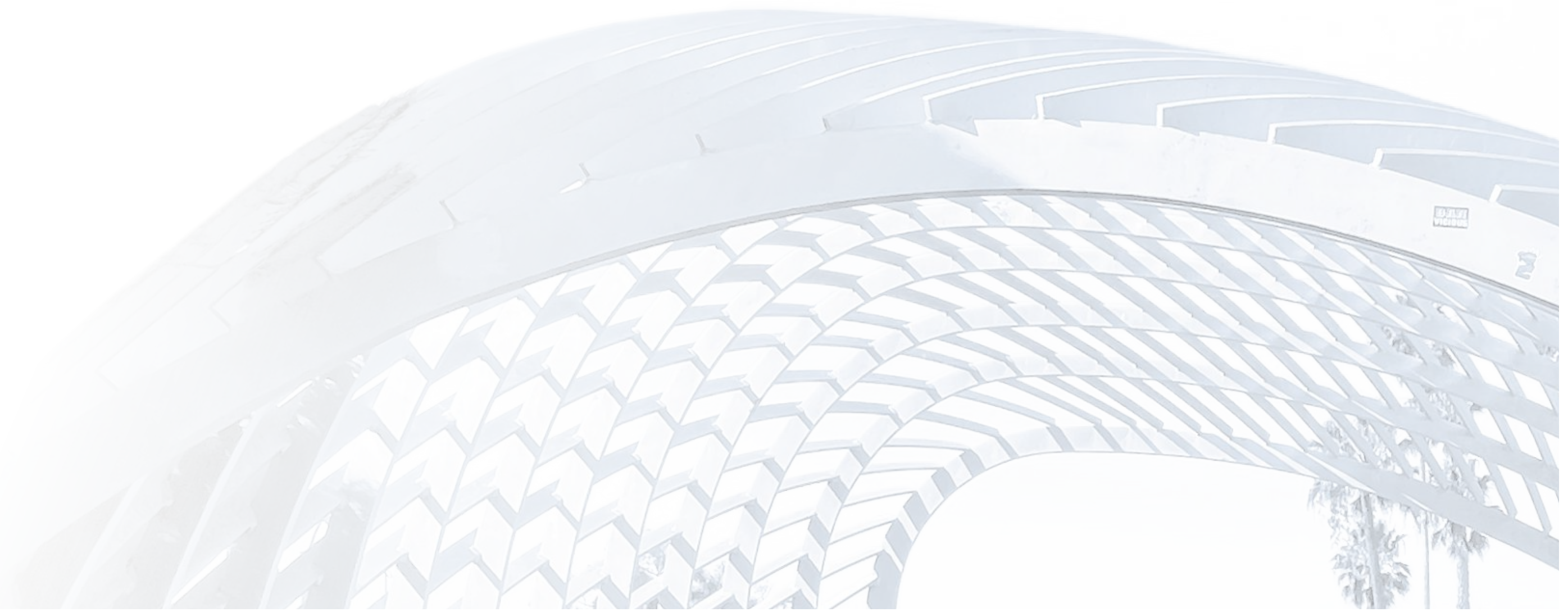
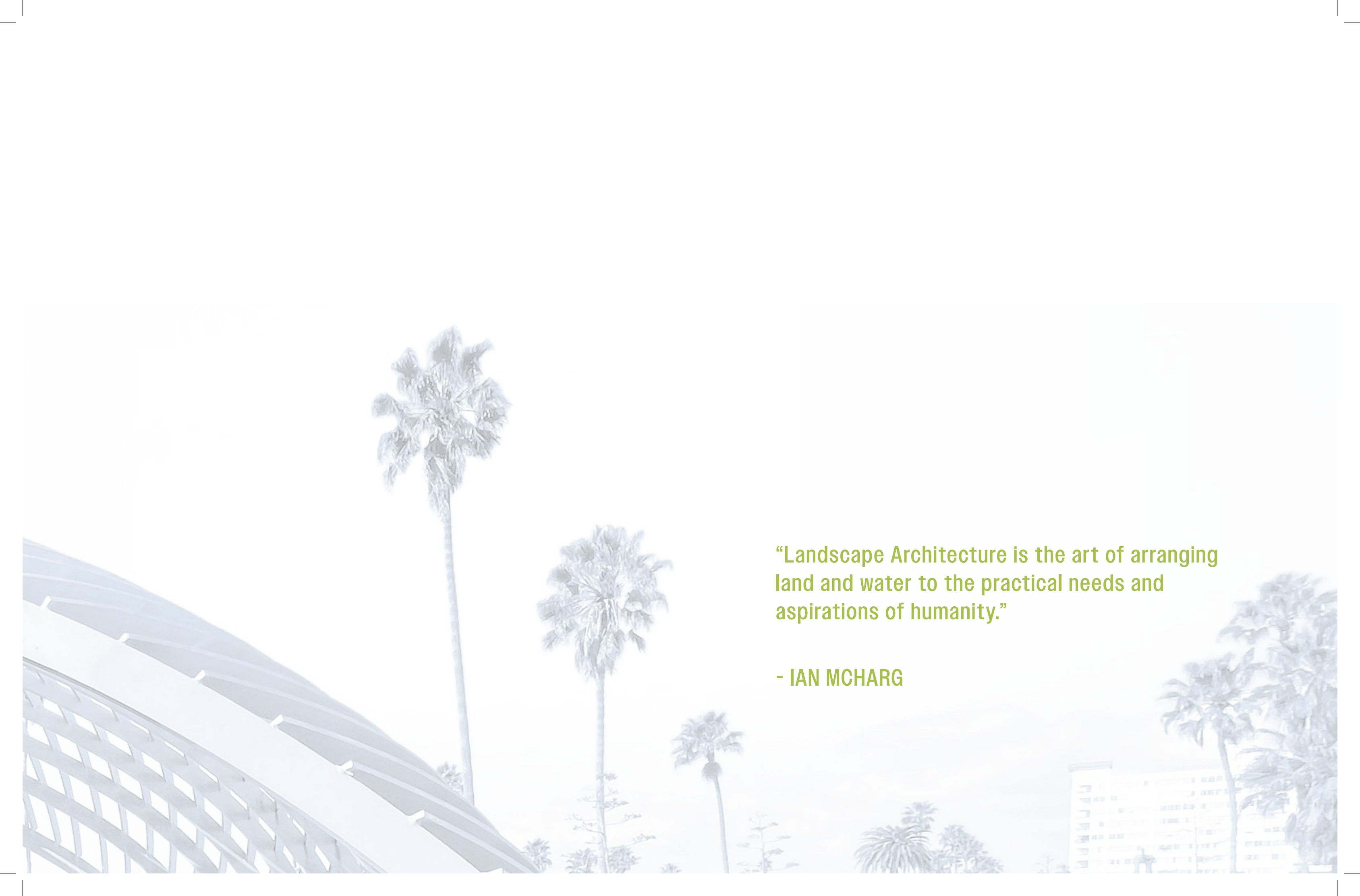


# TONGVA PARK

## AND SITE ANALYSIS

A QUICK STUDY BY TATO MAIZZA  
FOR DESIGN GRAPHICS 3  
SPRING 2025





**“Landscape Architecture is the art of arranging  
land and water to the practical needs and  
aspirations of humanity.”**

**- IAN MCHARG**



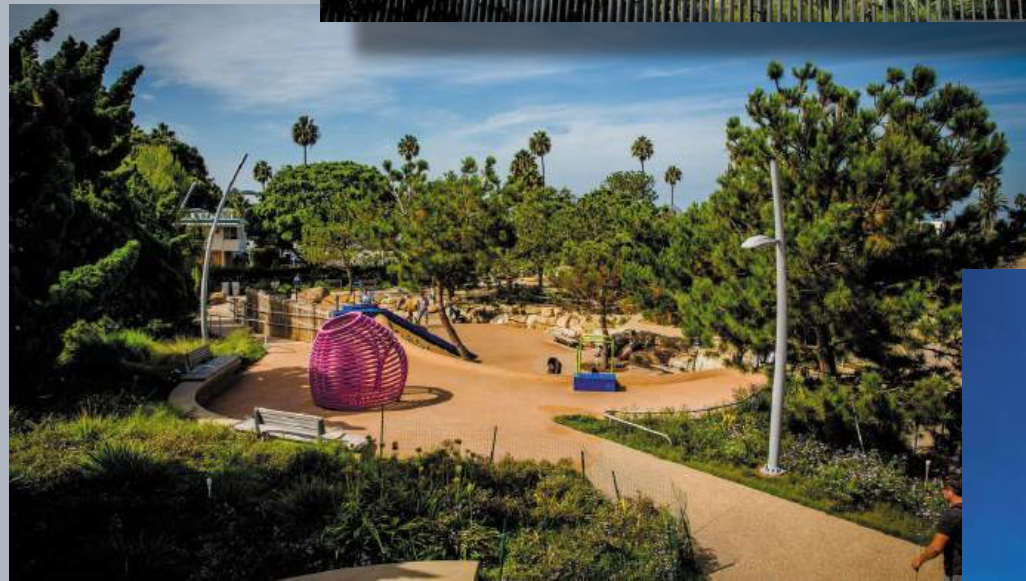
To my wife Anaik, my son Tomás and my stepson Oliver,  
without whose support I would still be going down a road  
that wasn't for me.

June 2025

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	11
CONCEPT	12
INTRODUCTION	13
SITE ANALYSIS	14
SITE PLANS	18
SITE DETAILS	22
SITE MATERIALS	26
PLANT PALETTE	28
REFERENCES	30
CONCLUSION	31





PHOTOS: [santamonica.org](http://santamonica.org)



## TONGVA PARK - BASICS

DESIGN: JAMES CORNER FIELD OPERATIONS LLC

CLIENT: CITY OF SANTA MONICA

COST: \$95.7 MILLION

AREA: 6.2 ACRES

YEAR COMPLETED: 2013

# NATURE AND ARCHITECTURE SHAPE THE ESSENCE OF TONGVA PARK



PHOTOS in order: CampOne.com, WorldLandForms, Landezine, Ozfan22

## FOREWORD: A CONTROVERSIAL SPACE

From its inception in the late 2000's, Tongva Park has been a controversial project. Slated to replace a wide stretch of parking lot pavement close to the Santa Monica Pier in the heart of Santa Monica, the project had plenty of vocal critics and enthusiasts alike.

The opposition challenged a lot of the decision-making, from the choice of a non-local landscape architecture firm to the name chosen to the amount of concrete used in the construction.

On the other hand, supporters saw an opportunity to revitalize the neighborhood with contemporary world-class design. In fact, since its opening in 2013, the park has received over 20 design awards, most notably the ASLA Honor Award for Design and was a Finalist for the ULI Global Award of Excellence for Urban Open Space.

Once finalized in 2013, the park enjoyed a few years of popularity, but the 2019-2022 drought combined with the Pandemic

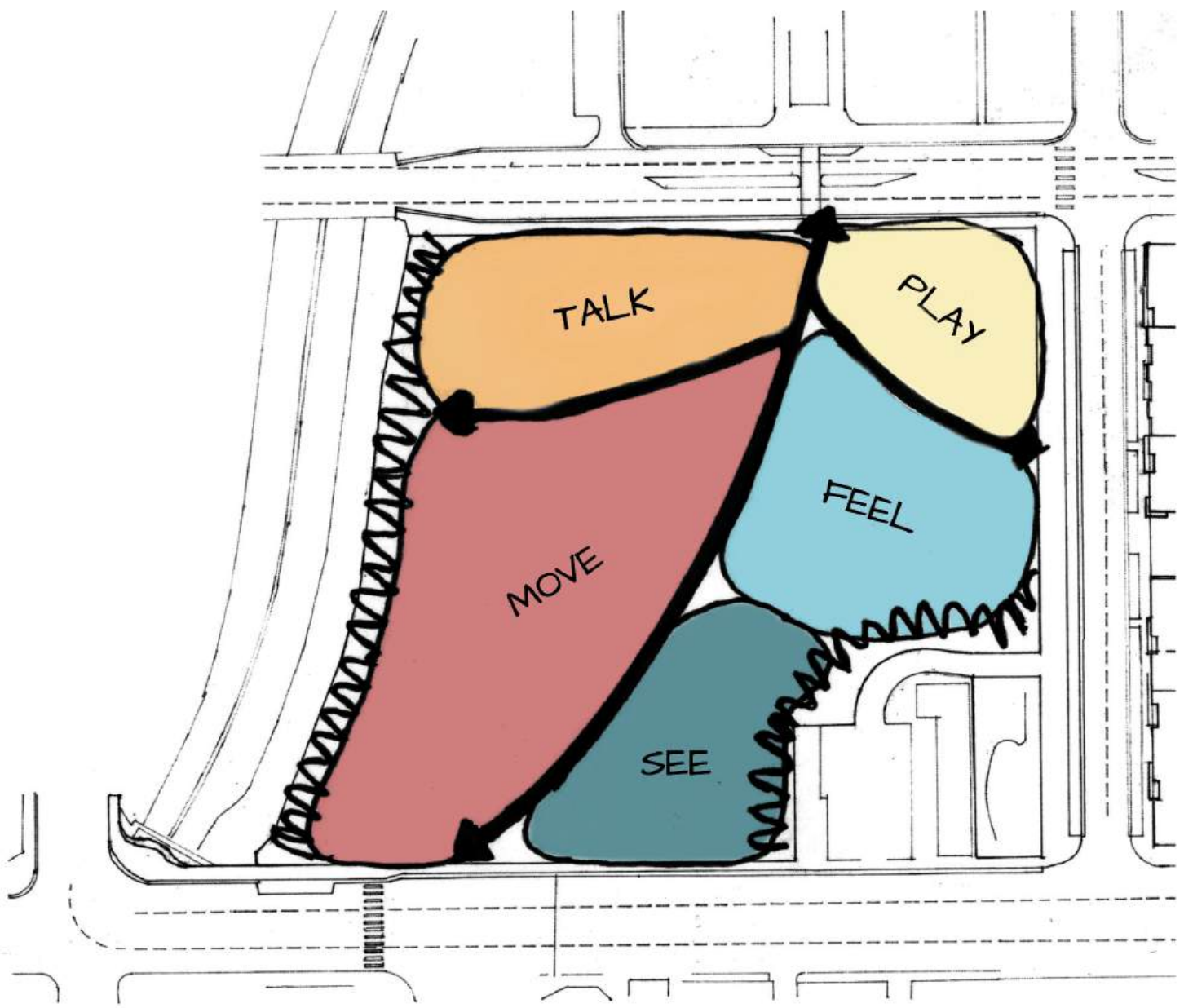
decreased its usage sharply. Reasons range from the increase of the homeless population in the park to the shutting off of its water features due to water scarcity.

Tongva Park today faces the tough choice of either consolidating itself as a safety net for a large number of unhoused or closing its proverbial doors to the homeless in order to attract more local visitors and tourists. As the Los Angeles Olympic Games approach, this discussion will get heated - just as everything else related to the park always have.

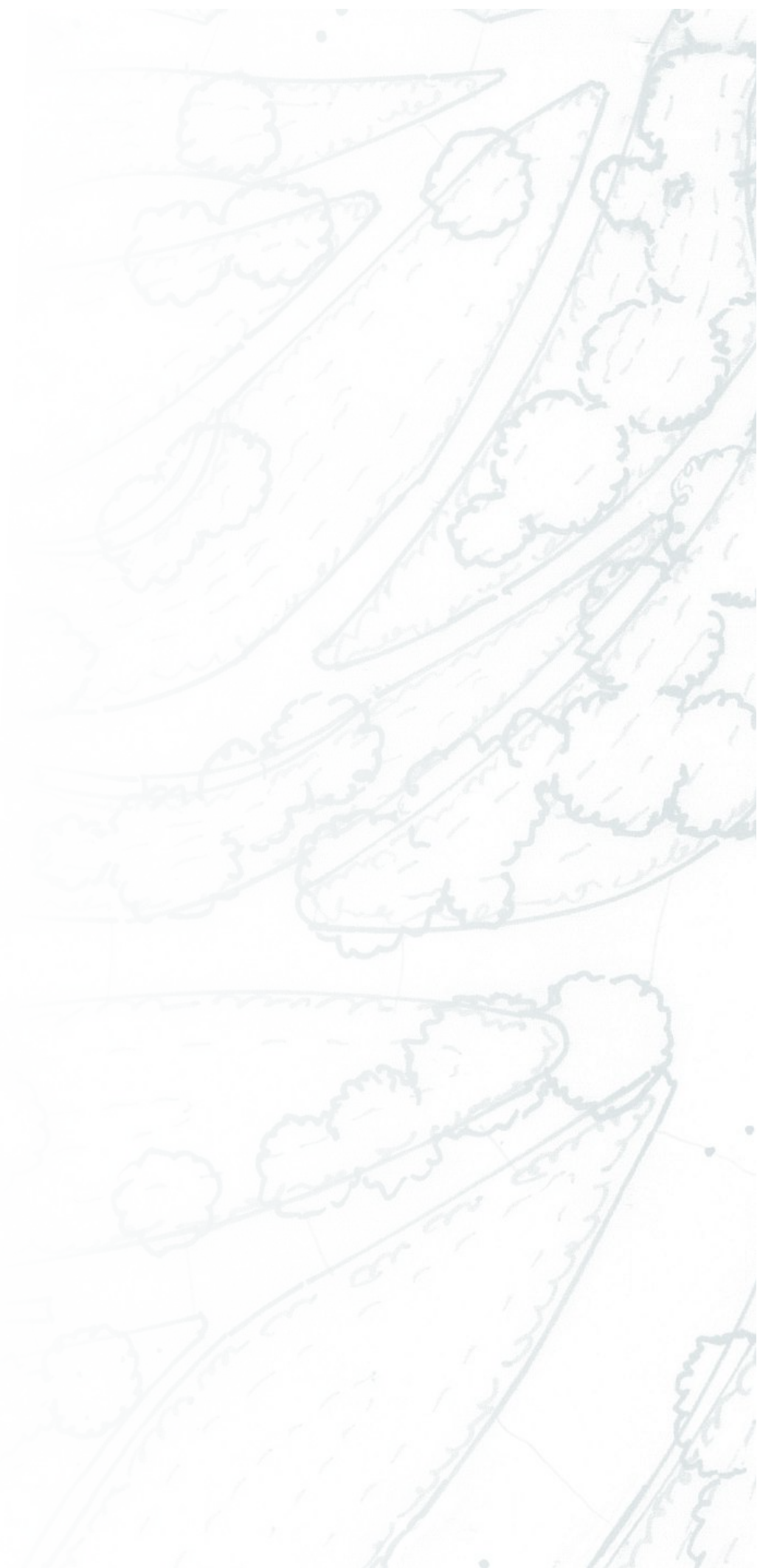


PHOTO: Tato Maizza

CONCEPT



NTS ⊗





## INTRODUCTION

In this study, Tongva Park is briefly analyzed for its core design elements, from circulation patterns to construction materials to plant design. This is the result of three different classes in Design Graphics at the UCLAx Landscape Architecture Program, which follow a progression from hand drafting techniques to digital rendering.

A Landscape Architecture project usually starts with the understanding of the client's Program (the client's wishes and goals for the project) followed by a thorough study of the project's target terrain, a process called Site Analysis. From this point, the designer will develop a Site Concept and propose Site Plan Drawings, Enlargements, Section-Elevations and Perspective Sketches to portray the design idea(s).

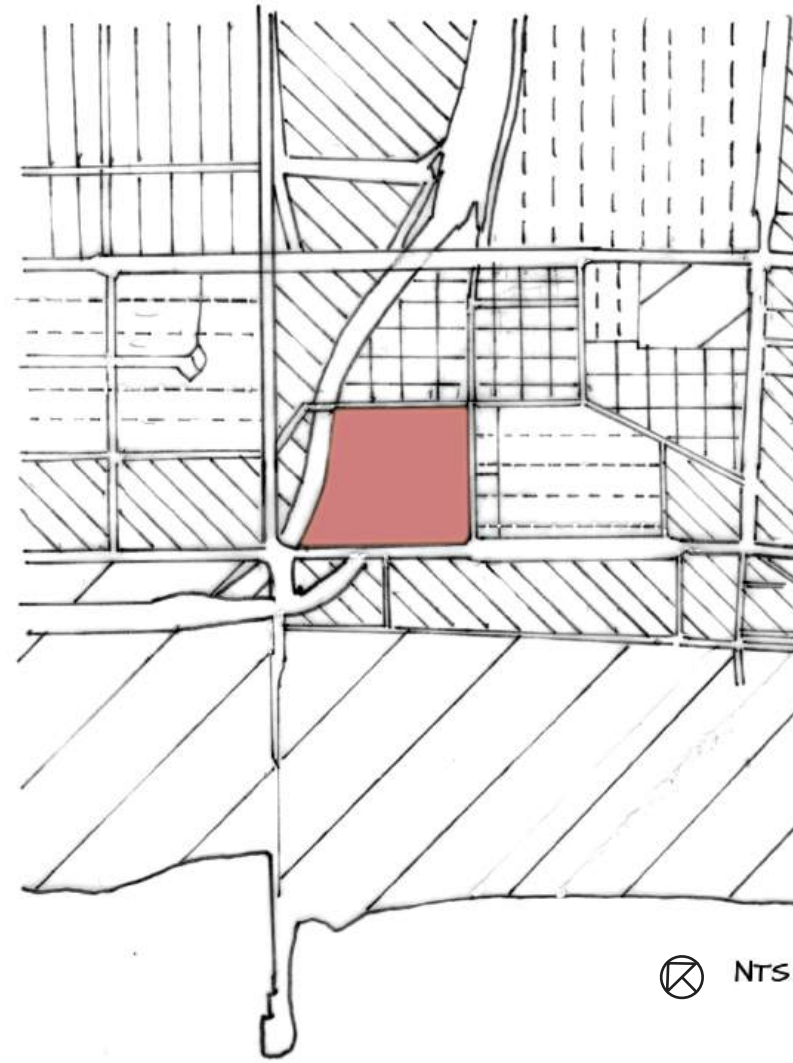
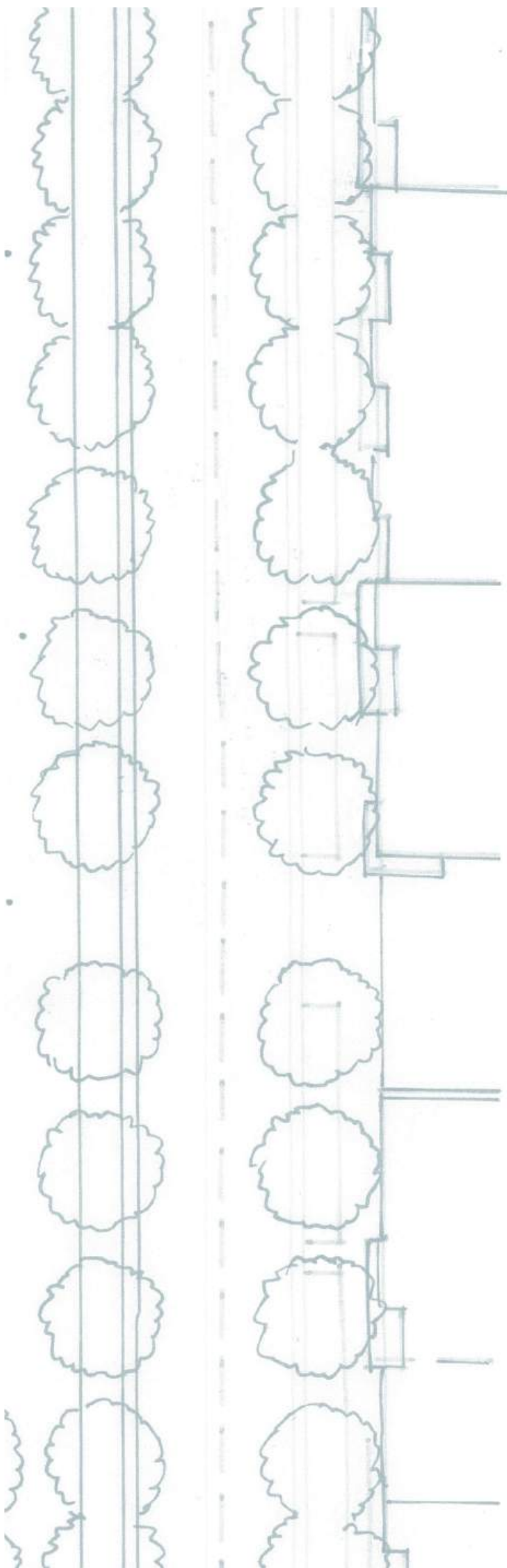
In the sections that follow, this process will be illustrated with work produced for the classes mentioned above, with the addition of a very broad sample of the construction materials and vegetation palette added to the site.



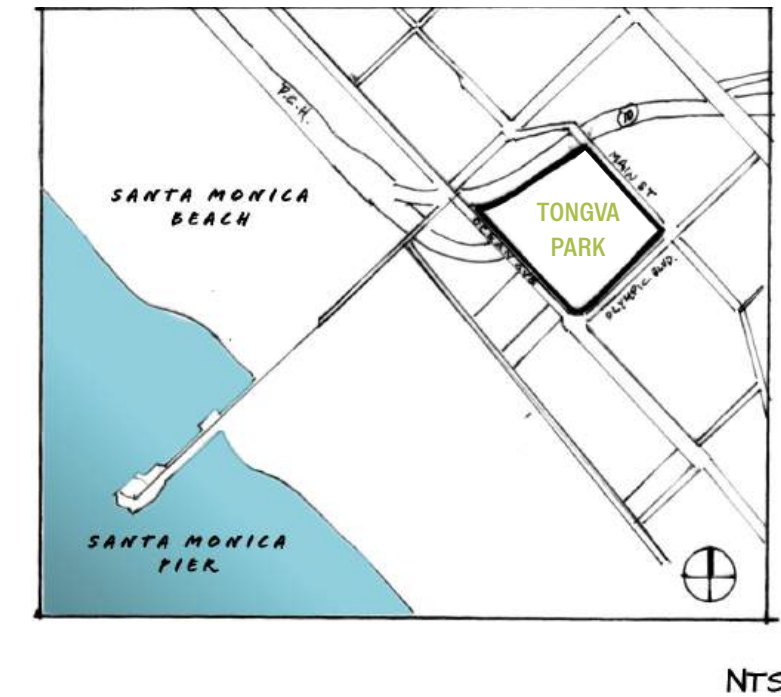
# SITE ANALYSIS

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE SITE ANALYSIS INCLUDE MULTIPLE DIAGRAMS, A SITE CONCEPT, SITE PLAN DRAWINGS, ENLARGEMENTS, SECTION-ELEVATIONS AND PERSPECTIVE DRAWINGS.

# CONTEXT & LOCATION



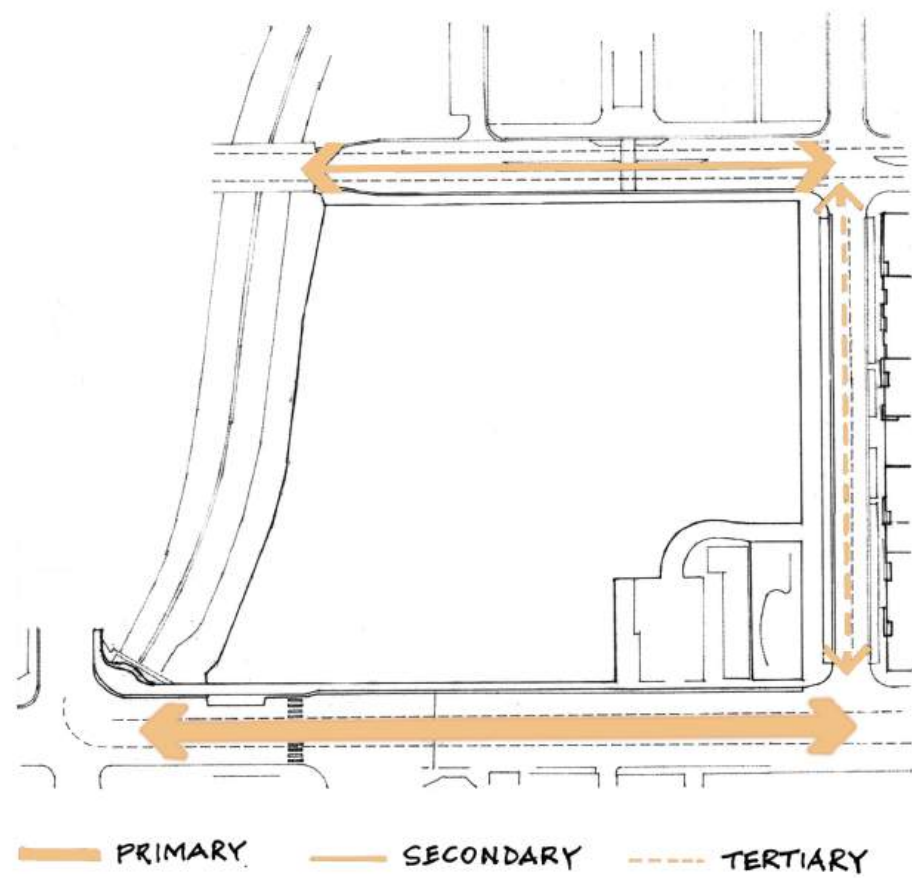
- |  |              |  |            |
|--|--------------|--|------------|
|  | PUBLIC SPACE |  | GOVERNMENT |
|  | COMMERCIAL   |  | MIXED USE  |
|  | RESIDENTIAL  |  | SCHOOL     |



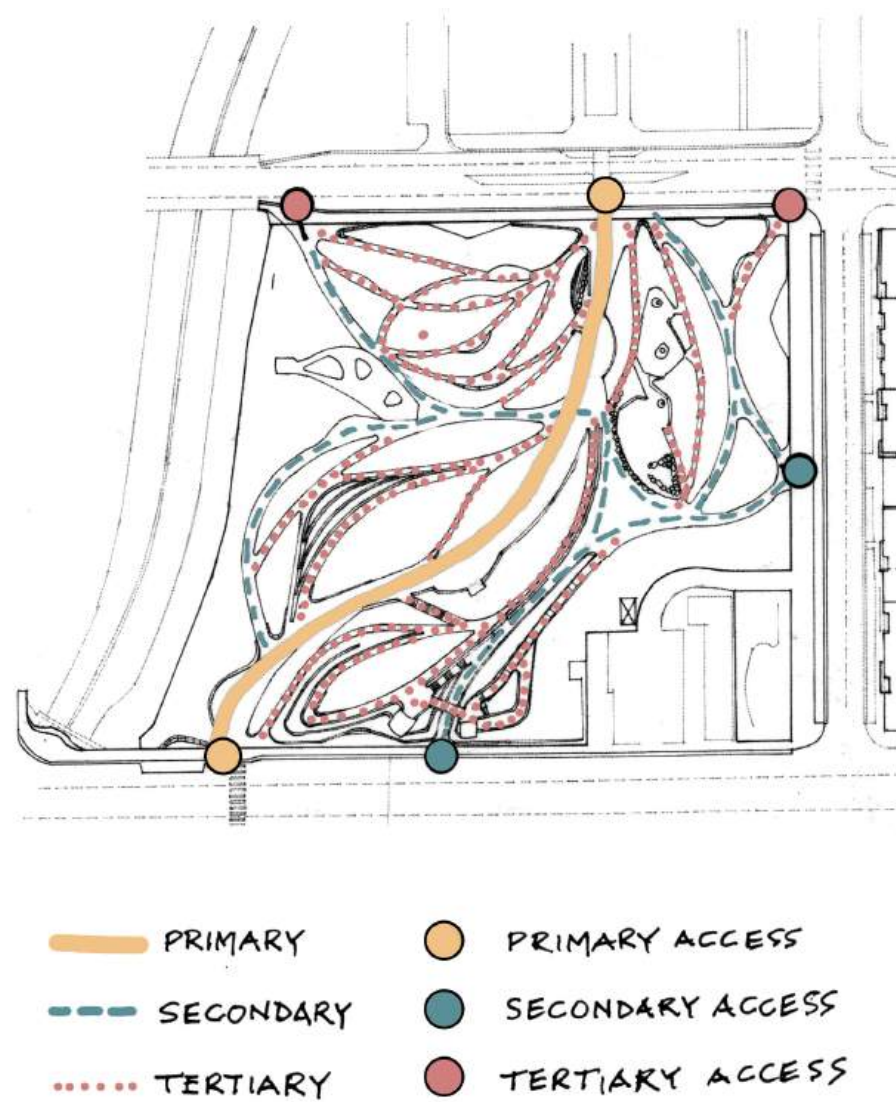
# USAGE AND ACCESS

Some of the most straightforward and relevant diagrams to a site relate to Circulation - pedestrian and vehicular being the most common. An added piece of information in that arena would be access points, again both pedestrian and vehicular (if there are any). In this page, an Usage Diagram was also added, to further illustrate pedestrian dynamics.

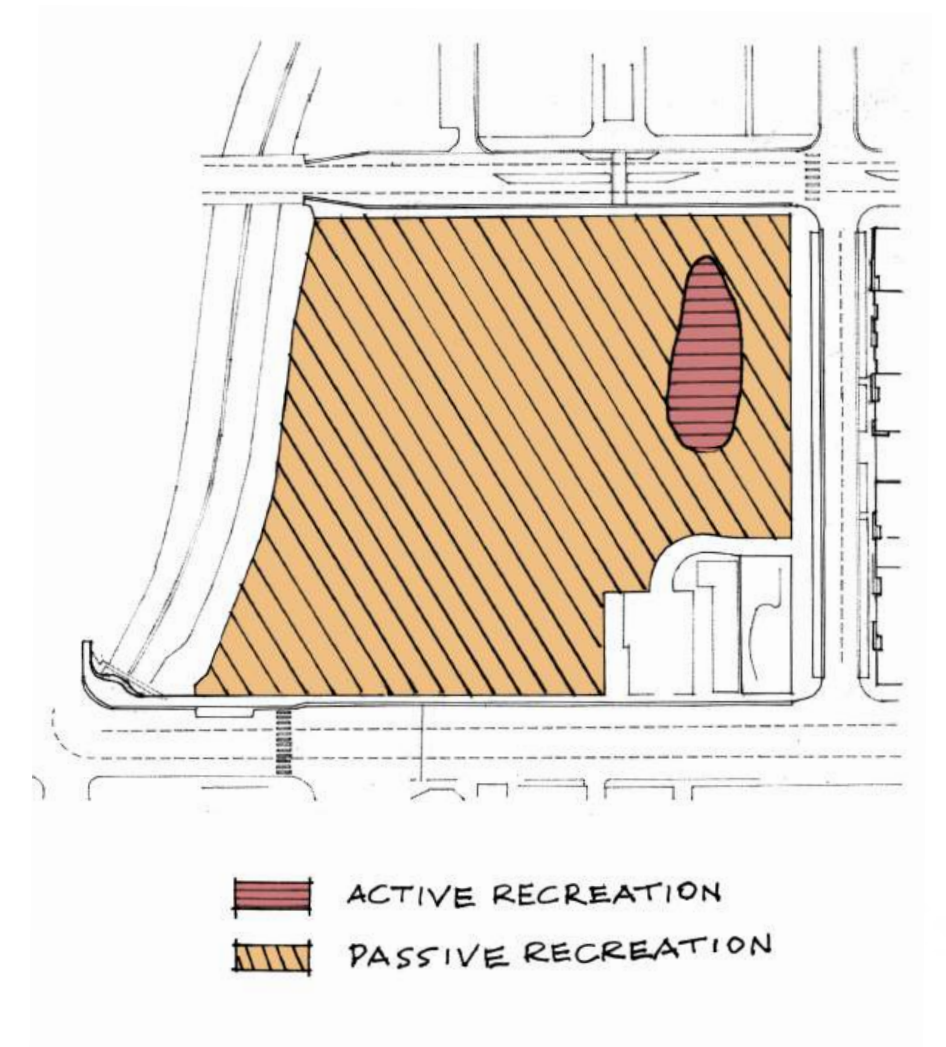
VEHICULAR CIRCULATION



PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION



ACTIVE / PASSIVE RECREATION



SCALE: 1" = 200' - 0"

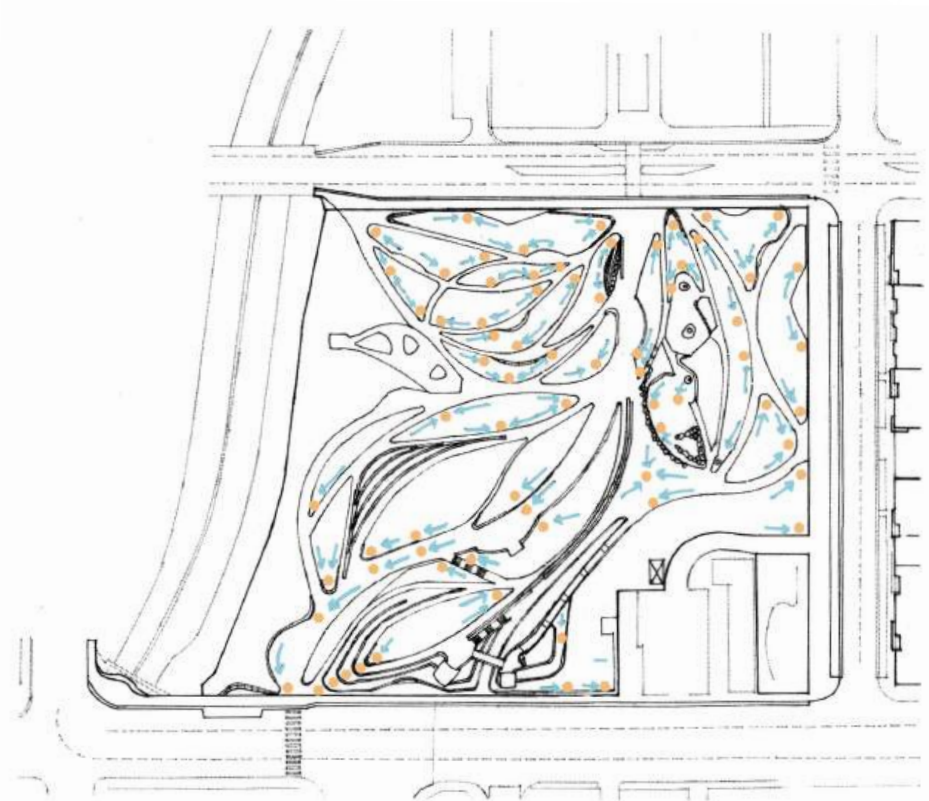
0' 100' 200' 400'



# WATER RELATED ANALYSIS

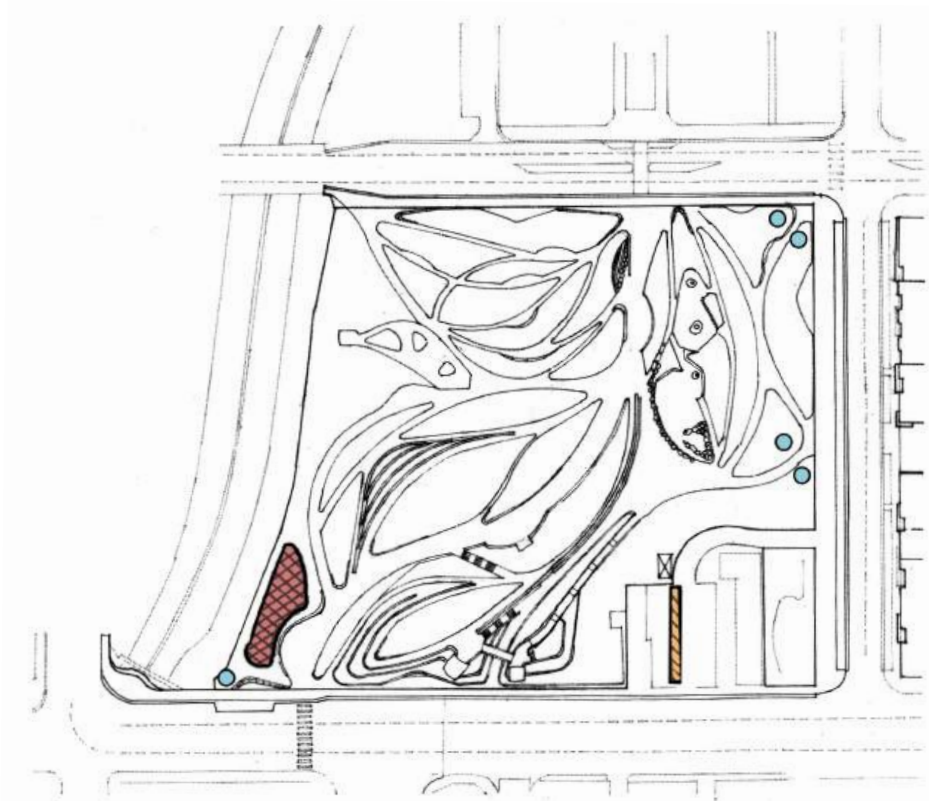
Extreme weather patterns and resulting climate catastrophes such as the recent 5 year drought in the state of California and more specifically the 2025 Palisades and Eaton fires in Los Angeles County raise the question of how storm water is managed and how prepared an urban park like Tongva is to withstand both the lack of rainwater and the risk of fire within its boundaries.

DRAINAGE



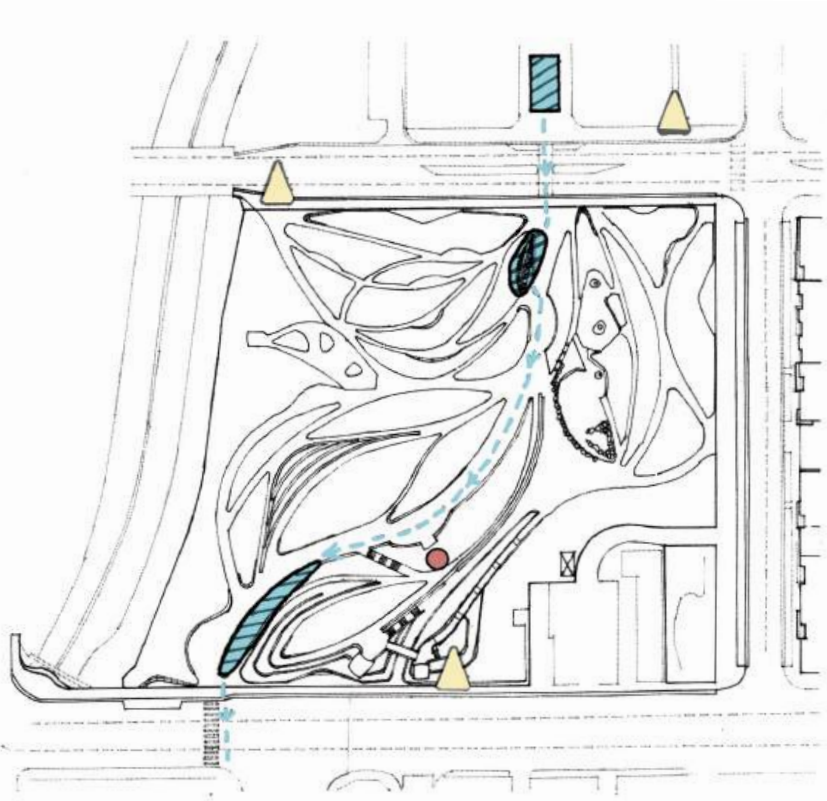
● STORM DRAIN      → WATER FLOW

STORM WATER MANAGEMENT



■ BIO RETENTION BASIN  
 ■ INFILTRATION TRENCH  
 ● DRY WELL

WATER FEATURES  
 FIRE SAFETY



■ WATER FEATURE  
 ▲ FIRE HYDRANT  
 ● FIRE RISER ROOM

SCALE: 1" = 200' - 0"



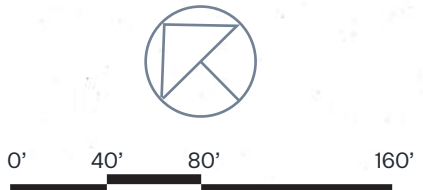


# SITE PLANS

SITE PLANS ARE DRAWN TO PORTRAY THE ENTIRETY OF THE PROJECT'S PLOT AND INCLUDE ALL THE PROPOSED ELEMENTS, BOTH HARDSCAPE AND SOFTSCAPE. IT'S THE BLUEPRINT OF THE LANDSCAPE PROJECT. IN THIS CASE, THE FOLLOWING SITE PLANS UTILIZE DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES TO PORTRAY TONGVA PARK AS BUILT.

# DIGITALLY RENDERED ILLUSTRATIVE SITE

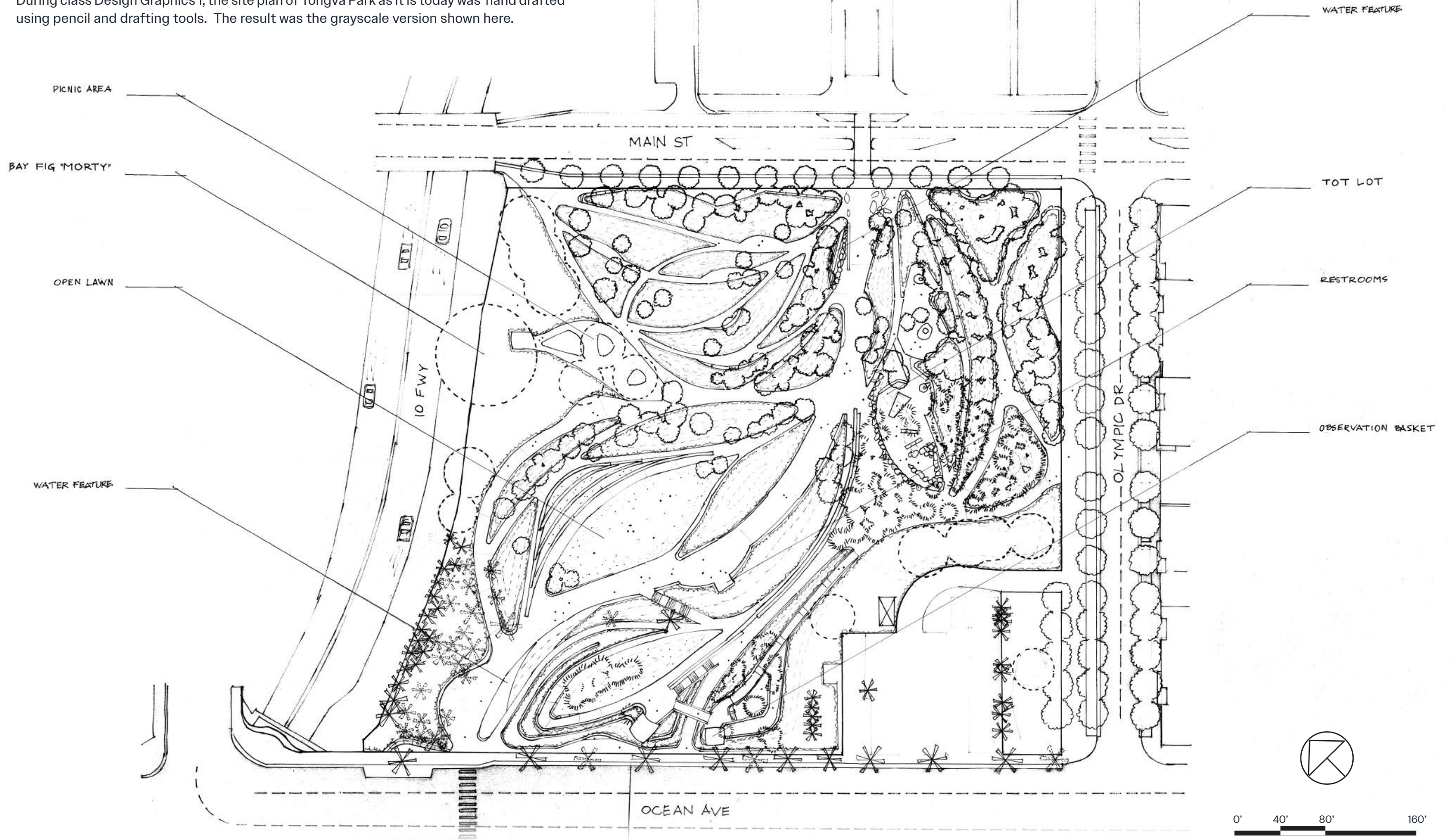
The Illustrative Site Plan below is the final result of the series of Design Graphics classes. It was completed for Design Graphics 3, where the preliminary drafted version of the Site Plan (shown on the next page) was cleaned up and rendered utilizing Photoshop.



SCALE: 1" = 80' - 0"

# PRELIMINARY DRAFT OF SITE PLAN

During class Design Graphics 1, the site plan of Tongva Park as it is today was hand drafted using pencil and drafting tools. The result was the grayscale version shown here.



# HAND RENDERED PRELIMINARY SITE PLAN

During Design Graphics 2, a new version of the Site Plan was drafted, this time using ink. It was then colored utilizing color pencils and AD markers.



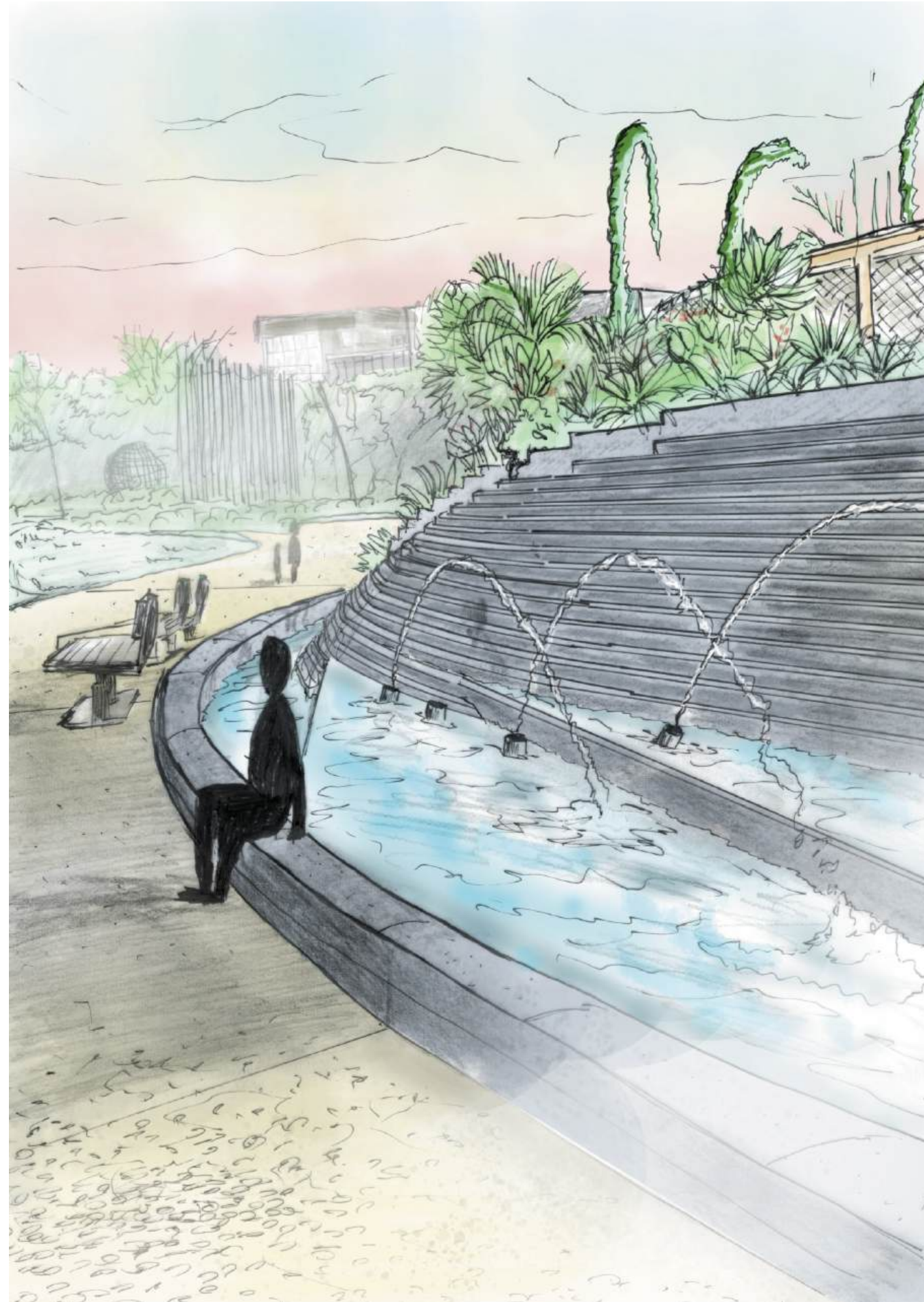
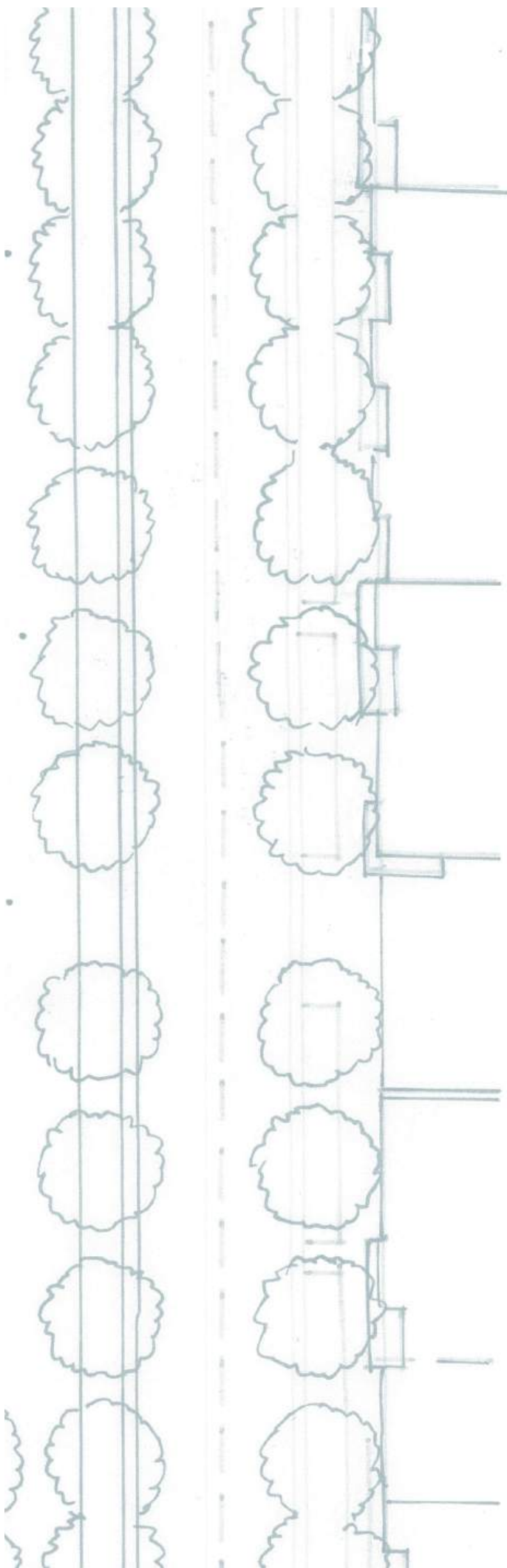
0' 40' 80' 160'

SCALE: 1" = 80' - 0"



# SITE DETAILS

THE LANDSCAPE DESIGN PROCESS CONTINUES BY ADDING DETAILS AND VARIOUS VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF HOW THE PROJECT IS INTENDED TO LOOK LIKE WHEN BUILT. IT IS A PARAMOUNT STAGE IN THE PRESENTATION, WHERE THE DESIGNER HAS THE CHANCE TO ILLUSTRATE HIS OR HER VISION TO THE DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS.



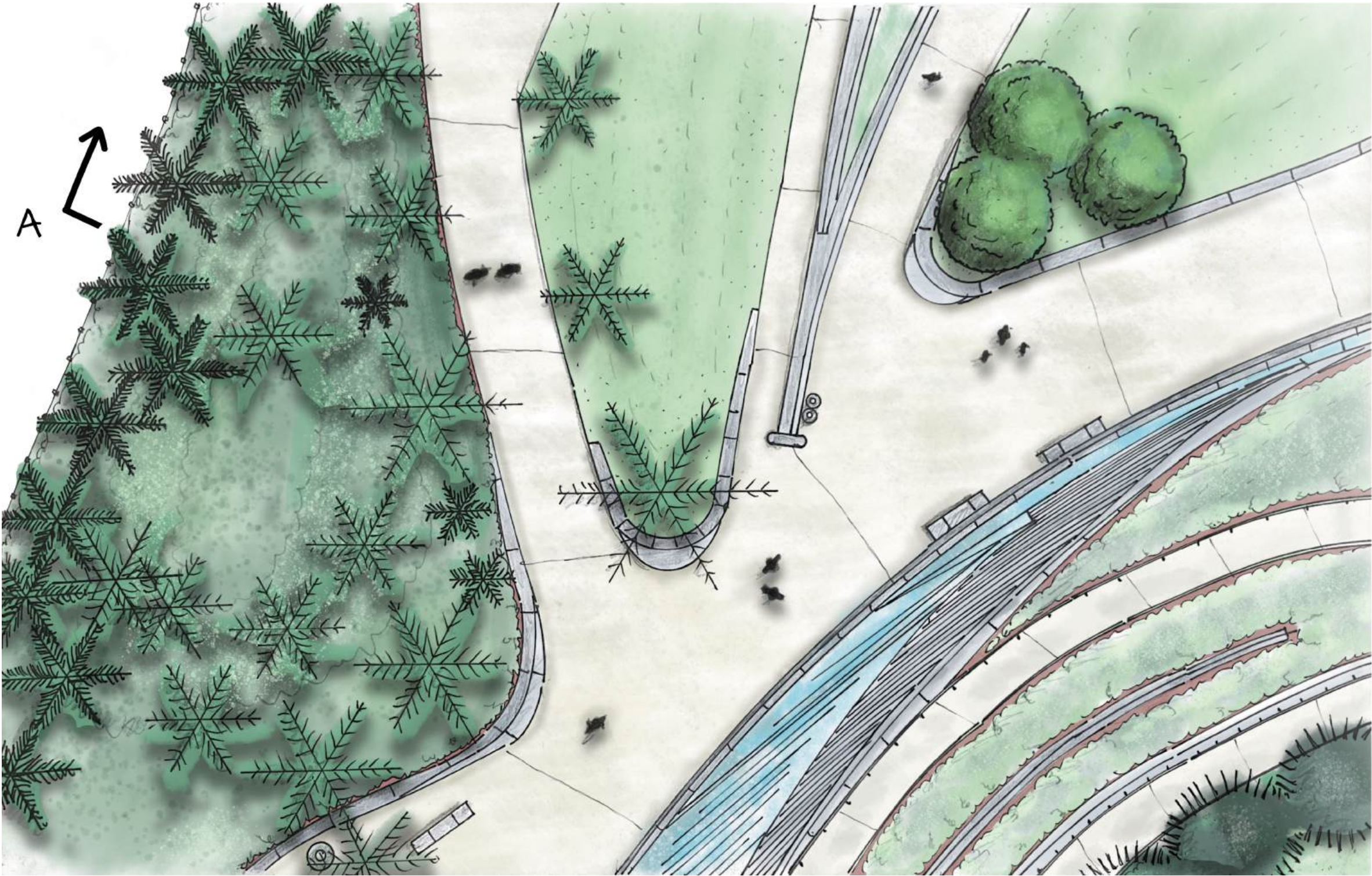
## PERSPECTIVE SKETCHES

Perspective Sketches or 3D Renders can be produced with a variety of techniques. In this case, the images were drawn with felt pen and colored digitally.



# ENLARGEMENT

Enlargements are intended to show detail on a specific segment of a Site Plan. In most cases, a Key graphic will also be displayed to show what area has been zoomed in (next page).

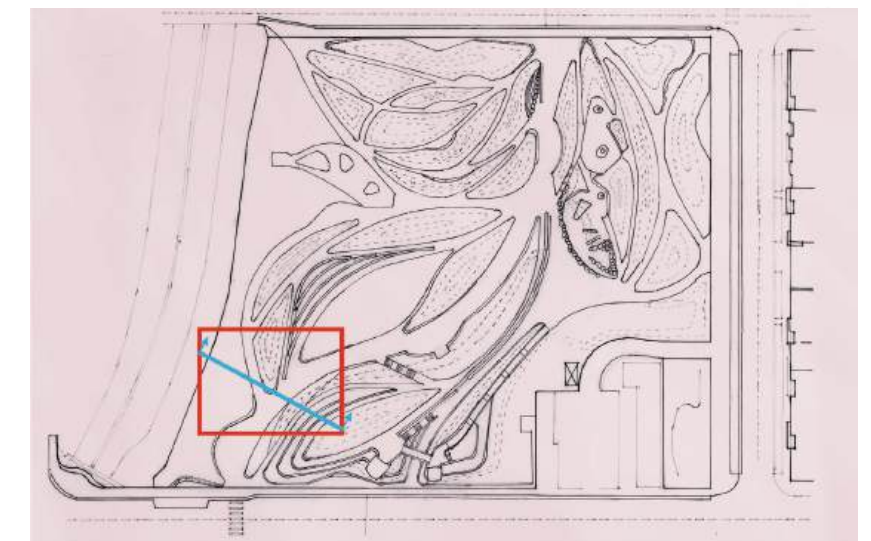


# SECTION - ELEVATION

Section-Elevations are intended to show the vertical scale of a site, the result of a cut slicing the terrain from the side.



Key

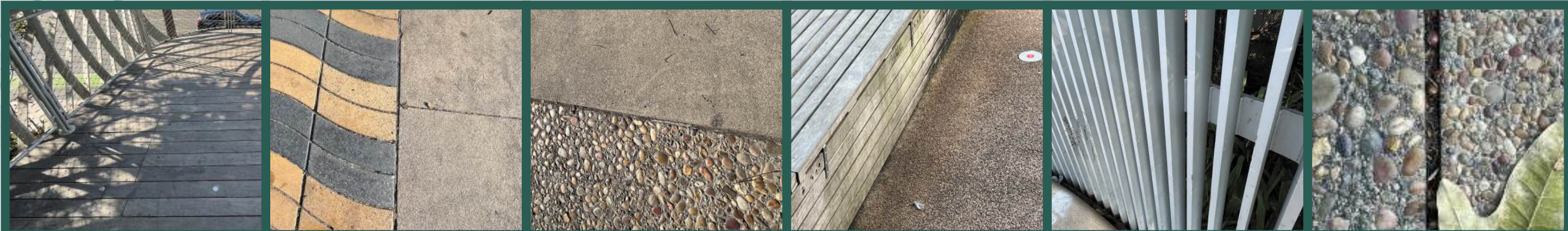




# SITE MATERIALS

THIS IS A BRIEF SLIDESHOW OF THE RANGE OF MATERIALS UTILIZED IN THE PARK AS BUILT. WORTH NOTING THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF CONTRASTING DIFFERENT MATERIALS AND USING THOSE TRANSITIONS AS THRESHOLDS WITHIN THE OVERALL DESIGN.

# SYNTHETIC TEXTURE AND FORM



METAL WIRE X WOOD SLATS

TILES X CONCRETE

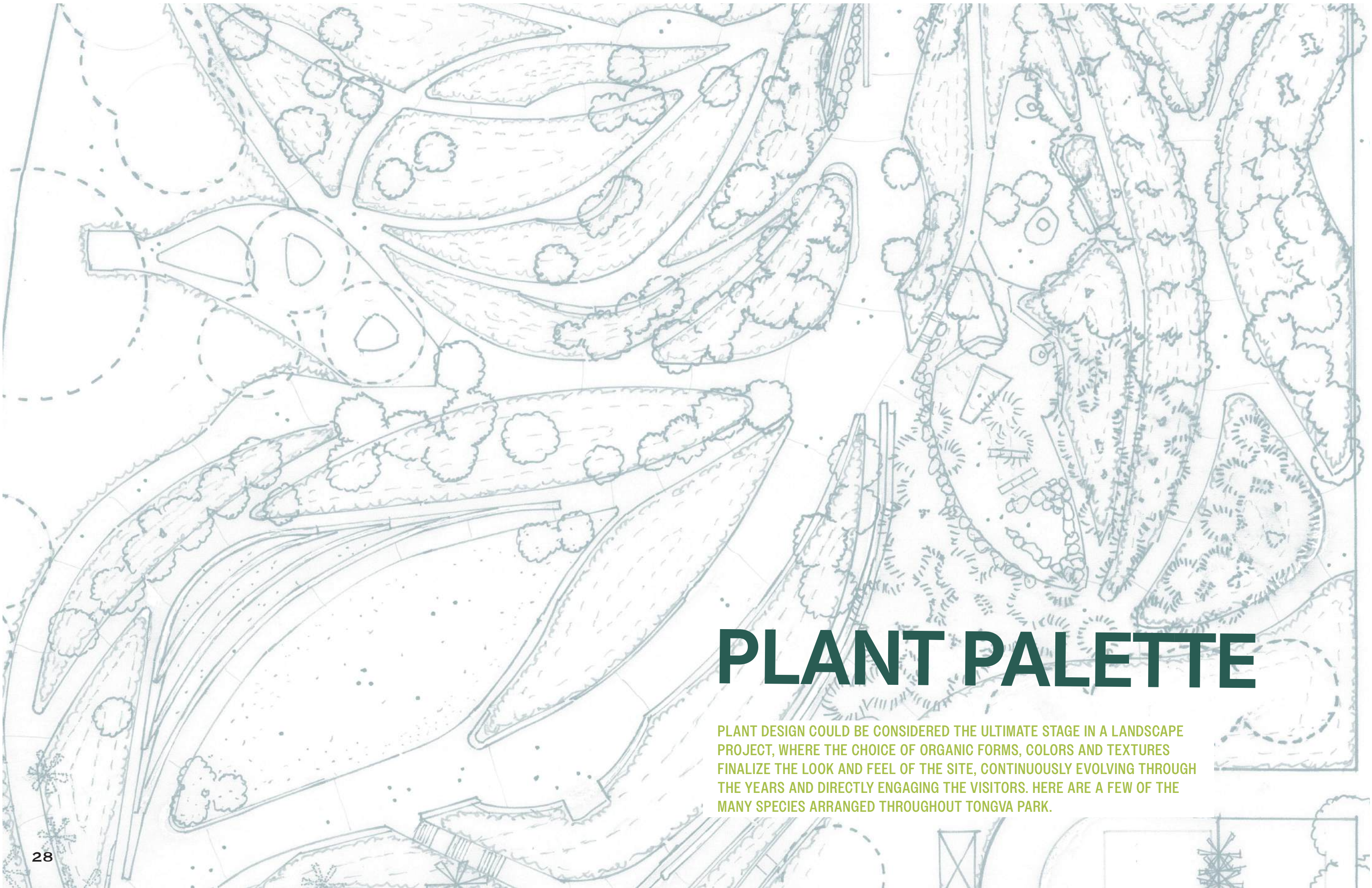
CONCRETE X AGGREGATE

WOOD SLATS X AGGREGATE

METAL X VOID

LARGE X SMALL AGGREGATE

PHOTOS: Tato Maizza



# PLANT PALETTE

PLANT DESIGN COULD BE CONSIDERED THE ULTIMATE STAGE IN A LANDSCAPE PROJECT, WHERE THE CHOICE OF ORGANIC FORMS, COLORS AND TEXTURES FINALIZE THE LOOK AND FEEL OF THE SITE, CONTINUOUSLY EVOLVING THROUGH THE YEARS AND DIRECTLY ENGAGING THE VISITORS. HERE ARE A FEW OF THE MANY SPECIES ARRANGED THROUGHOUT TONGVA PARK.

# ORGANIC TEXTURE AND FORM



NATIVE SPECIES



PRE-EXISTING FICUS



PALMS VARIETY



SHRUBS VARIETY



CONIFERS



AGAVES

PHOTOS: Tato Maizza

## REFERENCES

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Archibald, Ashley. “Turf War Rages on over Name of Tongva Park - Santa Monica Daily Press.” Santa Monica Daily Press - Santa Monica’s trusted source of essential news for 23 years, December 3, 2024. <https://smdp.com/2013/03/03/turf-war-rages-on-over-name-of-tongva-park/>.

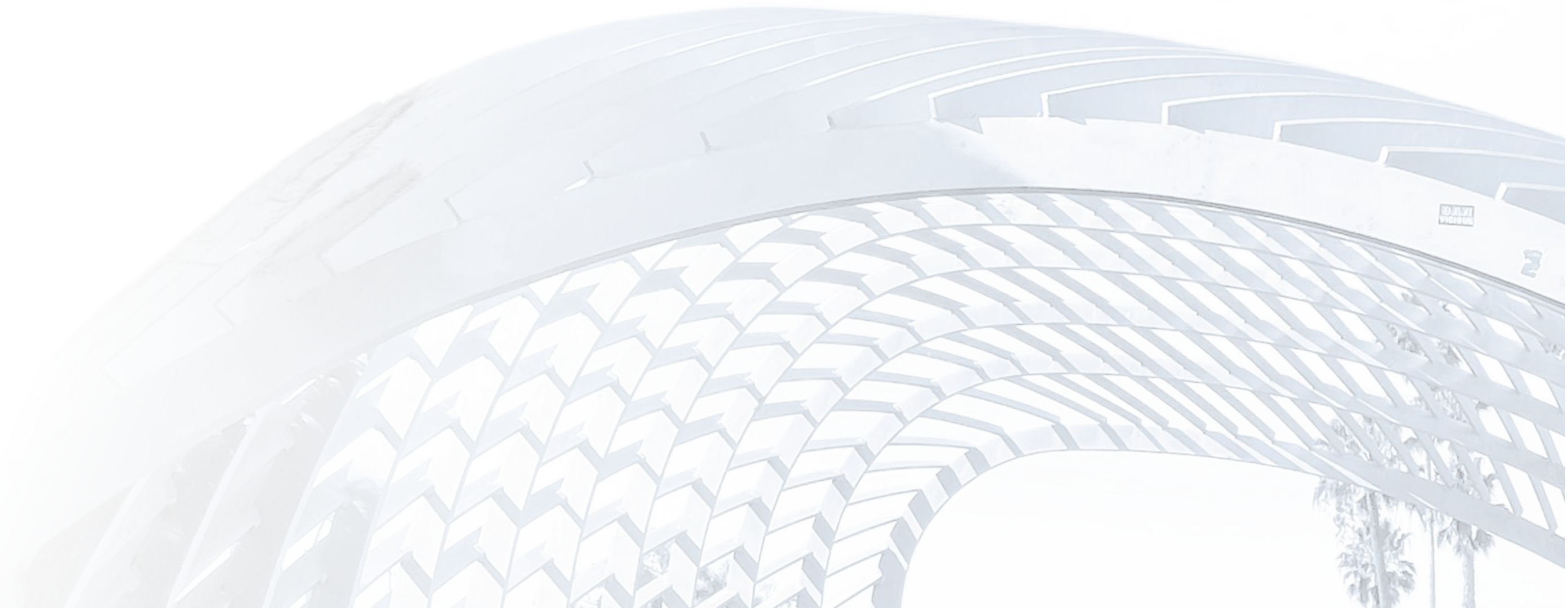
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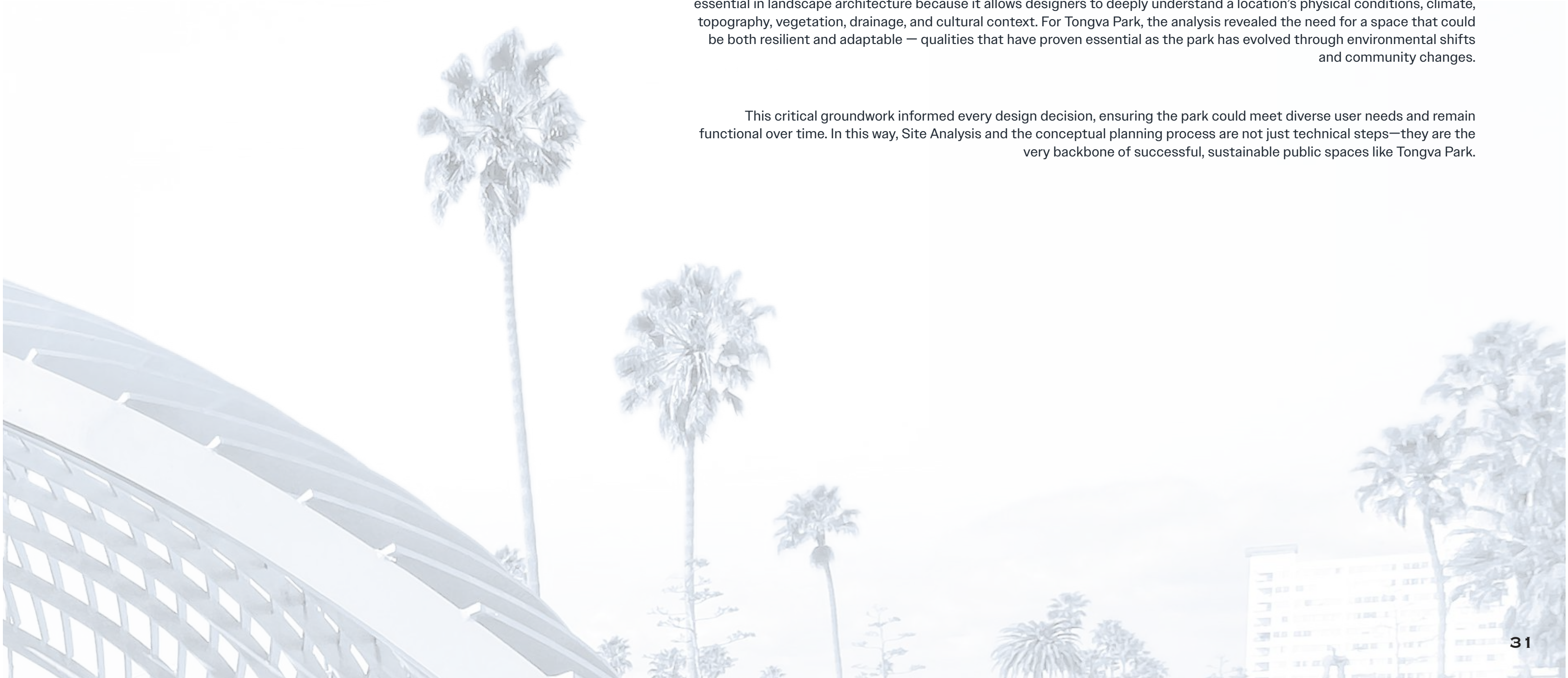


## CONCLUSION

In just over a decade, Tongva Park was brought to life from a conceptual landscape design into a vibrant, multifunctional public space in the heart of Santa Monica. What was once a flat parking lot is now a lush, ecologically rich space that succeeds in offering varied experiences to its users — whether it's quiet contemplation for individuals, picnic areas for group gatherings, playgrounds for children, or shelter for the unhoused.

This success is rooted not only in aesthetic design but in the foundational process of Site Analysis. A thorough Site Analysis is essential in landscape architecture because it allows designers to deeply understand a location's physical conditions, climate, topography, vegetation, drainage, and cultural context. For Tongva Park, the analysis revealed the need for a space that could be both resilient and adaptable — qualities that have proven essential as the park has evolved through environmental shifts and community changes.

This critical groundwork informed every design decision, ensuring the park could meet diverse user needs and remain functional over time. In this way, Site Analysis and the conceptual planning process are not just technical steps—they are the very backbone of successful, sustainable public spaces like Tongva Park.







PICNIC AREA

BAY FIG "MORTY"

OPEN LAWN

MA

10 FWY

