

An architectural rendering of Tongva Park at dusk. The scene features a modern, curved walkway with a metal railing and glass panels, leading up a hill. The walkway is illuminated by warm, golden light. In the foreground, there is a paved area with a curved, low wall. The background shows a large, leafy tree and a building with a curved, metallic facade. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting sunset or sunrise.

**DESIGN GRAPHICS 3
SPRING 2025**

TONGVA PARK

**DESIGNER – REED HEISLEY-SHELLABY
INSTRUCTOR – LAURA RAZO**



“We tried to make
a new center, a new
nucleus that ties
everything together, and
eliminates the black hole
created by the parking lot.

At the same time, we wanted to
create a set of experiences
that is very different
than what you
would get at the
beach.”

- James Corner
Field Operations
Tongva Park Landscape Architect

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INTRODUCTION

This book covers my development as a landscape designer and visual communicator throughout the Design Graphics (DG) course series at UCLA Extension's Landscape Architecture Program. During all three DG classes, students studied Tongva Park in Santa Monica, CA as an example of how a designer communicates ideas in drawings and illustrations.

This program has allowed me to develop my existing skills and challenged me to acquire new ones and to conceptualize landscapes in a deeper and more complicated way. I came into the program with a foundation in visual arts, with both traditional media and digital painting. I found making drawings and illustrations enjoyable, but learned that I needed to monitor how much time I spent on each piece, lest I let too much time slip by while fussing around with the details. The landscape architect's aim in drawings is to visually communicate important information with varying degrees of clarity, accuracy, and emotional interest, depending upon the type of drawing. Being able to execute a drawing that meets these objectives by the deadline is a crucial that I am in the process of developing.

In DG 1 we began to look at the park, with each student focusing on one quadrant of the park. This was our first foray into reading architectural plans, drawing at scale, using a hierarchy of different line weights, and drawing using one- and two-point perspective. The class equipped us with a general toolkit for communicating 3D space on a 2D page.

In DG 2 we developed the skills from the previous class, but also put ourselves in the shoes of a designer as they think about the intended uses and features needed for a particular space. We familiarized ourselves with the park as a whole through in-person observation and studying the various systems that determined the park's features. We looked at the local context of the park to understand who the potential park visitors were, what their needs and expectations were for the space, and how they might access the space. Finally, we started to use color in our drawings to communicate ideas and engage the viewer's emotions.

DG 3 was the most technical and structured of the three classes, and demonstrated how we could transform hand graphics from our previous coursework into vivid illustrations. We learned how to use the Adobe suite of programs to enhance and manipulate photos and drawings into a finished package that could be delivered to a client.

Throughout the Design Graphics series, I learned the particular techniques that landscape architects use in their professional pipeline, and the conceptual framework that they use to analyze the space and inform their design choices. I also created a body of work that I am proud of and enjoy sharing with family and friends.

TONGVA PARK

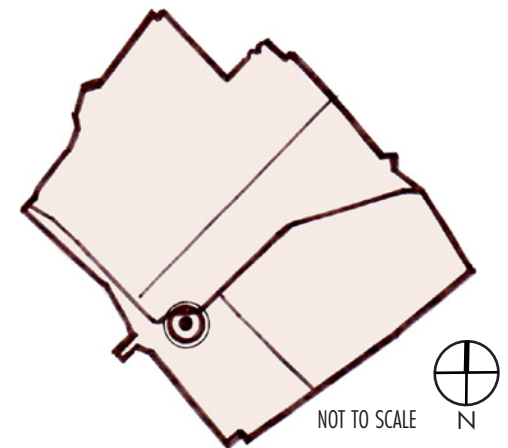
SITE HISTORY, CONTEXT, AND LOCATION

The city of Santa Monica, California hired renowned landscape architect James Corner of Field Operations to redesign an under-utilized plot of land between City Hall and the Santa Monica Pier into a central park for the city. The site that would be Tongva Park was a large parking lot for the RAND Corporation that lacked significant landscaping. The city acquired the land from the think tank in 1999, but it remained a parking lot that fragmented rather than connected parts of Downtown Santa Monica. The Santa Monica Freeway portion of Interstate Route 10 was completed in 1965. It bisects Downtown Santa Monica and creates a boundary with the site and City Hall to the south of the freeway and the main retail hub to the north. The freeway merges with California 1, Pacific Coast Highway (PCH), and terminates as it feeds into PCH where it makes a northward bend up the coast. There are few residential buildings in the area, so much of the foot traffic comes from visitors to other attractions such as the Santa Monica Pier, nearby hotels, and shopping centers, as well as Santa Monica municipal staff. Unhoused people have long resided in the coastal portion of Los Angeles County's Westside. The park has provided them with areas to rest, gather, and socialize relatively free from scrutiny and harassment by local authorities.

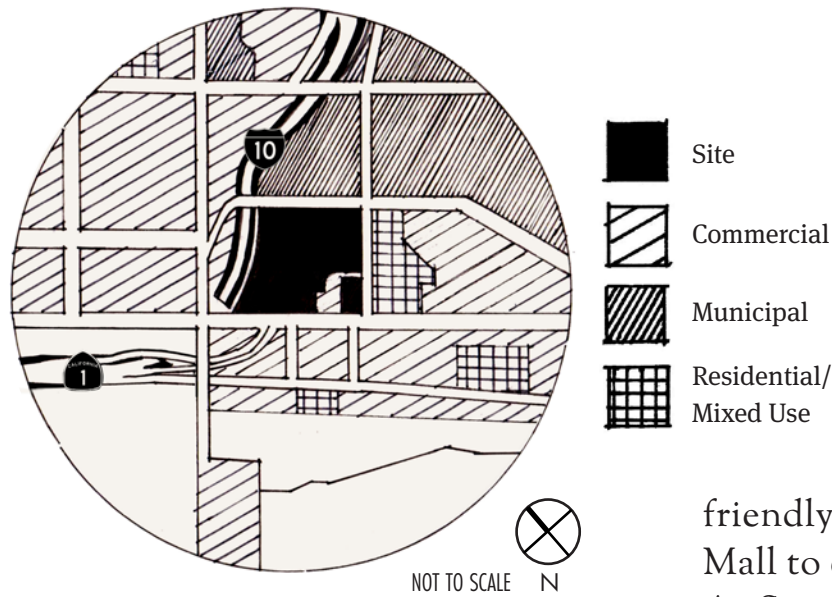
Downtown Santa Monica has undergone multiple waves of redevelopment since World War 2, starting with the creation of the



Santa Monica City Hall upon completion in 1939



Site location within Santa Monica, California



Santa Monica Mall in 1965, a pedestrian-only strip on the commercial hub of 3rd Street. The effort failed to arrest the decline of the district's commercial economy, so in 1980, the city approved the development of the lot on Broadway and 3rd into Santa Monica Place, an indoor shopping mall. Santa Monica Place contained larger retailers with a dining court, and directed foot traffic towards 3rd Street. Despite this redevelopment, businesses on 3rd Street continued to shutter. The city

decided to commit to keeping 3rd Street a pedestrian-friendly commercial corridor, and in 1989 redeveloped Santa Monica Mall to entice visitors, rechristening it the Santa Monica Promenade. As Santa Monica Place went into a period of decline, in 2010 the city redeveloped it as an open air shopping center with a variety of dining options, similar to the Grove in Los Angeles. The new design sought to attract tourists staying at nearby luxury hotels, and accordingly catered to the tastes of wealthy patrons from around the world. Located just on the other side of the 10 Freeway, from the commercial district, Tongva Park is adjacent to recent mixed-use housing development, City Hall, and a commercial strip on Ocean Avenue, home to Santa Monica's main luxury hotels. Chez Jay, a historic bar with outdoor seating, and a small motel are nestled into the southern tip of Tongva Park's block.



The previous Rand Corporation Building 1965

A pleasant destination in its own right, the park connects the community and visitors to City Hall and the Pier. The park's main axis of circulation serves as a pedestrian path that flows from City Hall to the Santa Monica Pier and the beach. Elevated overlook structures on the park's western hill provide sweeping views of

the Santa Monica Bay and the Santa Monica Pier. Public bathrooms are located under the hill, with an attendant present to maintain cleanliness and greet visitors. The park has multiple areas with tables and seating to accommodate family events or individual guests. The turf lawn area in the center provides flexible space for gatherings or performances. It is supplemented with amphitheater-like seating that extends the flexible-use space. The converging and diverging pathways through much of the park provide contemplative spaces to wander, with ample canopy to shield visitors from excessive sun and noise. Benches and seats are dispersed throughout the park where visitors can enjoy a moment of quiet repose. The park boasts hundreds of trees, including natives such as the Pacific madrone and Western sycamore, as well as exotic species such as the immense Moreton Bay fig and olive trees. Ornamental shrubs, wildflowers, and grasses fill the arching mounds brimming with vegetation that border pedestrian walkways. Planted in groups, various planting mixes provide flowering in seasonal succession so the planters have vibrant color and habitat for pollinators throughout much of the year.

Tongva Park was completed in 2013. The park has won multiple awards, including the American Society of Landscape Architects Honor Award in 2018 and the Chicago Athenaeum American Architectural Award in 2016.



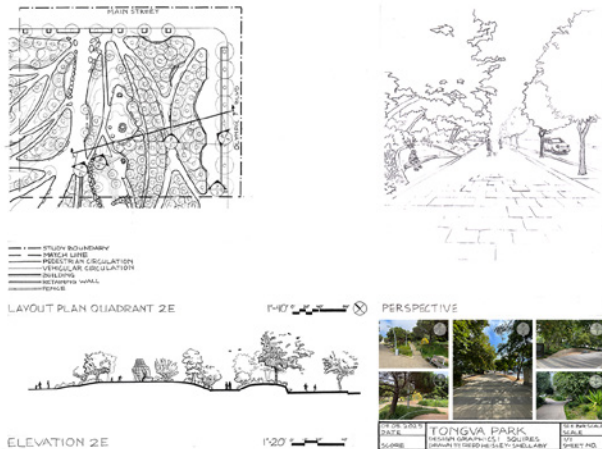
The municipal parking lot in 2010



Current view of Tongva Park

DESIGN GRAPHICS COURSE SERIES

Design Graphics 1



Instructor: David Squires
Principal Planner and Designer -
Aroundyou, Inc.

Medium:
Pencil on vellum

Skills Developed:

- line weight and hierarchy
- one- and two-point perspective
- lettering
- scale

Design Graphics 2



Instructor Rebecca Schwaner
Project Designer and Associate at Studio -
MLA

Medium:
Ink and marker on tracing paper

Skills Developed:

- line weight and hierarchy
- one- and two-point perspective
- color rendering
- site inventory and analysis

Design Graphics 3



Instructor: Laura Razo
Senior Environmental Design &
Compliance Associate - Sapphos

Medium:
Photoshop and InDesign

Skills Developed:

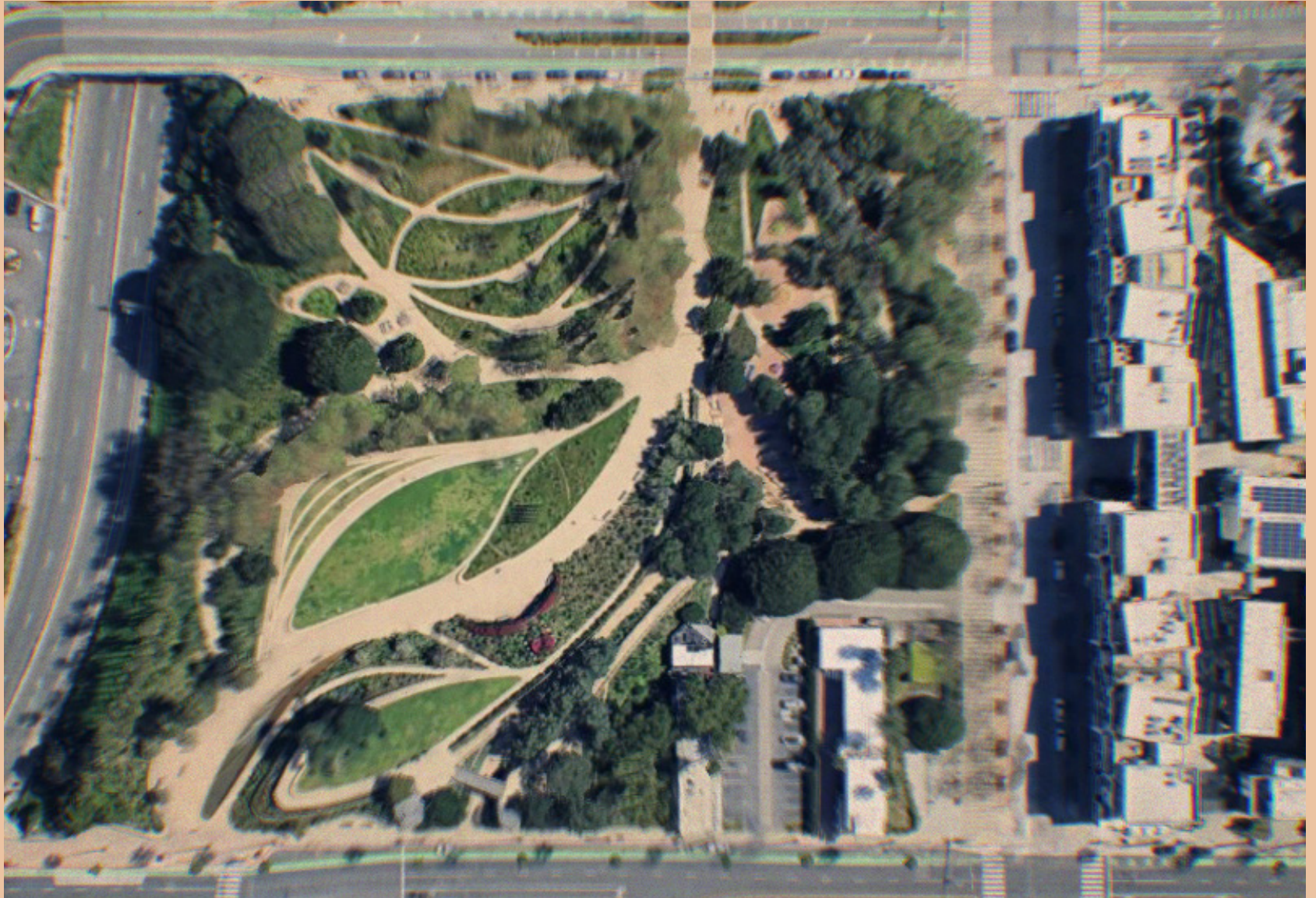
- publishing in InDesign
- image manipulation in Photoshop
- digital color rendering

INSPIRATION IMAGES

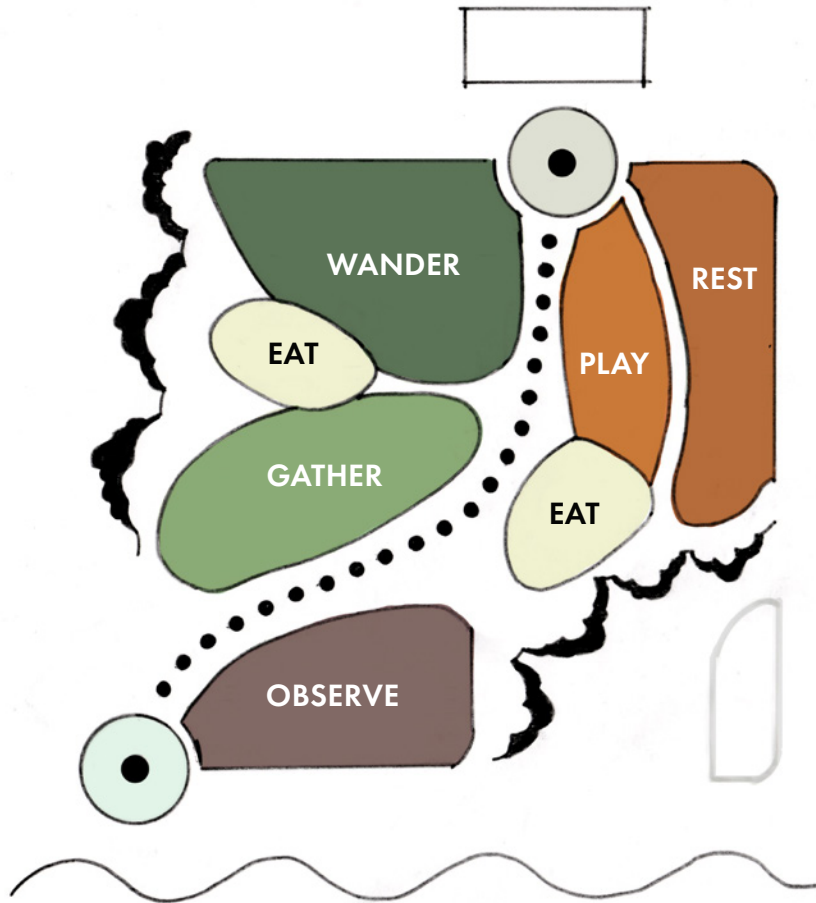




ANALYSIS MAPS AND CONCEPT DIAGRAM

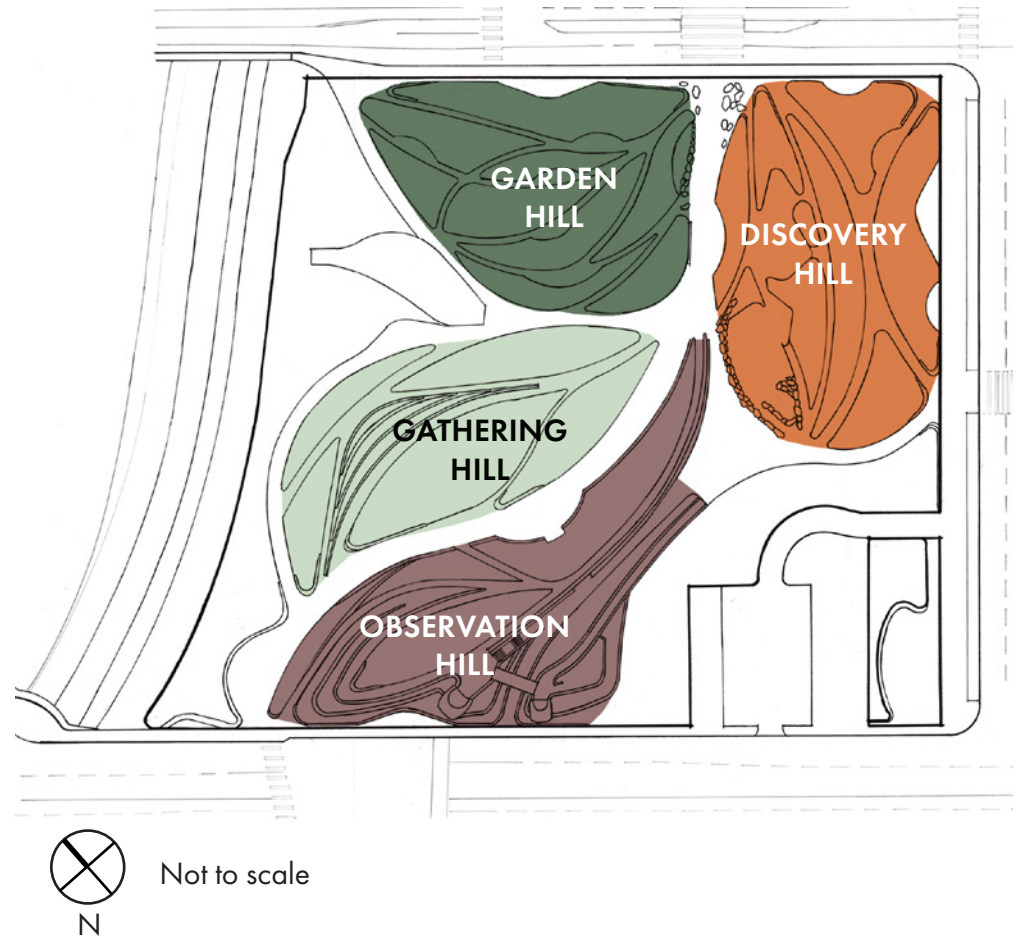


CONCEPT DIAGRAM



The concept diagram was a useful tool for students to put themselves in the shoes of James Corner when he was designing the park. Each space in the park has different uses. I divided the park into spaces based on what activity the design appeared to encourage.

THE FOUR HILLS OF TONGVA PARK

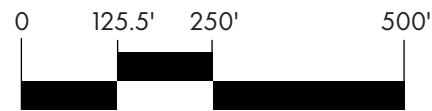
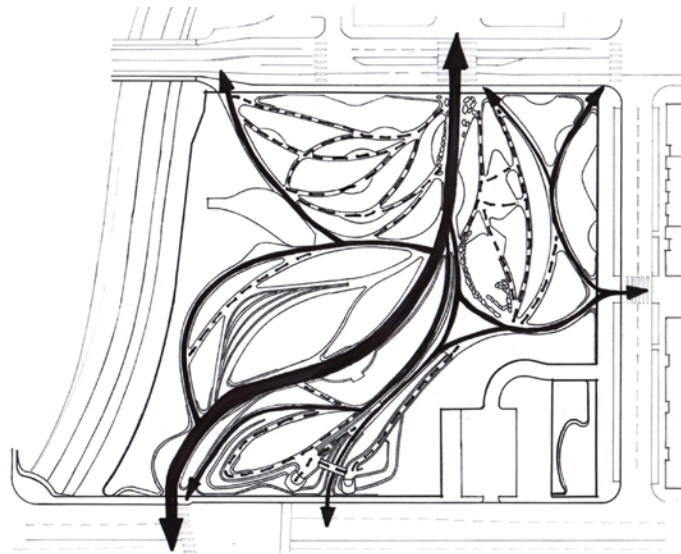


Upon visiting the park, I found that the four main hills of the park had already been named by Corner. I was happy to find that the labels had confirmed much of my interpretation of his intentions.

ANALYSIS MAPS

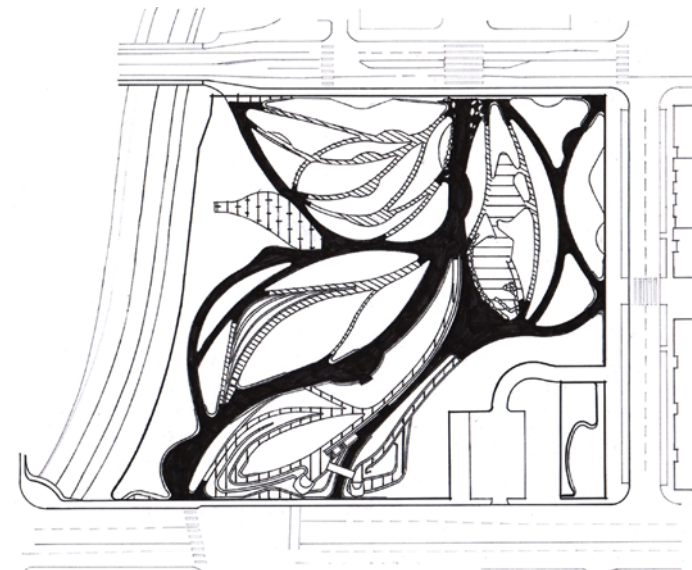
PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION

PAVING



SCALE: 1"=250'

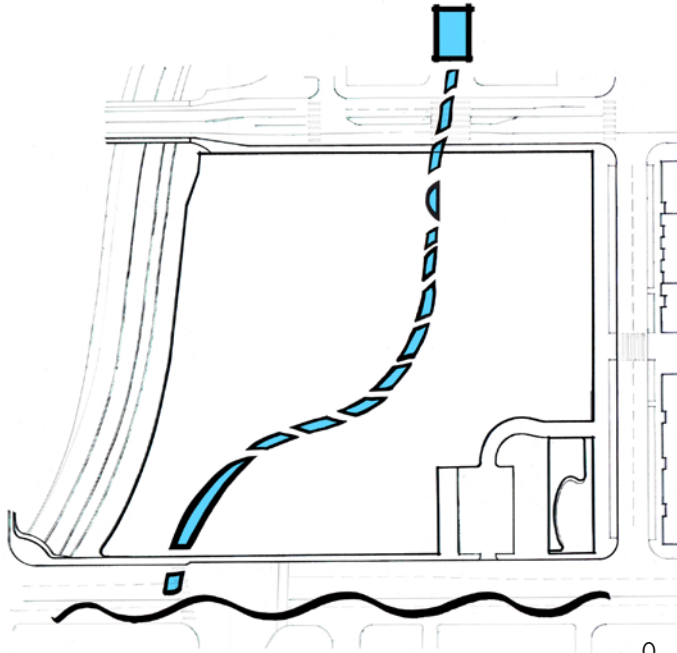
-  Primary Pedestrian Circulation
-  Secondary Pedestrian Circulation
-  Tertiary Pedestrian Circulation



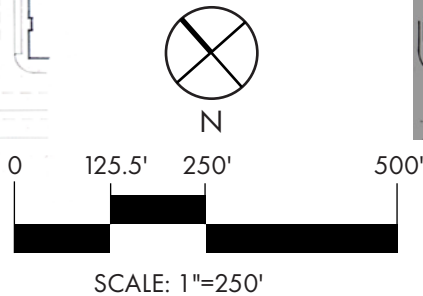
-  Large Aggregate
-  Small Aggregate
-  Decomposed Granite
-  Fall Zone
-  Concrete

ANALYSIS MAPS

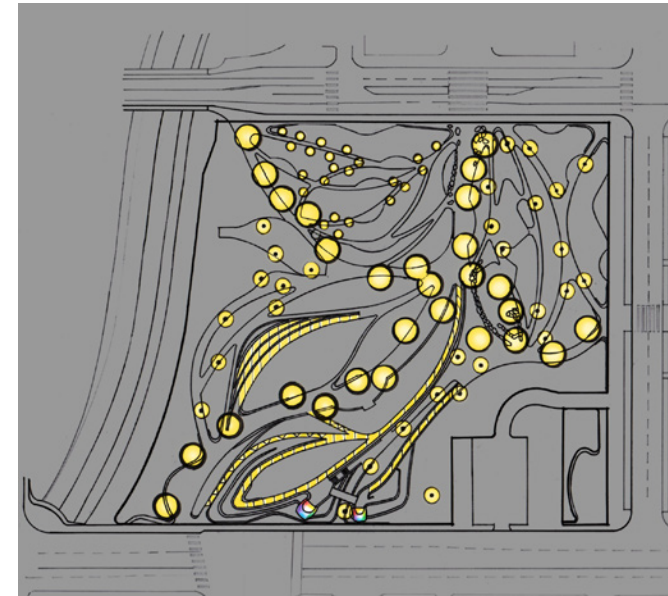
WATER FEATURES



-  City Hall fountain
-  Waterfall fountain
-  Observation Hill fountain
-  Implied water connection
-  Direction of Santa Monica Bay



LIGHTING



-  Fluorescent bollard
-  60W pole-mounted area light
-  90W pole-mounted area light
-  Color changing LED ingrade uplights
-  Wall-recessed steplights
-  Ground-recessed steplights

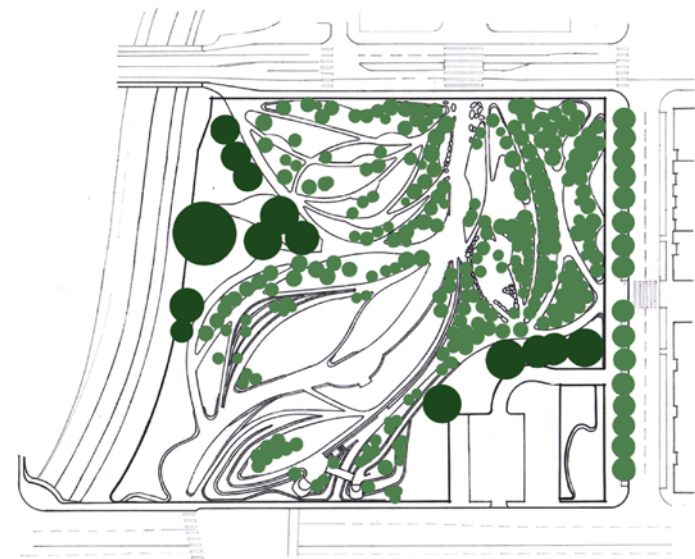
ANALYSIS MAPS

PLANTING

TREE CANOPY



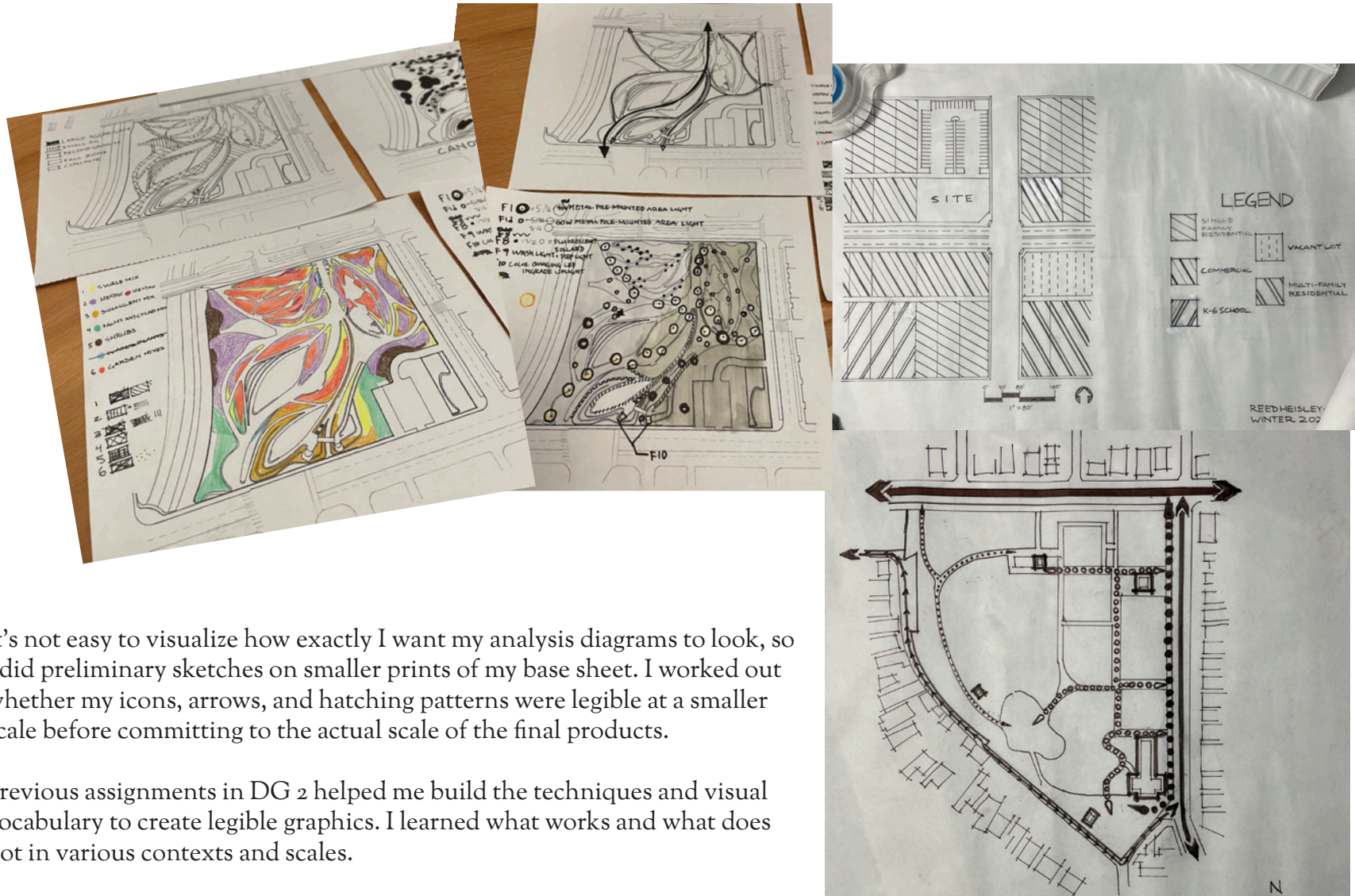
- Swale mix
- Meadow mixes
- Succulent mix
- Palms and cycad mix
- Shrubs
- Garden mixes



- Existing tree
- Proposed tree

ANALYSIS MAPS

PRELIMINARY DRAWINGS



It's not easy to visualize how exactly I want my analysis diagrams to look, so I did preliminary sketches on smaller prints of my base sheet. I worked out whether my icons, arrows, and hatching patterns were legible at a smaller scale before committing to the actual scale of the final products.

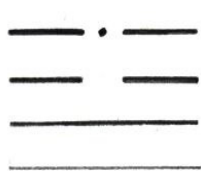
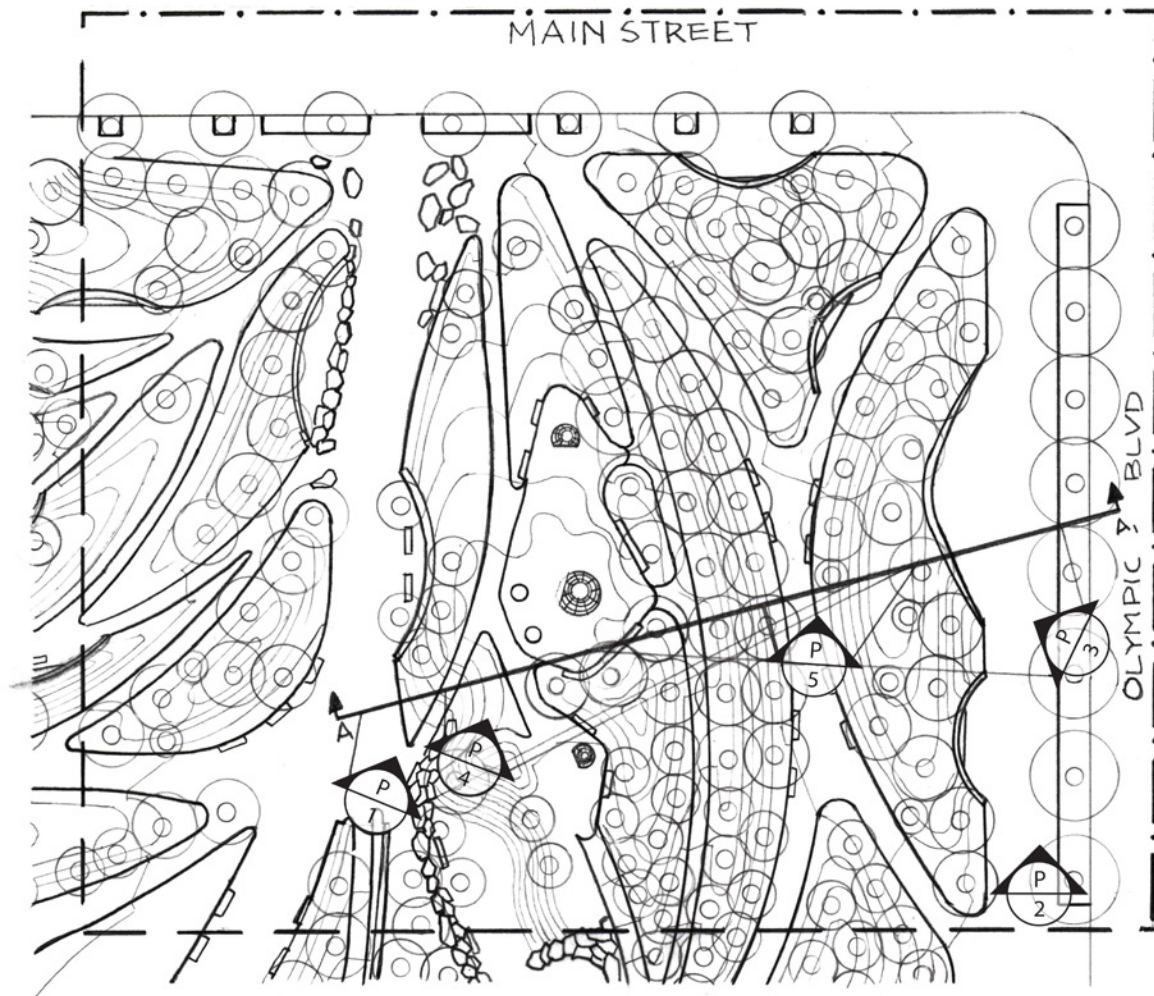
Previous assignments in DG 2 helped me build the techniques and visual vocabulary to create legible graphics. I learned what works and what does not in various contexts and scales.

SITE AND ILLUSTRATIVE PLANS



DESIGN GRAPHICS 1

SOUTHEAST QUADRANT

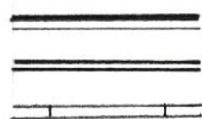


Study boundary

Match line

Pedestrian circulation

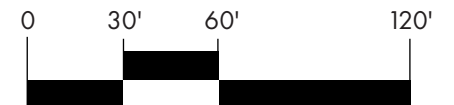
Vehicular circulation



Building (not used)

Retaining wall

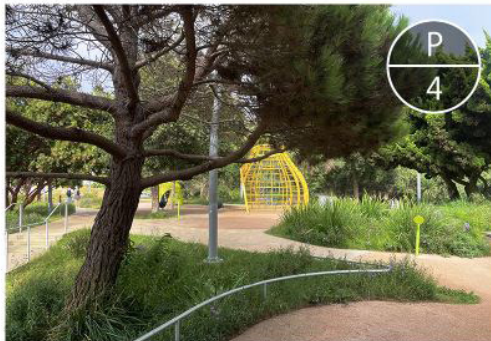
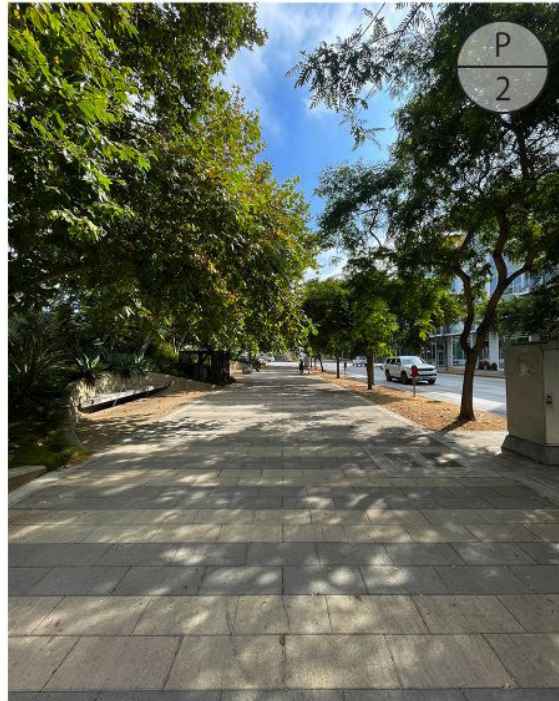
Fence (not used)



SCALE: 1" = 60'

DESIGN GRAPHICS 1

PHOTO GALLERY



DESIGN GRAPHICS 2

BLACK INK SITE PLAN



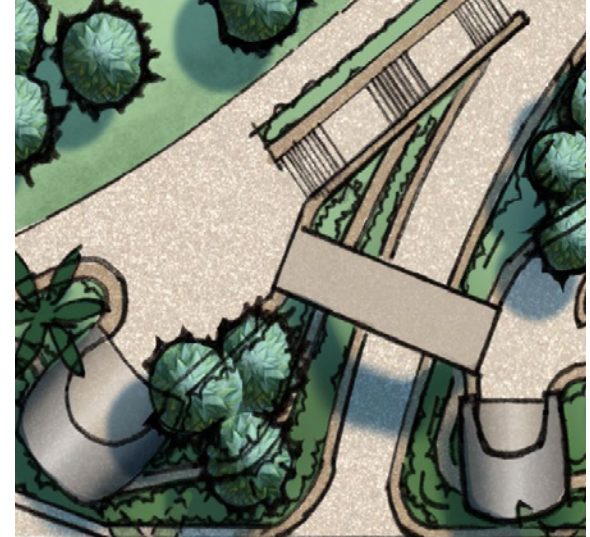
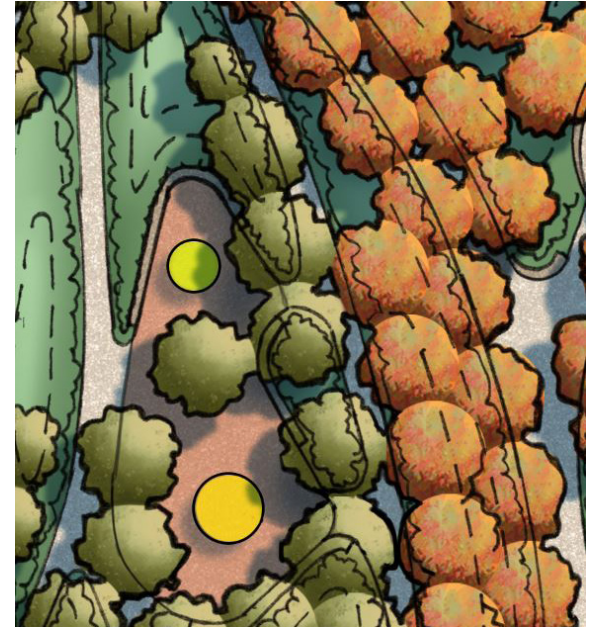
DESIGN GRAPHICS 2

HAND-COLORED ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN



DESIGN GRAPHICS 3

DIGITALLY COLORED ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN CLOSE-UPS



DESIGN GRAPHICS 3

DIGITALLY COLORED ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN



SCALE: 1" = 120'



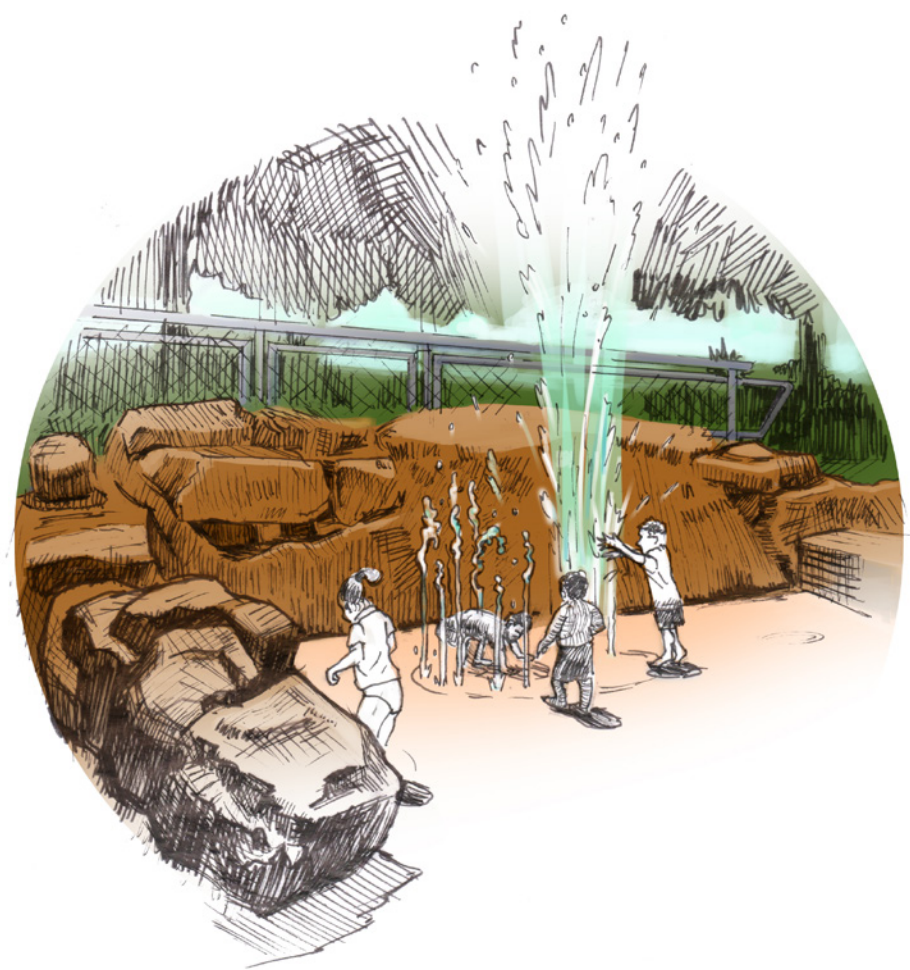
PERSPECTIVE DRAWINGS



PERSPECTIVE DRAWINGS

DESIGN GRAPHICS 1

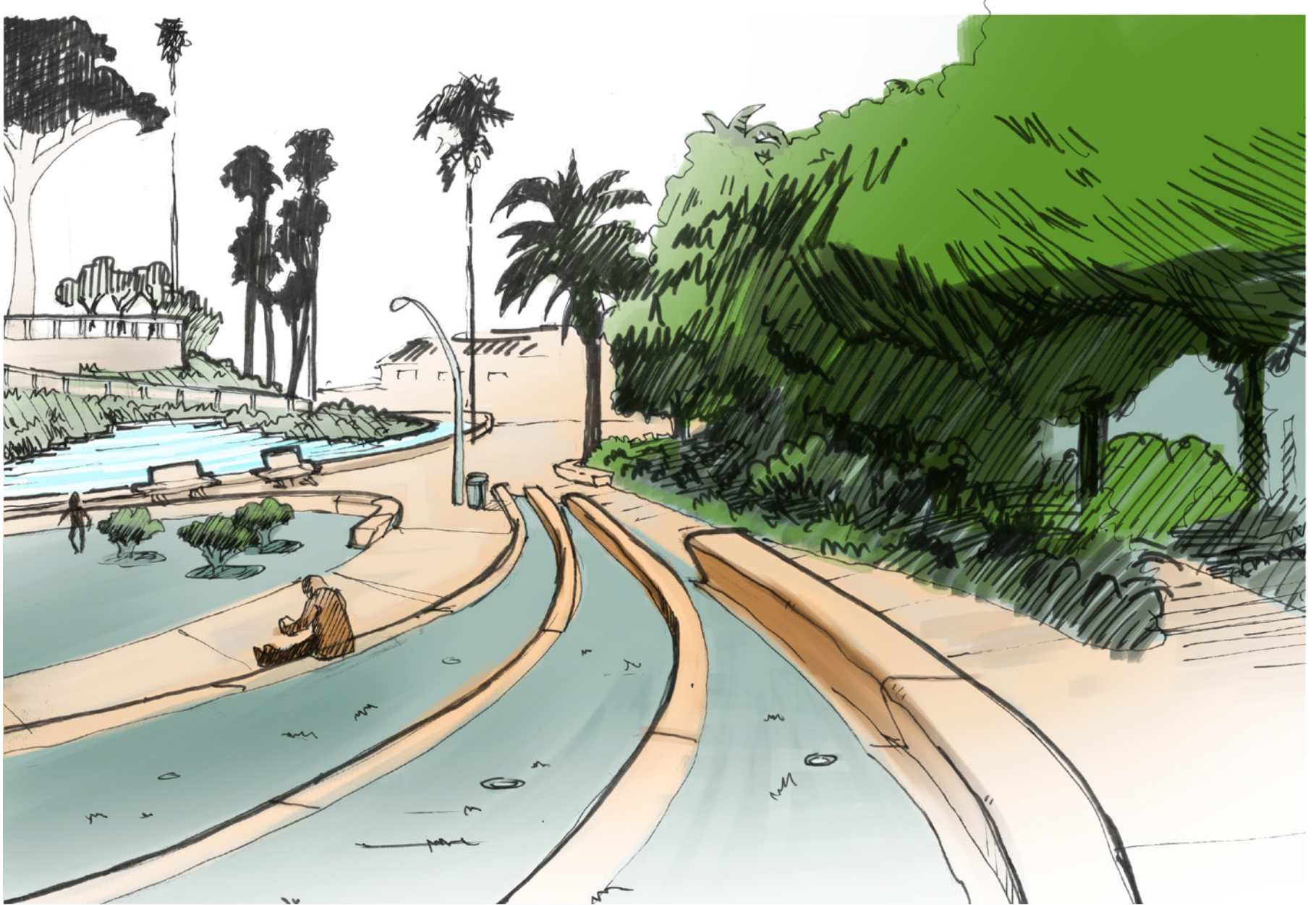
DESIGN GRAPHICS 2 & 3



My perspective drawings for DG 2 were in pen and ink. The colored versions of my drawings shown here were all scanned and colored digitally in DG 3.

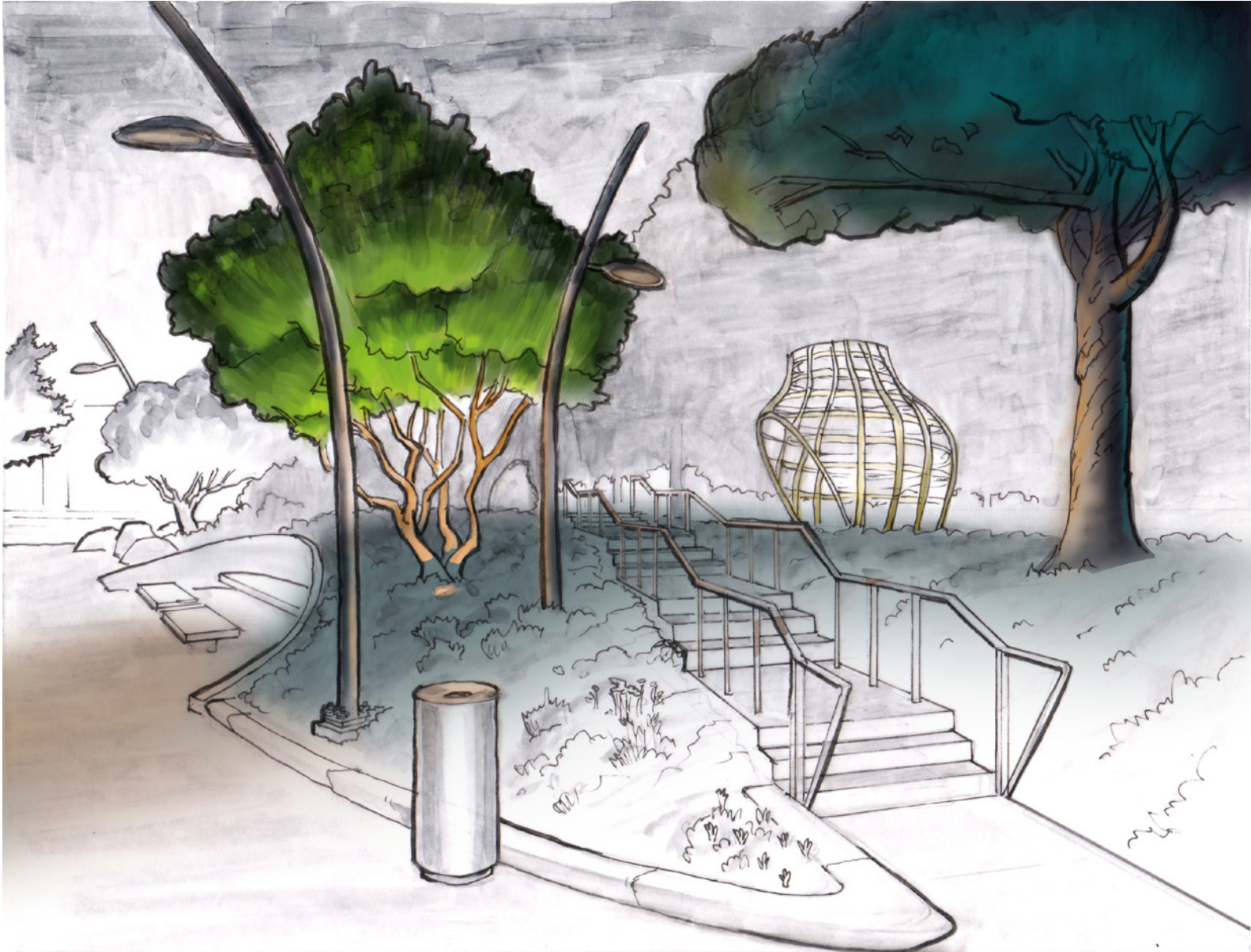
PERSPECTIVE DRAWINGS

DESIGN GRAPHICS 2 & 3



PERSPECTIVE DRAWINGS

DESIGN GRAPHICS 2 & 3

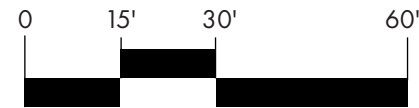


SECTION/ELEVATIONS

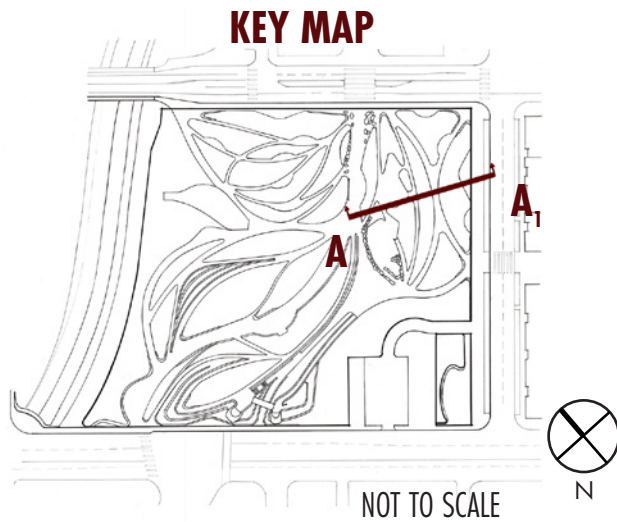


SECTION/ELEVATIONS

DESIGN GRAPHICS 1



SCALE: 1" = 30'

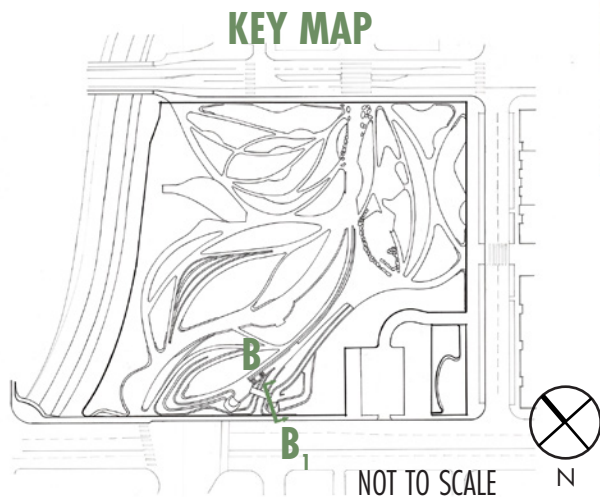


Section/elevations allow the viewer to get an idea of what a design would look like at a glance. Adding entourage (people, animals, vehicles) make the drawings come alive and can tell the viewer what kind of activities the designer intends for various spaces.

SECTION/ELEVATIONS

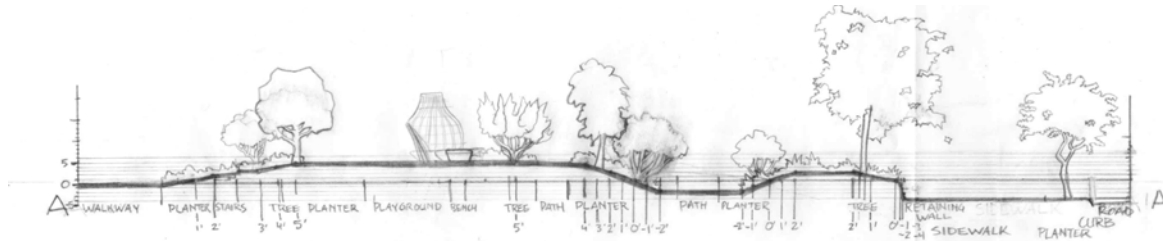
DESIGN GRAPHICS 2 & 3

Illustrating the sky can demonstrate different times of day and how the feeling of a space can change dramatically. I opted for sunset to take advantage of the spectacular beach views from one of the outlooks on Observation Hill. I included people of various ages to show that the park offers something for all ages, and is accessible for people of differing levels of physical ability.

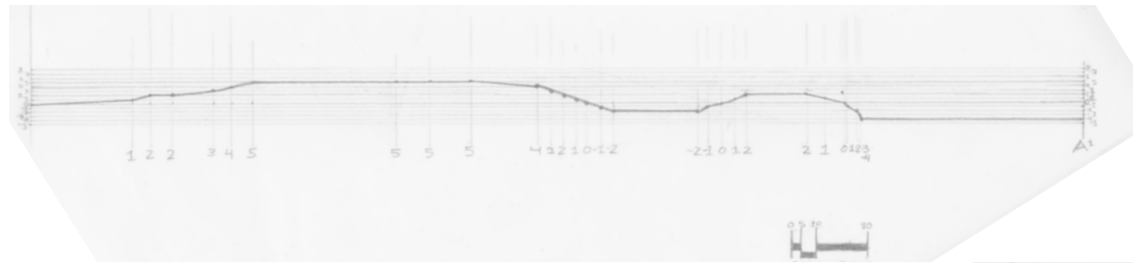


SECTION/ELEVATIONS STUDIES

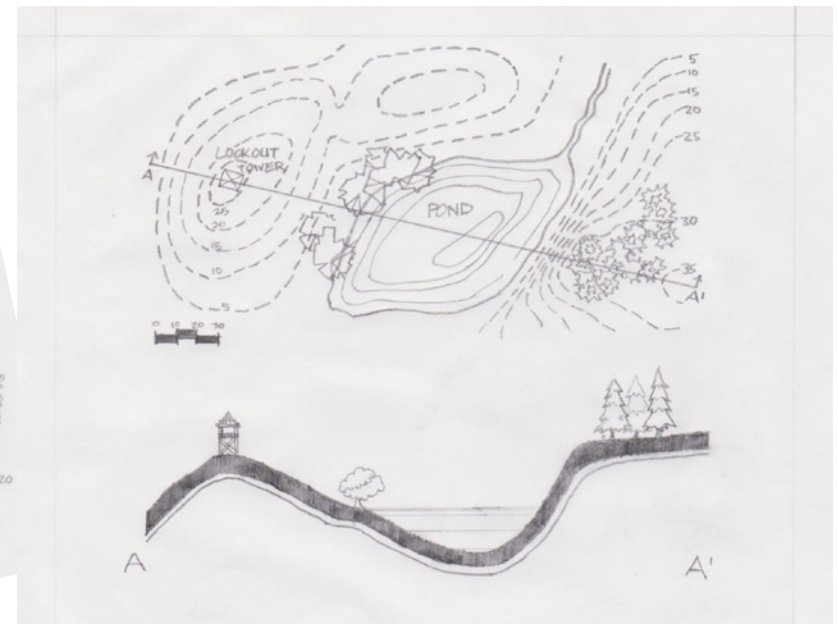
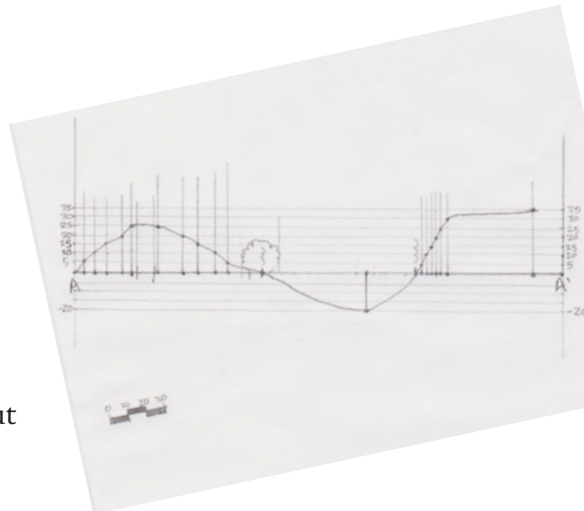
DESIGN GRAPHICS 1



In DG 1 we practiced drawing trees at scale continually throughout the class, which allowed us to have a good idea of the dimensions of a tree when estimating their scale on a section/elevation and other supporting drawings.



Section/Elevation drawings require accurate measuring of elevations from plans and plotting points on a Cartesian plane. We had to carefully lay out a grid on our paper, record the elevation from plan view, and plot the points accordingly on our plane. In DG 1 we practiced these tasks until creating a section/elevation could be done without the need for direction.



ENLARGEMENTS



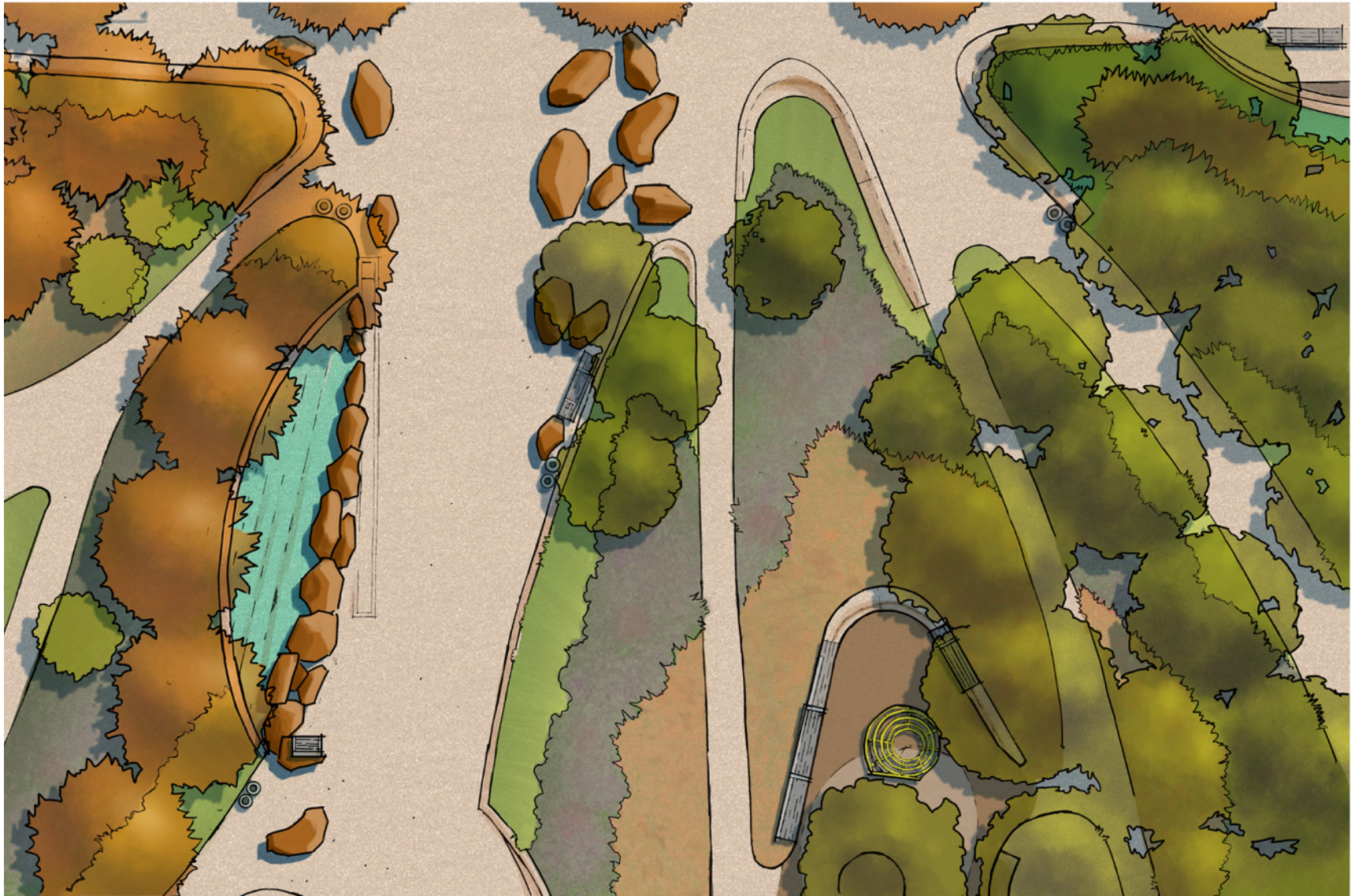
ENLARGEMENTS

DESIGN GRAPHICS 2



ENLARGEMENTS

DESIGN GRAPHICS 2 & 3



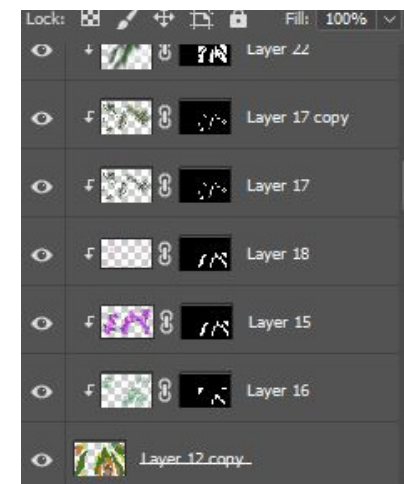
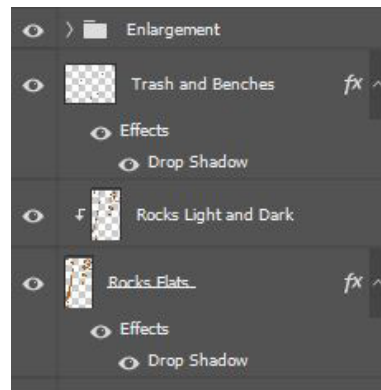
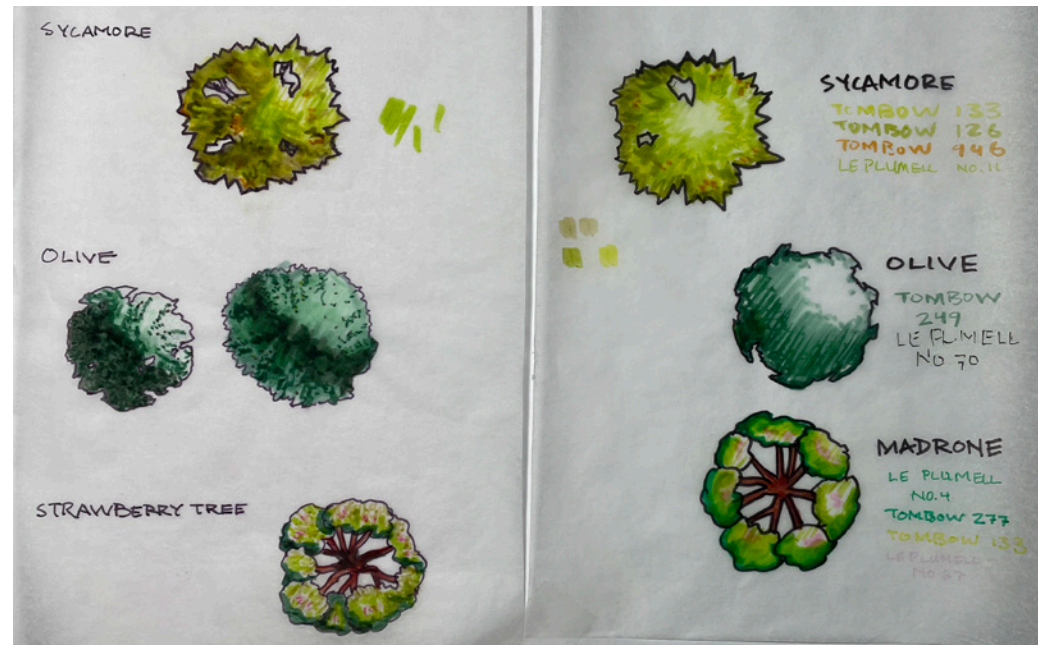
SCALE: 1" = 12'

ENLARGEMENTS PROCESS

Similar to the analysis diagrams, enlargements require some planning. In DG 2 I wanted to make sure I could draw the various types of trees using a standard, simplified graphics. My first drawings were too complex, so I simplified the style of each tree type to make them easily repeatable and sufficiently distinct from the others.

On the DG 2 enlargement, I spent entirely too much time rendering details in the mounds and boulders. Although it was enjoyable and communicated depth, I learned that one can easily get lost in rendering and revising with colored pencils. Adding more detail turned out to be a mistake. First, the legibility suffered because of the sheer amount of visual noise, causing me to revise one of my tree icons. Second, the level of detail took more time than I could afford on the project.

I resolved to go for a simpler design in my DG 3 digital coloring. I am satisfied with the result, as it increased the clarity of the work, and was completed in a fraction of the time as the original. Even so, I could have refrained from putting on much of the detail that I did, and the result would be equally successful.



SELECTED PLANTS AND MATERIALS



SELECTED PLANTS



Pacific madrone
Arbutus menziesii



Olive tree
Olea europaea



Stone pine
Pinus pinea



Western sycamore
Platanus racemosa



White rain-lily
*Zephyranthes
candida*



Purple aster
Symphyotrichum patens



Foxtail agave
Agave attenuata



Mauritius hemp
Furcraea foetida



SELECTED MATERIALS AND FEATURES



Boulders



Textured concrete



Concrete benches and
retaining walls



Wood benches



Large aggregate



Small aggregate



Decomposed
granite



Color changing LED
ingrade uplights
mounted in wood

CONCLUSION



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Thank you to my instructors David Squires, Rebecca Schwaner, and Laura Razo for imparting such valuable knowledge about landscape design and graphics to me. Your attention to detail and high standards have pushed me to do my best.

Thank you to my friends and family who support me.

I'm grateful for my intelligent and caring classmates who inspire me with their self-discipline and high quality of classwork.

CREDITS AND CITED WORKS

All images are the author's unless noted below.

Cover

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BIOGRAPHY



I grew up in Santa Monica, CA and remember the rapid transformation the city was undergoing in my youth. It's a cliché about modernity that “all that is solid melts into air,” but it is certainly true of my hometown. I now live in Orange County, CA.

As a child I loved making scale models of airplanes with my dad. Those analytical and aesthetic sensibilities have stuck with me and I'm looking forward to using my abilities designing landscapes that are beautiful and fit the needs of residents and the natural world.

I have always loved drawing and designing, but I only considered it doing it for work after leaving other careers. I'm excited for this opportunity to learn a new discipline and transform some of the grey suburban grid of Southern California into a place that people and wildlife thrive in.

