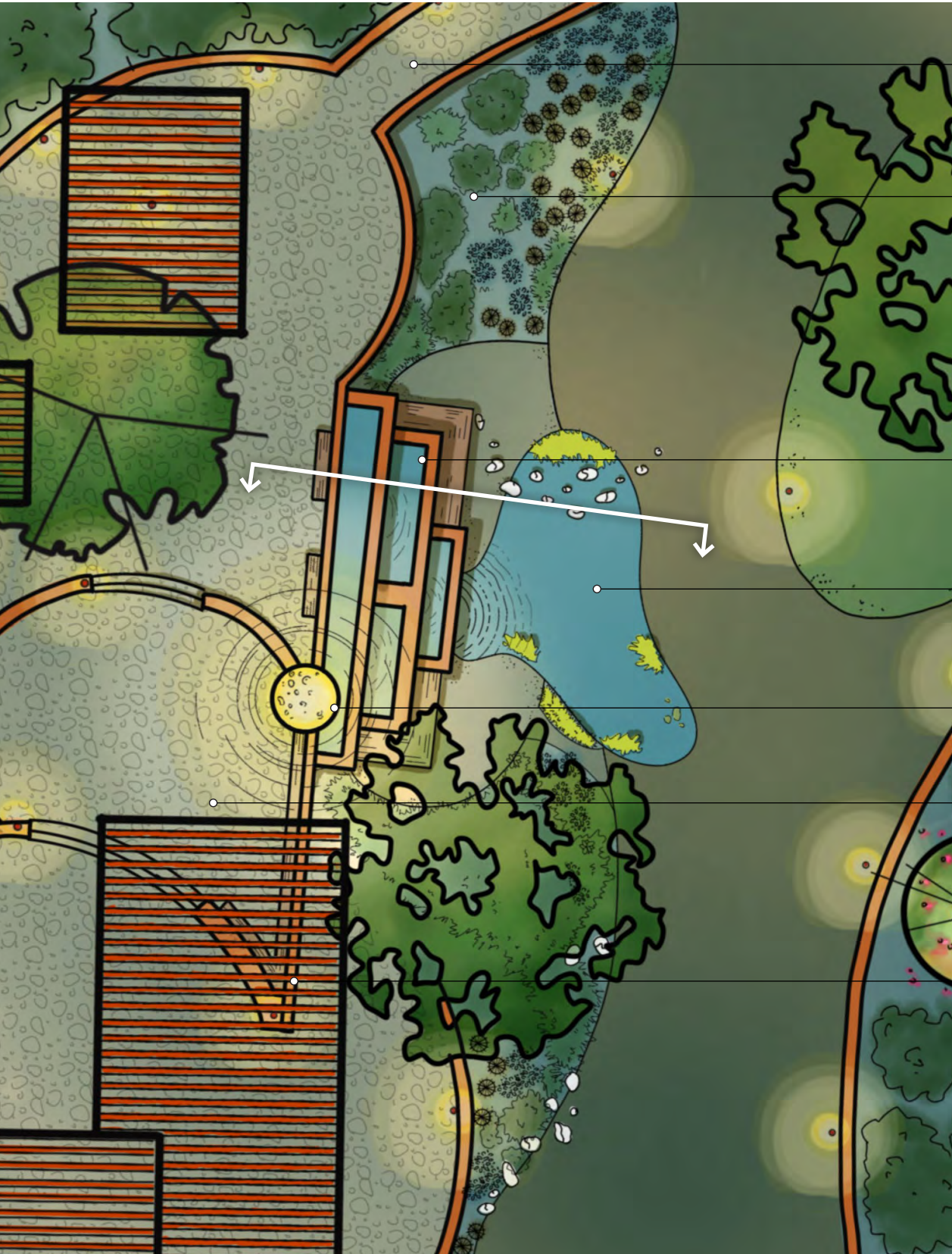


Engaging and easy to understand interpretive signage



Design Opportunity
Wildlife blinds could incorporate cutout patterns developed with Native artists, drawing from local ecology and cultural symbolism, like those by Ron Olguin at Isleta Pueblo.

MOONLIGHT PAVILION



ADA ACCESSIBLE /
EVENT MATERIAL
LOAD-IN RAMP

COASTAL SAGE
SCRUB PLANTER

WATERFALL
FROM
REPURPOSED
PLANTER

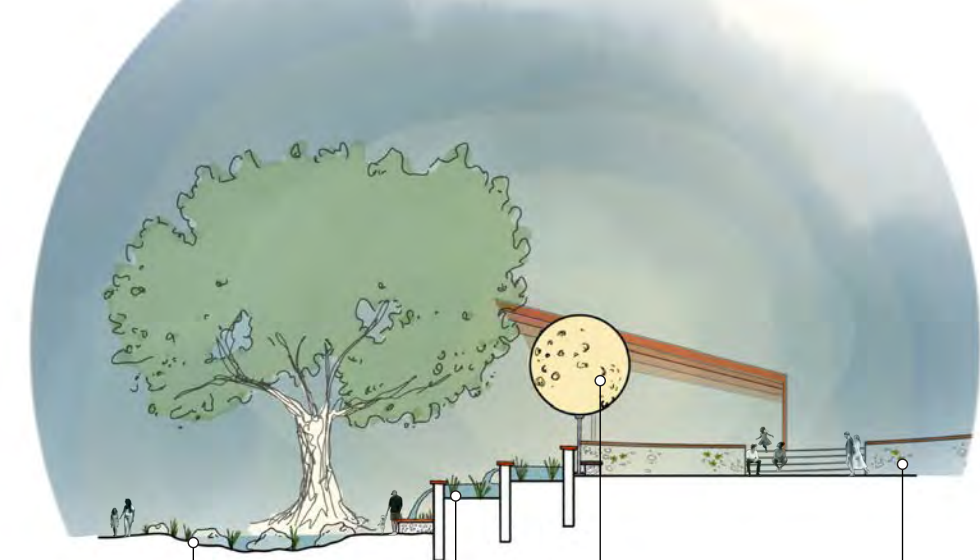
HUMAN-MADE
POND

LIGHT-UP MOON
SCULPTURE

GABION WALL
TERRACES

METAL SHADE
PAVILIONS

20 FT



POND

REPURPOSED
PLANTER
WATERFALL

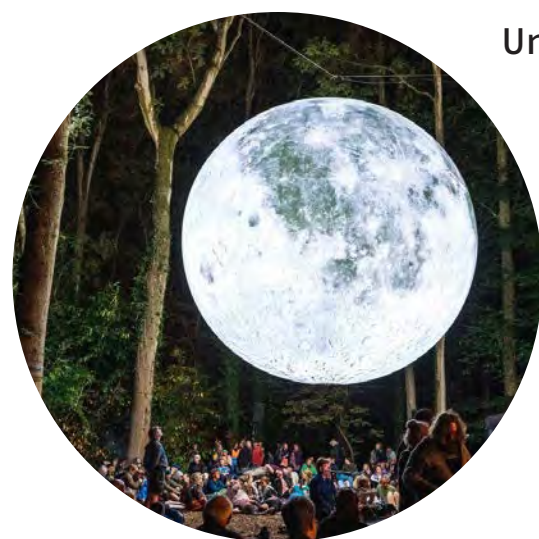
MOON
SCULPTURE

GABION
WALLED
TERRACE

20 FT

Gather, Reflect, Celebrate

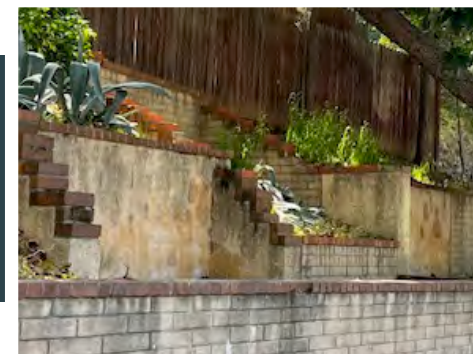
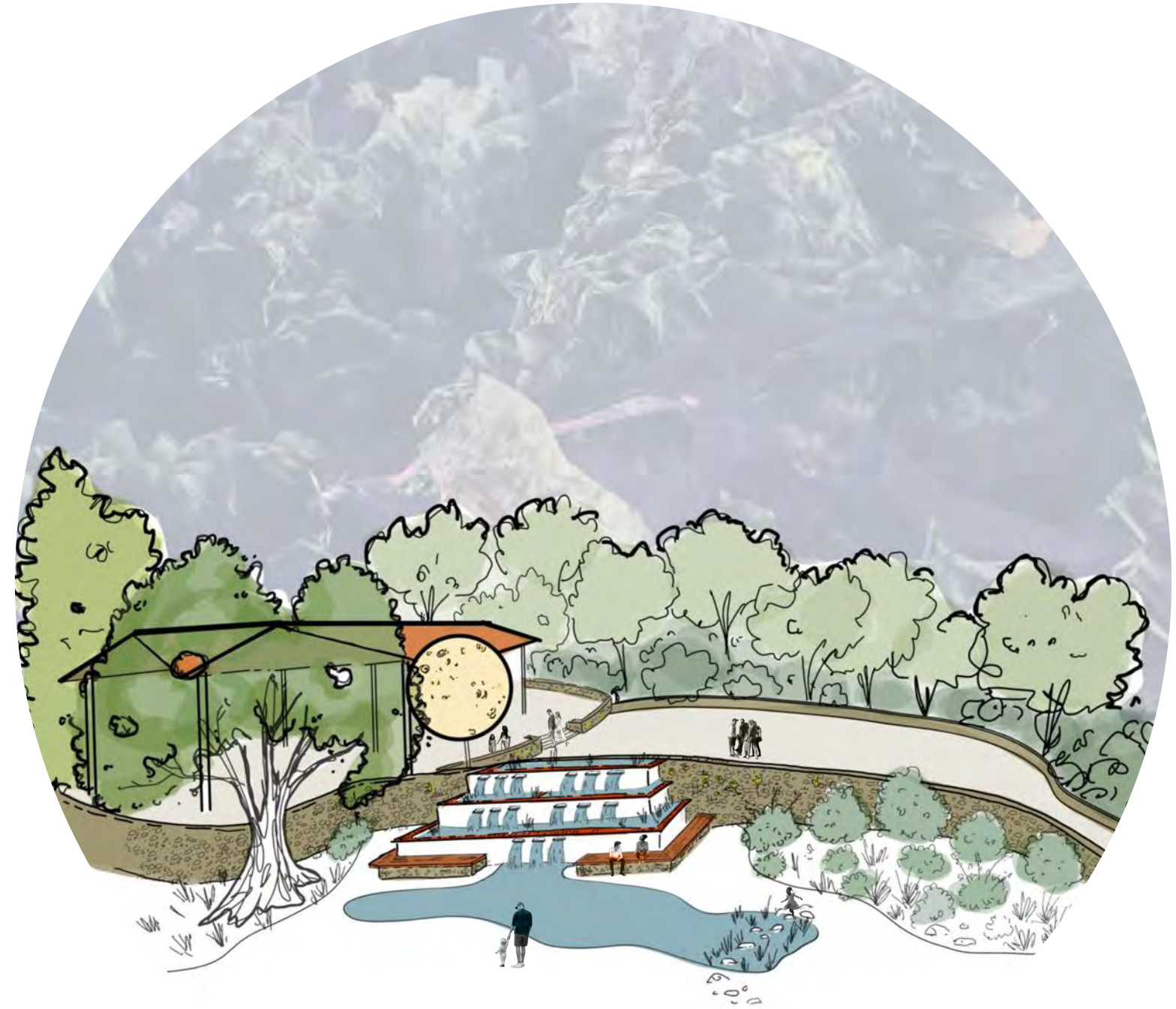
This event space reuses the former El Encanto footprint, with gabion walls built from rubble and landslide rock, and metal shade structures for fire resilience. Repurposed planters form a cascading waterfall into a pond beside native plantings. A glowing moon sculpture reflects in the water and casts soft light over the terrace, creating a memorable setting for community use, rentals, and evening programs—offering year-round revenue opportunities.



Under This Moon

The moon holds deep meaning across cultures, including for the Gabrielino-Tongva, where it is tied to ceremony, storytelling, and cycles of renewal. This site-specific sculpture echoes the sense of wonder sparked by Luke Jerram's *Museum of the Moon*, shown here.





Design Opportunity

Repurposing the planter to a water feature could support species like the Pacific chorus frog. Their familiar call is an instinctive cue that a place is alive, balanced, and safe.

PEBBLE POINT RIVER ACCESS



KIZH-INSPIRED
LIVING WILLOW
GATEWAY

BOARDWALK
DECKS TO FROG
SPRINGS

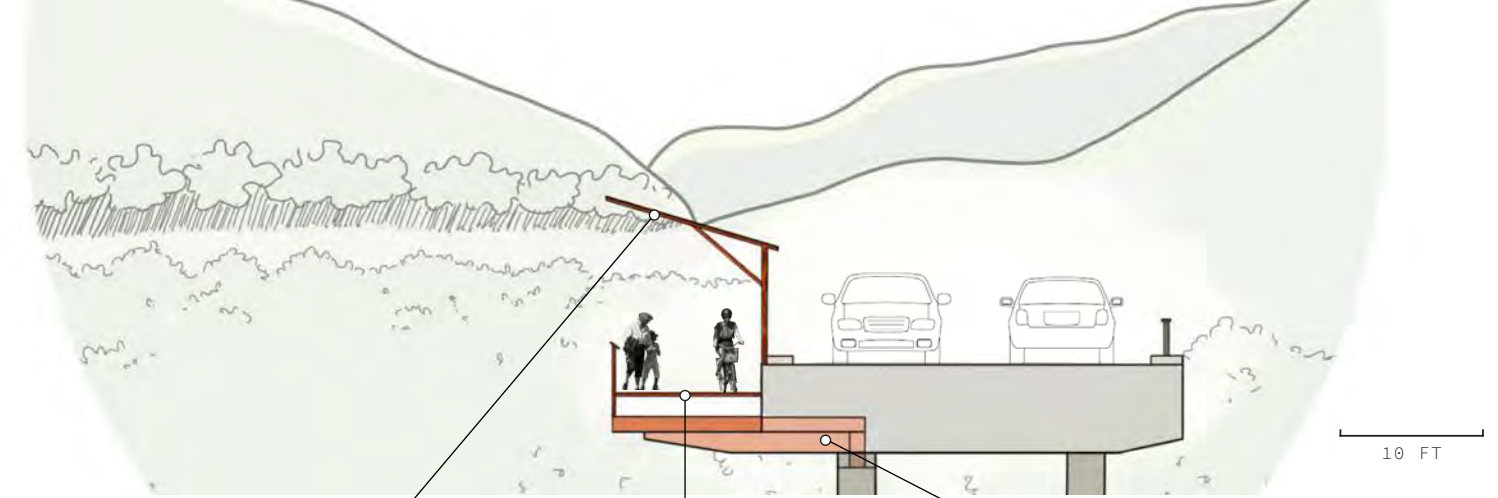
COVERED
PEDESTRIAN
BRIDGE EXTENSION

TERRACED RIVER
ACCESS

CONNECTION
TO SYCAMORE
GLAMPGROUND

HOPPABLE
BOULDERS
FRAMING ACCESS

40 FT



SHADE
STRUCTURE
AND SCREEN
DIVIDER

EXTENSION WIDE
ENOUGH FOR
BOTH BIKES AND
PEDESTRIANS

CANTILEVERED BRIDGE
ATTACHMENT

10 FT

Where Water Meets Stone

Pebble Point uses a natural dip in the riverbank to create sculptural terraces made of embedded pebbles in triangle-shaped forms, echoing native motifs and surrounding mountains. Flood-resilient materials and anchored boulders provide durable access to the water while discouraging boating. The bridge provides shade and an almost cathedral-like atmosphere, inviting play and reflection at the river's edge.



Bridge Extension

A cantilevered walkway, like this one in Clinton Township, lets pedestrians and cyclists safely cross between key areas—extending the trail network and allowing access between the east and west sides without first entering further into the park.

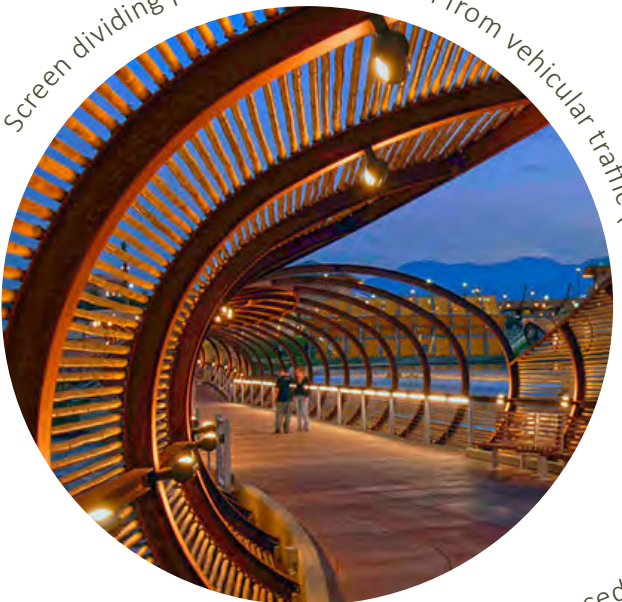


KEY MAP



Pebble Point and Bridge, aerial view from ridge trail

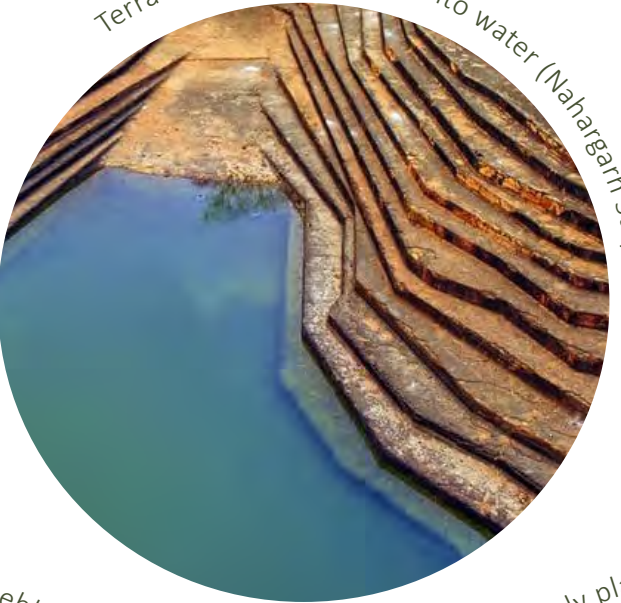
Screen dividing pedestrian extension from vehicular traffic (Corona)



Folded-plate design over bridge (Ashes & Diamonds Winery)



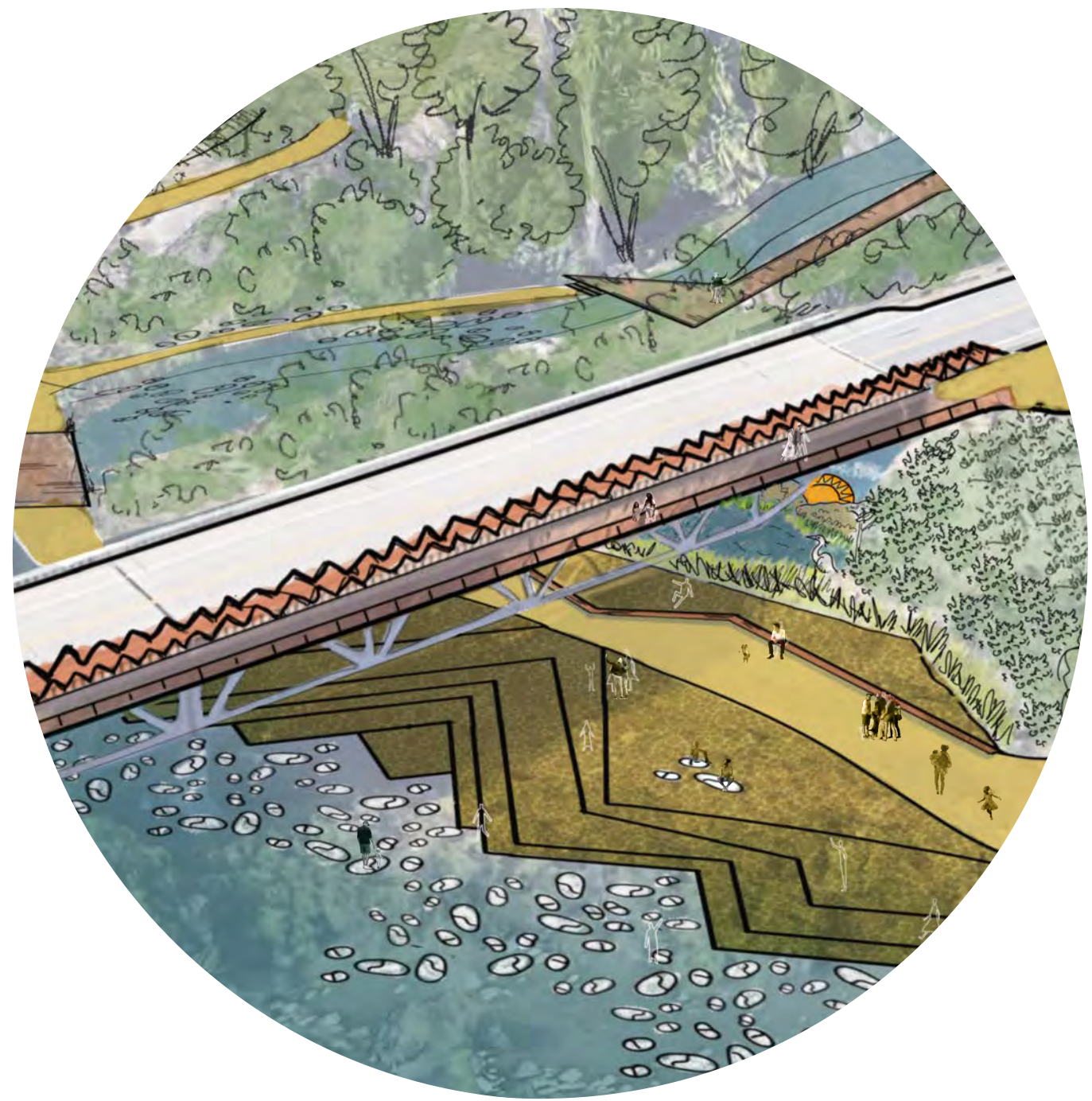
Terraced triangular steps into water (Nahargarh Step Well)



Terrace surface of embedded river pebbles and boulders (Land artist Jon Foreman)



Purposely placed boulders invite people to play



Design Opportunity
The space under the bridge offers a prime location for a mural reflecting the park's ecology, history, and identity, like this one in Cuyahoga Valley.

to protect
**WHAT IS
SMALL
AND
WILD**



a big
THANK YOU



Thank you to **my cohort** for your support and inspiration throughout this project and my time at UCLAx.

To **Jessie Corea**, for your thoughtful feedback and guidance.

To **Nathan Nunez**, for sharing your insight and personal connection to this land and its people.

To **Mark Stanley**, for welcoming us into the vision of Azusa Wilderness Park and the WCA.



To **my dad**, thank you for teaching me to see the world with wonder, care, and hope.

And to **Jack and Max**, thank you for your encouragement, patience, and love. You remind me daily why it matters to create something lasting, something worthy of the future. What we choose to pass down matters.