

The Great Wall of Los Angeles  
Art Park Master Plan



UCLAx LD6: Concept Development  
Instructor: Steven Chavez, PLA

Summer 2025

Katja Peppe

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Pre Design

Overview and History	3
Site History Timeline	4
Goals and Objectives	5
Site Inventory	6
Site Analysis	7
Site Constraints	8
Site Opportunities	9
Precedent Case Study 1	10
Precedent Case Study 2	11
Precedent Case Study 3	12

## Design Development

Design Alternative 1	13
Design Alternative 2	14
Design Alternative 3	15
Final Design	
Master Plan Concept	16
Master Plan	17
Site Section 1	18
Site Section 2	19
Perspective 1	20
Perspective 2	21
Walkthrough Video	22

# SITE OVERVIEW

The Great Wall of Los Angeles Park is located in Valley Glen in the San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles County, California. It is a 7.3 acre public park on the east and west banks of the Tujunga Wash channel. The site is adjacent to Grant High School and the Los Angeles Valley College, all surrounded by single and multi-family residential neighborhoods. The park has potential to be a recreation and cultural resource for the community, as well as the San Fernando Valley at large.

The Tujunga Wash is a tributary of the Los Angeles River in a watershed covering 824 square miles. More than half of the watershed area is highly developed. Though the Tujunga Wash exists in a concrete flood control channel, the adjacent areas may be used to slow and spread stormwater before it gets to the wash. The presence of water on site makes this an attractive place for local and migrating birds. On the other hand, University of California Irvine models predict knee to head-high water levels on site during a 100-year flood event.

This park's character is defined by a colorful, 13 foot high mural within the concrete channel. Designed by Judy Baca and titled, "The History of California," the mural is commonly known as "The Great Wall." Beginning in 1974, Baca's team of artists, historians, and at-risk youth conducted community meetings to uncover and represent the lost histories of Angelenos. The mural depicts stories from Black, Chicano, Jewish, Asian, feminist, and gang-affiliated communities. Today, the mural is 2,754 feet long, covering the time of dinosaurs to the 1950s, with plans to expand the artwork to the 1990s.



## San Fernando Valley Census Data

1.8 million residents	39.0 median age	\$90,176 median income	47.1% homeownership rate	57.6% speak a language other than English at home
--------------------------	--------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------	---

# SITE HISTORY TIMELINE

**Pre-1700** People of the Gabrielino/Tongva and Fernandeno Tataviam tribes live and manage the prairies, riverwash, and coastal sage scrub later called Los Angeles. In the late 18th century, Spain begins colonizing California.



**1821** Mexico gains its independence and assumes governance of California. Late in the decade, a rain-fed LA River carves a new path to the ocean toward San Pedro Bay. This is the location of the river's mouth today.



**1890s** The grizzly bear is hunted to local extinction in Los Angeles. After Mexico cedes California to the United States, European settlers continue to transport exotic and invasive species to the area.



**1930s** Midwest U.S. farms are struck by severe dust storms and extended drought conditions. Over the decade, one hundred thousand people migrate to Los Angeles, looking for work and better lives. A surplus of labor occurs and many Dust Bowl refugee families live in poverty.



**1934** Seven inches of rain falls early in the morning of New Years Day, flooding the LA River, causing severe damage, and claiming at least 40 lives. Local leaders endeavor in a partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers to control the flow of the LA River and prevent future flooding.



**1974** The Army Corps of Engineers contacts Judy Baca to design a mural for a channel beautification project. Baca agrees, and conceives a massive work that represents the lost histories of Angelenos. The Great Wall is completed, for the most part, in 350-foot chunks that each represent a decade of history. More than 400 youths participate in making the mural.



**1998** The neighborhood of Valley Glen is officially established. The area consists of parcels previously within Van Nuys and North Hollywood.

**2007** Directly north of The Great Wall of Los Angeles Park, the Tujunga Wash Greenway project is completed. The project adds 2.4 miles of multi-use trails and 15 acres of riparian habitat to the banks of the Wash.



**2013** The National Endowment for the Arts grants \$90,000 to Baca's Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) to design and paint the next four decades of history.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



## REPRESENT historical themes of the mural

- Showcase the mural as the reason and inspiration for the park
- Demonstrate historical landscapes
- Restore areas to native vegetation
- Retain history of site by keeping a majority of the healthy existing trees
- Make space for community gathering and cultural representation



## WELCOME visitors by softening edges of site

- Plant trees along streets and in parking lots for improved air quality, shade, and cooling
- Widen the sidewalk along Coldwater Canyon Ave
- Extend bus stop areas on Burbank Blvd and Oxnard St
- Provide additional ADA accessible entrances and routes through park
- Add amenities like restrooms and drinking fountains for visitor comfort



## INCORPORATE low impact development practices

- Install solar panels on the roofs of structures
- Collect stormwater into underground cisterns through permeable brick pavers and roof collection
- Use stored water for irrigation of the park and toilet flushing
- Select drought tolerant plants and native plants, and limit use of turfgrass
- Limit regrading of site

# INVENTORY & ANALYSIS: BUILT



**CONTEXT**

<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span>	Residential
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:purple; border:1px solid black;"></span>	Education/Government
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:green; border:1px solid black;"></span>	Park
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:10px; background-color:blue; border:1px solid black;"></span>	Radio/Industry

**LEGEND**

<span style="color:red; font-size:2em;">*</span>	Pedestrian Access Point	<span style="border:1px solid purple; border-radius:50%; padding:2px 5px;">M</span>	Manhole	<span style="border:1px solid green; border-radius:50%; padding:2px 5px;">B</span>	Bus Stop
<span style="color:yellow; font-size:2em;">~</span>	Heavy Noise	<span style="border:1px solid red; border-radius:50%; padding:2px 5px;">E</span>	Electricity	<span style="background-color:magenta; width:15px; height:10px; display:inline-block;"></span>	Suspended Pipe
		<span style="border:1px solid blue; border-radius:50%; padding:2px 5px;">W</span>	Water		



# INVENTORY & ANALYSIS: NATURAL



## FLOOD RISK





### 100yr Composite Flood Hazard

LAOC 100yr composite flood hazard

- < Ankle (0.03 - 0.11 m)
- Ankle - Knee (0.11 - 0.45 m)
- Knee - Waist (0.45 - 1.0 m)
- Waist - Head (1.0 - 1.7 m)
- Over Head (> 1.7 m)



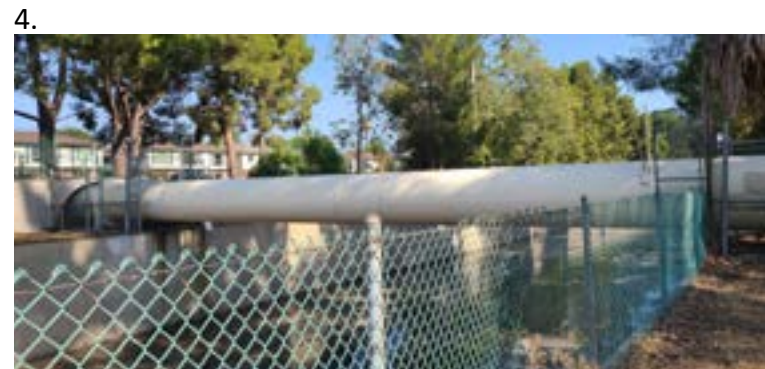
## LEGEND

-  Summer Sun Path
  -  Winter Sun Path
  -  Drainage Direction
  -  Wind Direction  
Prevailing SW  
Seasonal NE
- Sunset Garden Zone: 20
- Average annual precipitation: 16"  
July 0.01"  
January 3.88"
- High/low temperatures (F)  
August 89°/68°  
December 64°/46°

# SITE CONSTRAINTS



1. Much of the adjacent parking is owned by Los Angeles Valley College and Ulysses S. Grant High School. During school events, this parking fills up and is unavailable for park visitors.
2. Traffic on Coldwater Canyon Ave is nearly constant. This creates concern for noise, safety, and air quality.
3. There is limited access between the E and W banks of the river channel. Permissions to build additional access over the river may need to be gained from the Army Corps of Engineers.
4. A large, unattractive pipe runs elevated across the channel. It cannot be removed. A design solution may hide it or draw attention away from it.
5. The river channel is approximately 11' deep. The need for a safety rail around the channel affects the visibility of the Great Wall of Los Angeles mural.
6. The linear nature of site along the riverbanks limits options for a large gathering-type space.
7. Approximately one-third of the site is an inaccessible concrete channel.



# SITE OPPORTUNITIES



1. Bus stops at the NE and SW corners of the site connect it to three LA Metro routes, one DASH route, and one Commuter Express route. Public transit offerings enhance the sustainability of the site's operation.
2. The colorful, attractive Great Wall of Los Angeles is already on site and there are plans to expand it. Thoughtful landscape design can react to and complement this massive feature of the site.
3. The concrete channel of the LA River is designed to withstand intense flooding, limiting the risk of destruction of amenities or structures within the park.
4. Residential and educational uses envelop the site. These types of zoning can bring in many regular visitors.
5. The neighboring campuses of Los Angeles Valley College, Jack London High School, and Ulysses S. Grant High School can create partnerships for park stewardship and events.
6. Municipal and non-governmental organizations in this watershed have already invested in water filtration and retention. This design is informed by their challenges and successes.
7. The site is large enough to incorporate revenue-generating attractions that will help ensure the park's maintenance over time.
8. The grade outside of the channel is relatively flat, so the development of accessible pathways will be lower impact on the land.



# CASE STUDY: SUGAR BEACH

Location: Toronto Canada  
Size: 2 acres  
Context: Lakefront, Industrial  
Features: Sand beach. Splash pad, Walk/bike path, Events  
Completed: 2010

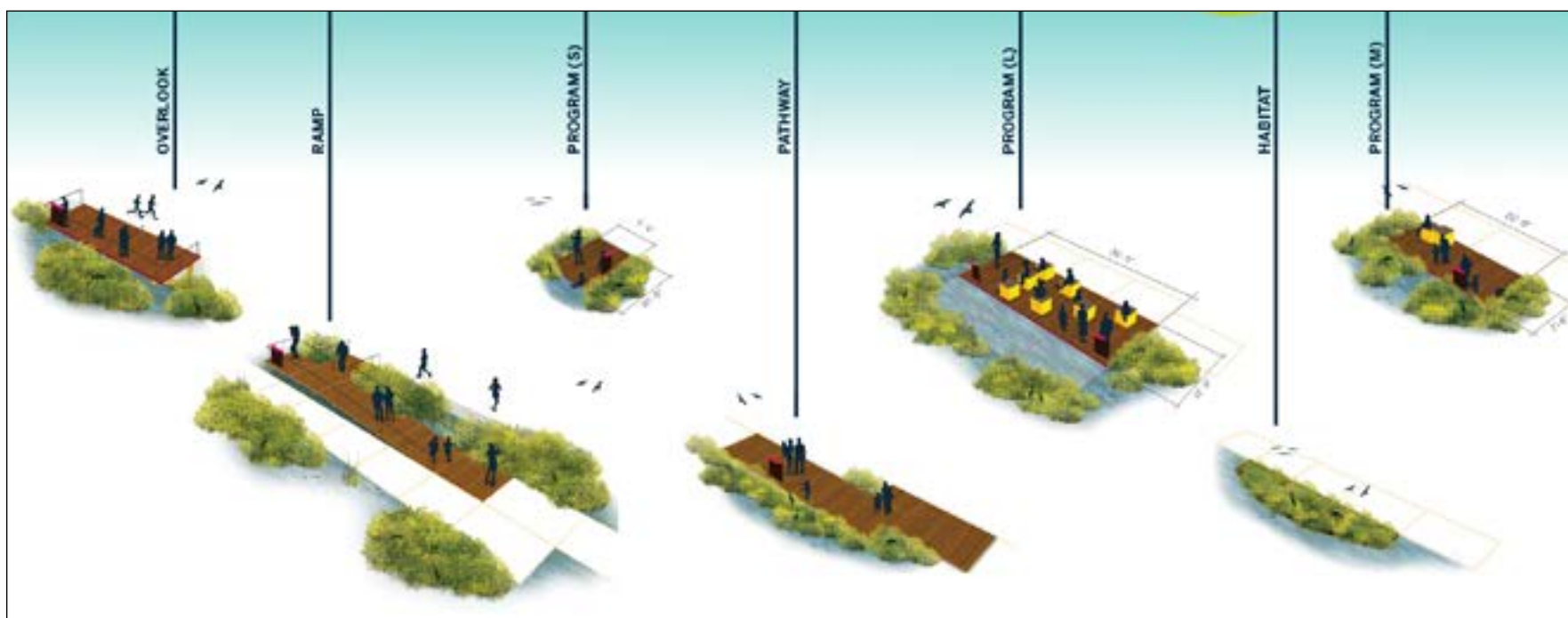


## OUTCOMES

- ▶▶ A public amenity that integrates the natural and built surroundings. Sugar Beach is a whimsical park with candy-striped rocks and pink umbrellas that nod to the neighboring sugar refinement factory.
- ▶▶ Flexible beach chairs and hill formations, some grass some rock, allow users to interact with the space. The sensation of sand in toes while being surrounded by city is novel.
- ▶▶ Sand as a material in an urban setting creates maintenance issues - namely trash removal and replenishment of lost sand.

# CASE STUDY: THE WILD MILE

Location: Chicago IL  
Size: Approx. 1/2 acre  
Context: Riverfront, Industrial  
Features: Walking path, River access, Floating gardens  
Status: Phase II completed 2024  
700 linear feet built of  
5280 planned

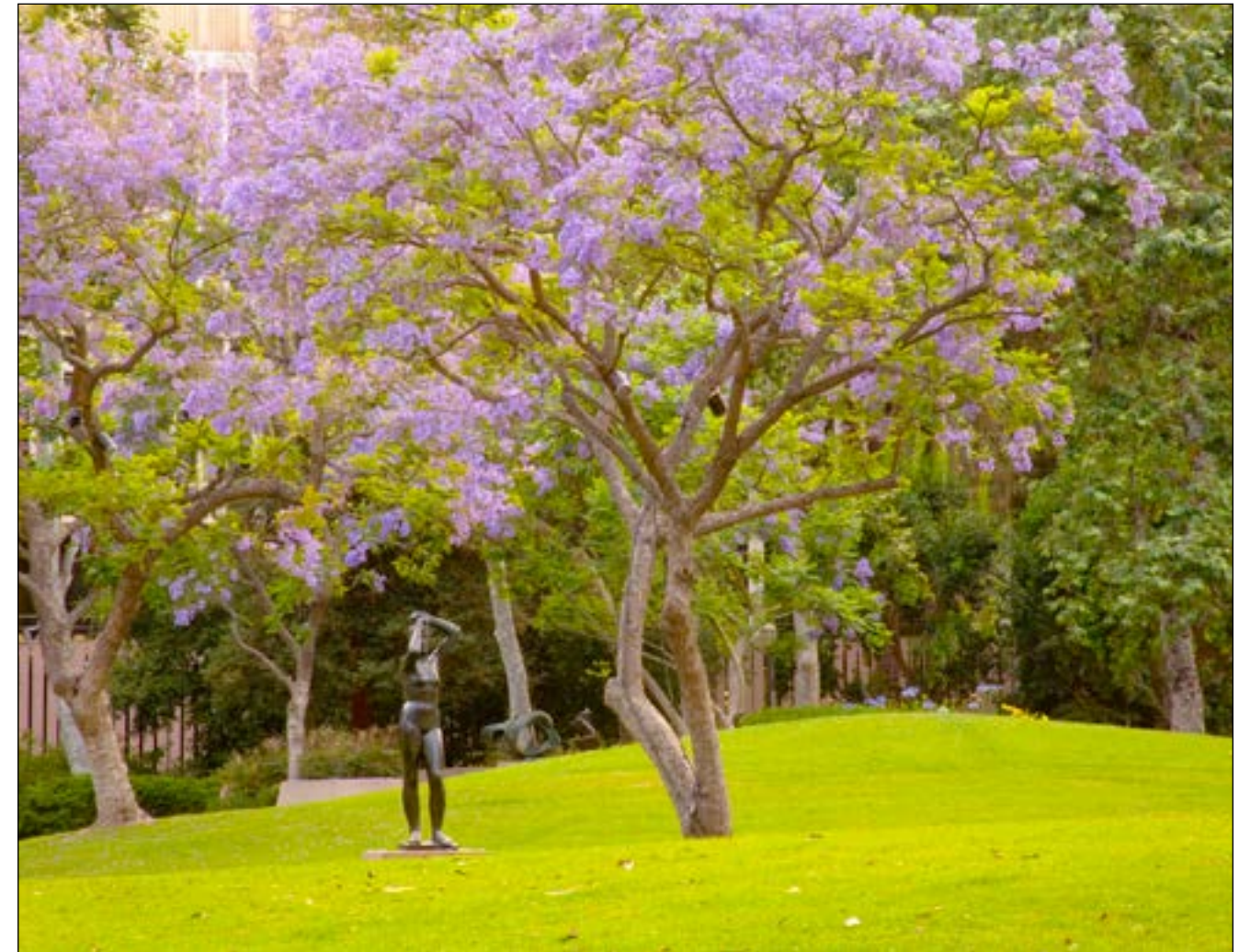


## OUTCOMES

- ▶▶ Impressive research and consideration of wildlife ecology went into this plan. This park provides a refreshingly natural user experience for a city, as well as rich restored habitat gardens.
- ▶▶ The lush plantings of the park are a welcome contrast to the harsh industrial-urban context. It seems a relaxing place but it is also geared toward recreation by the river access. The floating parks along the Wild Mile can be a peaceful destination or a stop on larger journey.
- ▶▶ How will the floating materials react to changes in water availability and quality? Time will tell. The water level fluctuates as much as 8' in one year.

# CASE STUDY: FRANKLIN D. MURPHY SCULPTURE GARDEN

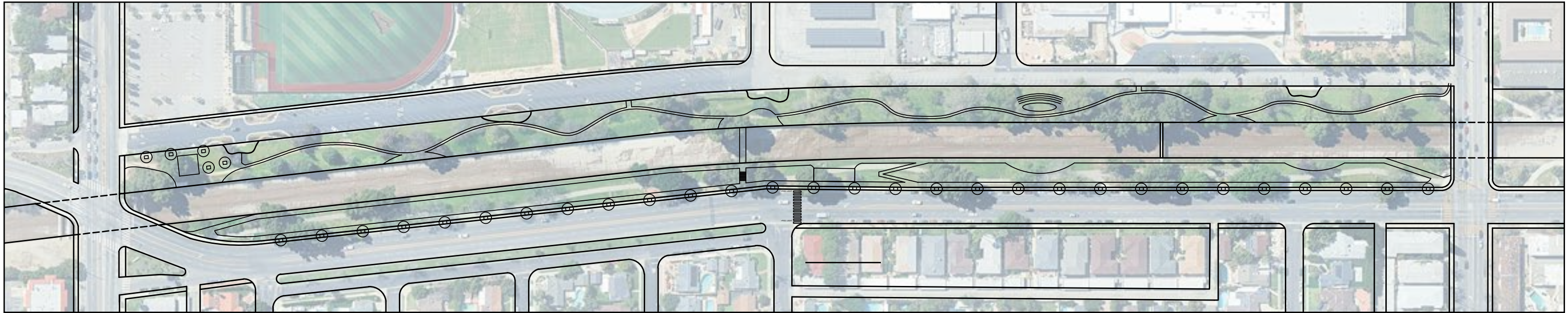
Location: Los Angeles CA  
Size: 5 acres  
Context: University campus  
Features: Sculpture collection,  
Walking path  
Completed: 1967



## OUTCOMES

- ▶▶ The space is thoughtfully arranged to include direct paths to campus buildings as well as meandering means to enjoy the artwork. There is a broad hill and lawn, but also pockets of intimacy.
- ▶▶ While the sculpture collection has remained in place since construction of the garden, the design stands on its own as an enjoyable walking park. There is room in the space to switch out sculptures if ever desired.
- ▶▶ Many of the site's trees are arranged as features of two species - Jacaranda and Coral trees. After the spectacle of spring blooms, the canopy is rather unexciting. Perhaps an appropriately neutral backdrop for the art.

# DESIGN ALTERNATIVE 1



## REVAMP \$ / \$\$\$

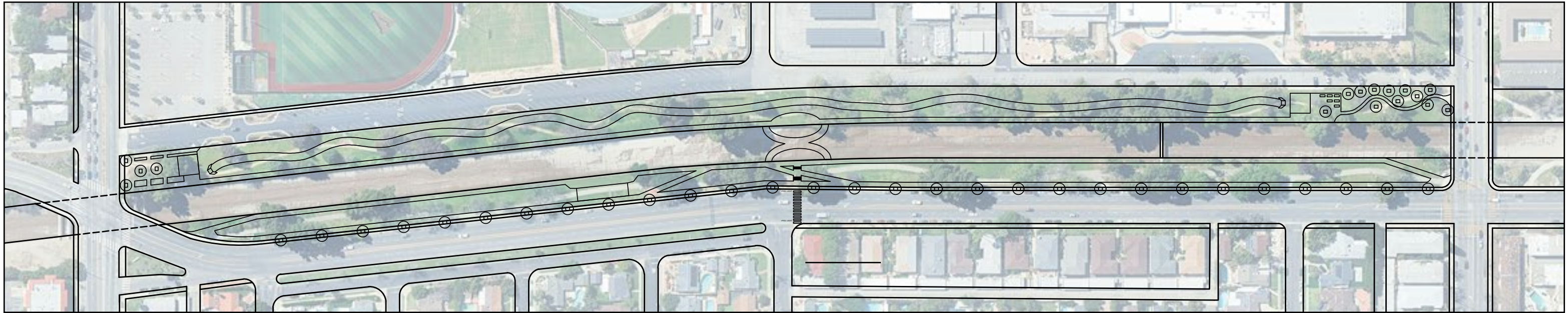
▶▶ A light-on-the-land approach that adds two new buildings and upgrades current park features. The existing pedestrian bridge is maintained.

▶▶ On the east bank, the sidewalk on Coldwater Canyon Ave is widened to a 10' walkway with a line of shade trees. A solar powered pedestrian crossing beacon is added at Hatteras St. There are stairs and accessible routes between the cultural center (entrance on Coldwater Canyon Ave) and the wide walkway along the channel.

▶▶ On the west bank, a picnic area sits where the bridge connects. Circulation design and existing trees are, in most cases, maintained. A cafe is added near Burbank Blvd, and an amphitheatre is added across from Grant High School.



# DESIGN ALTERNATIVE 2



## RENEW \$\$ / \$\$\$

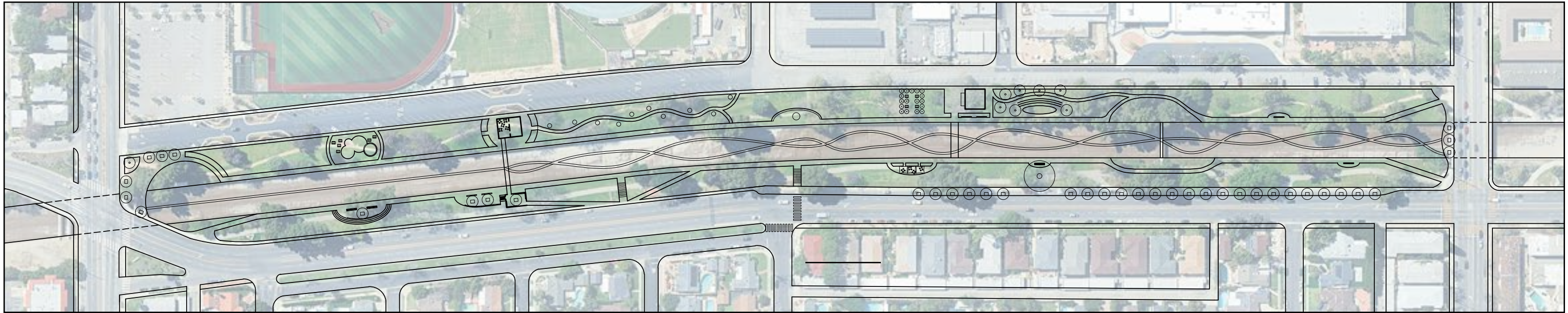
►► This approach incorporates resilient, natural water infrastructure with three new buildings and a signature construction bridge to give this park a new feeling.

►► On the east bank, the sidewalk on Coldwater Canyon Ave is widened to a 10' walkway with a line of shade trees. A solar powered pedestrian crossing beacon is added at Hatteras St. There are stairs and accessible routes between the cultural center (entrance on Coldwater Canyon Ave) and the wide walkway along the channel.

►► On the west bank, a dry streambed is constructed to primarily filter the storm drain water and release it back to the wash channel, as it is north of Oxnard St. The north entrance features a small, shady sculpture garden next to a cafe. A second cafe sits at the south entrance at Burbank Blvd.



# DESIGN ALTERNATIVE 3



## REIMAGINE \$\$\$ / \$\$\$

►► This design adds three major elements to the park: an amphitheatre with a cafe, a state-of-the-art event venue/cultural center/art gallery, and a pedestrian bridge suspended roughly 30' above the wash channel.

►► On the west bank, a cultural center is constructed across from LA Valley College. The ground floor is an indoor-outdoor pavillion, above is an indoor art gallery and outdoor patio. The patio connects to a bridge that borrows views of the mountains and offers a new perspective of the park. An amphitheatre is constructed to the north.

►► On the east bank, the bridge connects to a smaller patio above a building housing restrooms. Access to Coldwater Canyon Ave and the channel-front promenade is available by ramp or stairs. A bike path takes place of parking on NW Coldwater Canyon Ave and weaves down to the promenade before the new pedestrian crossing at Hatteras St.



# REFRACT: CONCEPT STATEMENT

"We have to guard against the temptation to accept that history is necessarily the limit of who we are as human beings.

- Ta-Nehisi Coates



"Refract" refers to the alteration of a view or scene by natural, physical processes. The showcase of this park is the brightly colored mural in the flood control channel. When the East side stretch is installed, park visitors will view the mural from both sides of the channel, creating a symmetry of activity. Design elements and forms follow this symmetry, however, the message is not to be symmetrical. Alternative views are expressed through programming. For example, a modern citrus orchard on the West bank is sited opposite the "Three Sisters" picnic grove on the East bank, where indigenous agriculture is demonstrated. Neither method is superior, each achieves a goal, but they are different. History may show us methods of life but they are not absolute.

# REFRACT: MASTER PLAN

## WEST BANK

**Bus Stop**  
 Small plaza  
 Shade trees  
 Exotic, drought-tolerant plants  
 Drinking fountain

**Playground**  
 Play equipment  
 Splash pad  
 Drinking fountain  
 Picnic area

**Cultural Center**  
 Floor 1: Pavillion  
 Floor 2: Gallery + Patio  
 Restrooms  
 Drinking fountain  
 Suspended bridge

**Sculpture Walk**  
 Five to ten pieces  
 Permanent or rotating  
 One signature, large-scale piece

**Citrus Grove**  
 Picnic area  
 Edible landscape

**Lancer Cafe**  
 Restrooms  
 Drinking fountain  
 Outdoor stage  
 Covered bridge

**Restoration Area**  
 Native landscape  
 Place for reflection

**Bus Stop**  
 Shade trees  
 Drinking fountain



## EAST BANK

**Low Flow Channel**  
 Visual interest  
 Meandering wash vs. straight channel

**Weaving Garden**  
 Picnic area  
 Craftable landscape

**Coldwater Station**  
 Restrooms  
 Drinking fountain  
 Suspended bridge  
 Patio

**Coldwater Crossing**  
 Painted crosswalk  
 Pedestrian beacon  
 Neighborhood access

**Three Sisters**  
 Picnic area  
 Edible landscape

**Oak Circle**  
 Endangered Engelmann Oak  
 Seating for wildlife observation

**Ironwoods**  
 Columnar street trees  
 Shade + mural views from street  
 Native habitat



**At least 52 existing trees are retained in the design.**

# SITE SECTION 1



## Cultural Center

The two-story building includes a stormwater collection cistern underground, solar panels on the roof, and second-floor bridge to the East bank.

## Low Flow Channel

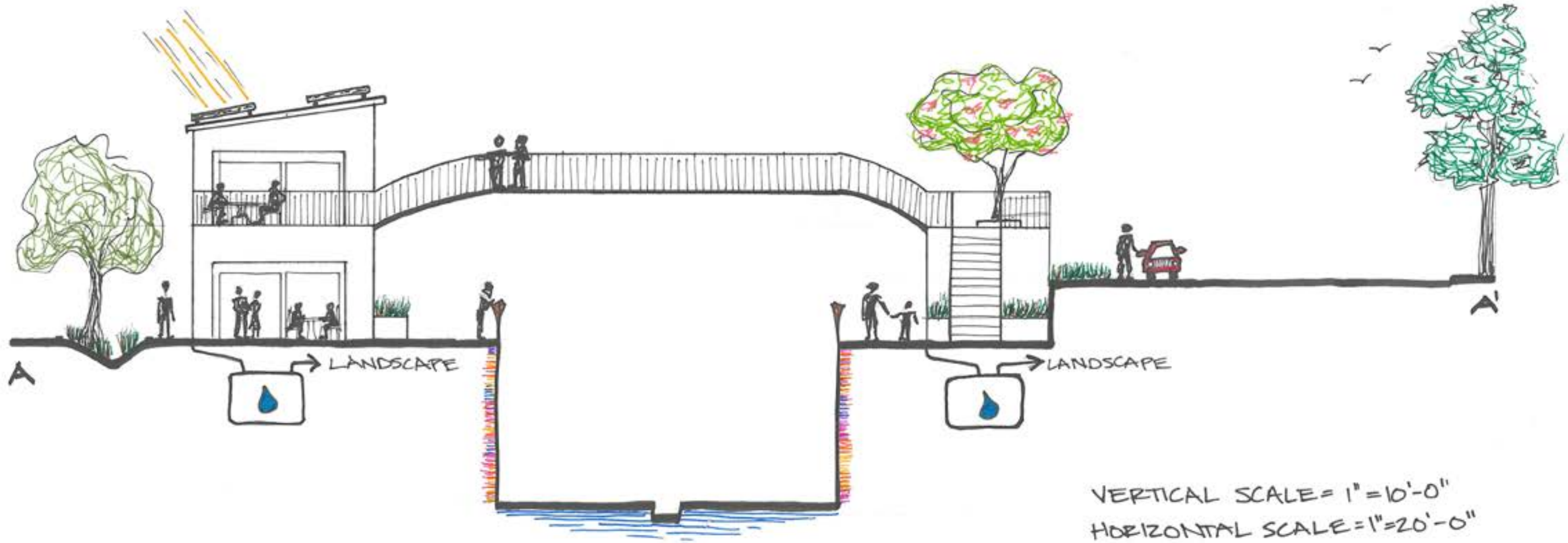
Linear

## Coldwater Station

A modest structure with restrooms and a rooftop patio. The connecting place between Coldwater Canyon Ave and the West bank.

## Coldwater Canyon Ave

## Ironwoods



# SITE SECTION 2



## Lancer Cafe Theatre

The amphitheatre-style benches outside of Lancer Cafe can be used for viewing performances or simply enjoying the mural.

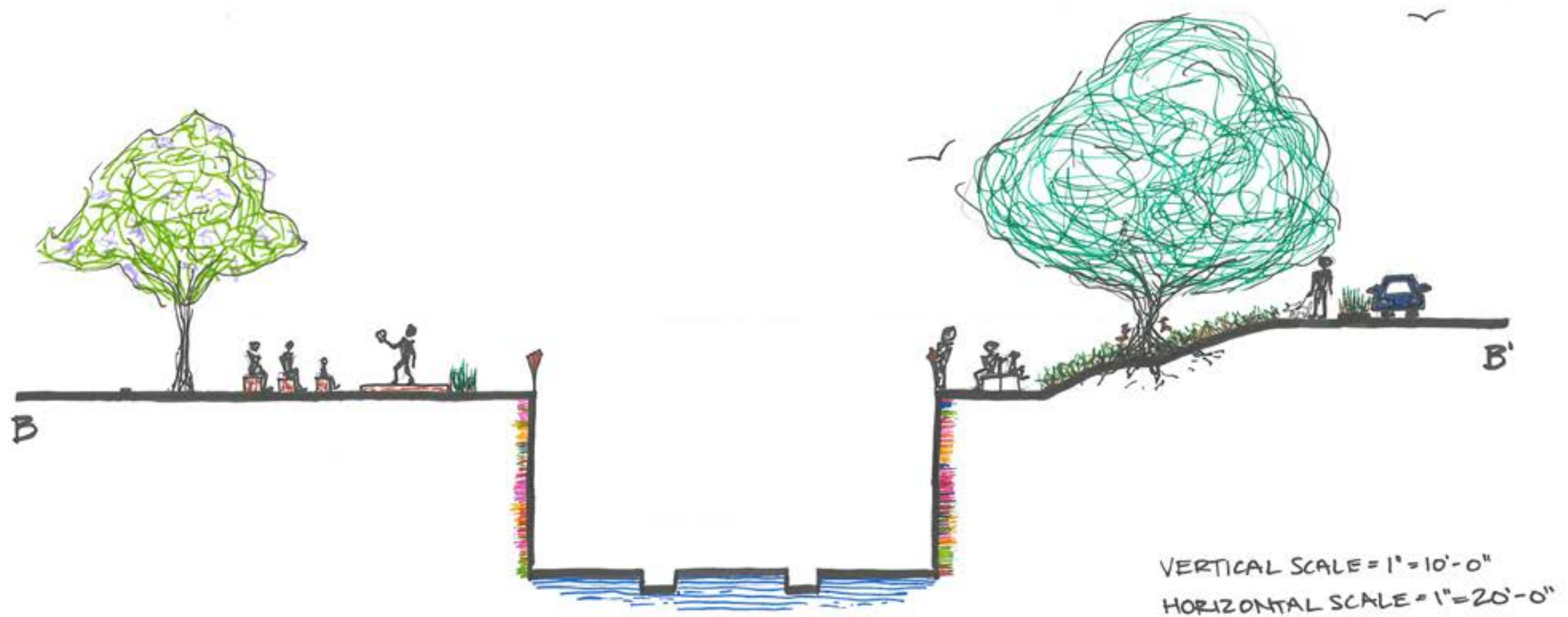
## Low Flow Channel

Braided

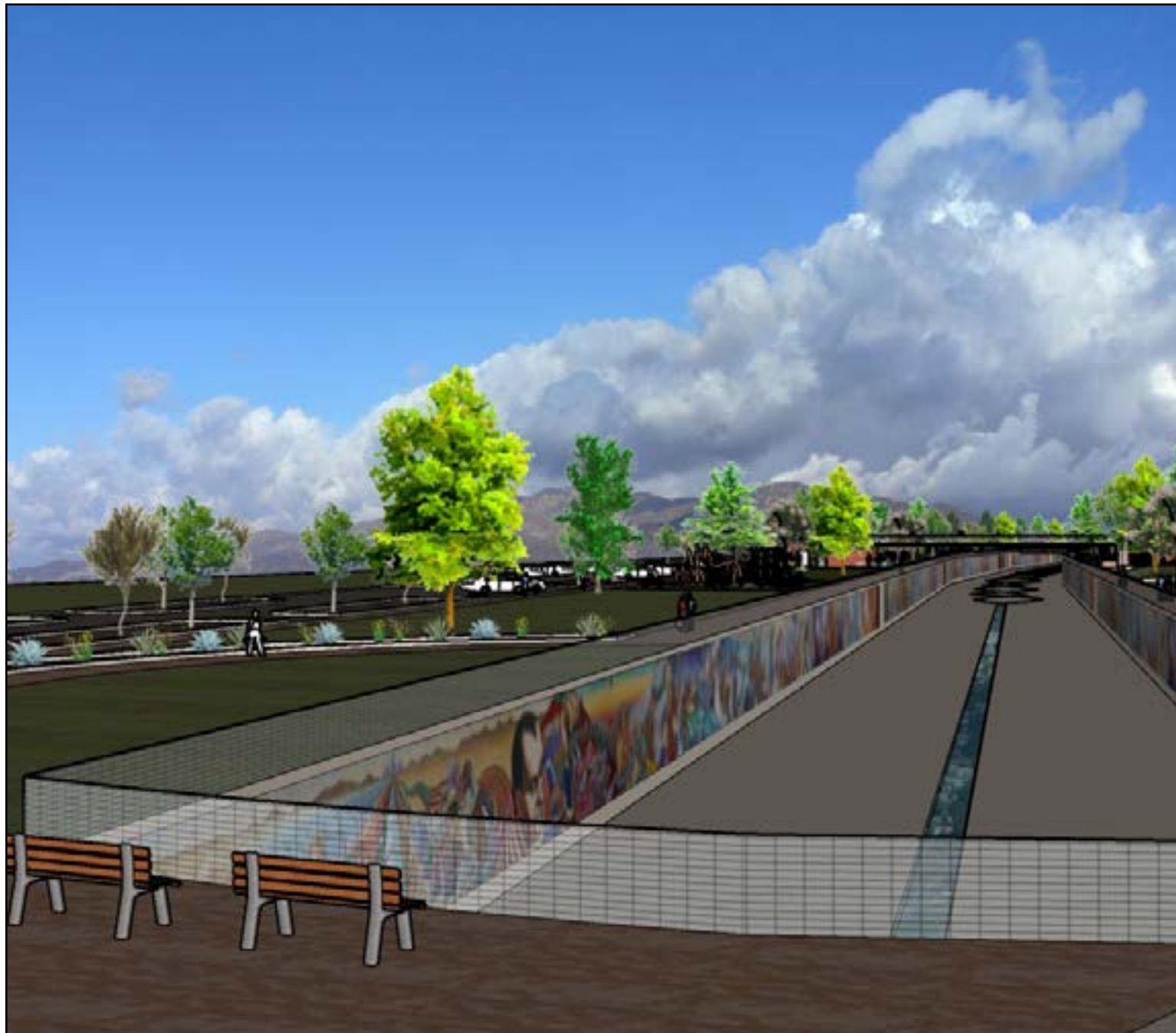
## Oak Circle

An intimate wildlife viewing room stationed at a stately Engelmann Oak tree.

## Coldwater Canyon Ave



# PERSPECTIVE 1



# PERSPECTIVE 2



# WALKTHROUGH VIDEO

[Link to Model Walkthrough on Youtube](#)  
**Thank You For Watching!**

