

TONGVA PARK



SPRING 2025

PLANTS THAT SUSTAIN

the park's pollinators and visitors

A CLOSER LOOK

at the park's design and use

INSPIRATION

that shaped the park

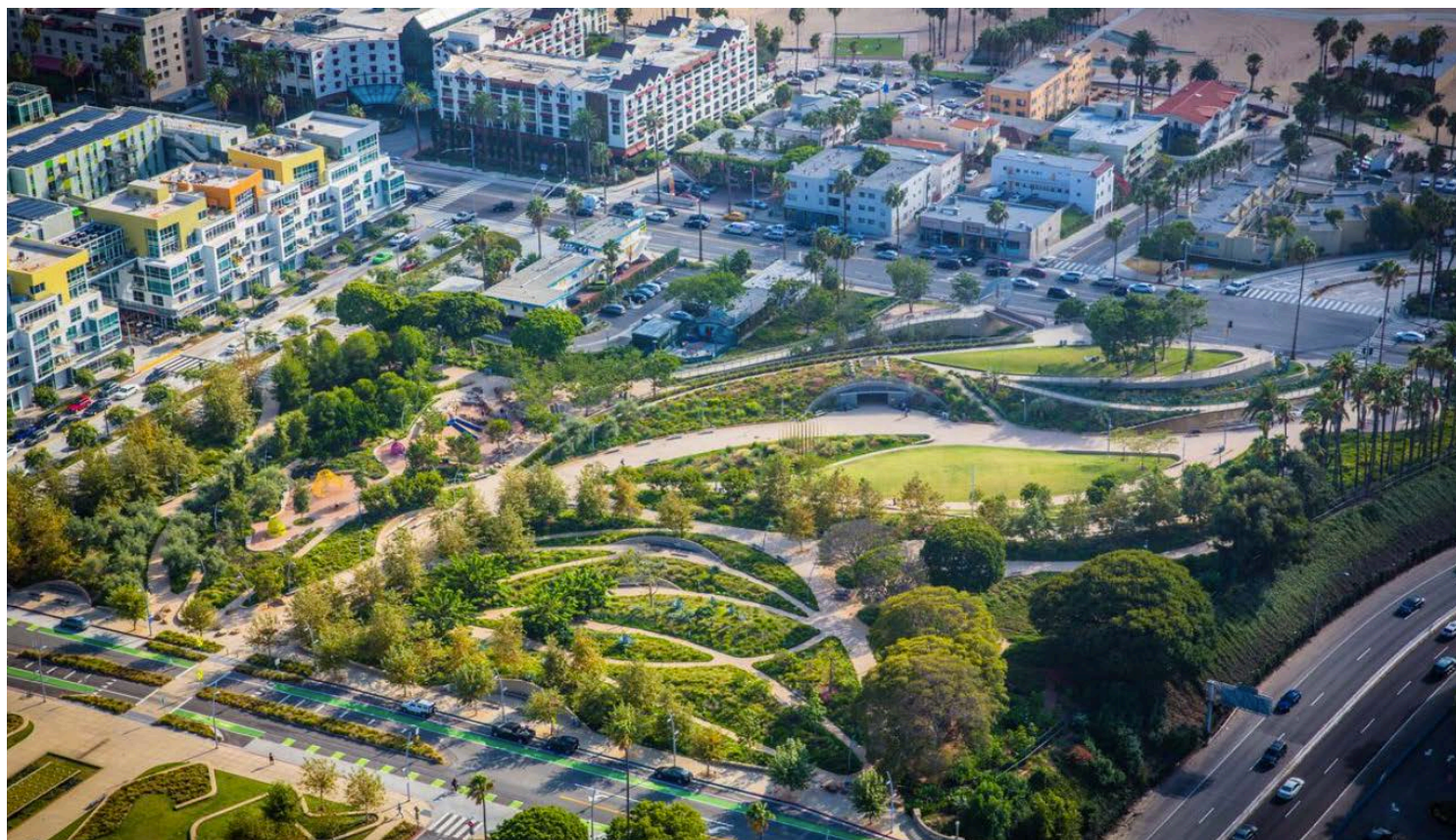
DESIGN GRAPHICS III

with LAURA RAZO

by **KELSEY WOODWORTH**

“The flowing natural habitat offers a strong contrast to the messy urbanism of downtown Santa Monica.”

- Matt Shaw | Architizer Magazine



CONTENTS

6	Introduction
7	Inspiration, History + Concept
8-9	Location + Context
10-11	Circulation
12-13	Accessibility
14-15	Hardscape
16-19	Drawings – Illustrative Plans
20-21	Drawings – Details
22-23	Drawings – Section/Elevation
24-25	Plant Palette + Materials
26	Interactive Elements
27	Water Systems
28	About
29	Wrap Up + Acknowledgements
30	References



INTRODUCTION

Landscape architecture students at UCLA Extension recently studied Santa Monica's Tongva Park in depth across a series of Design Graphics courses. *Tongva Park Magazine* (what you're currently reading) is the culmination and showcase of work from the past nine months.

Throughout this magazine, every map, diagram, plan, section, graphic, and perspective sketch was hand drawn. In addition to learning how to draw, our work involved reverse engineering the park to examine and understand its uses, construction, and design concept.

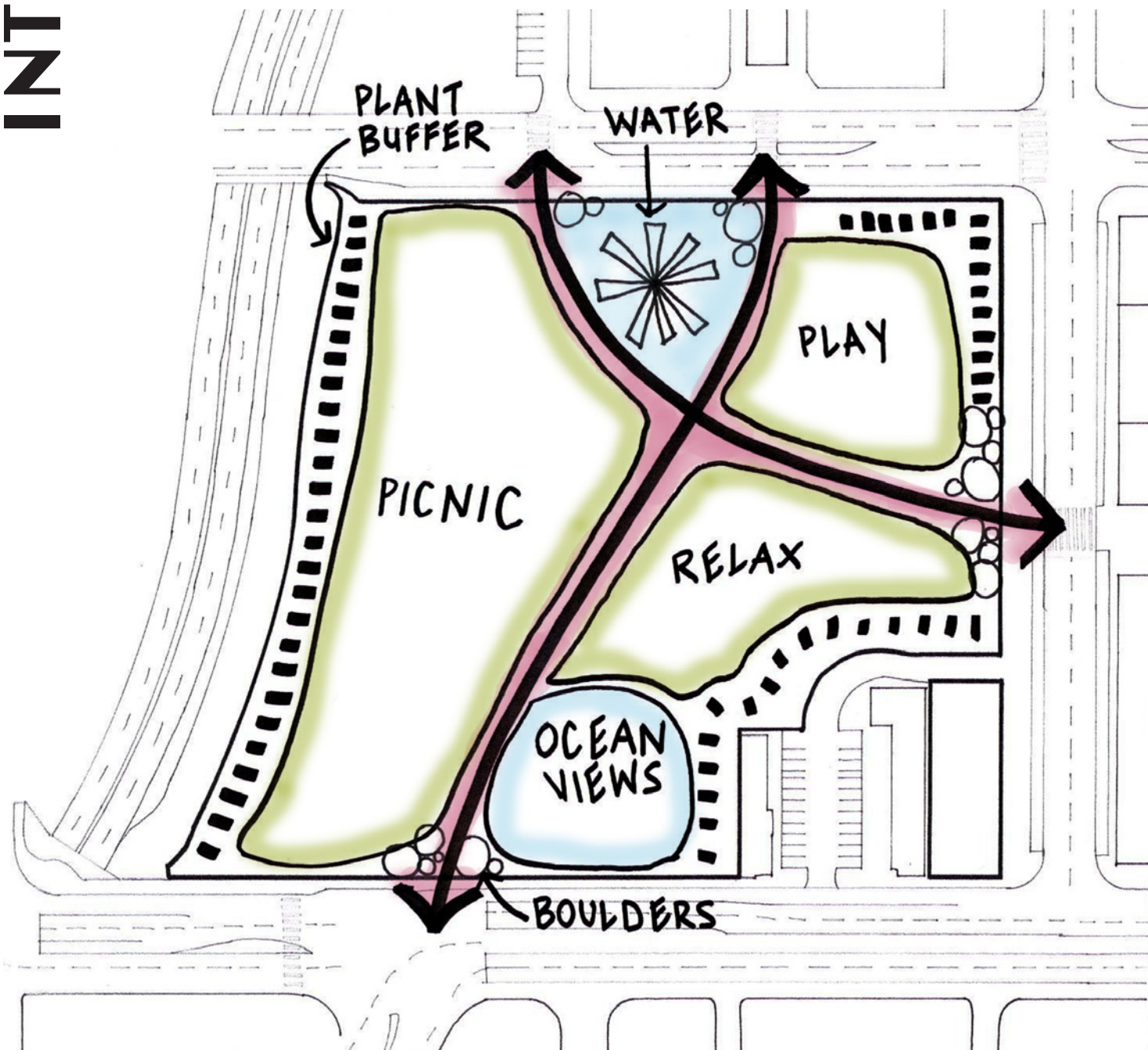
We began with *Design Graphics I: Drafting and Drawing of the Built Environment* (DG1), where

we learned pencil techniques, how to read plans and the hierarchy of lines, 3D sketching, how to produce plan drawings, and an understanding of scale, perspective, and the hardscape.

In *Design Graphics II: Communication for Site Analysis, Conceptual, and Site Design* (DG2), we used ink and color to hone our illustrative graphic skills and produce accurate and beautiful drawings.

Finally, in *Design Graphics III: Digital Rendering and Presentation Drawings* (DG3), we learned how to use Photoshop and InDesign to edit photos, paint, and enhance drawings.

And so, here it is—everything that pertains to Tongva Park, all rolled into one. Enjoy!



HISTORY, INSPIRATION + DESIGN CONCEPT



Designed by landscape architect James Corner and his team at Field Operations (Navy Pier, Chicago; High Line, New York City; Waterfront, Seattle), Tongva Park was transformed from an abandoned parking lot into a seven-acre park in the heart of Santa Monica.

In an effort to fill the asphalt wasteland, a park was constructed to serve both as a destination and a connective corridor linking residential and commercial areas to the beach and the iconic Santa Monica Pier.

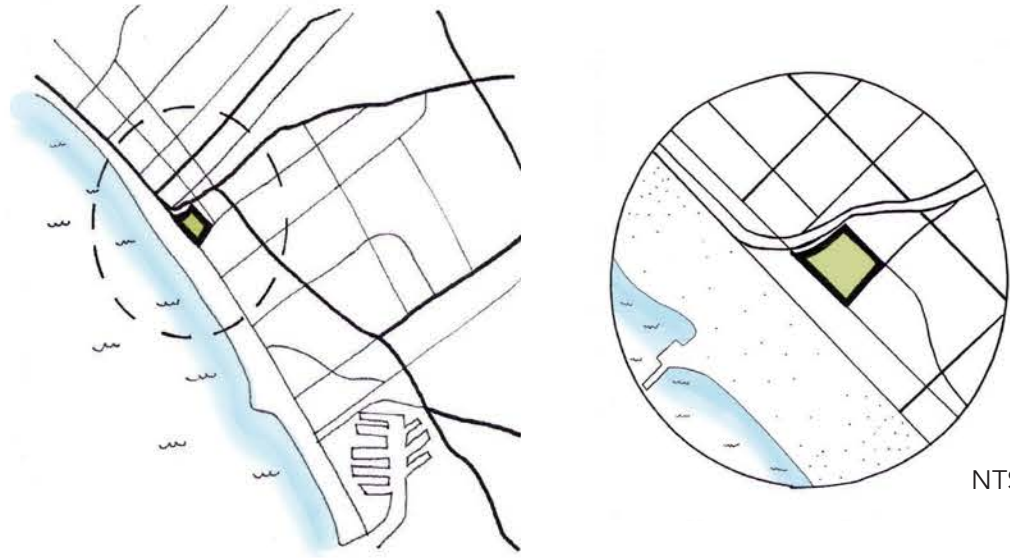
Tongva Park features four main “hill” areas: Garden Hill, which consists of display gardens and intimate alcoves for lounging or relaxing; Discovery Hill, which boasts a shaded and unique playground, slides built into the hill, rockwall, and a summer splash pad adjacent to the picnic area; Observation Hill, an elevated outlook that leverages borrowed views of the city and ocean,

highlighted by their nest-like architecture; and Gathering Hill, a large open turf area for picnicking, flying kites, running dogs, or using the amphitheater for community events.

Nodding to its local surroundings, the park combines rolling hills, native vegetation, Mediterranean meadow gardens, pine forests, and arroyo-like paths and swales to create a complete SoCal oasis.

Tongva Park is named in honor of the Indigenous peoples of the Los Angeles area. Before colonization, the Tongva people inhabited 4,000 square miles across 100 villages, from the Los Angeles Basin to the Southern Channel Islands.

Their deep connection to and respect for the land is more than worthy of celebration or acknowledgment in a park name—it should serve as the example



NTS



Situated between City Hall, the I-10 Freeway, Ocean Avenue, and the active beach front, Tongva Park connects commercial, civic, and residential areas with each other and the ocean. The city's connection to water is represented by the flow of water from City Hall's fountain and down through the park.

The park poses a lovely alternative for those who want to skip the beach.



1



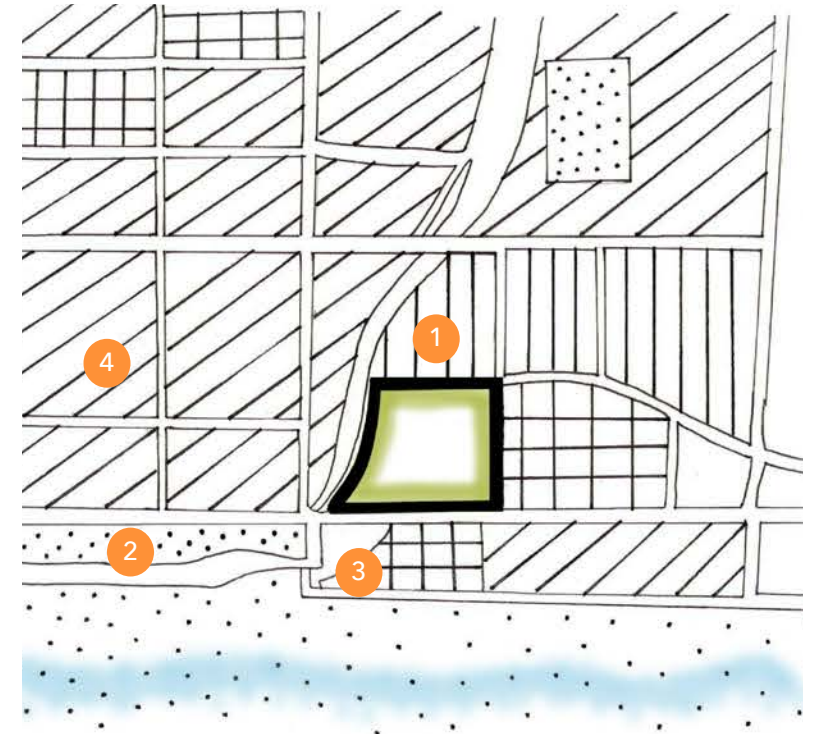
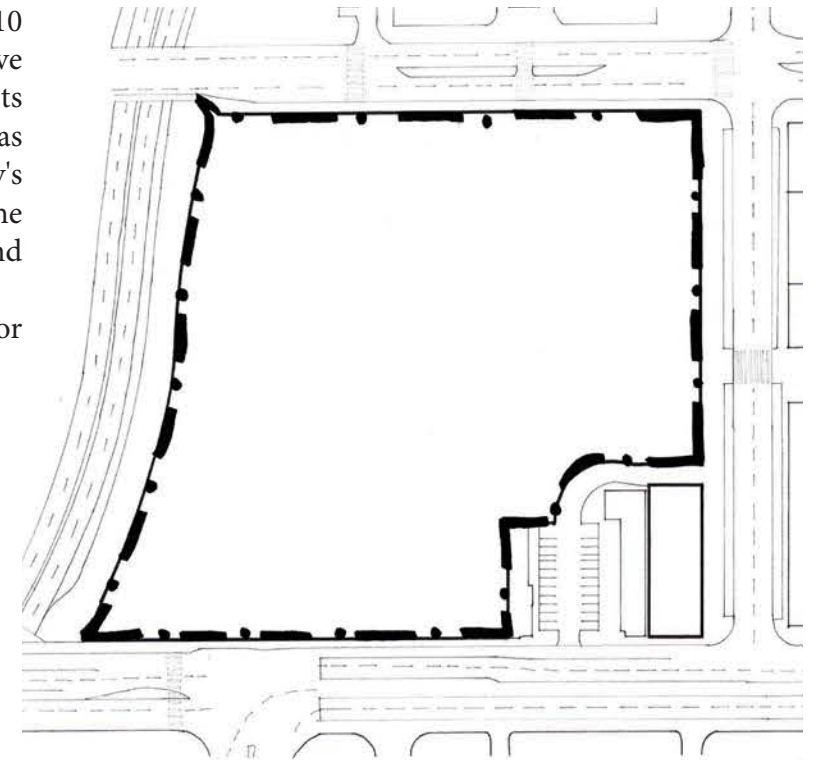
2



3



4



CIVIC
 COMMERCIAL
 RECREATION
 RESIDENTIAL

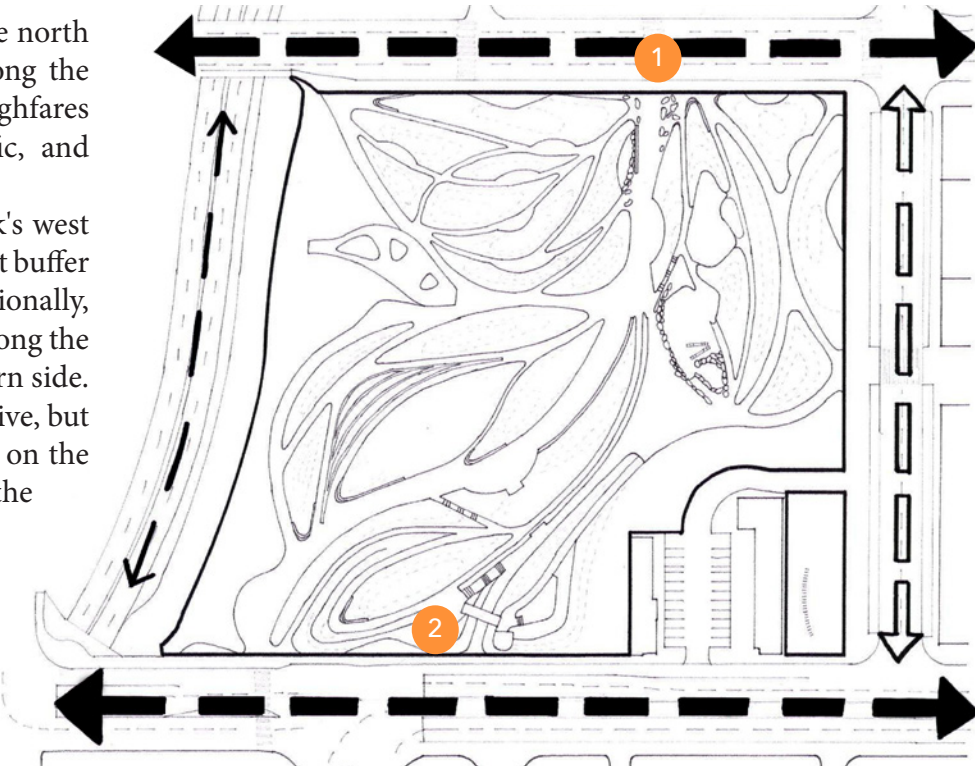
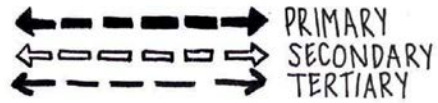
VEHICULAR

Vehicular traffic primarily flows along the north side of the park on Main Street and along the south side on Ocean Avenue. Both thoroughfares offer bus stops, multiple lanes of traffic, and several access points to the park.

The I-10 Freeway runs along the park's west edge, but a sloping vegetated wall and plant buffer helps reduce the impact of noise. Additionally, the freeway passes beneath an overpass along the park, so there is no access from the western side.

Through traffic runs along Olympic Drive, but it is primarily used by residents who live on the street or by service vehicles for Chez Jay, the bar at the corner of Olympic and Ocean.

There is no site-specific parking.

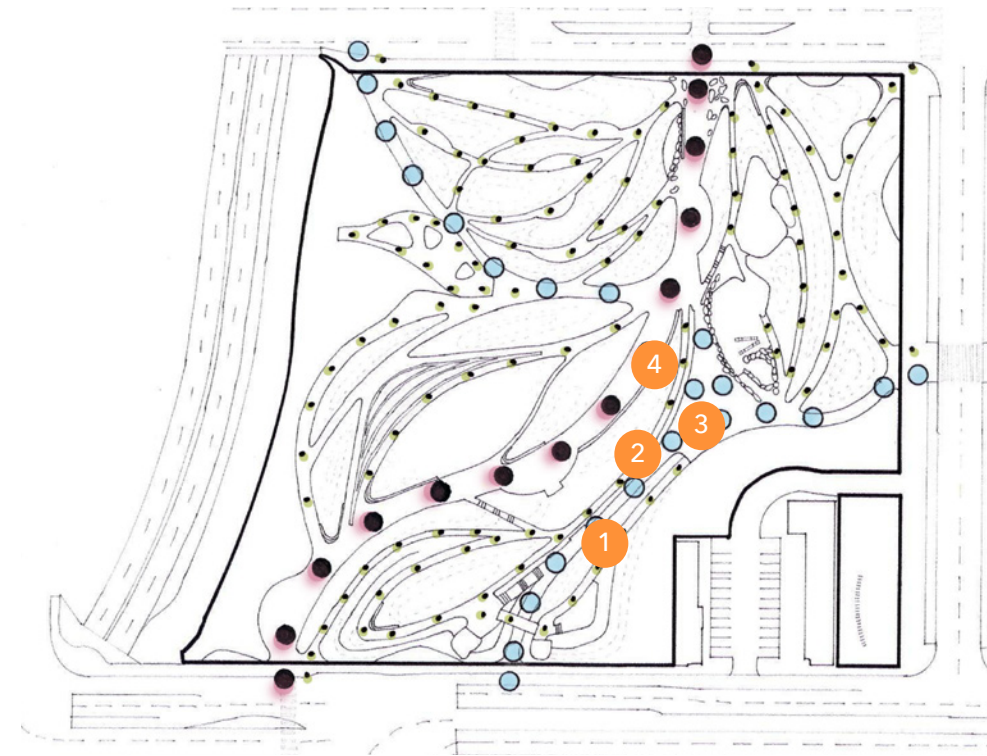


PEDESTRIAN

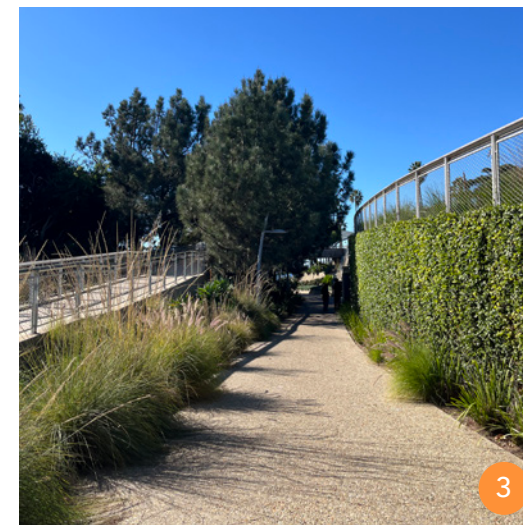
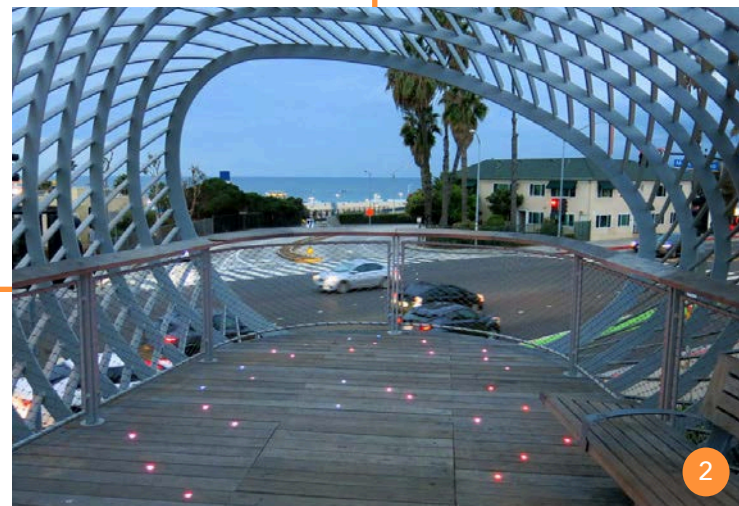
The primary path of the park leads from City Hall to Ocean Avenue, touching all four quadrants. This is the widest path through the park (see Photo 4).

Secondary pedestrian circulation moves from the north, east, and south sides of the park, directly connecting the residential building on Olympic Drive.

Tertiary paths meander through the trees and gardens accessing tucked-away benches and alcoves.



CIRCULATION



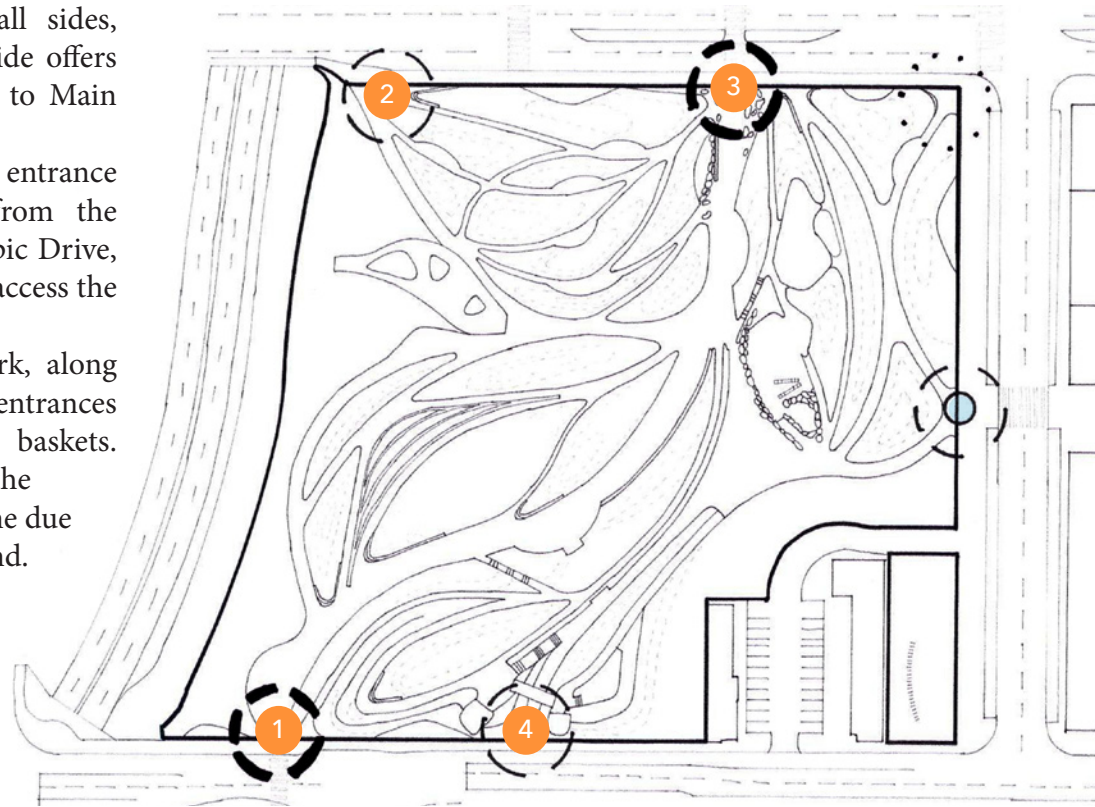
ENTRY POINTS

Tongva is accessible from all sides, except the west. The north side offers three entrances that connect to Main Street and City Hall.

Along the east side is an entrance directly across the street from the residential building on Olympic Drive, making it easy for families to access the park and playground.

The south side of the park, along Ocean Avenue, offers wider entrances and features the overlook baskets. Entering on the south side of the park comes with a slight incline due to the grade at the southern end.

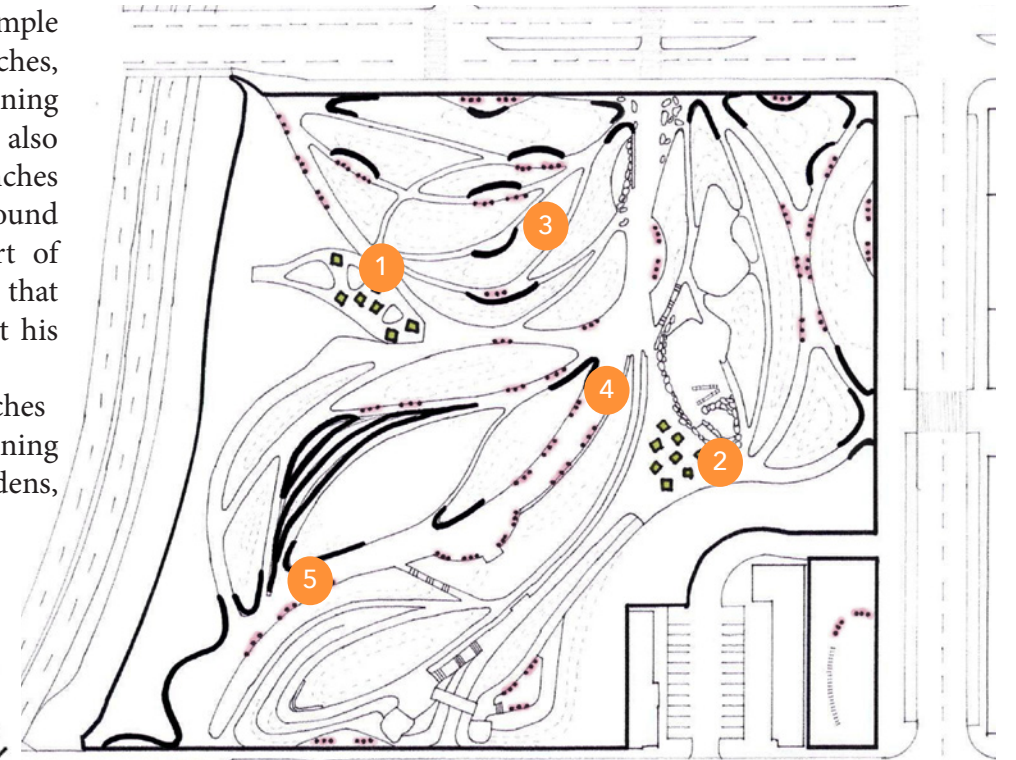
All entrances are marked.



SEATING

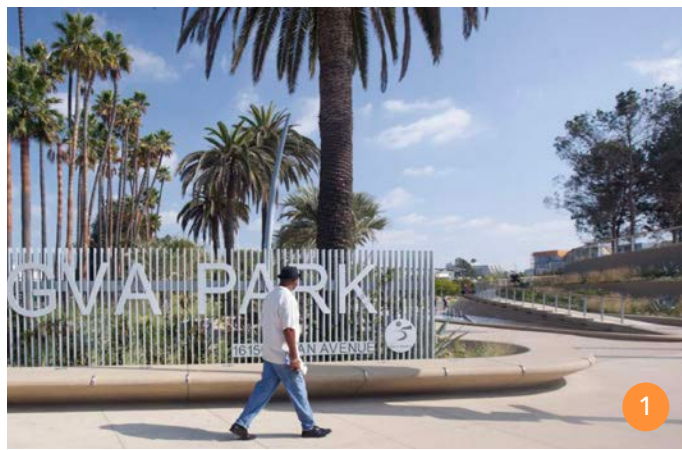
Tongva Park offers ample seating with various benches, picnic areas, and retaining walls that extend out to also provide seating. The benches and retaining walls found in Tongva Park are part of Corner's signature style that can be found throughout his other projects.

These curvilinear benches are tucked into the retaining walls among the gardens, making it a cozy, private space for visitors.



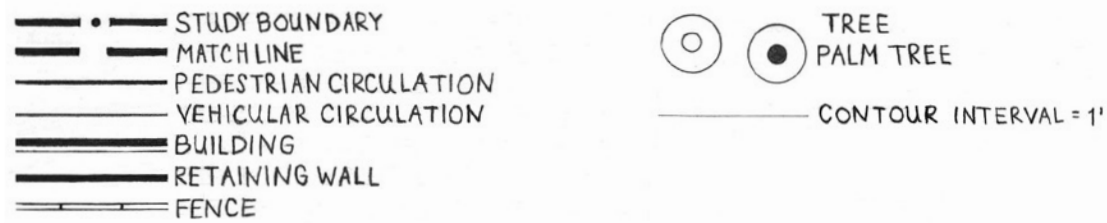
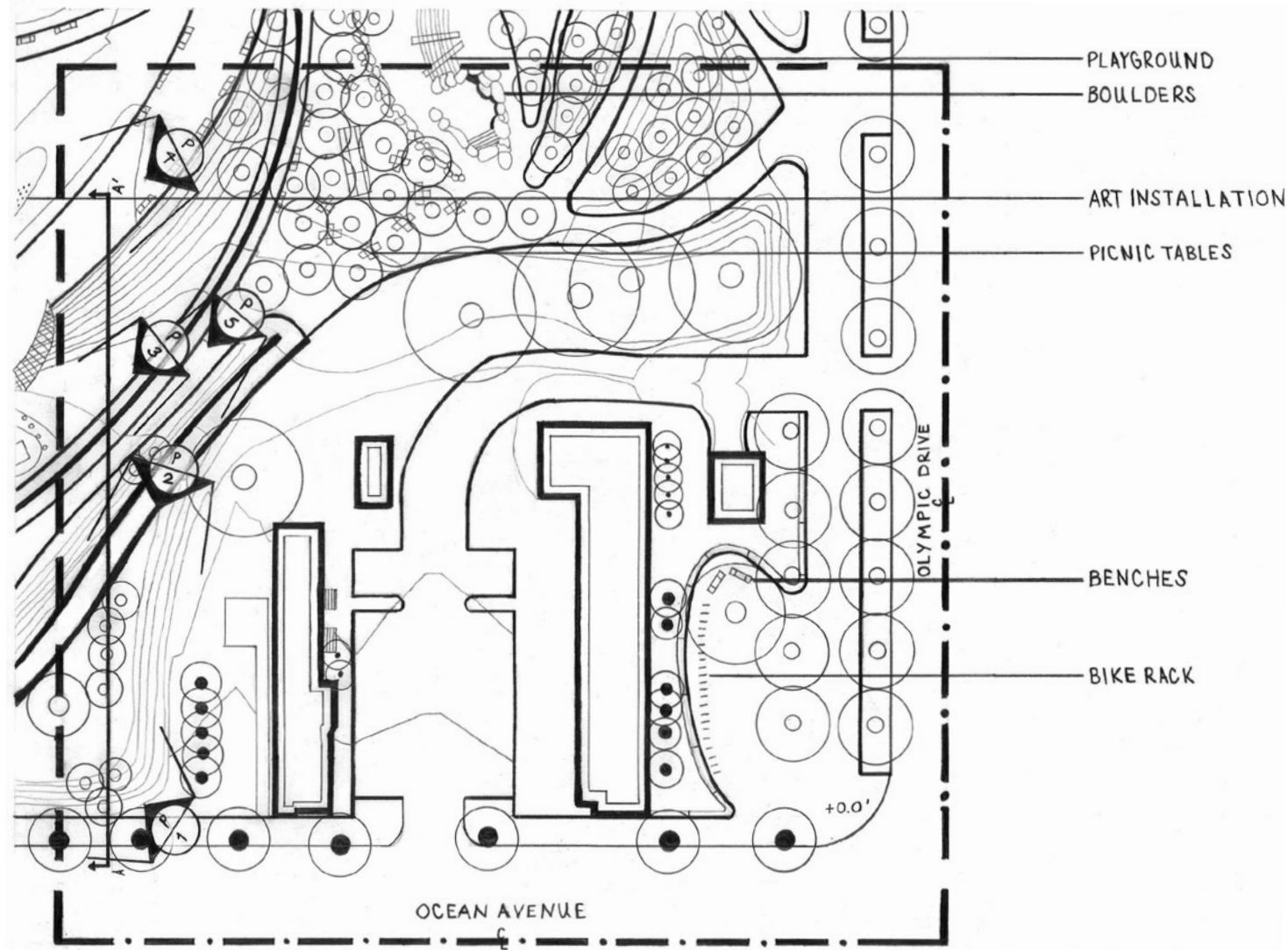
ACCESS

Seating is what invites people into a space, and there's no shortage in Tongva Park. Benches dot every path and can be found in both sunny and shaded spots. Some are hidden away for privacy; others are positioned to watch passersby or to enjoy the views toward the ocean. There are two main picnic areas in Tongva, both situated in the shade with permanent furniture. The area near the playground is typically a livelier space given its proximity.



HARDSCAPE

There are no straight lines in Tongva Park. That's what gives it the sculpted feel of an arroyo! And that's what makes drawing this park a challenge for beginners. The focus of the plan (pictured below) is the hardscape in the southeast corner of the park. This was drawn in DG1 to examine hierarchy of lines with varying pencil weights, from buildings to contours. Look closely and you'll see where the lip of the retaining wall sticks out just enough for one to sit.



MATERIALS



1



2

The paving throughout the park is beige and simple. Concrete pavers blend seamlessly into smaller paths made with compacted stone that matches the concrete seating walls and boulders. The boulders are placed throughout the park, at entrances and water features, and came from the nearby San Gabriel Valley.

Inside the park, nearly all the edging is metal, giving a sleek look to the park's gardens, turf, and sculpted spaces.

In contrast, the playground is covered in a rubbery surface, and the adjacent splash pad utilizes an aquatic safety surface.



3



4

ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN

HAND RENDERED: INK, AD MARKERS + COLORED PENCILS



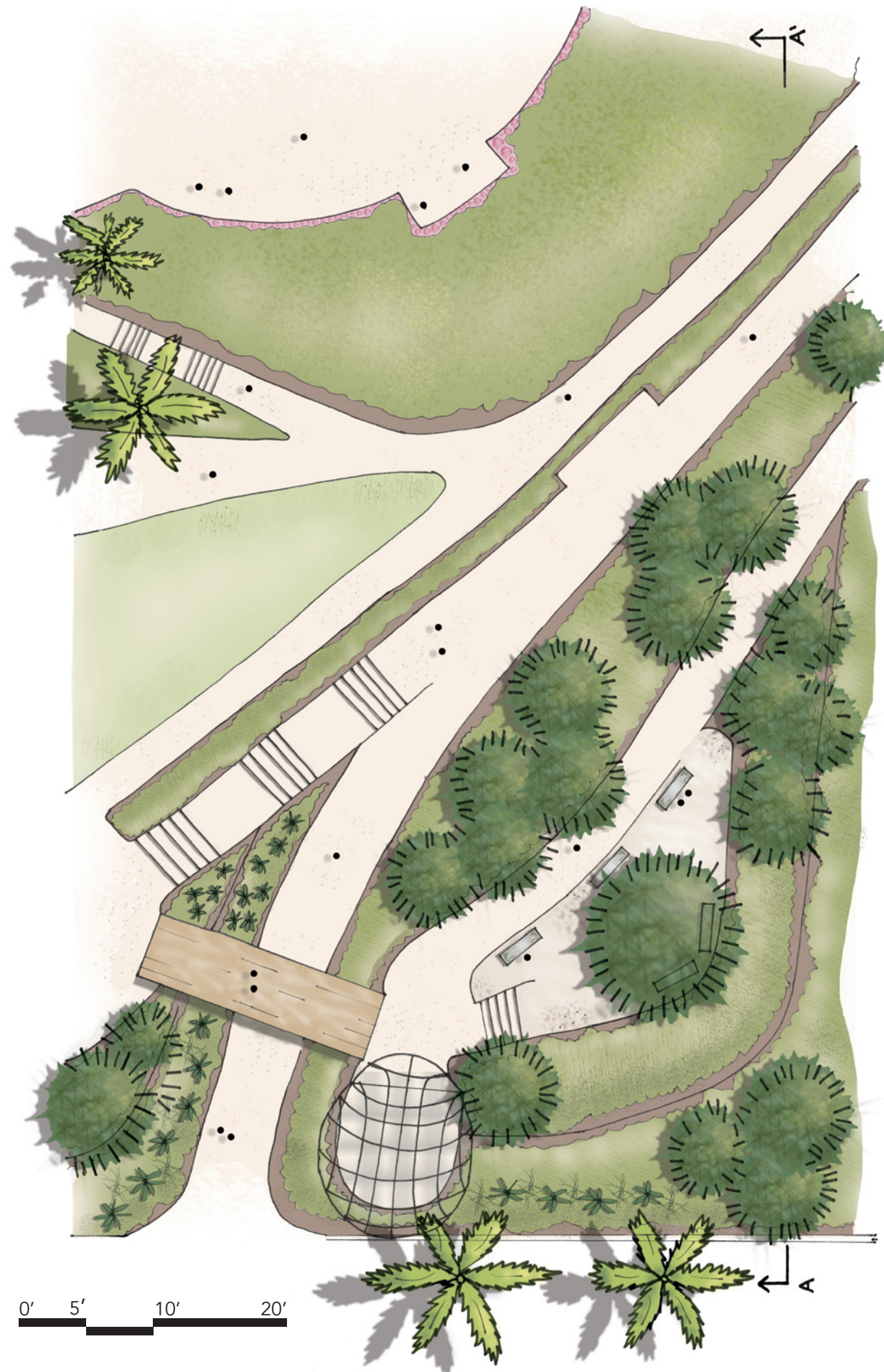
ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN

DIGITALLY COLORED: PHOTOSHOP + INDESIGN



A CLOSER LOOK

HAND RENDERED; DIGITALLY COLORED



1. Key plan
2. Entering Tongva from Ocean Ave
3. The lower path towards restrooms and Ocean Ave exit
4. The upper path through pines, towards overlook

1"=10'
0' 5' 10' 20'

SECTION / ELEVATION

HAND RENDERED; DIGITALLY COLORED

SIDEWALK (OCEAN AVE)

GUARDRAIL

LIGHT

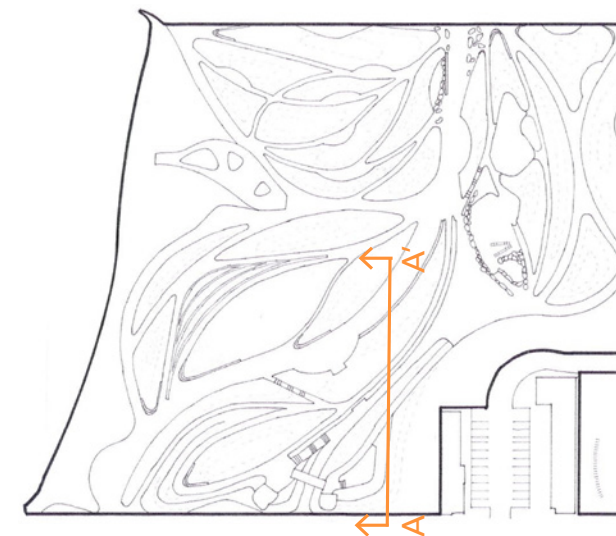


In DG1 and DG2, we examined slope and grading at Tongva Park along an assigned section line and learned how to draw them to scale. This is an essential component not only for visualizing a site, but also for understanding elevation changes and what might lie beneath the surface (tree buckets, cisterns, pumps, etc.).

Depicted above, you'll see that this section cuts from Ocean Avenue nearly halfway into the park, ending at the Weather Field sculpture. The section intersects four

of the park's pedestrian paths, revealing dramatic drops and a high retaining wall within the pine forest area. This gives visitors variety, incline, different viewpoints, and alternating senses of enclosure and exposure as they move throughout the park. The sloping hillsides are lush and covered in a variety of grasses and succulents.

The base layer of this illustration was completed in DG1, then refined in DG2 with improved graphics and color, and finally digitally colored and overlaid in DG3.



PLANTING

Tongva Park contains approximately 30,000 plants from more than 170 species and 21 tree species, many of which were grown in nurseries across California. Some trees didn't travel far at all, like "Morty," a beloved Moreton Bay fig (pictured right), and "The Three Amigos," a trio of ficus trees near the City Hall entrance. These trees were preserved and repositioned to fit the new landscape design. Several palms were also relocated and now frame the park's main entrance.

oaks that provide ample shade, while Observation Hill features groves of pine and cascading grasses and succulents. Western sycamores weave through swales and low points, framing soft meadows filled with grasses, wildflowers, and bulbs. Native varieties of sage, asters, agave, and aloe attract attention from visitors and pollinators alike with their striking forms and seasonal blooms.

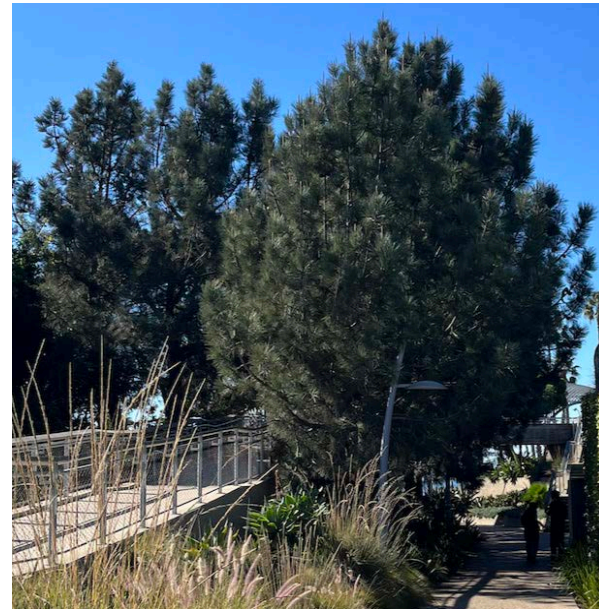
The park's design draws inspiration from the Southern California arroyo landscape, once the natural state of this site. Echoing its washes, ravines, and native vegetation, these elements are reflected in the planting, architectural forms, and materials, giving Tongva Park its distinct Santa Monica identity.

Read more about the park's irrigation system on Page 27.

The planting strategy blends native and drought-tolerant species, inspired by three Southern California ecological zones: coastal scrub, chaparral, and riparian. These plant communities are thoughtfully matched to the park's microclimates, resulting in a landscape that feels both lush and regionally authentic. Discovery Hill contains the most trees, including silvery olives and



Moreton Bay Fig Tree



Pine Tree



Mexican Grass Tree (*Robert Perry*)



Australian Grass Tree (*Matakana*)



Mendocino Reed Grass (*Houzz*)



Purple Sage (*Gardenia*)



Black Sage (*Gardenia*)



White Sage (*Gardenia*)



Pink Gaura (*The Spruce*)



Butterfly Bush (*The Spruce*)



Fleabane Aster (*Gardenia*)



Sycamore Tree



Oak Tree



Palm Tree



Blue Fox Tail Agave (*Gardenia*)



Bitter Aloe (*Gardenia*)



Hen and Chicks (*Gardenia*)

INTERACTIVE

Tongva offers opportunities for passive or active recreation, community gatherings, or solo outings. Walking paths in the park encourage visitors to meander through the gardens and invite them to sit in shaded areas under the large oaks, sycamores, ficus, and pines.

The park's unique structures, including a conch-like wireframe lookout to the Pacific, add to the beauty and architectural character of the space.

Weather Field, a kinetic sculpture by artist Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle, anchors the park as a minimal and serene landmark amidst the tall grass and open turf. Behind the sculpture, there's an amphitheater and turf area used for community events, picnicking, or open recreation.

Additionally, there's a large playground equipped with hillside slides, geometric climbing gyms, a rock wall, picnic area, and a summer splash pad.



1



2



3

WATER SYSTEMS

The construction of the park has transformed seven acres into significant green space, adding 30% more shade from new trees and 70% more permeable surface for stormwater retention.

Stormwater from the park is collected in bioswales that run along the base of hills within the park, and plants are irrigated by water from the nearby Santa Monica Urban Runoff Recycling Facility. Additionally, the water features on-site recirculate the water in closed systems.

The park exemplifies a model of sustainability for city parks by balancing environmental and cultural considerations. The restoration of a drought-tolerant, mostly native ecosystem is complemented by an irrigation system that uses city runoff.

It is critical that public spaces use water in this way, especially when it is such a precious resource.



1



2



3



4



Kelsey Woodworth is an aspiring landscape architect committed to creating greener, more equitable cities by designing accessible, community-centered outdoor spaces. Guided by author Robin Wall Kimmerer's quote, "restoring land without restoring the relationship is an empty exercise," Kelsey brings a unique blend of marketing expertise and hands-on experience in teaching gardens to ensure education and community engagement are central to every project.

Rooted in a deep love for the outdoors and the wonder of Mother Nature, Kelsey approaches her work with both environmental stewardship and social responsibility in mind. She believes that landscape architecture is as much about people as it is about place, and when traveling, sees cities through the lens of their parks and gardens.

Kelsey holds a bachelor's degree in public relations and international business from Auburn University and lives in Los Angeles. She loves the salty smell of low tide, herby pasta dishes, and being a tourist.

WRAP UP

As DG3 concludes, I'm reflecting on the three-course journey with deep appreciation for the building blocks and steps that led to this final project. I entered the program with zero drawing experience, but I quickly learned that drawing is a skill that can be practiced and improved. It also reinforced how much I love looking at maps and how satisfying I find clean, crisp lines.

Landscape design is both technical and creative, requiring a disciplined balance between precision and imagination—knowing when to hold back and when to go for it. I look forward to continuing to learn and improve my design communication skills so I can translate ideas from my brain into reality and create beautiful spaces.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my professors: David Squires (DG1), Rebecca Schwaner (DG2), and Laura Razo (DG3). You've all gone above and beyond to make sure your students are supported, encouraged, learning, and improving. A special shoutout to Rebecca for her catchphrases that helped push me through some tougher moments this year: "GO!", "Practice, practice, practice," and "Don't get stuck."

MEGA shoutout to my classmates and our ongoing group chats that kept spirits alive. Doing this program as working professionals, with families, on a tight timeline is TOUGH—and I'm proud of us. I feel so lucky to be surrounded by such inspiring, funny, supportive, and talented peers. Your work motivates me to be better. Thank you.

Oscar and the team at ARC continue to make printing a smooth and pleasant experience. Will they read this?

My dog Bear (who definitely won't read this) deserves credit for staying up late with me, doing homework, and being a good boy.

And last but certainly not least, thank you to my partner Chris—for making me dinner during class, going to the printer on my behalf, and encouraging me to keep going.

ARTICLES

American Society of Landscape Architects. "2018 ASLA Professional Awards: Tongva Park and Ken Genser Square." *ASLA.org*, 2018.

Balderrama Morley, Jack. "Tongva Park in Santa Monica is Californian through-and-through." *The Architect's Newspaper*, November 6, 2019.

Field Operations. "Projects: Tongva Park, Santa Monica, California." *Field Operations*, 2013.

Shaw, Matt. "From Parking Lot to Urban Oasis: James Corner's A+Award-Winning Tongva Park." *Architizer*, 2015.

Westside Los Angeles. "Tongva Park: A Stunning Urban Oasis in Santa Monica." *www.westsidelosangeles.com*, May 2, 2025.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Cover Photo: Street-Porter, Tim. "People in Overlook Baskets." *FieldOperations.net*. May 28, 2025.

<https://www.fieldoperations.net/project-details/project/tongva-park.html>

Page 4: Santa Monica Government. "Tongva Park Aerial." *SantaMonica.gov*. June 1, 2025.

<https://www.santamonica.gov/places/parks/tongva-park>

Page 8, Photo 1: Field Operations. "Location Aerial." *Architizer*. May 19, 2025.

<https://architizer.com/blog/inspiration/industry/james-corner-field-operations-tongva-park/>

Page 9, Photo 1: Santa Monica Daily News Press. "City Hall." June 3, 2025

<https://smdp.com/news/mckinley-provides-sustainable-transportation-for-staff/>

Page 9, Photo 2: Getty. "Santa Monica State Beach." *Conde Nast Traveler*. June 3, 2025.

<https://www.cntraveler.com/activities/santa-monica/santa-monica-state-beach>

Page 9, Photo 3: Mini Adventures. "Santa Monica." *Mini Adventures*. June 3, 2025.

<https://mini-adventures.com/one-day-in-santa-monica/>

Page 9, Photo 4: Spectrum News. "Third Street Promenade." *Spectrum News*. June 3, 2025.

<https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/southern-california/business/2021/02/23/santa-monica-reimagines-third-street-promenade>

Page 10, Photo 1: CarScoops. "Santa Monica City Bus." June 3, 2025.

<https://www.carscoops.com/2023/07/californian-bus-company-uses-ai-to-spot-parking-violations-that-could-lead-to-tickets/>

Page 10, Photo 2: Sequeira, John. "An overlook at Tongva Park on Ocean Ave." June 3, 2025.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/basic-la/49323403633/in/photostream/>

Page 11, Photos 1-4: Woodworth, Kelsey. "Tongva Park Paths." November 17, 2024.

Page 12, Photo 1: Street-Porter, Tim. "Ocean Ave Entrance." *ArchPaper.com*. June 1, 2025.

<https://www.archpaper.com/2019/11/tongva-park-feature/>

Page 12, Photo 2: Street-Porter, Tim. "Boulders." *ArchitectMagazine.com*. May 28, 2025.

<https://www.architectmagazine.com/project-gallery/tongva-park-and-ken-genser-square>

Page 12, Photo 3: Field Operations. "City Hall Entrance." *UrbanNext.net*. June 1, 2025.

<https://urbannext.net/tongva-park-and-ken-genser-square/>

Page 12, Photo 4: Woodworth, Kelsey. "Overlook Entrance." November 17, 2024.

Page 13, Photo 1: W.E. O'Neil Construction. "Picnic Area." June 1, 2025.

<https://www.weoneil.com/project/tongva-park-and-genser-town-square/>

Page 13, Photo 2: Urbidermis. "Picnic Table." *Urbidermis.com*. May 30, 2025

<https://www.urbidermis.com/proyectos/tongva-park/>

Page 13, Photo 3: Architizer. "Woman on Bench." *Architizer.com*. May 30, 2025.

<https://architizer.com/projects/tongva-park-and-ken-genser-square-1/>

Page 13, Photo 4: Woodworth, Kelsey. "Benches in Perspective." November 17, 2024.

Page 13, Photo 5: Architizer. "Amphitheater." *Architizer.com*. May 30, 2025.

<https://architizer.com/projects/tongva-park-and-ken-genser-square-1/>

Page 15, Photo 1: Street-Porter, Tim. "Three Amigos." *Architect Magazine*. May 27, 2025.

<https://www.architectmagazine.com/project-gallery/tongva-park-and-ken-genser-square>

Page 15, Photo 2: Woodworth, Kelsey. "Tongva Path 1." November 17, 2024

Page 15, Photo 3: Woodworth, Kelsey. "Tongva Path 2." November 17, 2024

Page 15, Photo 4: W.E. O'Neil Construction. "Splash Pad." June 1, 2025.

<https://www.weoneil.com/project/tongva-park-and-genser-town-square/>

Pages 24-25: Cited in image captions on page.

Page 26, Photo 2: Santa Monica. "Art Installation." *SantaMonica.com*. June 4, 2025.

<https://www.santamonica.com/things-to-do/tongva-park/>

Page 26, Photo 3: Santa Monica Government. "Tot Lot at Tongva Park." *SantaMonica.gov*. May 28, 2025.

<https://www.santamonica.gov/places/parks/tongva-park>

Page 26, Photo 4: Street-Porter, Tim. "Ocean Ave Overlook at Sunset." *FieldOperations.net*. May 28, 2025.

<https://www.fieldoperations.net/project-details/project/tongva-park.html>

Page 27, Photo 1: W.E. O'Neil Construction. "City Hall Fountain." June 1, 2025.

<https://www.weoneil.com/project/tongva-park-and-genser-town-square/>

Page 27, Photo 2: Street-Porter, Tim. "Girl running by water feature." *FieldOperations.net*. May 28, 2025.

<https://www.fieldoperations.net/project-details/project/tongva-park.html>

Page 27, Photo 3: Seib, Al. "Water features curl around Tongva Park." *LA Times*. August 28, 2013.

<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-santa-monica-park-review-20130828-story.html>

Page 27, Photo 4: Santa Monica Daily Press. "Tongva Park." *smdp.com*. January 25, 2014.

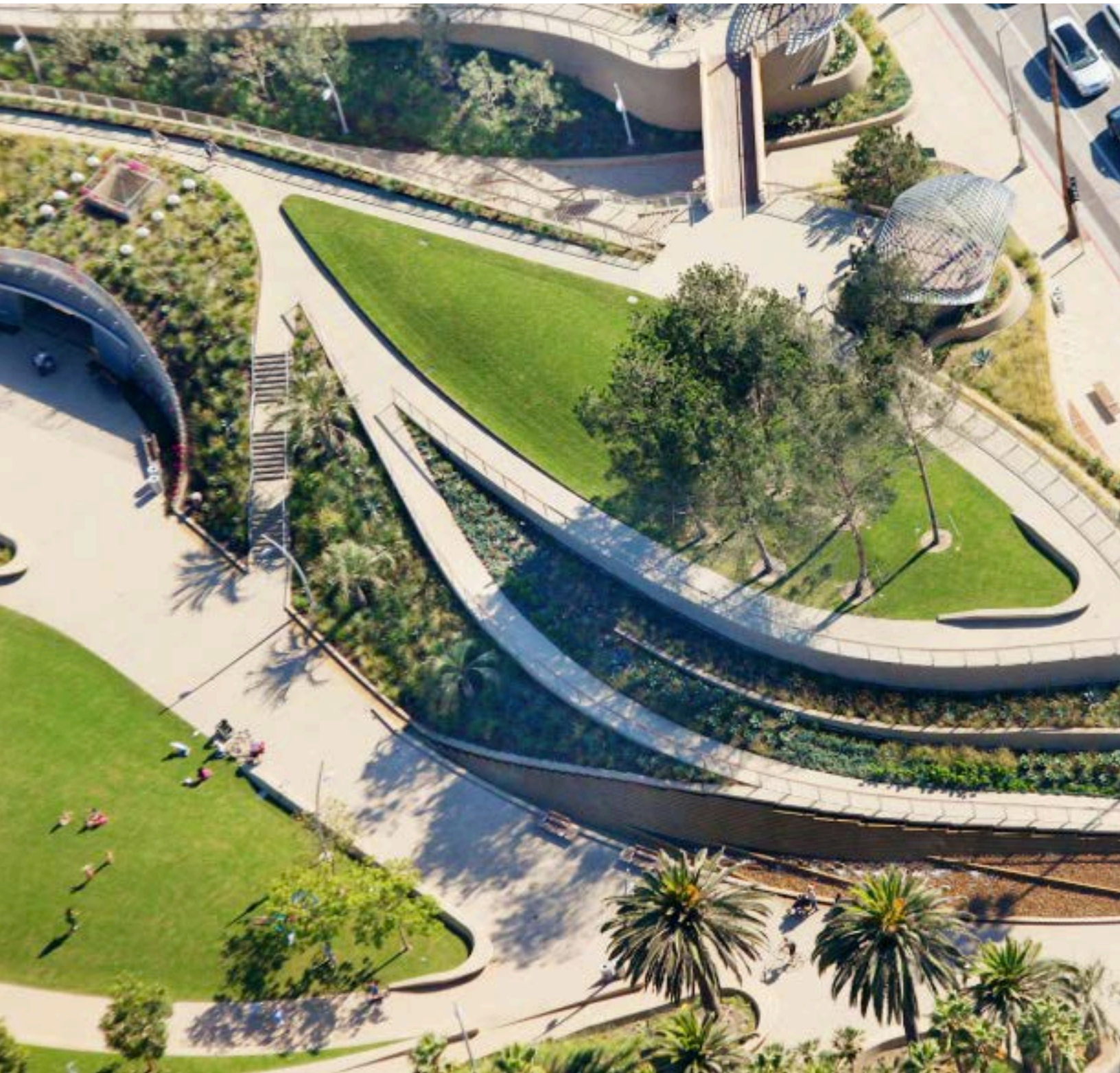
<https://smdp.com/news/new-civic-center-parks-praised-for-design/>

Page 28, Self Portrait Background: Street-Porter, Tim. "Ocean Ave Entrance." *FieldOperations.net*. May 13, 2025.

<https://www.fieldoperations.net/project-details/project/tongva-park.html>

Back Cover Photo: Street-Porter, Tim. "Overlook Aerial." *Architizer.com*. May 28, 2025.

<https://architizer.com/blog/inspiration/industry/james-corner-field-operations-tongva-park>



UCLA EXTENSION
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
by KELSEY WOODWORTH
© JUNE 2025