

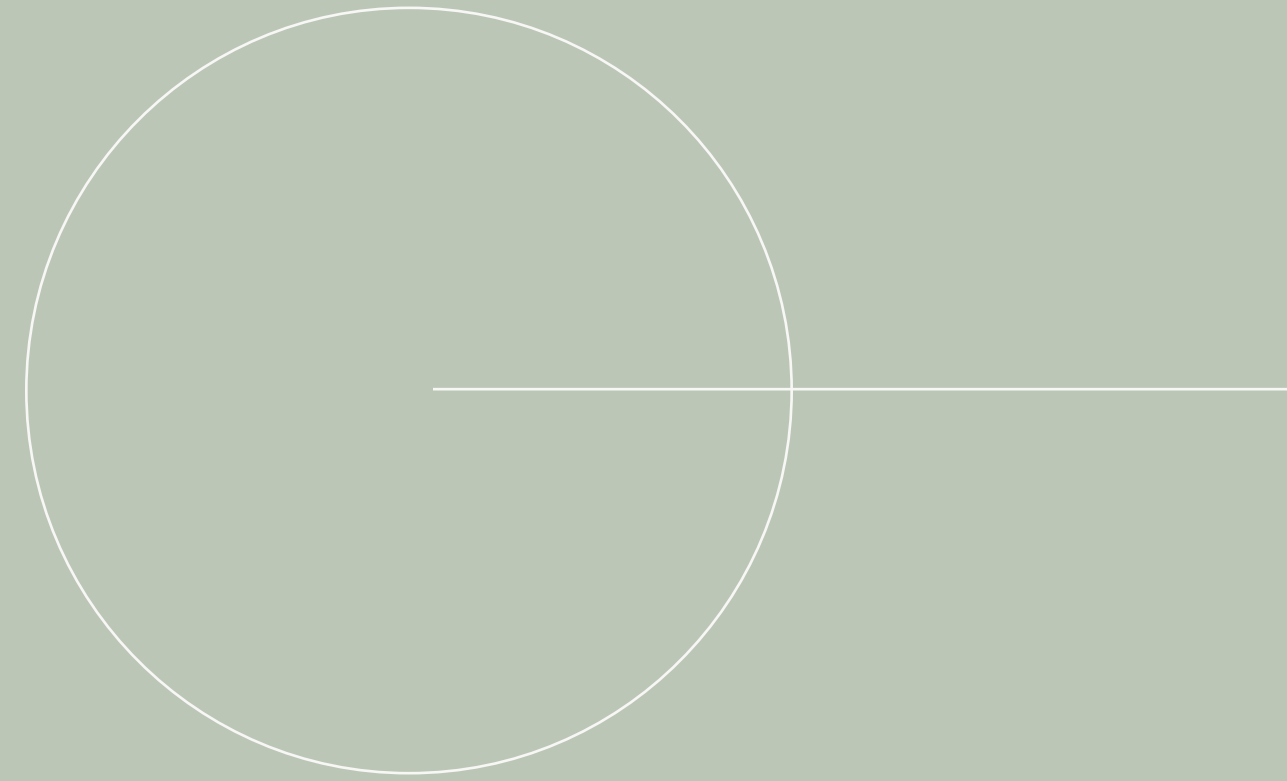


TONGVA PARK

DESIGN GRAPHICS 3

SPRING 2025

RYAN O'LEARY JONES



“I have two mottos. One is learn something new every day. And the second one is... change that garden if you don’t like it. Rip it out and you start all over again.”

—Martha Stewart

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INTRODUCTION

After two decades producing unscripted television, Ryan O'Leary Jones found himself at a crossroads — not because the door behind him closed, but because he was ready to open the next one.

As a TV producer, Ryan shaped narratives, built dynamic experiences, and captured real human emotions. Now, he's channeling those same storytelling instincts into a different kind of transformation: landscape design.

This new chapter is about turning space into possibility — reimagining the everyday into something healing, functional, and alive. Outdoor environments have the power to support mental wellness, foster connection, and reflect the diverse stories of those who move through them.

This book is a snapshot of that unfolding journey. A door opening. A space becoming.

DESIGN & JOURNEY

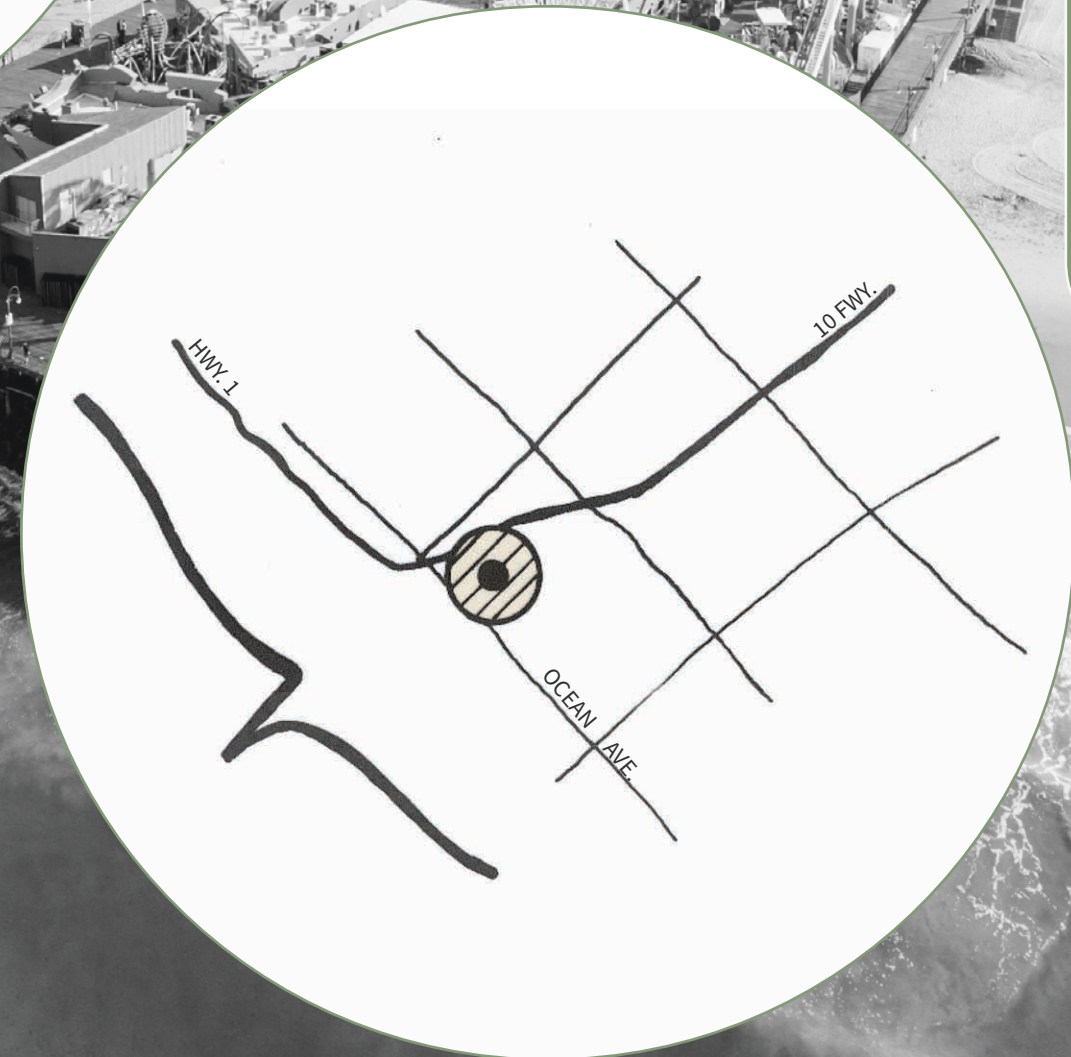
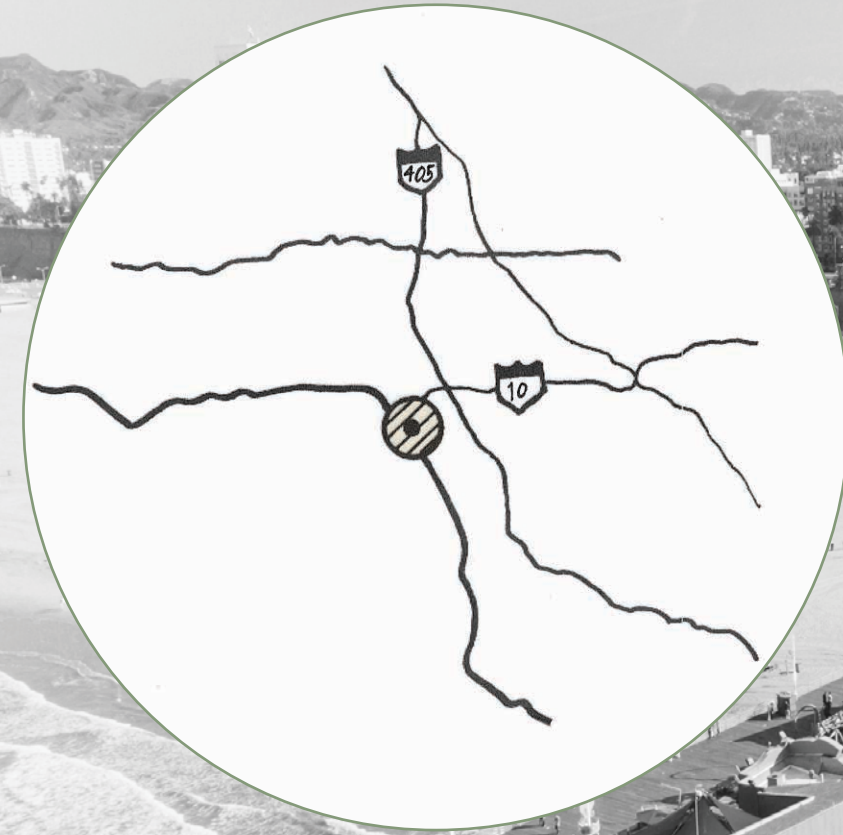
Throughout this book, you'll find visual studies, graphic explorations, and reflections that illustrate how spaces — and people — are always in the process of becoming.

Developed through a series of three design graphic courses in the UCLA Extension Landscape Architecture Program, this work explores how to visually communicate a space all done through the built environment of **TONGVA PARK**.

It blends conceptual thinking with tangible design outputs — from research to rendering.



THE SITE



LOCATION

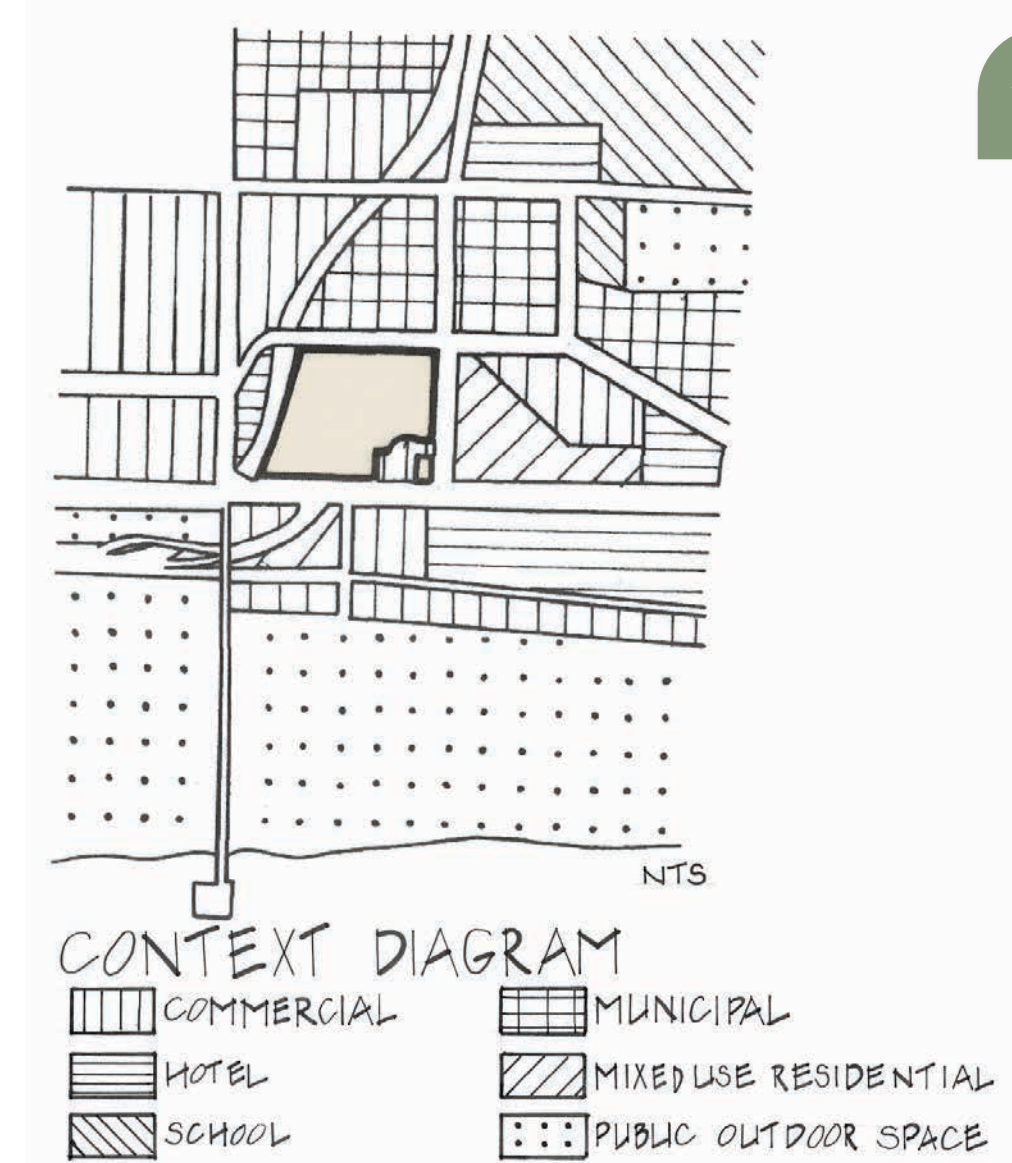
Nestled between bustling downtown Santa Monica and the Pacific, the site presents a rare opportunity: to carve beauty, belonging, and softness out of hardscape. Once overlooked — a parking lot, a pass-through — it now anchors a city's connection to land and sky.

CONTEXT

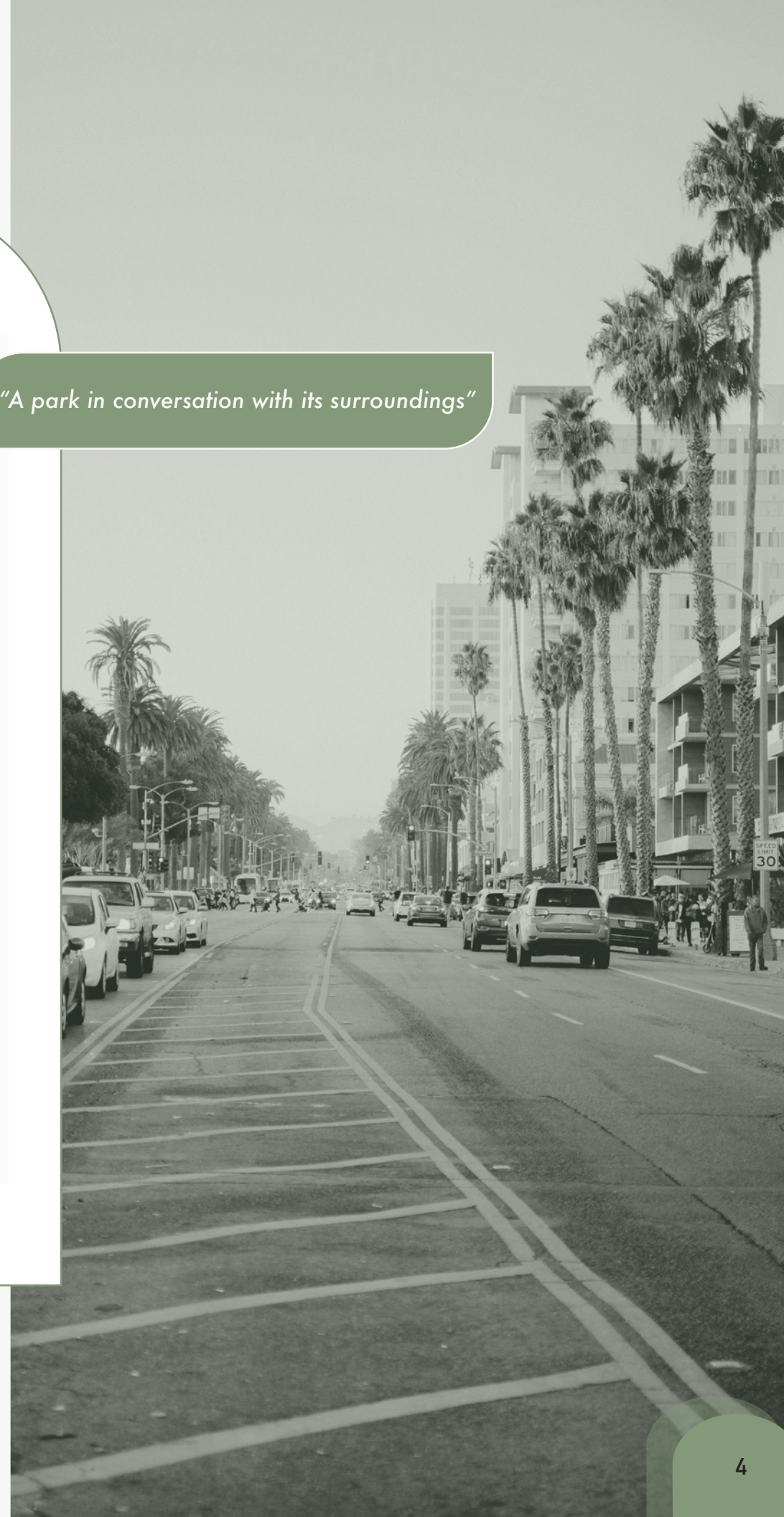
TONGVA PARK is uniquely positioned at the crossroads of commerce, tourism, civic life and daily routine. Just steps from City Hall, a stone's throw from bustling hotels and restaurants, and directly adjacent to residential mixed-use developments, the park becomes more than a green space — it becomes connective tissue.

It offers moments of pause between the school drop-off and the grocery run. It absorbs foot traffic from tourists venturing toward the pier, then releases them back into the city with a refreshed perspective. It provides lunchtime shade for municipal workers and a public gathering ground for hotel guests seeking something local and authentic.

By responding to its surroundings with clarity and openness, Tongva Park invites everyone in: not as visitors, but as neighbors.

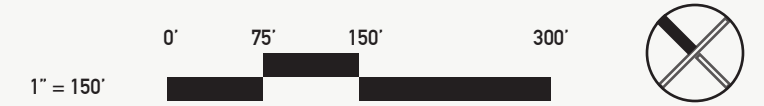
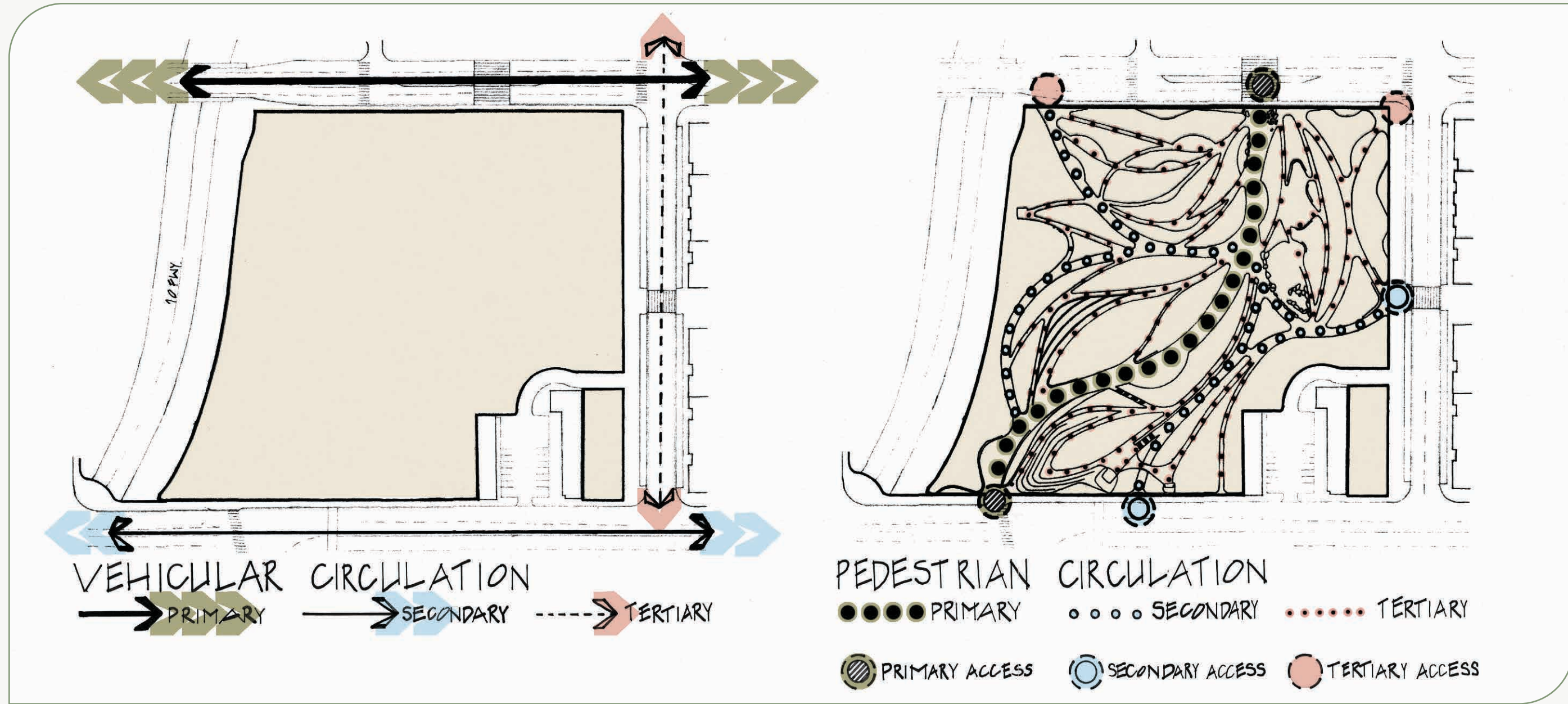


"A park in conversation with its surroundings"



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ANALYSIS



Existing fig trees anchor the park.



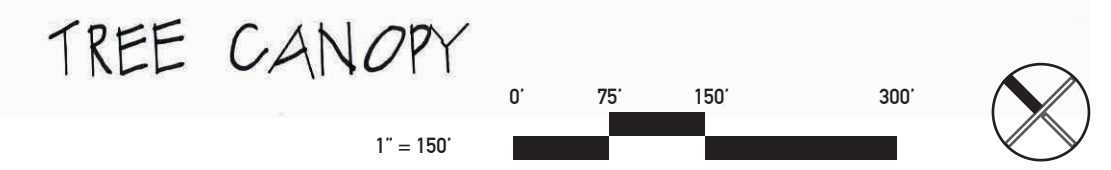
Canopy is not uniform — and that's intentional. Denser near seating and gathering spaces.



Light is designed into the canopy. Openings in tree coverage allow for dappled sun along pedestrian paths.



Cork trees in the play area create multi-sensory engagement.



The canopy evolves. Younger trees are spaced to anticipate future growth, becoming something more over time. This will be a park even more defined by shade, texture and enclosure — a space that matures as the city around it changes.

CONCEPT



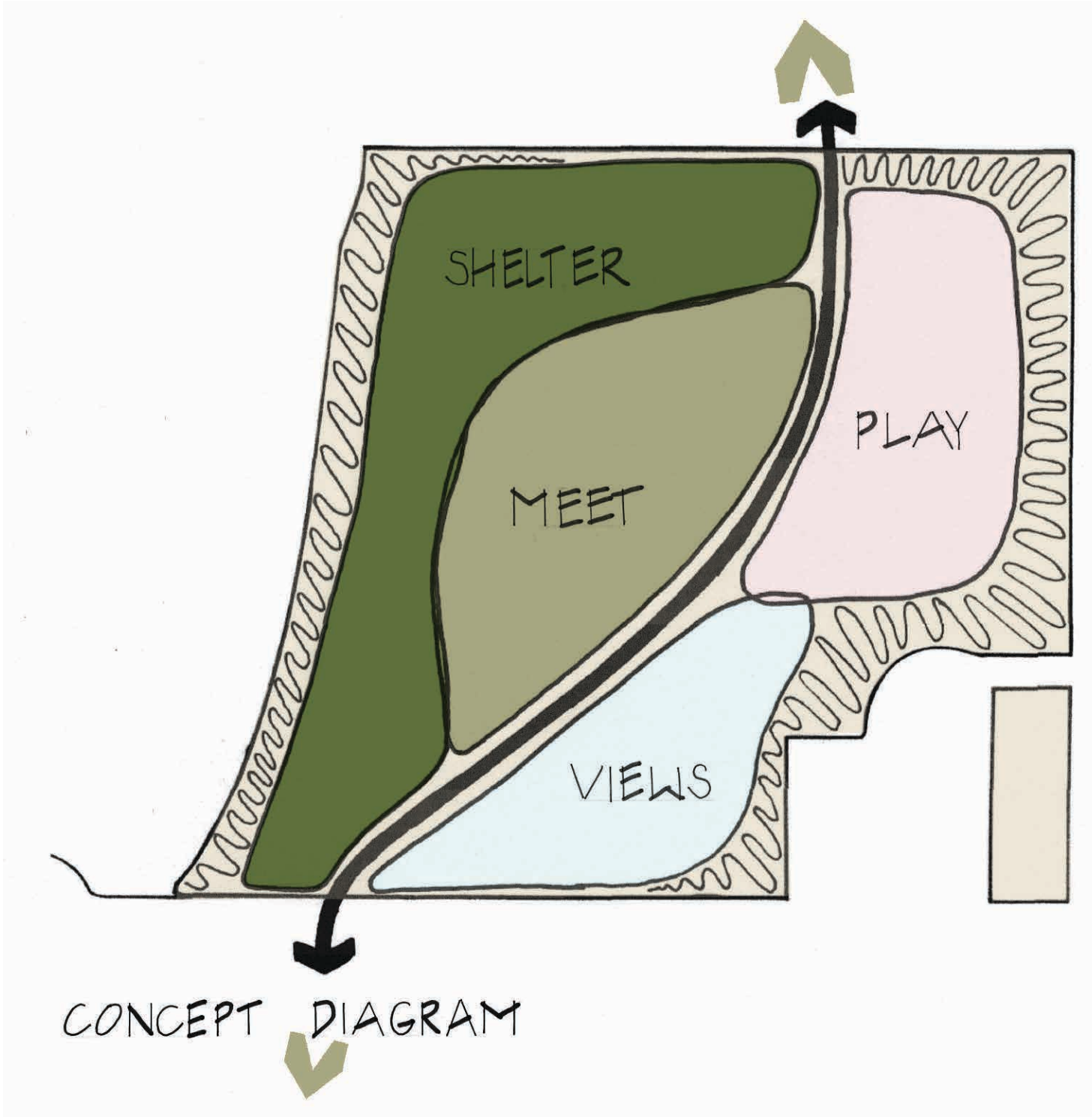
THE BIG IDEA

A park, reimagined as terrain for discovery.

At the edge of the Pacific and the threshold of a dense urban core, **TONGVA PARK** unfolds as a sculpted landscape that draws from the movement, light, and forms of the Southern California coast.

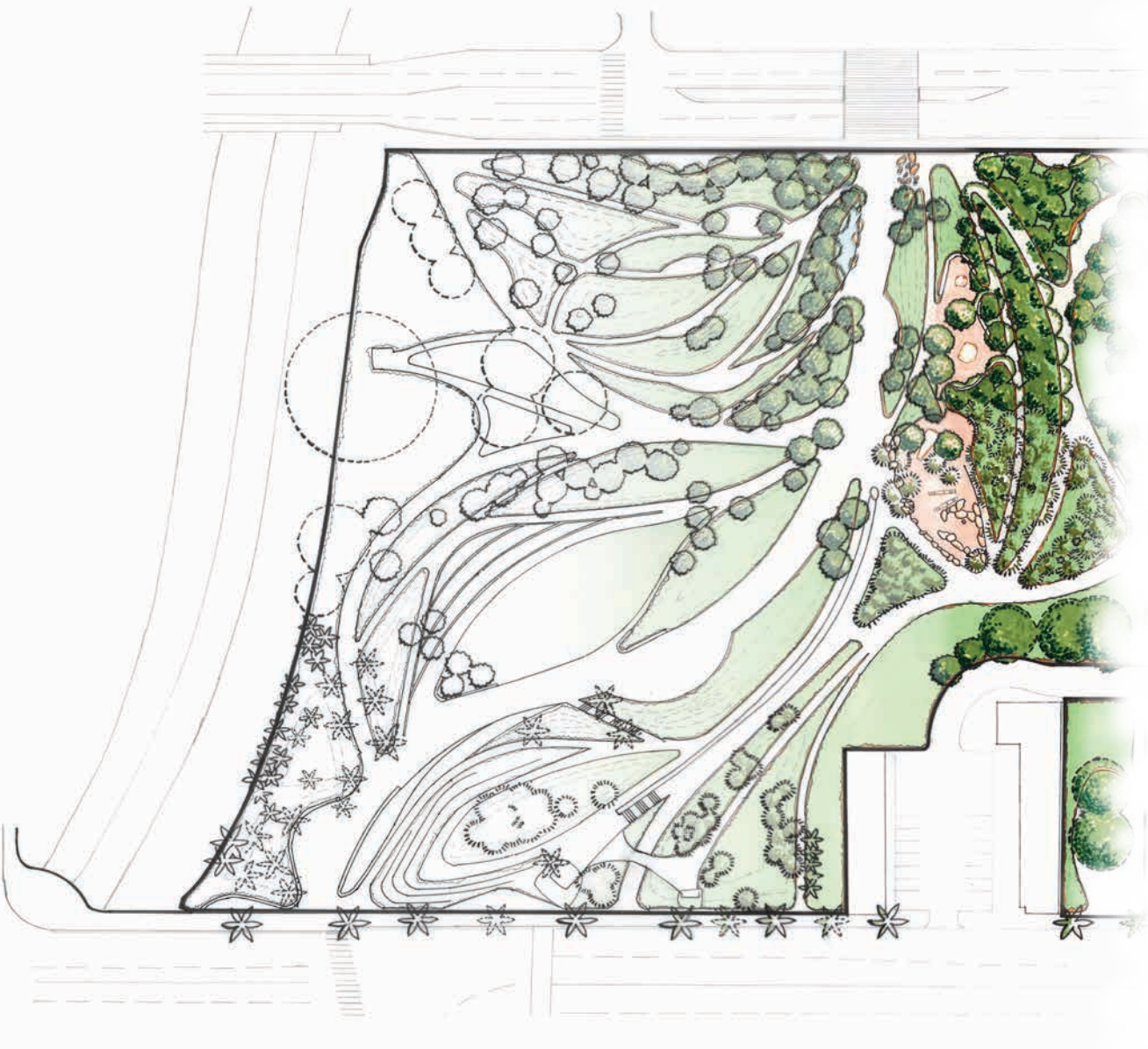
The big idea is simple: **to shape space in a way that invites people to wander, to look up, and to connect — with each other and with the land beneath them.**

Elevated pathways, shaded groves, and open clearings are choreographed to create a series of shifting perspectives. Every rise and curve is intentional, designed to soften boundaries between the city and the sea. It is a park not defined by static zones, but by fluid experiences — where the wind shapes the path as much as the plan.



CONCEPT DIAGRAM

THE PLAN



UNFOLDING THE SITE

The **TONGVA PARK** site plan introduces a cohesive spatial framework shaped by circulation, grading, and programmed use.

The Moreton Bay fig, with its massive scale, defines **SHELTER** and anchors spatial organization. The overlook platforms frame **VIEWS** of the ocean and city. **PLAY** areas weave topography and material into moments of delight – where boulder-lined paths carve routes through the landscape, encouraging exploration and framing informal play. The amphitheater and art installation foster **COMMUNITY** gathering, while the green roof and water features merge infrastructure with ecology.

The plan prioritizes connectivity: linking Ocean Avenue with the Civic Center, layering elevation changes for interest and accessibility, and providing flexible use zones adaptable to the needs of residents, visitors, and children.

This spread visualizes the evolution of the design from early conceptual massing and diagrammatic studies through the hand drafting process (left) to a more refined layout (right).

The following pages will deconstruct key moments within the plan – each selected for their capacity to reflect the larger vision of Tongva Park as an experiential, civic landscape.

MORETON BAY FIG

ART INSTALLATION

AMPHITHEATER

GREEN ROOF



WATER FEATURE

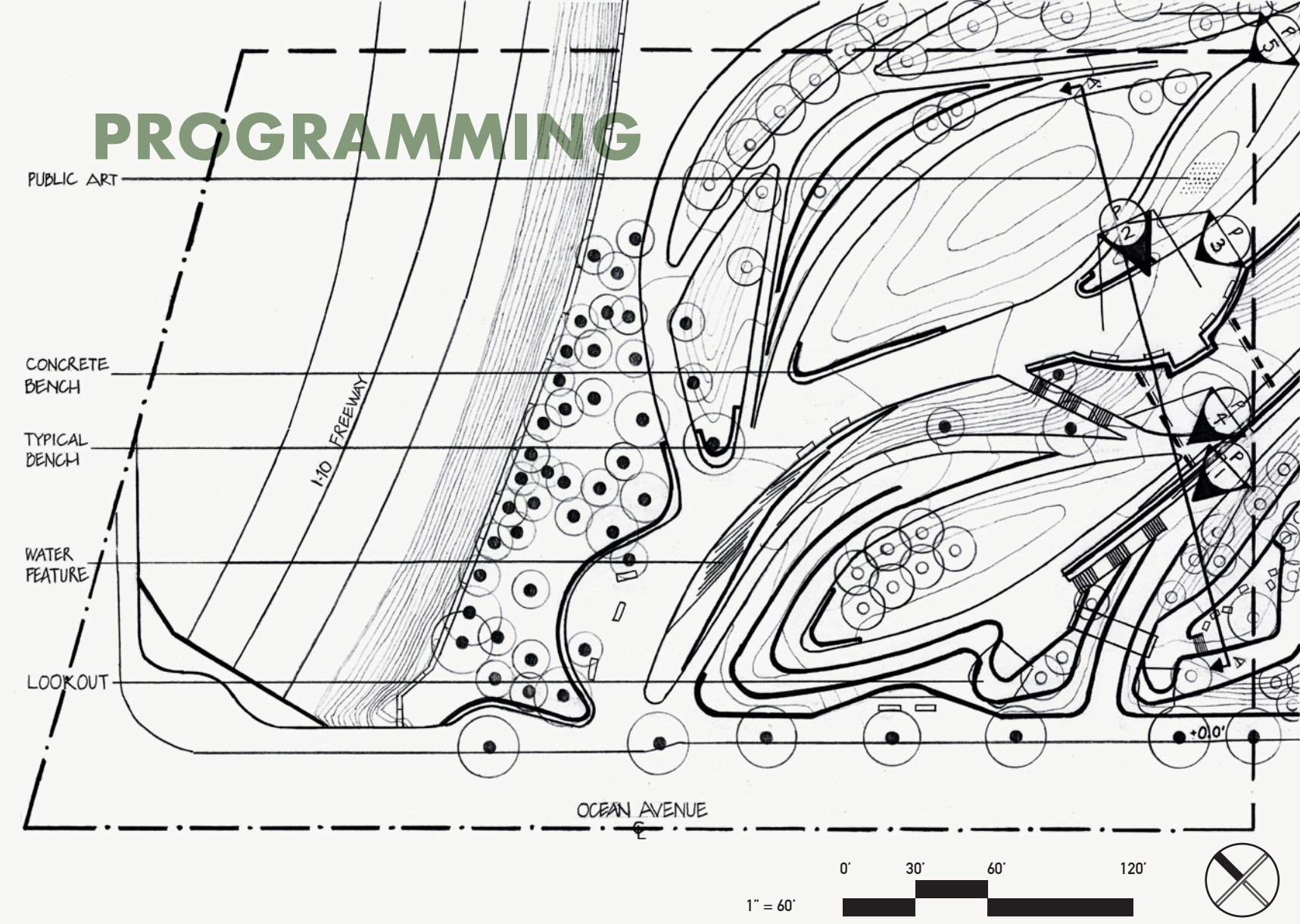
PLAYGROUND

BOULDER LINED PATH

VIEWING PLATFORM



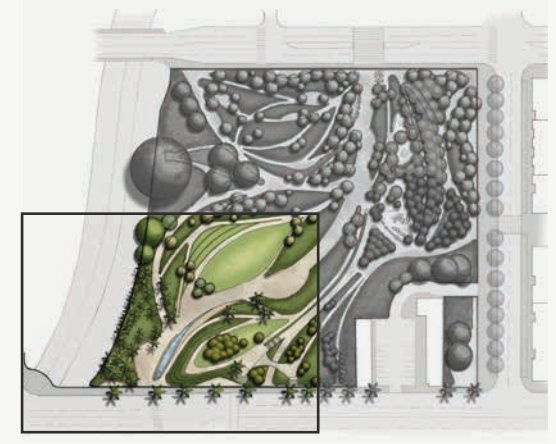
PROGRAMMING



SHAPING USE

In the park's southwest **QUADRANT**, daily life finds a quiet rhythm. A water feature draws movement along the edge, offering respite just steps from the city. The raised walk glides overhead, while gathering lawns, shaded seating, and civic art invite pause.

Here, programming reveals its intent—not through spectacle, but through calibrated layers of activity that respond to setting, and community. It's an introduction to how the park meets its users, and how a designer begins to read a site through use.



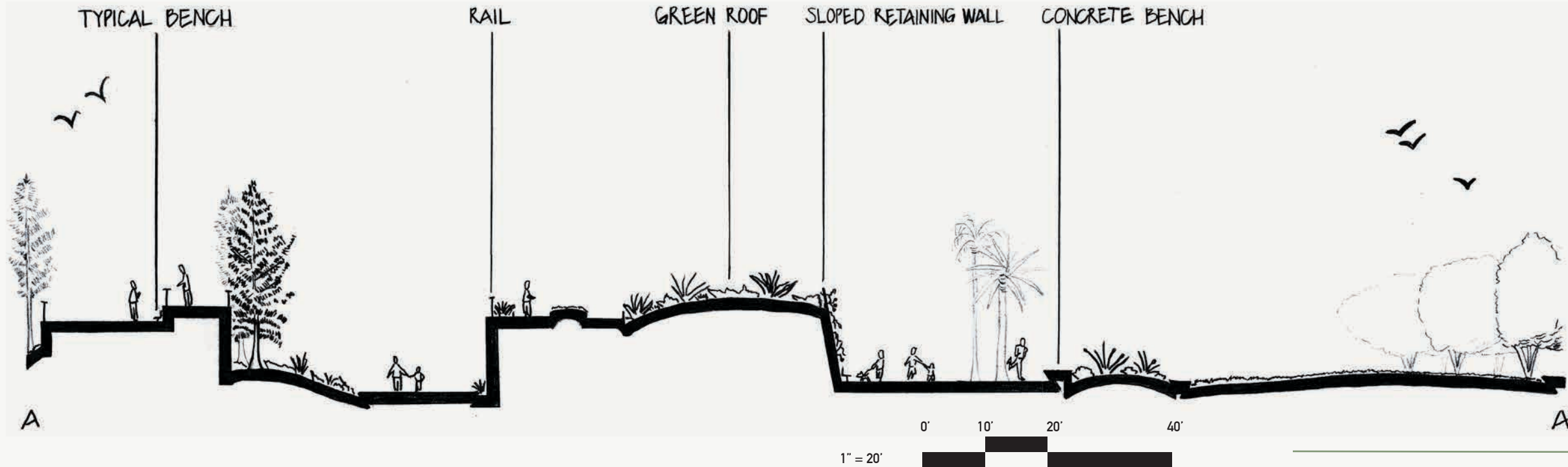
KEY MAP NTS

RESTROOM PAVILION

More than just a restroom, this sculptural form blends into the green roof and hillside, merging architecture with landscape.

Like much of Tongva Park, it's designed to be discovered — tucked beneath trees and accessed by winding paths.

This is one part of a larger system of amenities that serve visitors without disrupting the park's flow.





FRAMING THE EXPERIENCE

Amenity spaces at **TONGVA PARK** are layered both vertically and experientially. From the raised overlook and sculpted green roof to the shaded gathering lawn below, this quadrant of the park demonstrates how infrastructure can serve multiple functions—providing shelter, framing views, and supporting passive recreation.

The integration of public restrooms into the landform reinforces the park's seamless terrain, while programmed areas balance open space with active use. These amenities are not separate from the landscape; they are embedded within it—supporting the larger vision of shelter, play, meeting, and views.

But as the park stretches east, its role begins to shift. New patterns of use emerge, calling for spaces that invite movement, spontaneity, and a broader range of experience — **a reminder that every path leads to something new.**

INVITATION TO PLAY

Tucked into the park's eastern edge—just steps from multifamily residences and buffered from the road by planting and grade—the playground acts as a communal anchor for families and children. Sheltered yet connected, it offers a safe, welcoming space for families. Sculptural equipment rises between trees, framed by organic paths and shaded seating areas. It's a zone designed for discovery and movement, with multiple points of access that blur boundaries between structured play and open-ended exploration.



Abstract and sculptural, the play structures encourage open-ended movement, fostering creativity as much as coordination.



Built into the slope, the slides and climbing wall use elevation to engage the body. Climbing and descending become part of a continuous, fluid loop of play.



Informal and intuitive, the boulders along the paths offer a different kind of engagement—spontaneous play woven into circulation, where movement and imagination intersect.



ENLARGEMENT



A CLOSER LOOK

At the heart of the park, primary circulation weaves through layered moments – a tucked-away playground gently elevated above grade, a water feature drawing light and movement, and informal boulder paths inviting pause or play. This is where program meets possibility.

Perspectives (right) reveal the space in use: families navigating the walkways, children exploring the margins. It's a place where design functions and feels organized yet open, structured yet spontaneous. A quiet study in how spaces guide us, and how we, in turn, make them our own.



SECTION ELEVATION



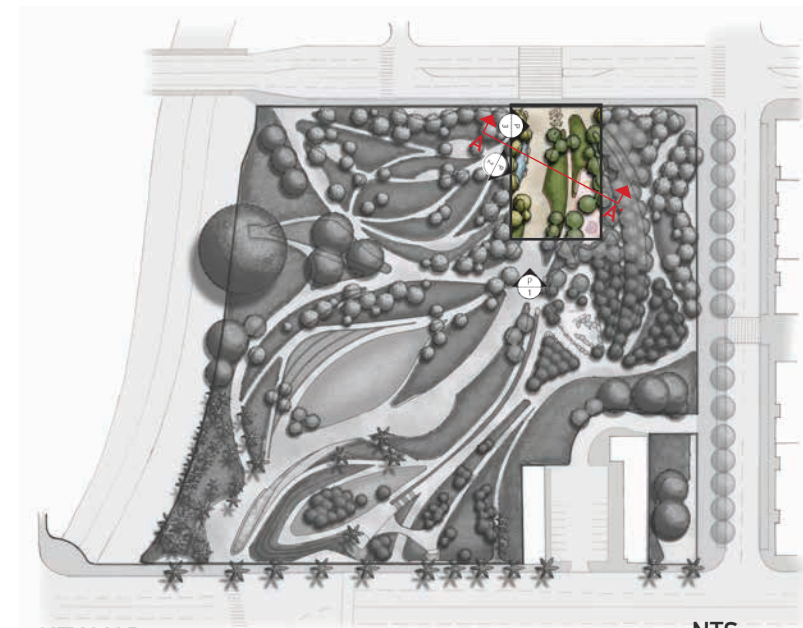
PERSPECTIVE 1



PERSPECTIVE 2



PERSPECTIVE 3



KEY MAP

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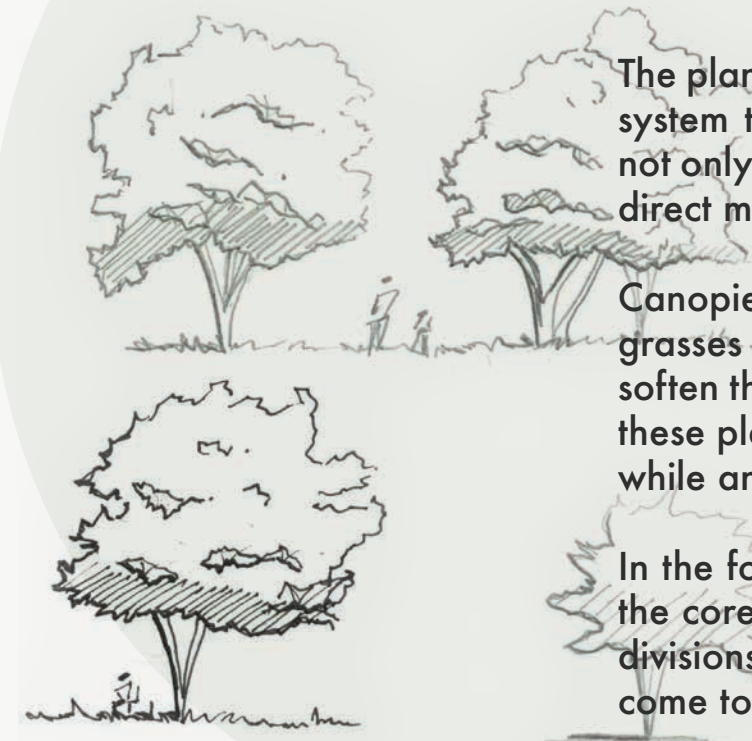


PLANTING PLANNED

The plant palette at Tongva Park is more than aesthetic; it's a structural and experiential system that supports the park's larger conceptual framework. Species were selected not only for resilience and regional appropriateness but for their ability to shape space, direct movement, and evoke emotional response.

Canopies of fig and sycamore define zones of shelter and gathering, while layered grasses and perennials guide circulation and animate views. Playful, tactile plantings soften the edges of programmed spaces, inviting exploration and interaction. Together, these plant communities work across time and scale—offering shade and texture today, while anticipating growth and seasonal change into the future.

In the following pages, planting is examined through functional categories that reflect the core themes of the park: Shelter, Meet, Play, and Views. These are not just spatial divisions, but ways of understanding how planting design helps a public landscape come to life.



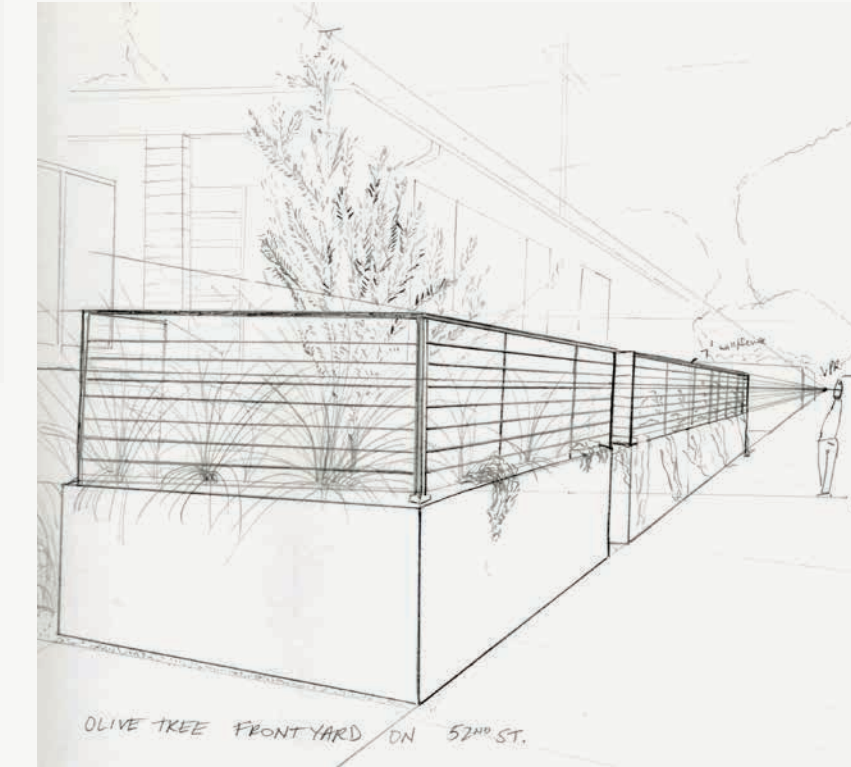
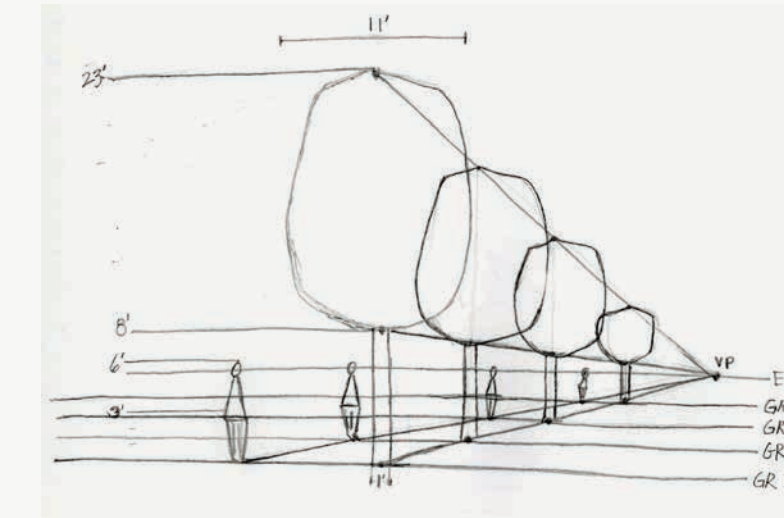
Straight Lines & Wiggly Lines

In the early stages of learning to draw trees and plants, every line felt like a choice between precision and intuition — straight lines for scale and structure, wiggly lines for character and life.

Sketching by hand became more than practice; it was a way to understand how these forms grow, how they shape space, and how they belong in a designed landscape. Each line is a small act of translation, from observation to understanding.

As skills sharpen, so does awareness of how the landscape functions—how structure and softness support the larger concept of **TONGVA PARK** as a place of shelter, play, gathering, and view.

These drawings mark a shift: from learning to see, to seeing how it all fits.



SHELTER

The vertical framework of **TONGVA PARK** is defined by a diverse canopy that balances shade, scale, and spatial rhythm.

The Moreton Bay Fig (*Ficus macrophylla*) or “Morty” as the locals refer to him, offers expansive shade and acts as a central gathering point. While the Strawberry Tree (*Arbutus ‘Marina’*) adds visual interest with reddish bark and evergreen foliage.

Together, this structured planting mediates between the urban edge and interior calm — offering layered protection, framing key views, and creating moments of pause.

As these species mature, the park evolves, deepening its sense of shelter and becoming even more embedded within the life of the city.



Arbutus ‘Marina’



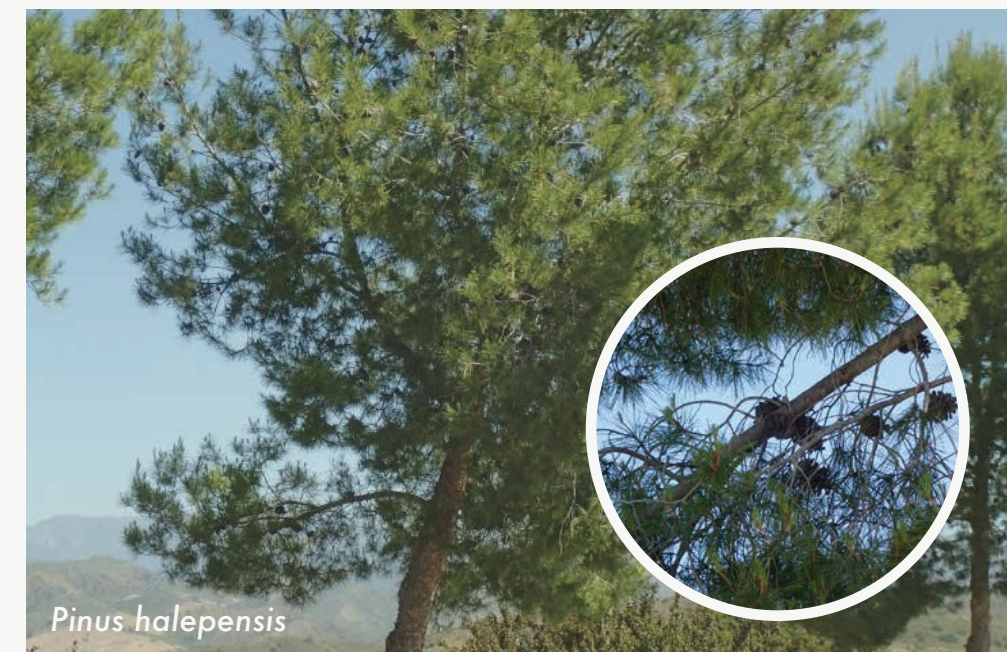
Aesculus californica



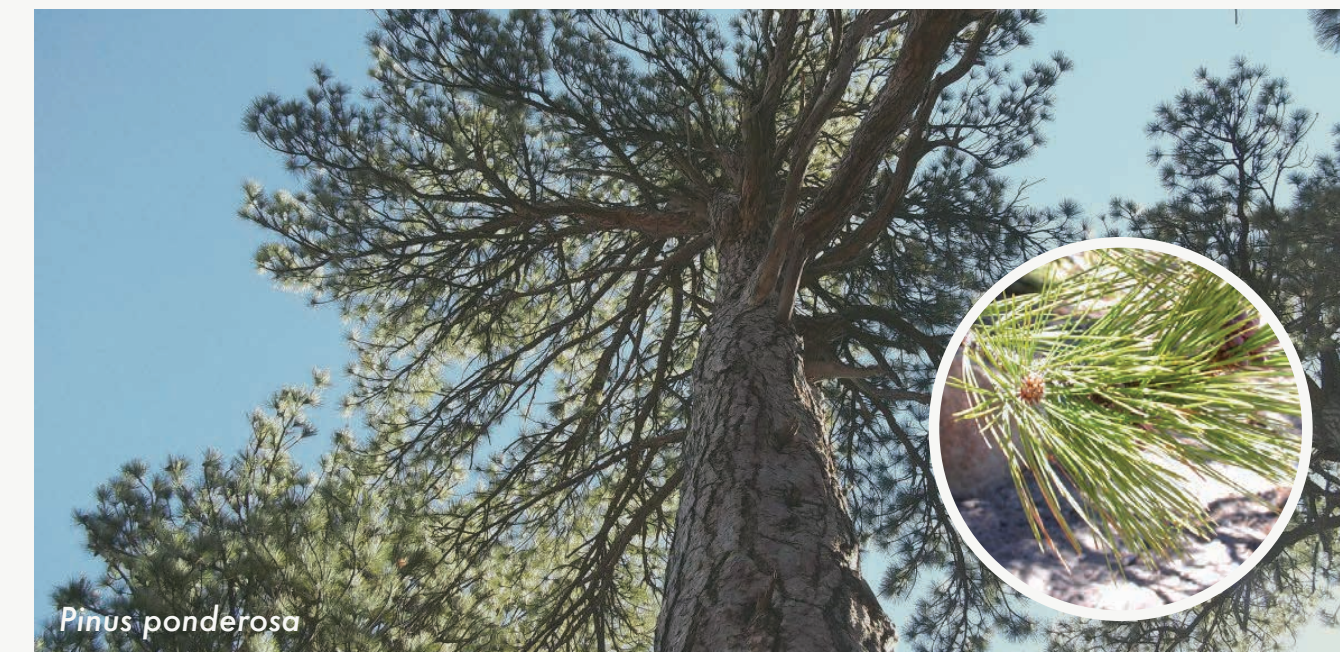
Cercis occidentalis



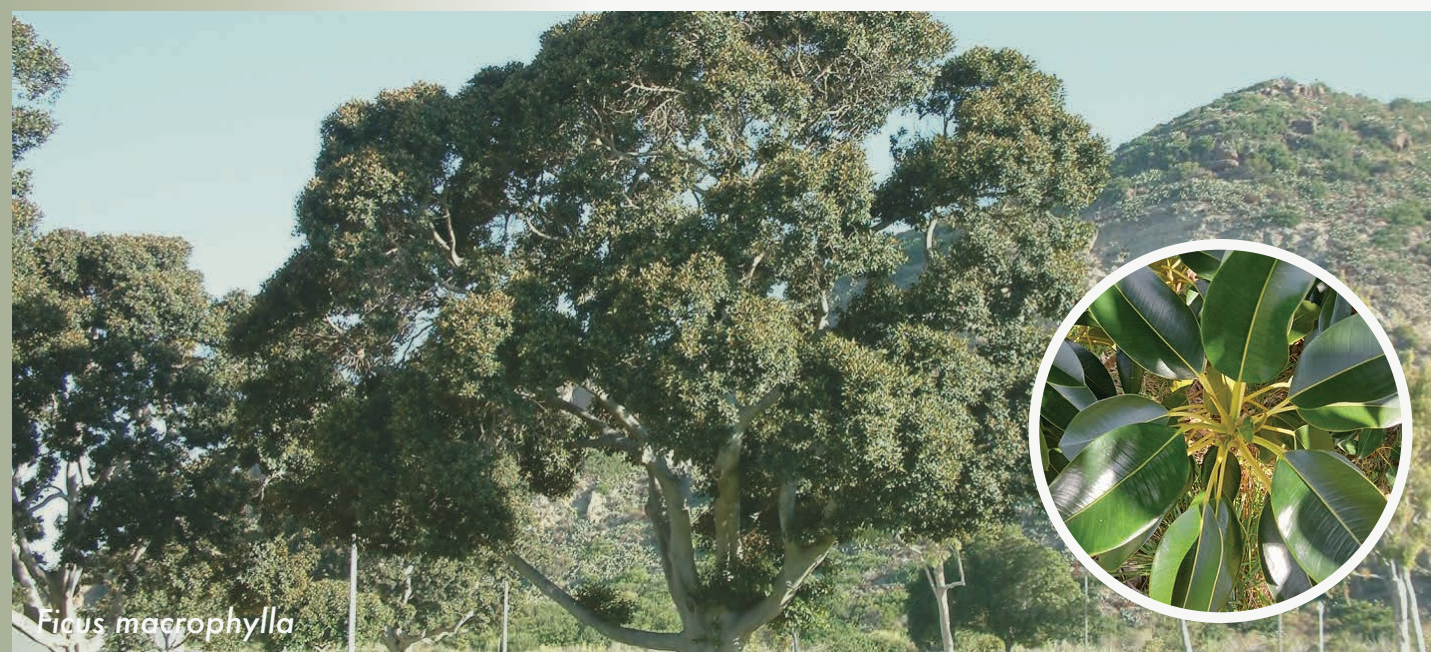
Heferomeles arbutifolia



Pinus halepensis



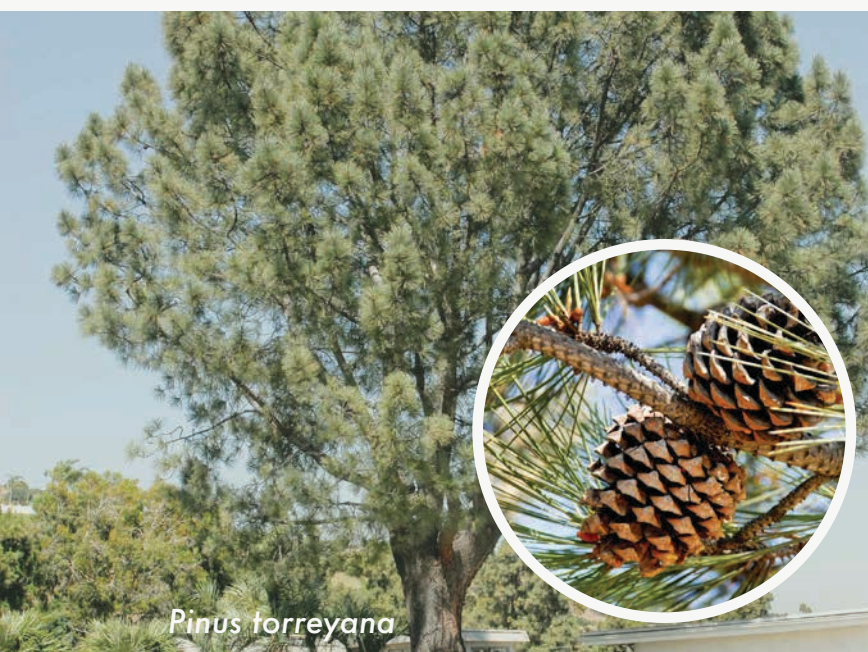
Pinus ponderosa



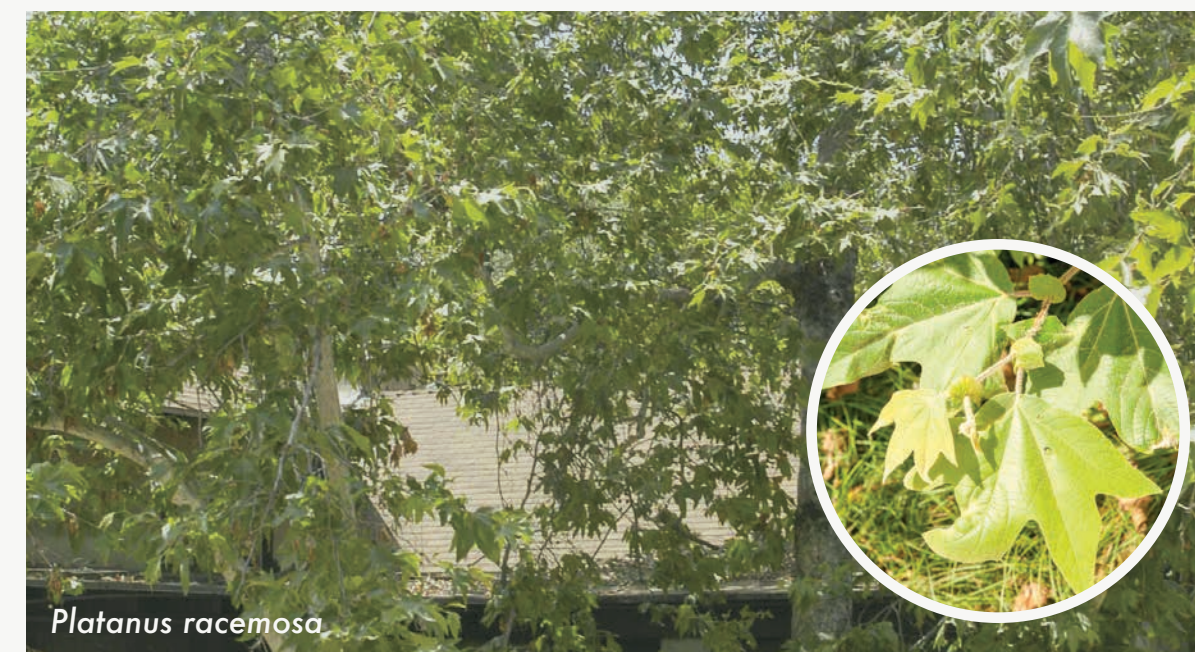
Ficus macrophylla



Ficus rubiginosa



Pinus torreyana



Platanus racemosa



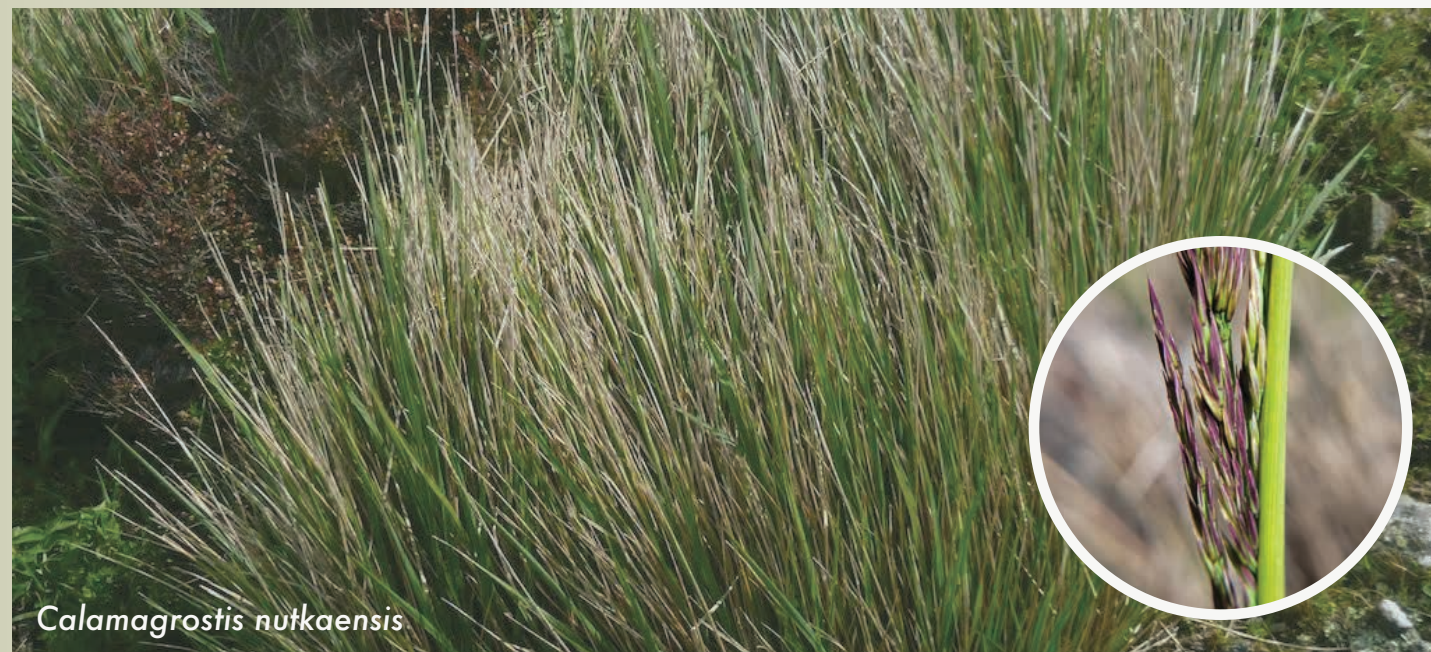
Umbellularia californica

MEET

In the heart of **TONGVA PARK**, the planting invites connection. Low-growing textures frame open lawns and walkways, shaping edges that feel soft yet intentional. This is where paths widen, sightlines open, and the park extends an invitation to gather.

Species like *Bouteloua gracilis* and *Calamagrostis nutkaensis* offer movement and texture at the ground level, while *Carex pansa* is used to stay naturally small and reduce maintenance, allowing foot paths to stay clear for pedestrians to meander. And it's complimented with white blooming bulbs of *Zephyranthes candida* and *Milla biflora* blending in, creating a welcoming palette for passers by.

As the city moves around it, this planting framework holds space for people to meet—planned, yet flexible; designed, yet open to the unexpected.



PLAY

Play at **TONGVA PARK** isn't limited to structures — it's embedded in the landscape. A mix of hardy and expressive species frames the experience, offering durability alongside sensory engagement.

Carex divulsa handles foot traffic with ease. *Agapanthus* brings playful rhythm with its spherical blooms, while *Alstroemeria* species add vivid pops of color that signal joy. Even the bold forms of *Agave attenuata* contribute a sculptural curiosity that invites interaction — just close enough to admire, just far enough to respect.

Symphotrichum chilense offers a final note of color and seasonal change, tying back to a theme of evolution and surprise. Together, these plants create an experience built for resilience, delight, and discovery.



Agapanthus praecox



Agave attenuata



Aloe marlothii



Carex divulsa



Gaura lindheimeri



Nymphaea odorata



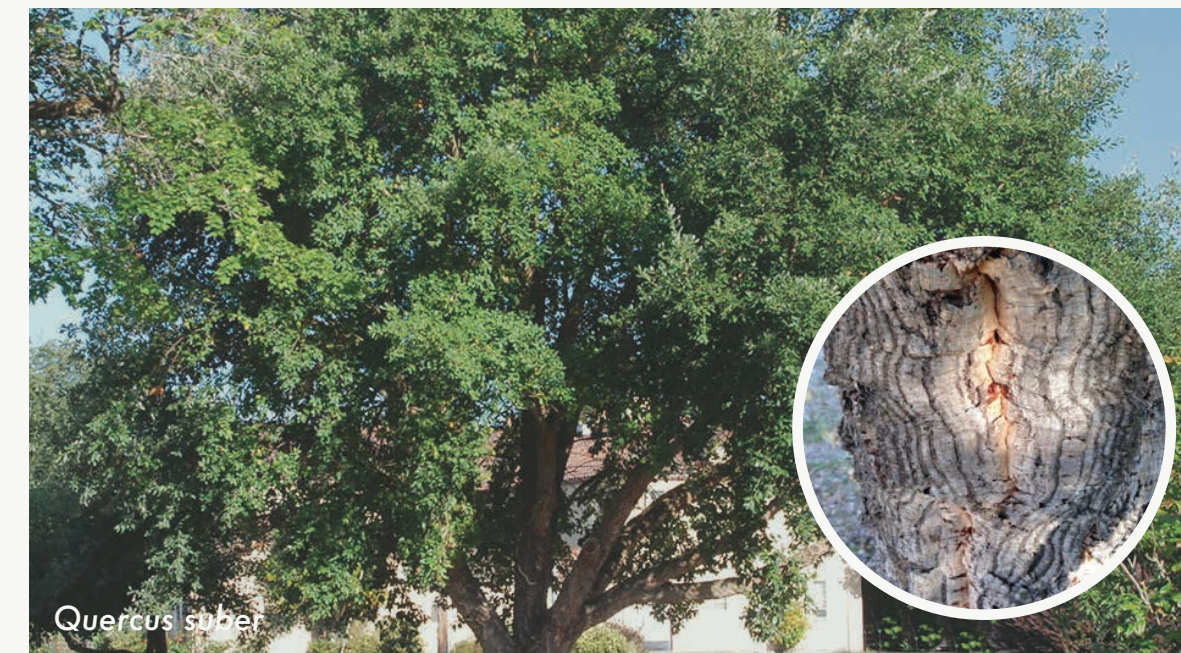
Alstroemeria



Baccharis pilularis



Penisetum spathiolatum



Quercus suber



Symphotrichum chilense

VIEWS

Along the park's ridges and raised paths, planting becomes an instrument of visibility — preserving open sightlines to the coast, sky, and city.

Towering *Washingtonia robusta* and *Phoenix canariensis* rise like sentinels, echoing Santa Monica's historic coastal postcard identity while anchoring views across the shifting topography.

Bougainvillea punctuates the visual field without obscuring it.

Together, these plants draw the eye forward, reinforcing the park's role as a lens through which the landscape is discovered.



Bougainvillea



Dasyllirion wheeleri



Salvia apiana



Trichostema lanatum



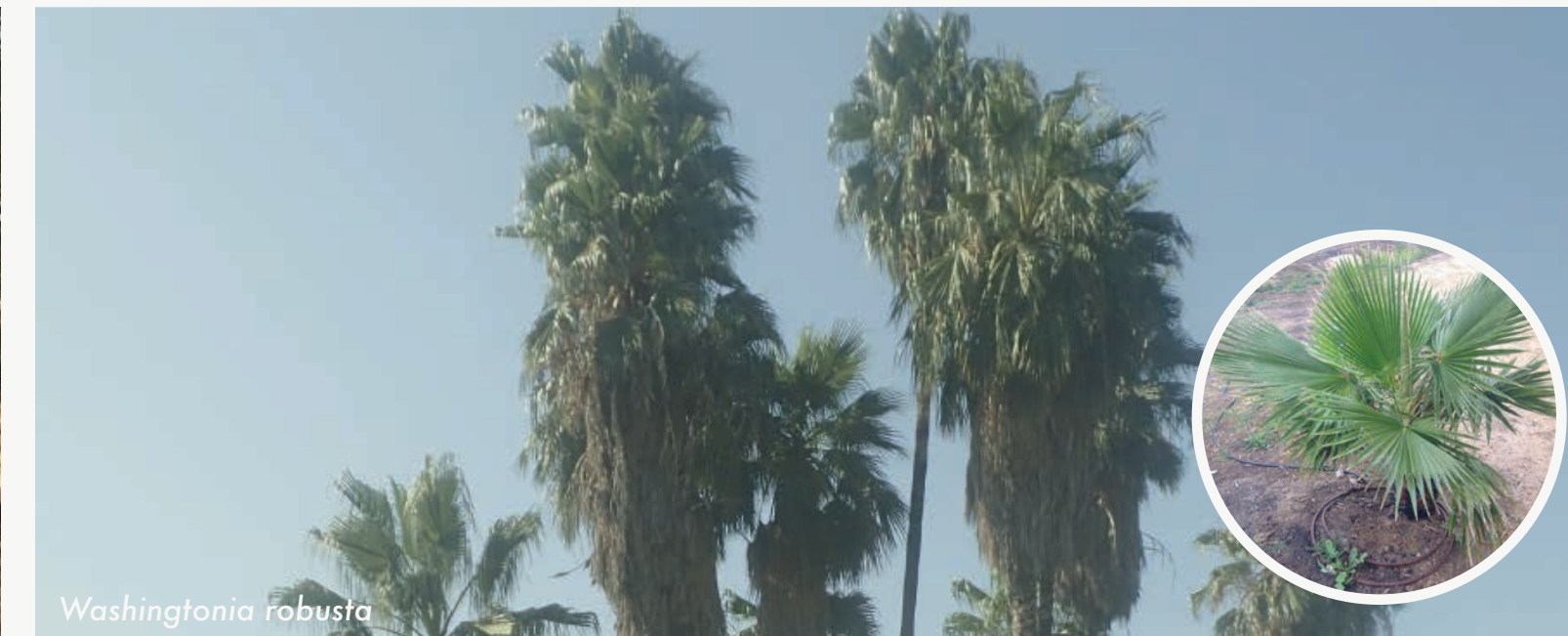
Encelia californica



Phoenix canariensis



Washington filifera



Washingtonia robusta

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This booklet marks the beginning of a new chapter—a shift in both perspective and purpose. Every page represents a step forward, taken with the humility of a beginner and the persistence of someone determined to communicate clearly, think critically, and design meaningfully.

Special thanks go to the teachers who shaped this process with care and intention: David Squires, Rebecca Schwaner, and Laura Razo. Their insights and support turned confusion into clarity and offered the structure needed to begin building a new creative language. This was not just a course in Design Graphics—it was an invitation to learn how to see, interpret, and express spatial ideas with purpose and craft. The tools gained here will carry forward into the profession, where visual communication is foundational to collaboration, storytelling, and problem-solving.

Deep gratitude goes to a partner and two young children who provided both grounding and inspiration throughout this learning curve. They are the reminder of why spaces for connection, play, and restoration matter.

This booklet, like the journey itself, is imperfect—full of experiments, pivots, and revisions. But in its imperfections, it reflects a commitment to learning, to listening, and to creating work that responds with care to the land and the people who move through it.

SOURCES

Images

Page 3:

- LeJeune, M. *Santa Monica Pier* [Photograph]. Unsplash. <https://unsplash.com/@matthewlejeune>

Page 4:

- Alexander, B. *Ocean Ave.* [Photograph]. Unsplash. <https://unsplash.com/@baileyal3xander>

Page 7:

- *Images found on Pinterest; original creators unknown. Used here for educational purposes only.*

Plant Photography

All plant imagery used throughout the *Palette* section was sourced from reputable public plant databases, including:

- Calflora. <https://www.calflora.org/>
- Calscape. <https://calscape.org/>

Park Photography & Drawings

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs of Tongva Park, as well as diagrams, illustrations, and design graphics were produced by the author as part of academic coursework.

Research & References

Research informing this booklet includes public planning documents and landscape architecture texts, as well as articles and reports about Tongva Park. Notable sources include:

- James Corner Field Operations – Tongva Park project overview
- Greenlee & Associates – www.greenleeandassociates.com/projects/tongva-park

BE INTENTIONAL
WITH EVERYTHING