



UCLAX Landscape Architecture

**Tongva Park
Design Graphics 3
Spring 2026
Rachel Noll**

Instructor: Laura Razo

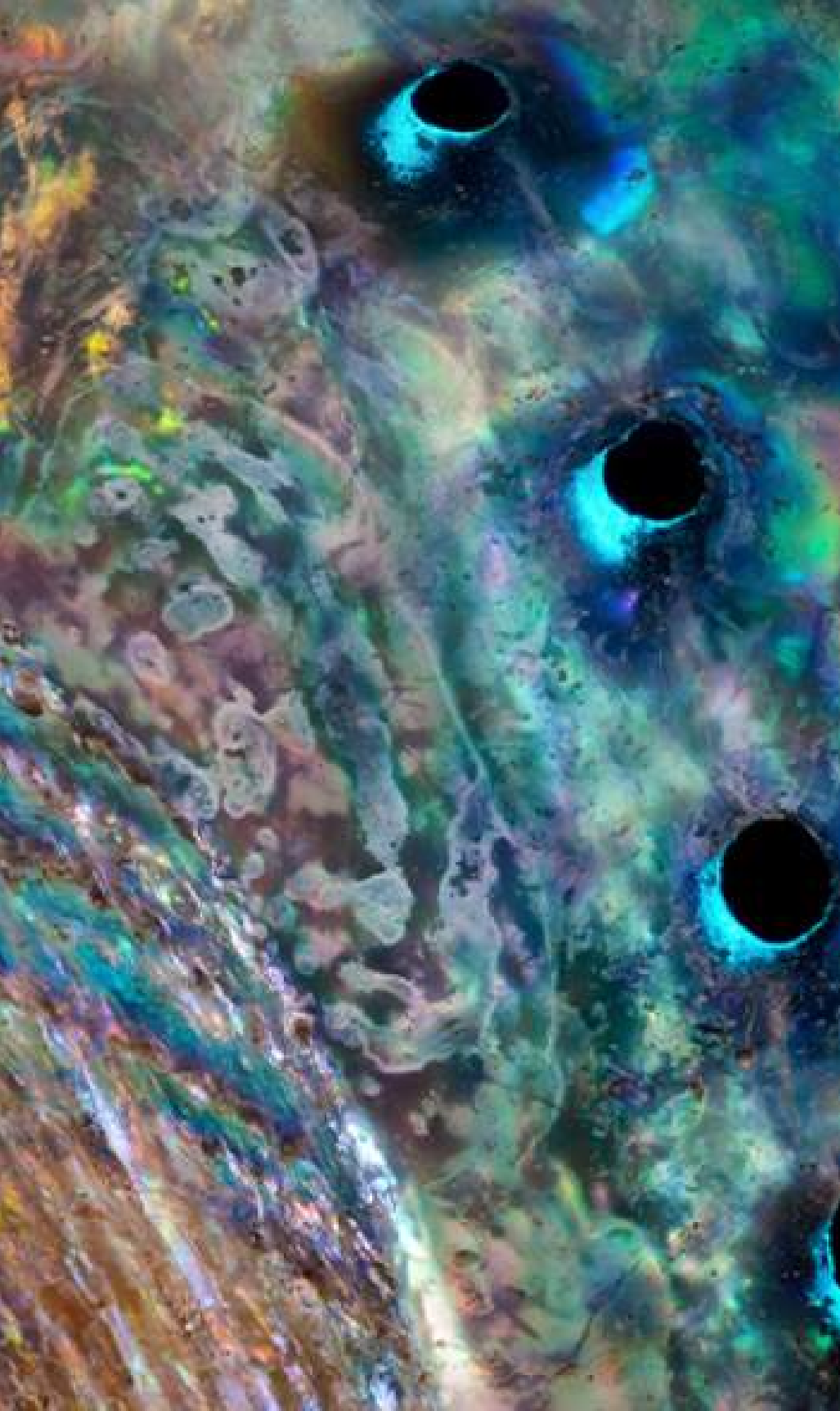
TONGVA PARK



“We need the tonic of wildness...At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature.”

Henry David Thoreau
Walden: Or, Life in the Woods

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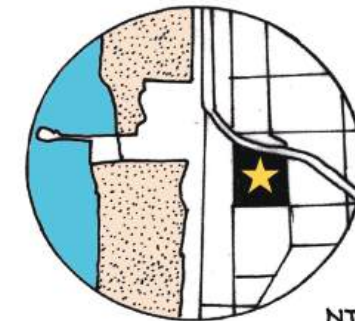
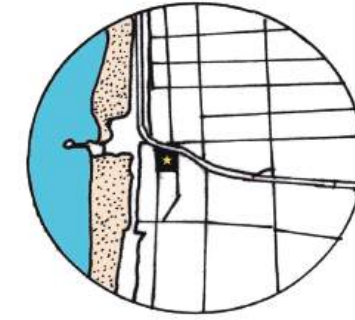
Introduction

Tongva Park is an urban park located near the ocean in Santa Monica, California. Tongva Park's original designer was landscape architect James Corner through his firm James Corner Field Operations. Formerly a 6 to 7 acre asphalt parking lot, the land was transformed into the award-winning Tongva Park, named in honor of the Gabrielino-Tongva Indigenous inhabitants of the LA Basin, including Los Angeles, Long Beach, and San Gabriel Valley.

The Tongva inhabited Southern California for thousands of years, with evidence of settlements dating back at least 6,000 to 7,000 years. The Tongva had over 50 separate villages throughout the LA Basin, making it one of the most densely populated Indigenous regions in California.

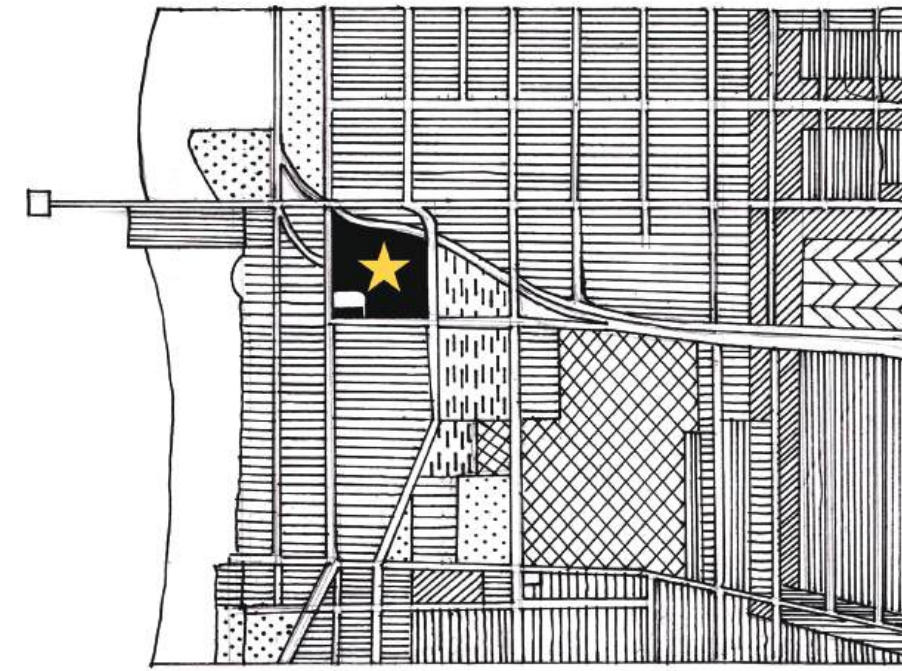
After the first encounter with the Portola expedition from Spain, many Tongva people were forced into the mission system after the establishment of the Mission San Gabriel Arcangel in 1771. Harsh labor conditions, disease and cultural displacement decimated the indigenous population from an estimate of 5,000 to 10,000 to just a few hundred by the early 1900s, a nearly 95% reduction.

Tongva Park is a fitting tribute to these original Indigenous inhabitants.



NTS

Santa Monica, California



CONTEXT

RESIDENTIAL
COMMERCIAL
MIXED USE
INDUSTRIAL

SCHOOL
MUNICIPAL
PUBLIC/OUTDOOR

NTS



Tongva Basket

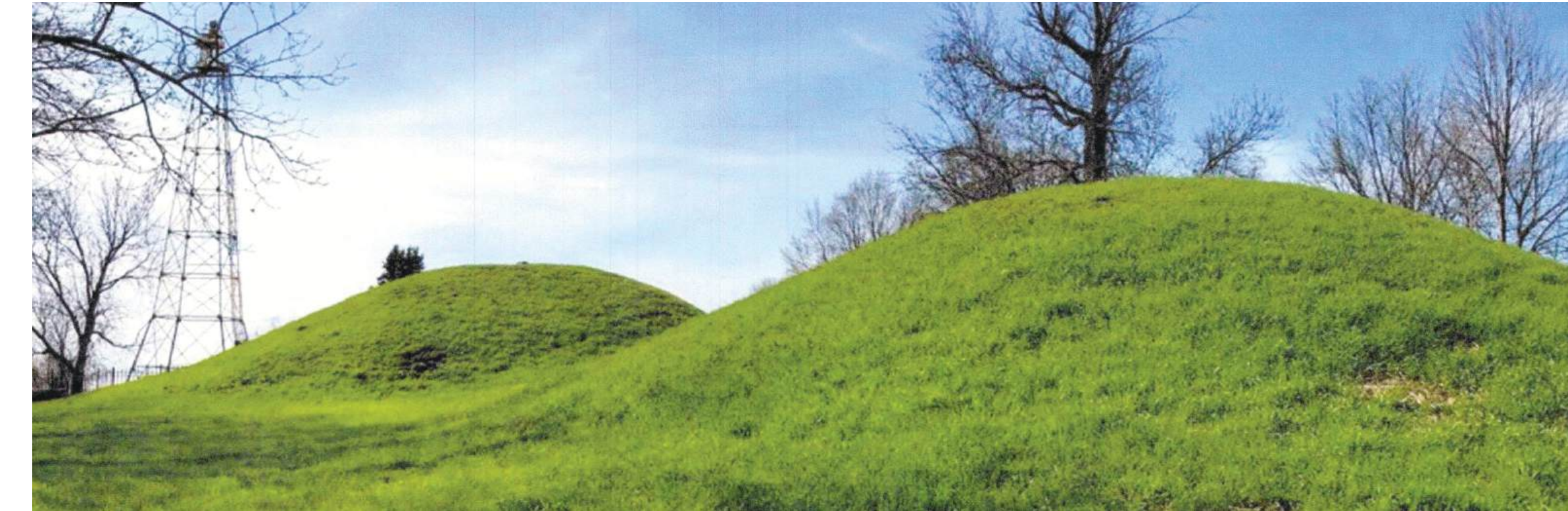


Circular Woven Mat

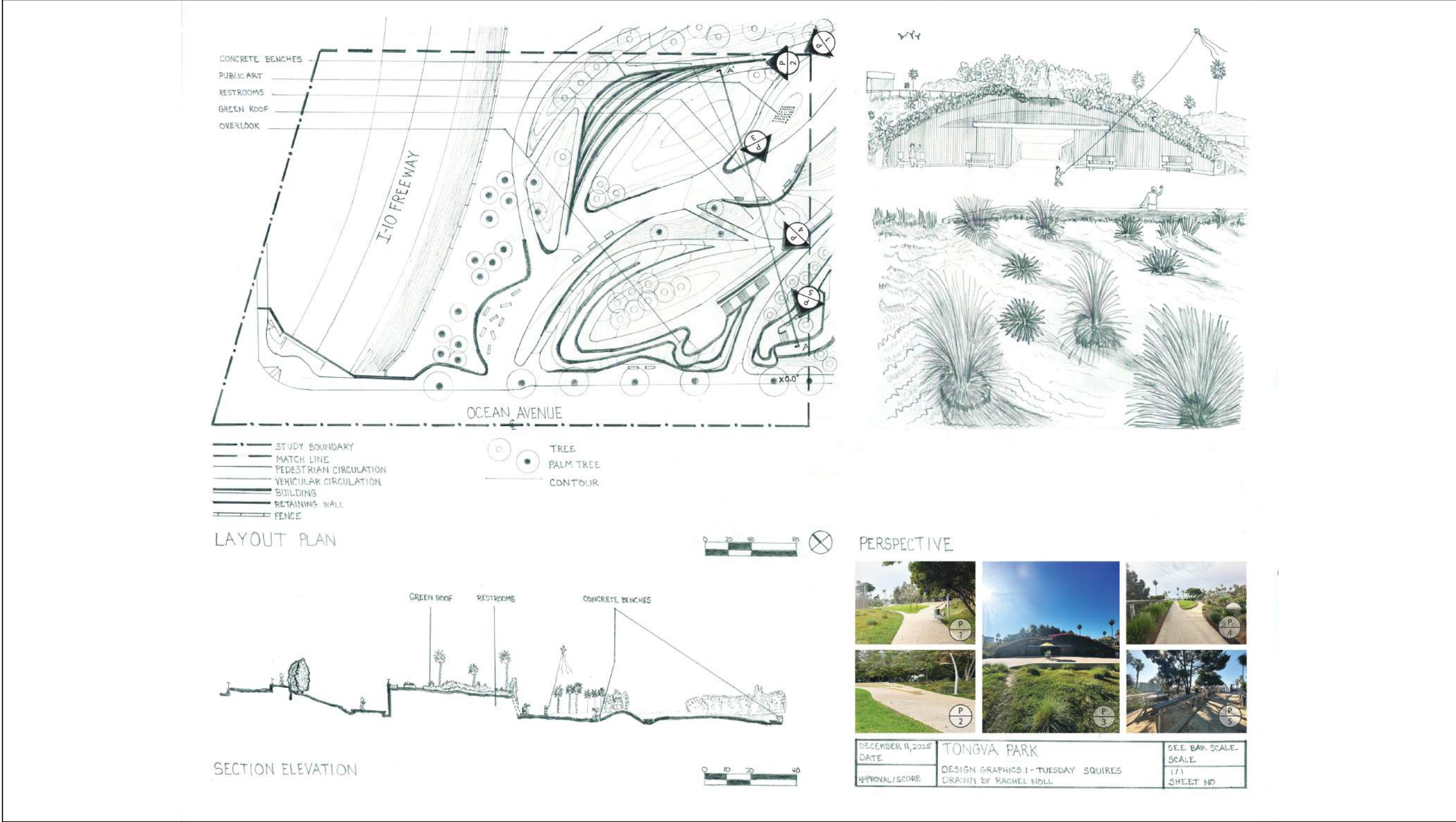


Traditional Tongva Kiich

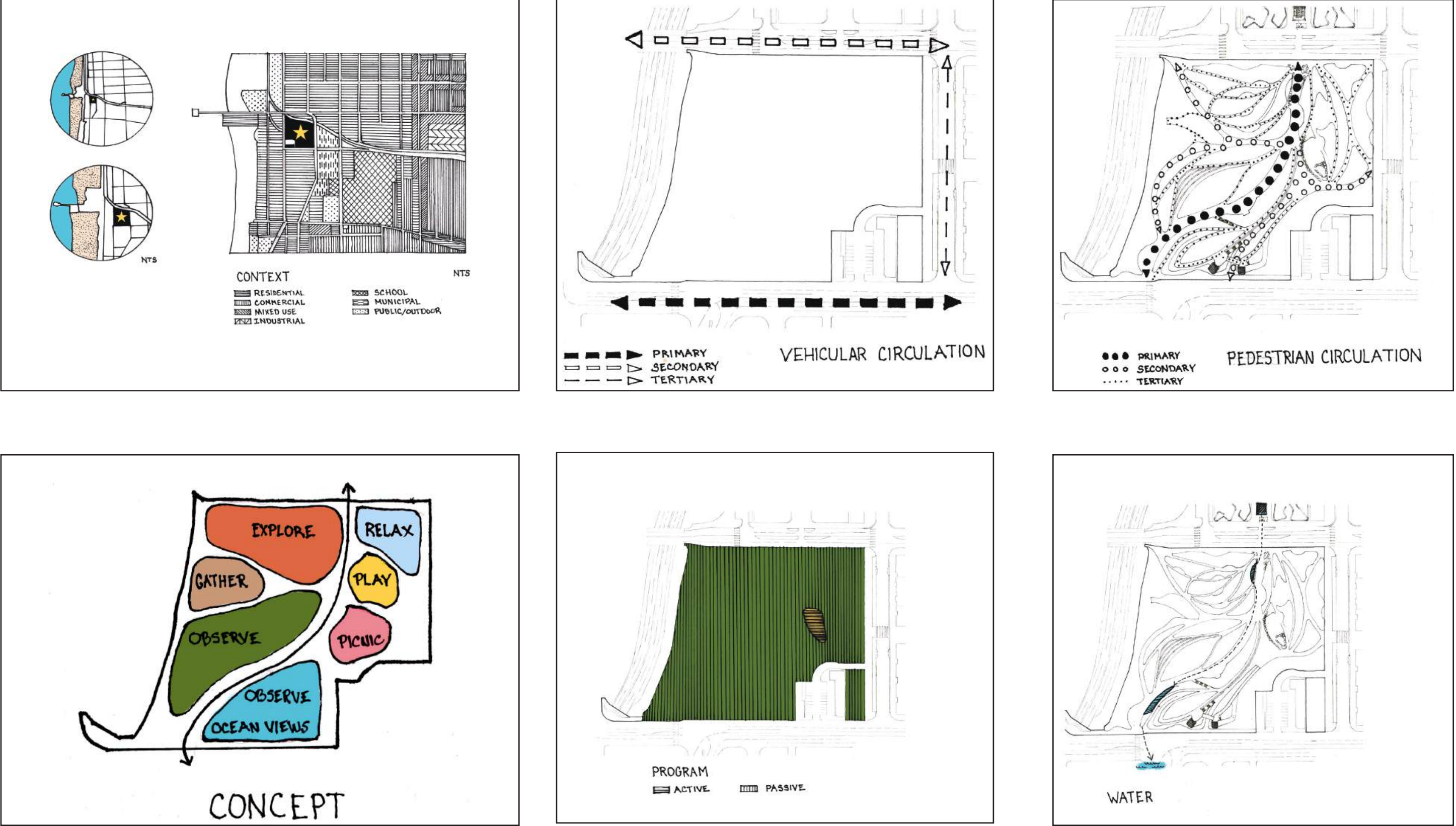
Inspirational Images



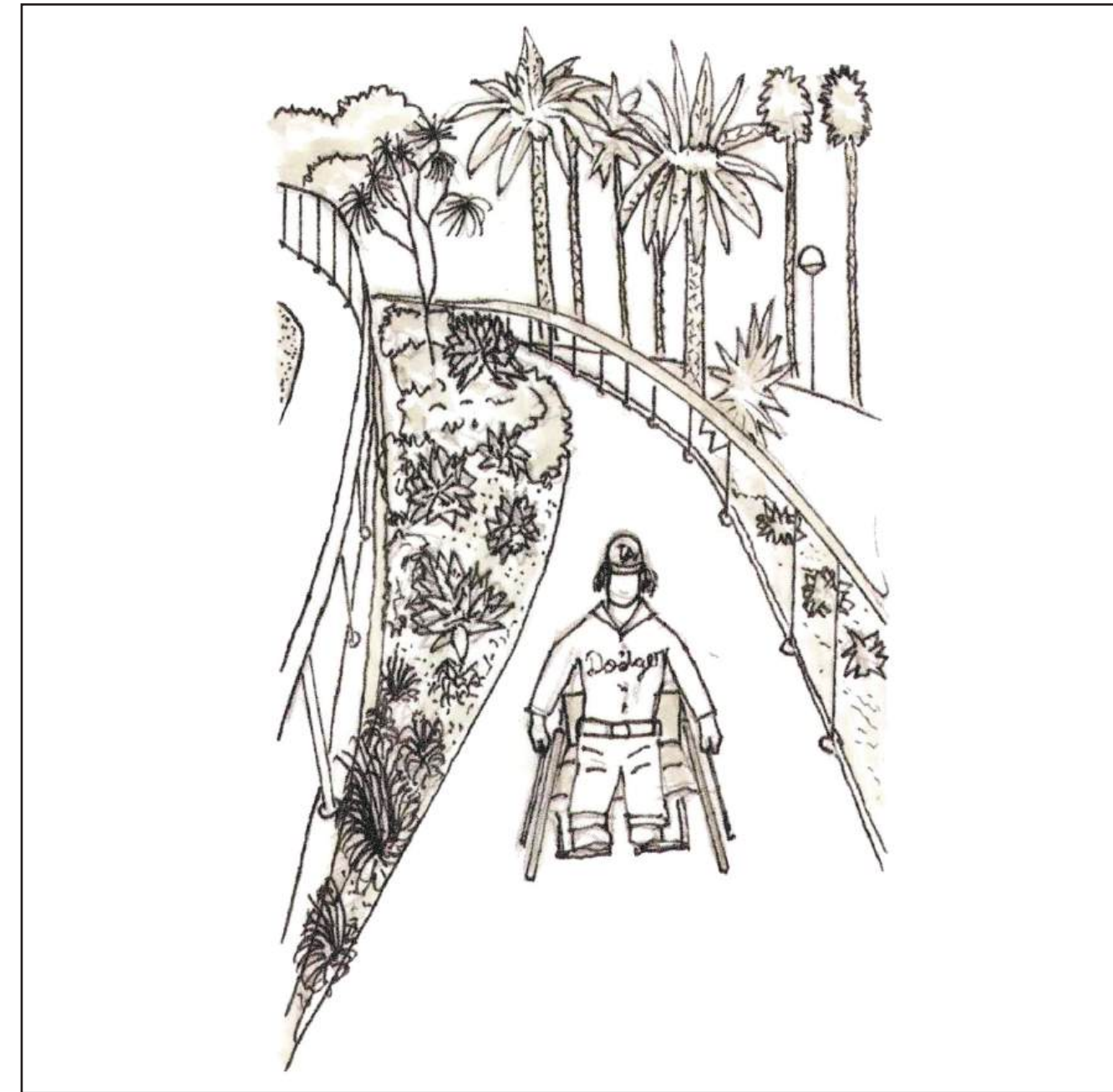
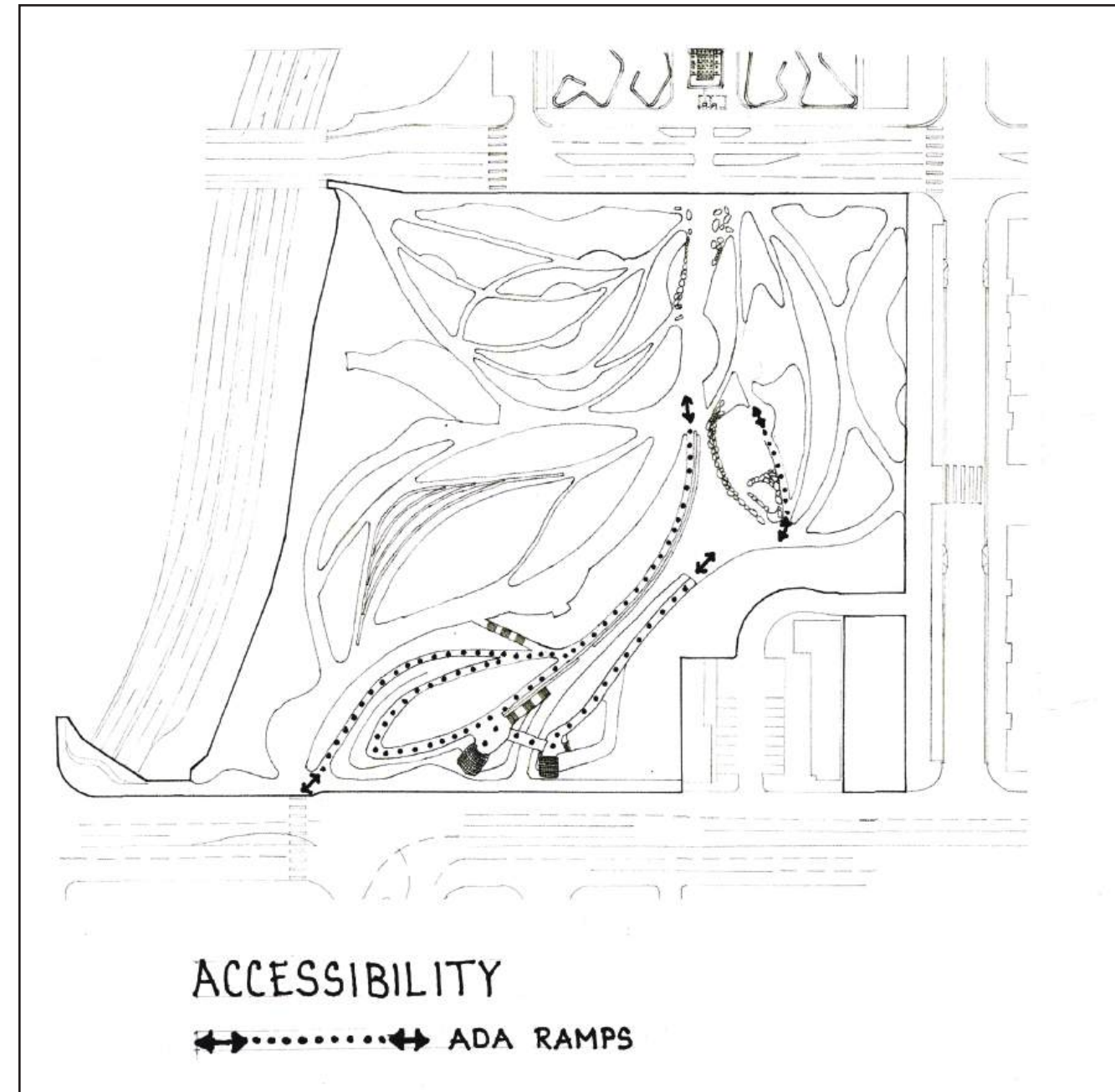
Quadrant, Section, Perspective & Photo Gallery



Site Analysis

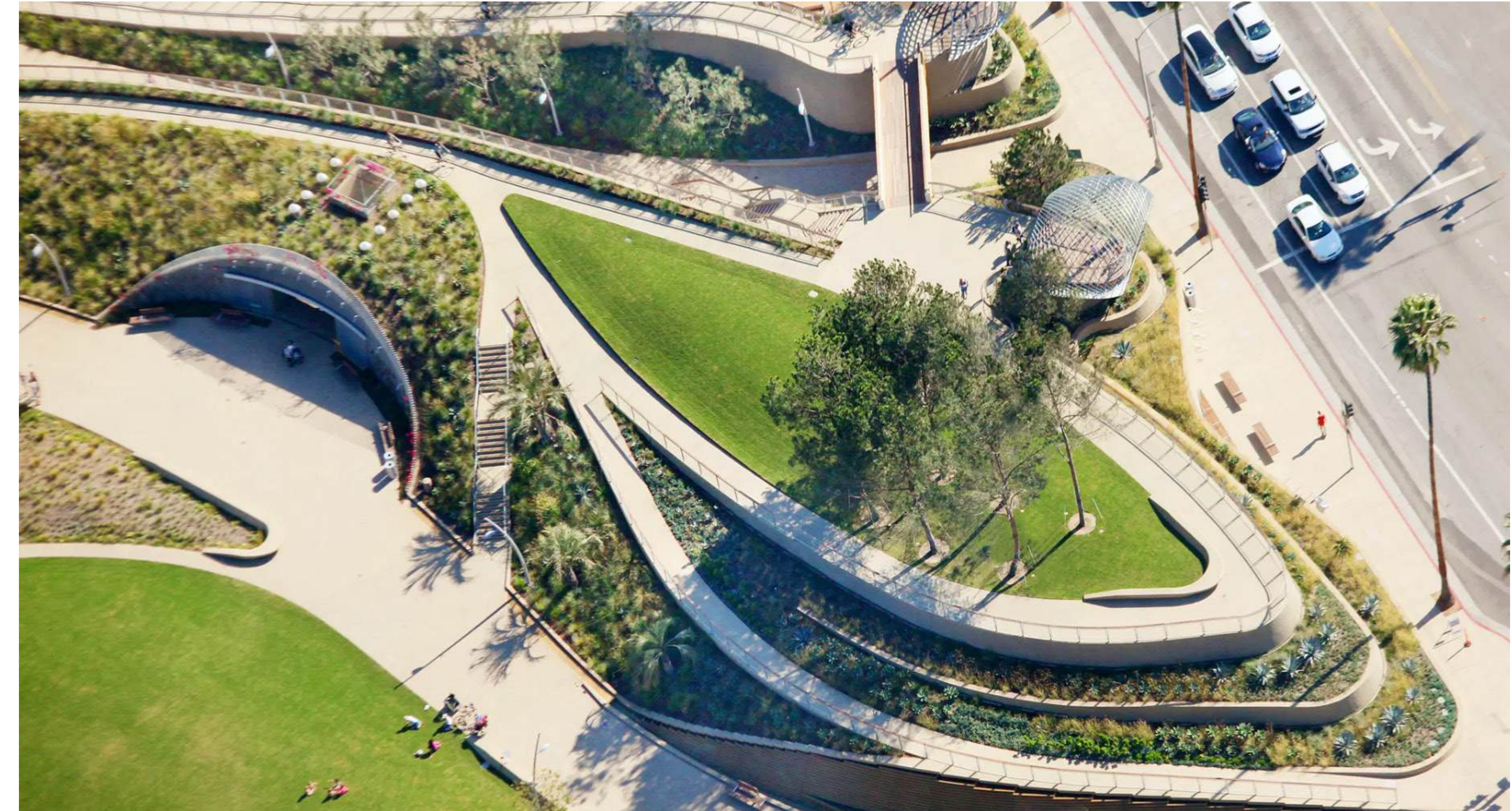


Accessibility/ADA

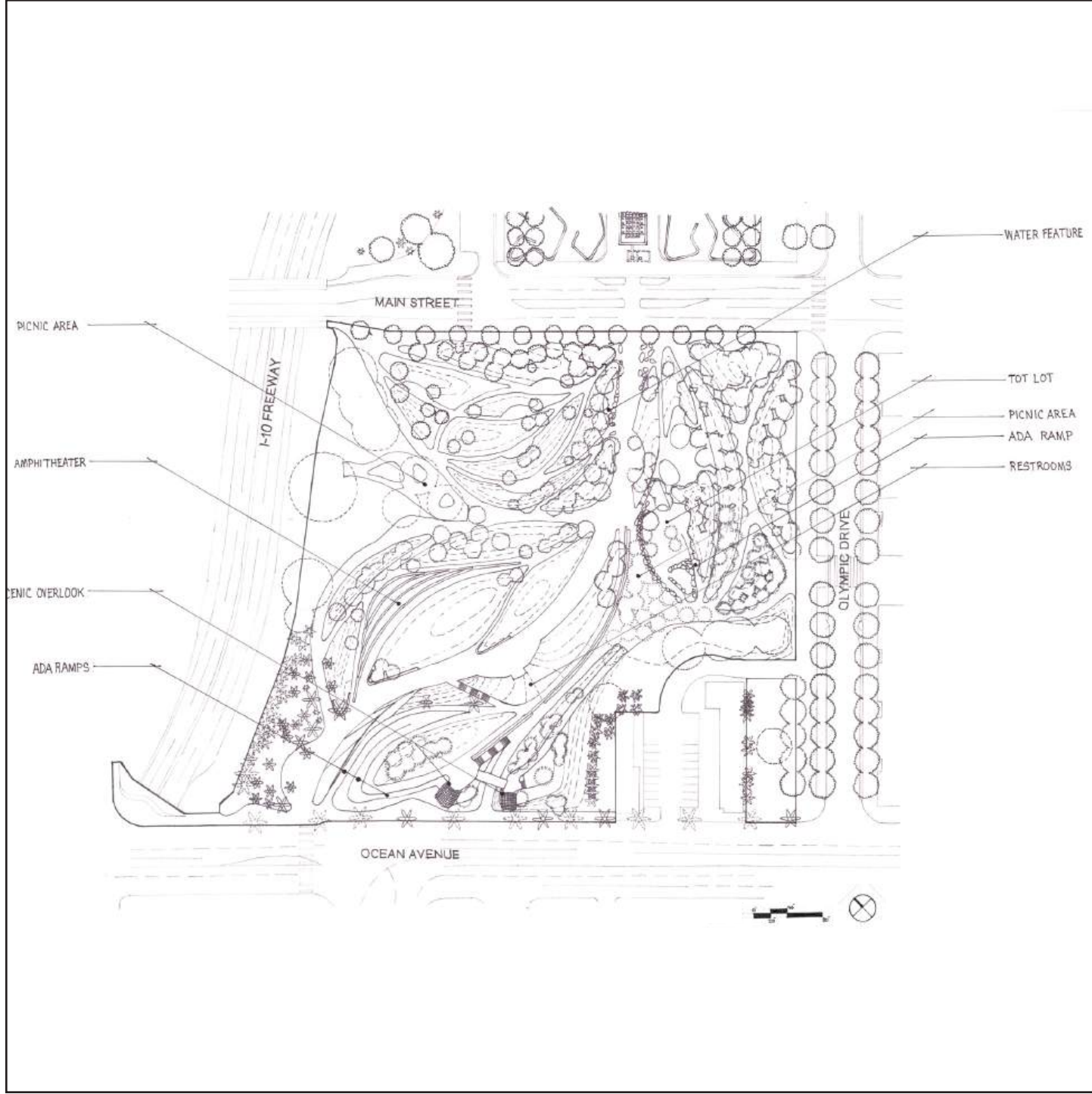


One of the important aspects of design in any location is the allowance for access for people with disabilities. Tongva Park was designed with ADA access in mind through the use of numerous ramped paths rather than strict reliance on stairs. The accessibility map above shows the ADA ramps. The ramps allow those in wheelchairs, walkers, canes, or others to enjoy the observation cages with access provided from either direction. Additionally, there are ADA ramps to provide access to the Tot Lot as well.

Aerial View Showing ADA Ramps



Illustrative Plan—Ink & Colored Pencils



Ink Black and White



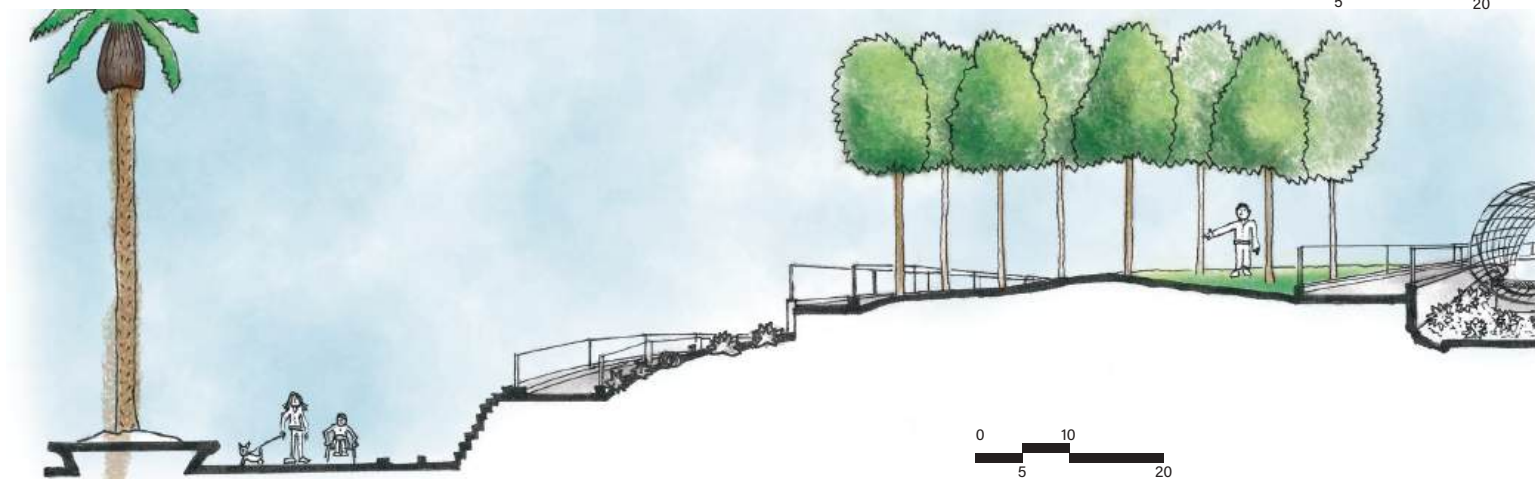
Ink and Colored Pencil

Illustrative Plan—Rendered in Photoshop

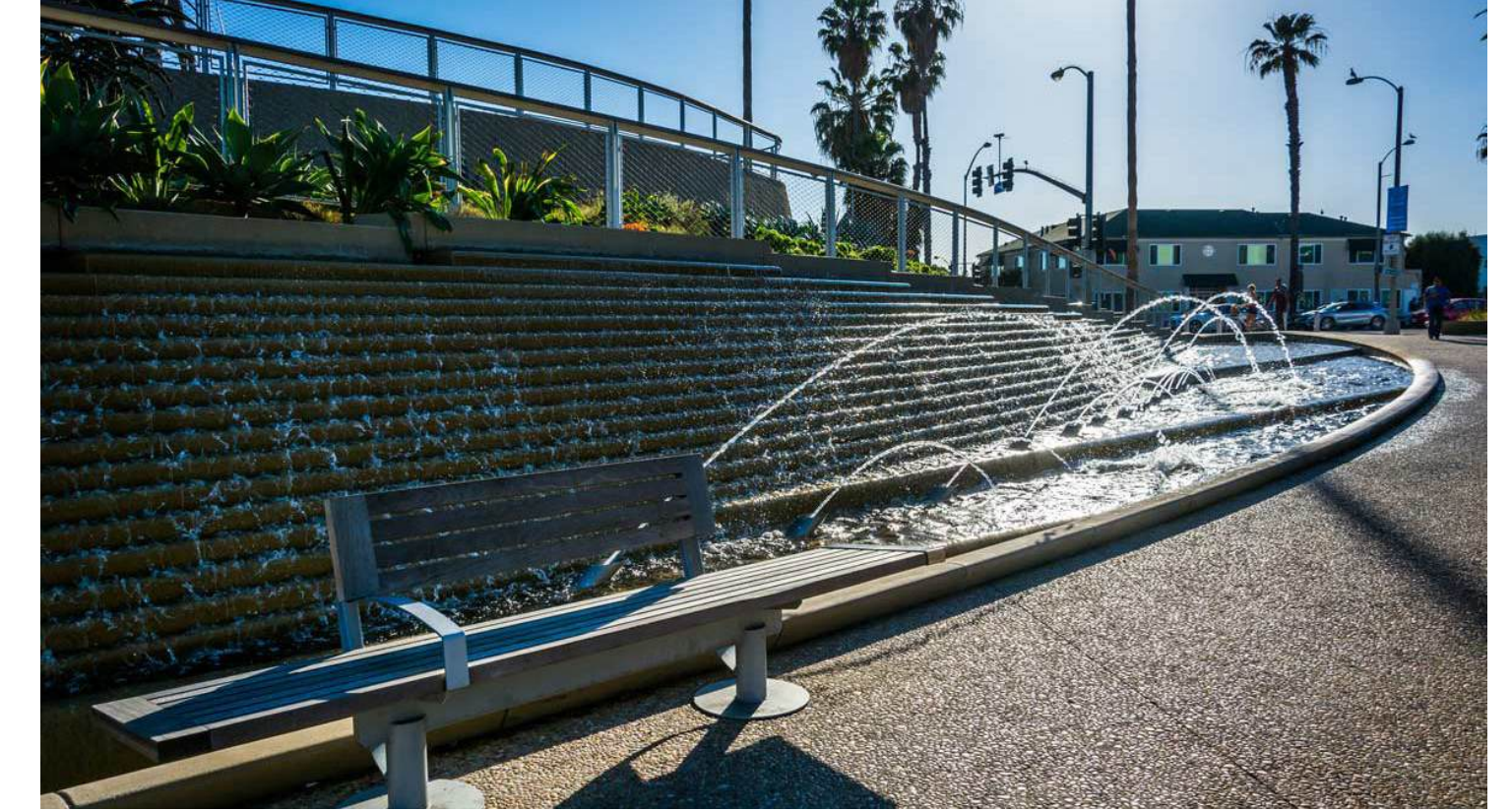
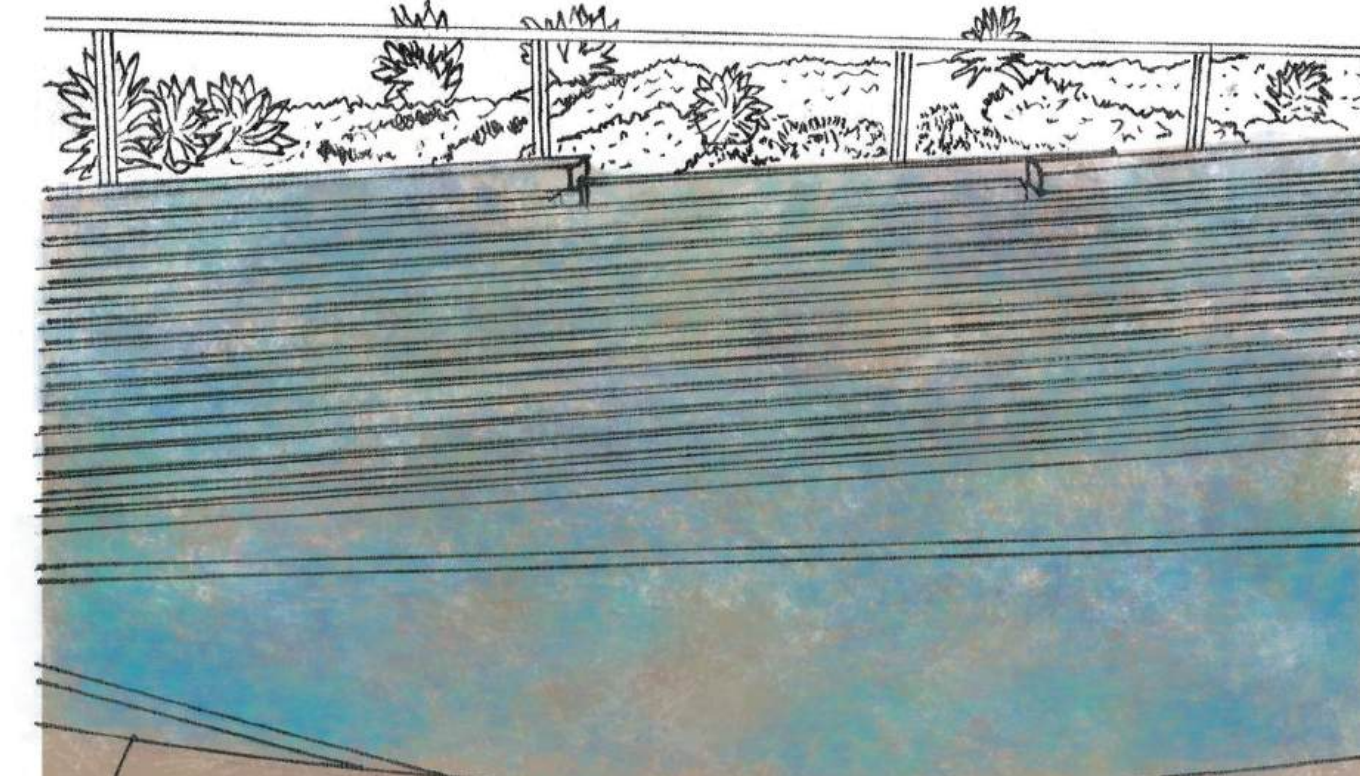


Color Rendered in Photoshop

Enlargement, Section, & Perspective



Perspective & Images



Plantings

Tongva Park exhibits an amazing variety of greenery including trees, grasses, succulents, and flowering plants. Greenlee Associates was hired by James Corner Field Operations as the horticultural expert. At the time of construction, existing trees were protected or transplanted, including one Moreton Bay fig, three Rustyleaf figs, and a number of palms. Then a significant number of new trees and plants were brought in to create the shaded park we enjoy today. There are more than 300 trees from 21 species and more than 30,000 plants from 170 species.

The mix of plants is international with species from Australia, New Zealand, Africa, Mexico, South America, and others. The park contains an unusual combination of grasses and succulents, which give the pathways a soft and interesting look.

The park is split into four separate “hill” sections named Observation, Garden, Discovery, and Gathering Hills. Each of these “hills” is planted with a different mix of trees and plants to add visual interest and different blooming patterns throughout the year.



Moreton Bay Fig

Plantings—Trees



Aleppo Pine



California Bay Sycamore



Cork Oak



Fruitless Olive



Indian Fig



Island Oak



Majesty Palm



Rustyleaf Fig



Senegal Date Palm



Windmill Palm



Umbrella Pine



Western Sycamore

Plantings—Grasses



Atlas Fescue



Berkeley Sedge



Crimson Fountain Grass



Deer Grass



Blue Grama



California Meadow Sedge



Pink Muhly Grass



Slender Veldt Grass

Plantings—Grasses

Plantings—Aloe Succulents



Candleabra Aloe



Century Plant



Firey Bitter Aloe



Foxtail Agave



Mitre Aloe



Short Leaf Aloe

Materials



Cast-in-Place Concrete Benches with Steel Reveal Joints



Visible Aggregate Concrete Walkways

Tongva Park displays a variety of materials and construction methods. For the hardscaping, aggregates came from pits in the nearby San Gabriel Valley where huge deposits of alluvial fan granite have been open-pit mined for cobble, sand, and gravel since the 1920s. The large boulders that border the Main Street entrance and the Tot Lot are called California Gold, a type of decomposed granite. The lower level walkways by the fountain and bathrooms are made of concrete with exposed aggregate. Other pathways throughout the park are made with finished concrete. The exterior Ocean Blvd.-facing retaining walls are made of a rough finish concrete, which support two cocoon cage structures made of steel, with decks made of dense tropical hardwoods to withstand the salt air. Steel railings accompany one or two sides of the inclined walkways and stairs. In the Tot Lot, poured-in-place rubber was used to provide a safe surface for children. Different color schemes were used to provide visual interest. Many cast-in-place concrete seat benches are located throughout the park. They have a curvilinear cross section incorporating stainless steel reveal joints that articulate the curved forms, provide crack control, and visually divide the seating surfaces into smaller architectural panels. The bottom right photo on page 18 shows the construction of the bathroom structure. Spans of concrete like this typically use post-tension concrete, wherein hydraulic jacks are used after drying to tighten cables that were laid in the concrete.

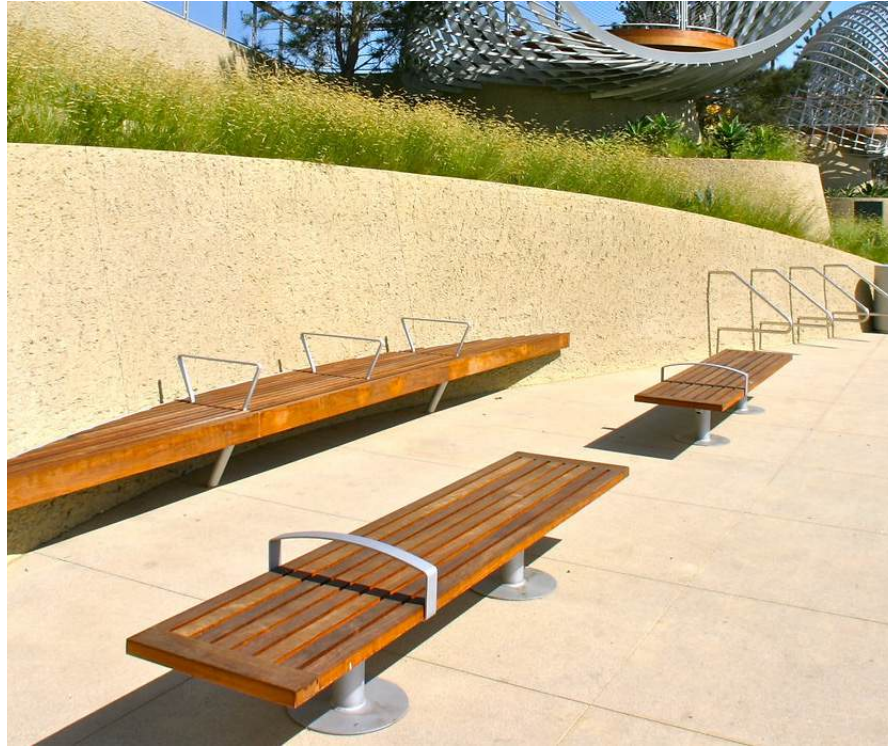
Materials



Fountain with Surrounding Aggregate Concrete



Rough Concrete, Steel Cage, and Wood Platform



Rough Concrete Retaining Wall-Wooden Benches



Tot Lot Poured-In-Place Rubber



California Gold Boulders Set in Concrete



Post-Tension Concrete for Bathroom Structure

Project Summary & Acknowledgements

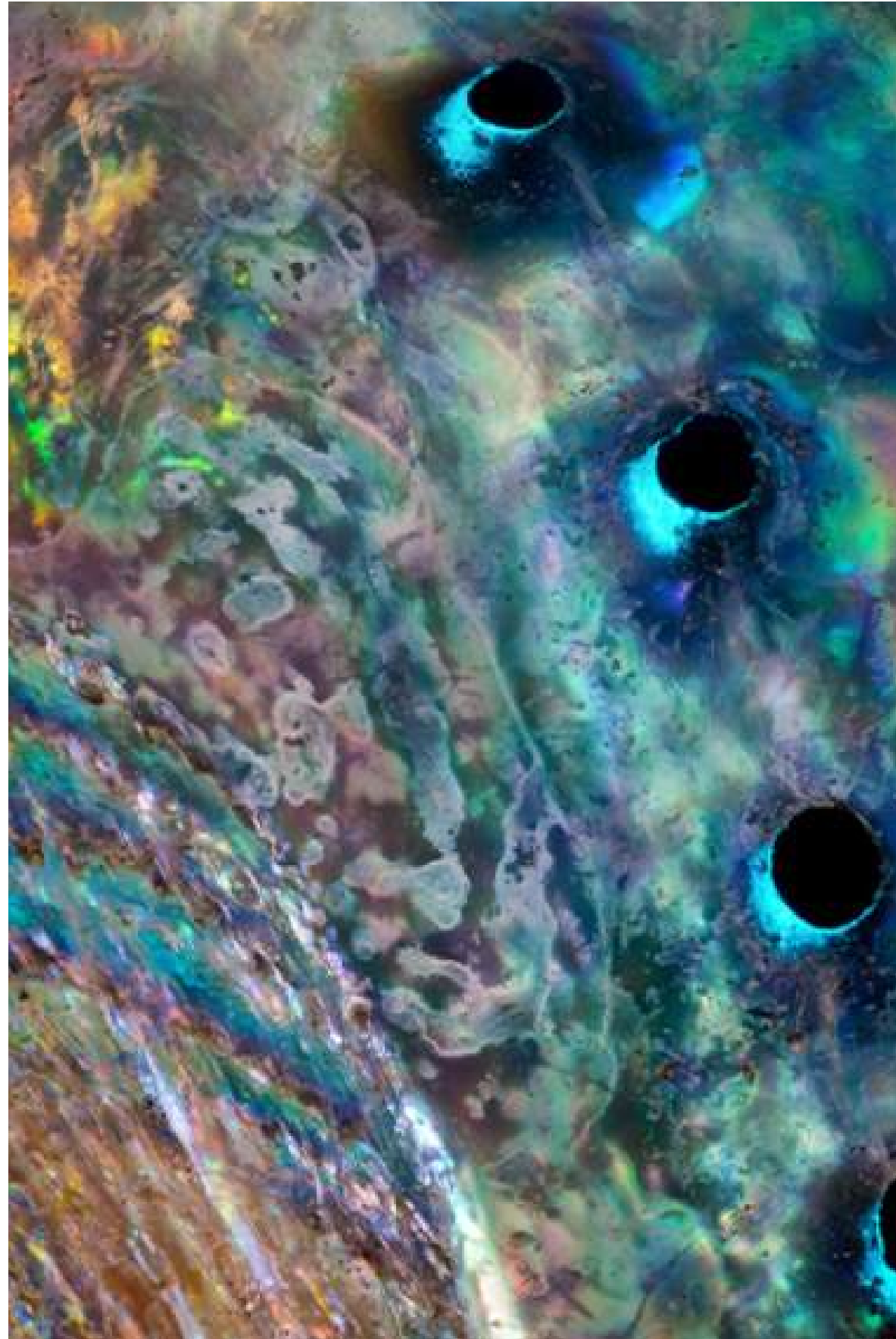
Tongva Park has afforded me the opportunity to learn the basics about landscape architecture through my DG1, DG2, and DG3 classes. This journey has held many challenges: learning to sketch using only a pencil for scaling, dealing with the frustration of site plans with mistaken and inconsistent elevations, managing numerous scanning issues, using math to figure out proper scaling, and learning new computer programs from a textbook where the written commands don't match the software. But through all of this I have improved my skills greatly.

I have a particular appreciation for any and all design that actively incorporates access for people with disabilities. Gardens, parks, promenades, and other public places can be enjoyed by all, but only with the incorporation of ADA requirements. Tongva Park demonstrates how this can be done in a large 6-acre space.

I would like to thank David Squires, Rebecca Schwaner and Laura Razo for their patience and guidance over my first three quarters.

I would like to thank my service animal Brooks for his love and care and my Dad for his belief in me. I want to thank my cohort for their empathy, understanding, and kind support, especially when I have faced challenging moments.





References & Photo Credits

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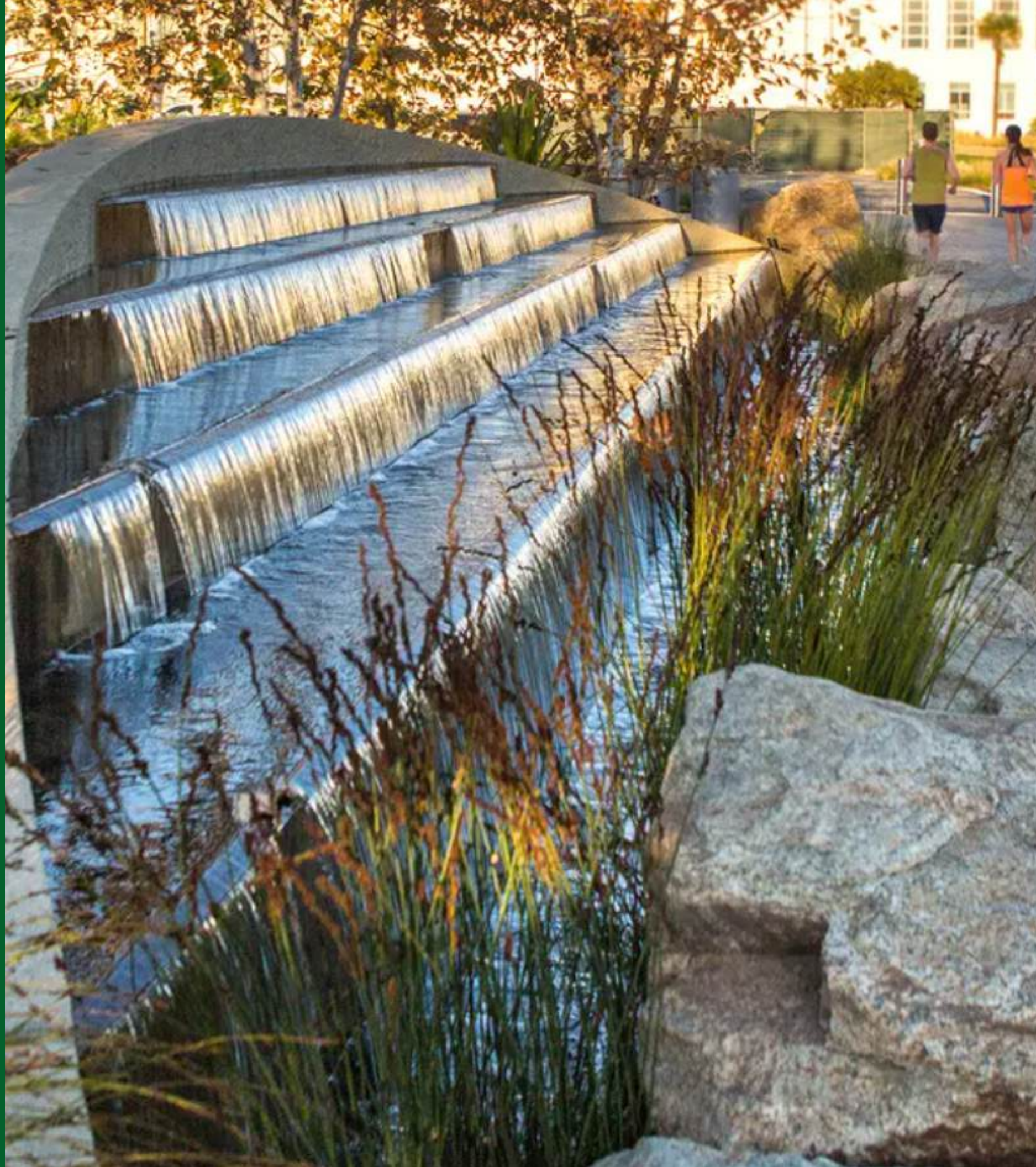
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