



VALLEY OF THE ARTS

MASTER PLAN for *THE GREAT WALL of LOS ANGELES*

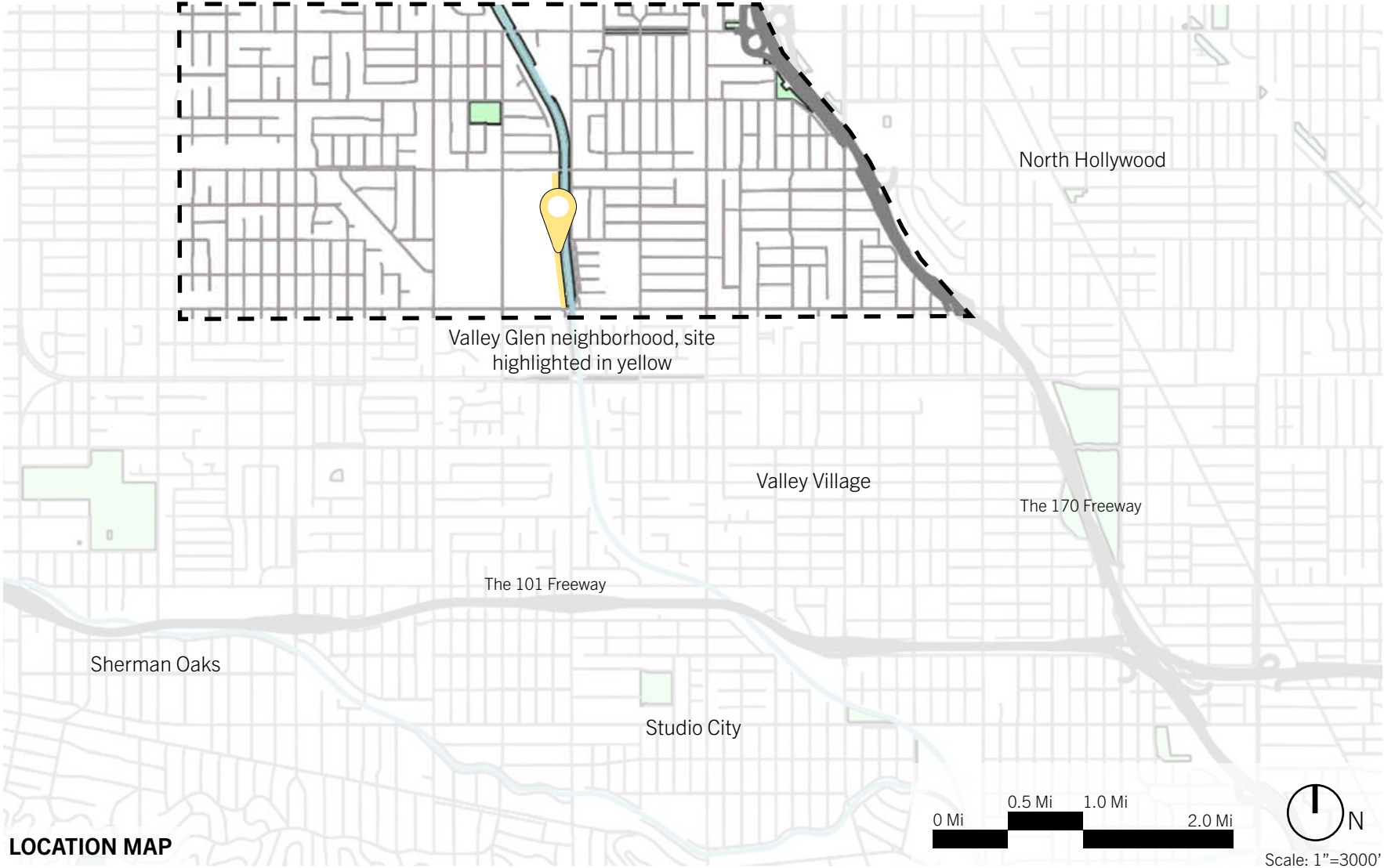
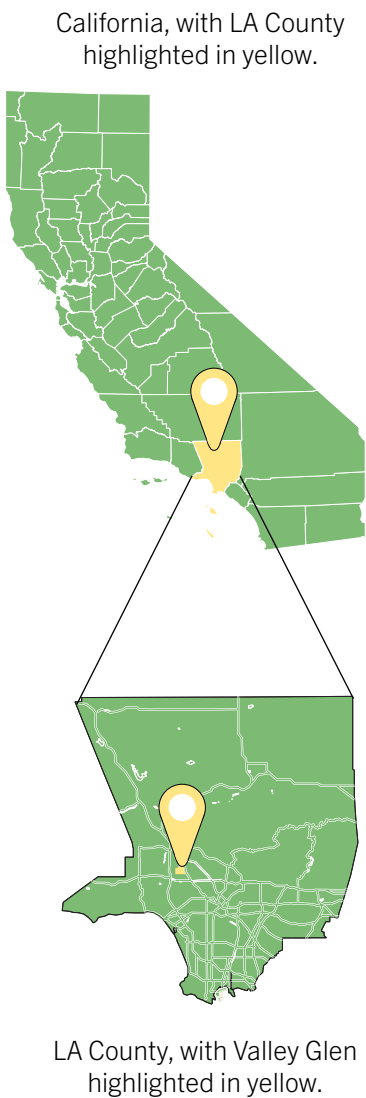
BRIAN BAUTISTA • TATO MAIZZA • RYAN O'LEARY JONES

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SITE OVERVIEW



- 11.6 acres or 9 football fields of space.
- 37,179 square feet of art, 1/2 mile in length.
- 225 square miles of watershed drained to the LA River.
- More than 17,000 students across three schools.
- A deficient 1.5 acres of park per 1,000 residents.
- 59,000 residents in Valley Glen, plus neighboring cities.

The Great Wall of Los Angeles is a half-mile long mural painted in the drainage channel of the former Tujunga Wash. The site is located in the Tujunga Green Belt, bordered by Oxnard Street to the north, Burbank Boulevard to the South, two high schools and one college to the west and Coldwater Canyon Avenue to the east. The Tujunga Green Belt is within the neighborhood of Valley Glen, within the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles, California.

The Great Wall of Los Angeles was originally painted from 1978 to 1984 during the summer. It was conceived by the Army Corps of Engineers, who

approached artist Judy Baca to paint the mural on the walls of the channelized Tujunga Wash. Baca employed at-risk youth to paint the 2,754 foot mural over the course of the next six summers.

Each section of the mural covers different eras and key events in American as well as Los Angeles's history, emphasizing events critical to minority, women and LGBTQ+ groups, all painted in the social realism style.

After completion, the mural slowly aged and deteriorated despite its status as one the world's

largest murals and as a physical and cultural landmark. In 2011 it was renovated and restored with Judith Baca at the helm of the Social and Public Art Resource Center. The mural is set to be expanded onto the western side of the channel before the 2028 Olympics take place.

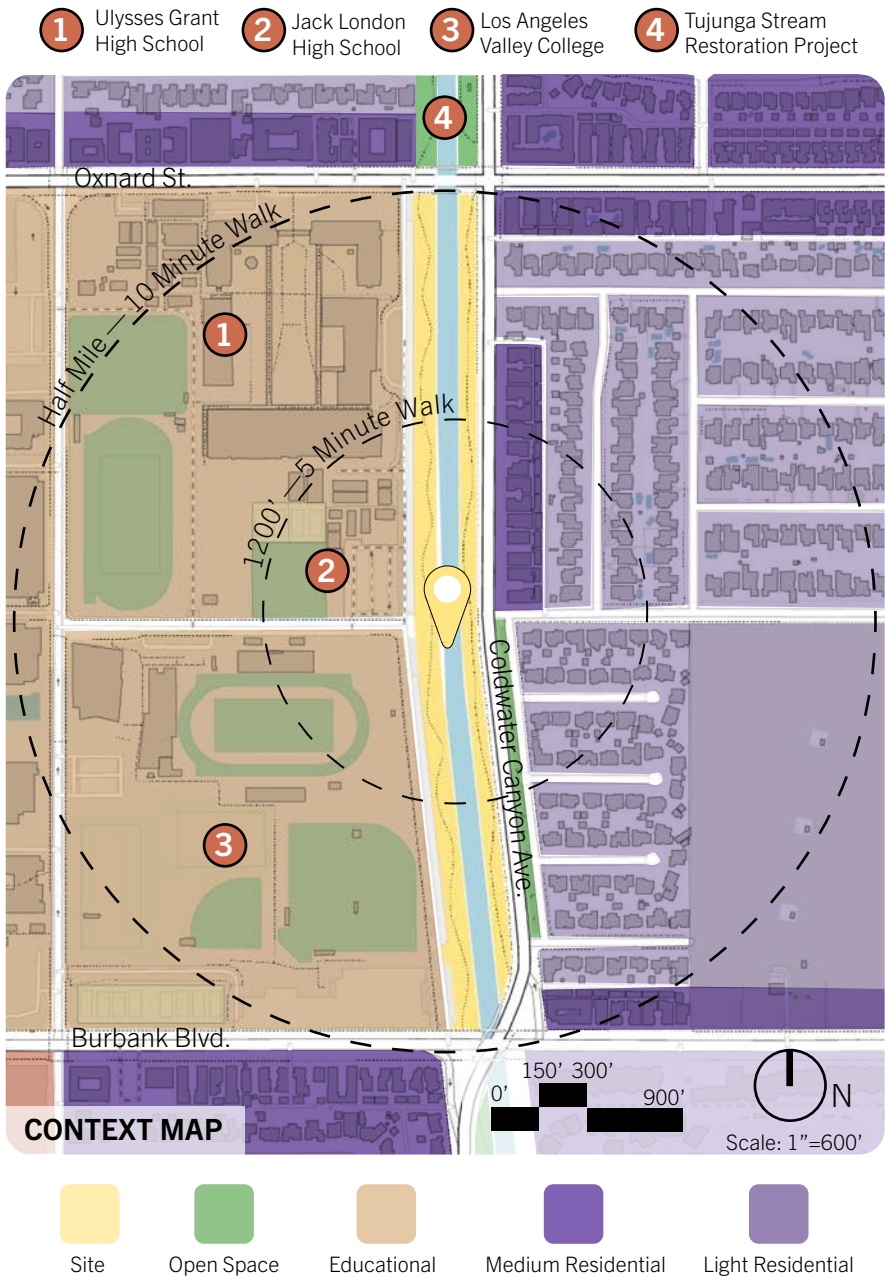
The site itself sits within the Los Angeles River watershed. It used to wander across the San Fernando Valley floor as floods changed the course and size of the tributaries and the LA River itself. The entire watershed was placed into concrete channels to prevent flooding. Besides the schools that flank

the western edge of the site, low to medium density residential units are across Coldwater Canyon, though access to the park is relegated to the north and south entrances on Oxnard and Burbank.

Demographically, Valley Glen is home to over 59,000 people, with the majority populations being White, Hispanic or Asian. Renters make up 2/3^{ds} of the population. The daily population rises dramatically thanks to the presence of Los Angeles Valley College with its 16,000 students. The adjacent Grant High School is home to another 1,600 students, while a small continuation school hosts a few hundred.

Transit for students and the adjacent population is handled by a pair of bus stops to the north and south of the park; beyond that, access is limited to automobile parking.

North of the park is the Tujunga Stream Restoration Project, which was completed in 2007. It provides rainwater infiltration as well as pedestrian and bike paths and has a variety of native plants which serve as an ecological restoration for wildlife as well as open space for residents. The site's former ecology is estimated to be an intergrade between Riparian, Coast Sage Scrub and Grassland ecosystems.



SITE HISTORY TIMELINE

TIME IMMEMORIAL



The Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians live within the San Fernando Valley and in the greater Los Angeles County area. The Tujunga Wash flowed unchecked, changing with the seasons as a tributary to the Los Angeles River.

1769-1821 SPANISH ERA



The Portola Expedition explores California, marking the first time Europeans traveled overland. The Mission System was established and enslaved the indigenous people while confiscating their land for ranching and agriculture. The Tujunga Wash was unchanged from its natural state.

1821-1848 MEXICAN ERA



Mexico wins its independence from Spain. California is ruled in a semi-autonomous form from Mexico City. The missions were secularized and ranching became the dominant land use as the Rancheros were established. While the valley is more agricultural than it has ever been, the wash remains much the same.

1848-1910 EARLY AMERICAN ERA



California joins the United States as the 31st state after Mexico loses to Union Troops in 1848. The San Fernando Valley is predominantly agricultural, though its ownership changes from Rancheros to privately owned enterprise. The Tujunga Wash begins to function as an agricultural drainage as it bisects farmland.

1911- 1938 LOS ANGELES EXPANDS



Water from the Owens Valley Aqueduct arrives in 1913, fueling growth of Los Angeles and the surrounding cities. The San Fernando Valley is annexed by Los Angeles, accelerating the transition from agricultural to residential and industrial land use. Civilization encroaches on the Tujunga Wash as farms give way to housing.

1938 CATASTROPHIC FLOODING



A pair of storms sweep through Los Angeles, dumping a years worth of rain in a few days. Multiple levees and dams fail, including the Big Tujunga Wash Levee. Between 1930 and 1940 the population of the valley doubles. With housing approaching the wash, controlling the flow of the wash becomes critical to the safety of those nearby.

1938-1950 RISE OF THE CAR



Urbanization increased, particularly after World War 2 with the advent of freeways and inexpensive suburban housing. The Army Corps of Engineers channelized the LA River and its tributaries, allowing land adjacent to the Tujunga Wash to be developed.

1950-1984 SUBURBAN BOOM



The valley continues its decentralized commercial, industrial and residential expansion. In 1974 the Army Corps of Engineers asks Judith Baca for a mural on the walls of the Tujunga Wash. She describes it as "A tattoo on the scar where the river once ran." **Work on the mural began in 1978 and finished in 1984.**

1985-2011 DETERIORATION & REVIVAL



The finished mural ages and weathers on the walls of the channel. Growing ecological awareness around the LA River engenders the 2007 Tujunga Wash Stream project north of Oxnard Boulevard. **From 2007 to 2011, the mural was restored, in some cases, by the same students who painted it.**

2012-2026 GROWING AWARENESS



As the cultural heritage of the mural is realized, further upgrades to the surrounding park have been installed. However, a true master plan that accounts for the San Fernando Valley's large population and lack of a world-class park continue to hold the site back.

DESIGN GOALS

“First collaborate,
then paint.”
- Judith F. Baca

CELEBRATE THE WALL

The mural becomes the cultural anchor.



ACTIVATE THE PARK

Support everyday use with flexible community spaces.



BUILD ENGAGING SPACES

Make the park a cultural destination for users beyond the immediate neighborhood.

CONNECT PEOPLE + PLACE

Strengthen relationship to the neighborhood context.



RESTORE THE LANDSCAPE

Make ecology visible, functional and experiential.



SITE INVENTORY

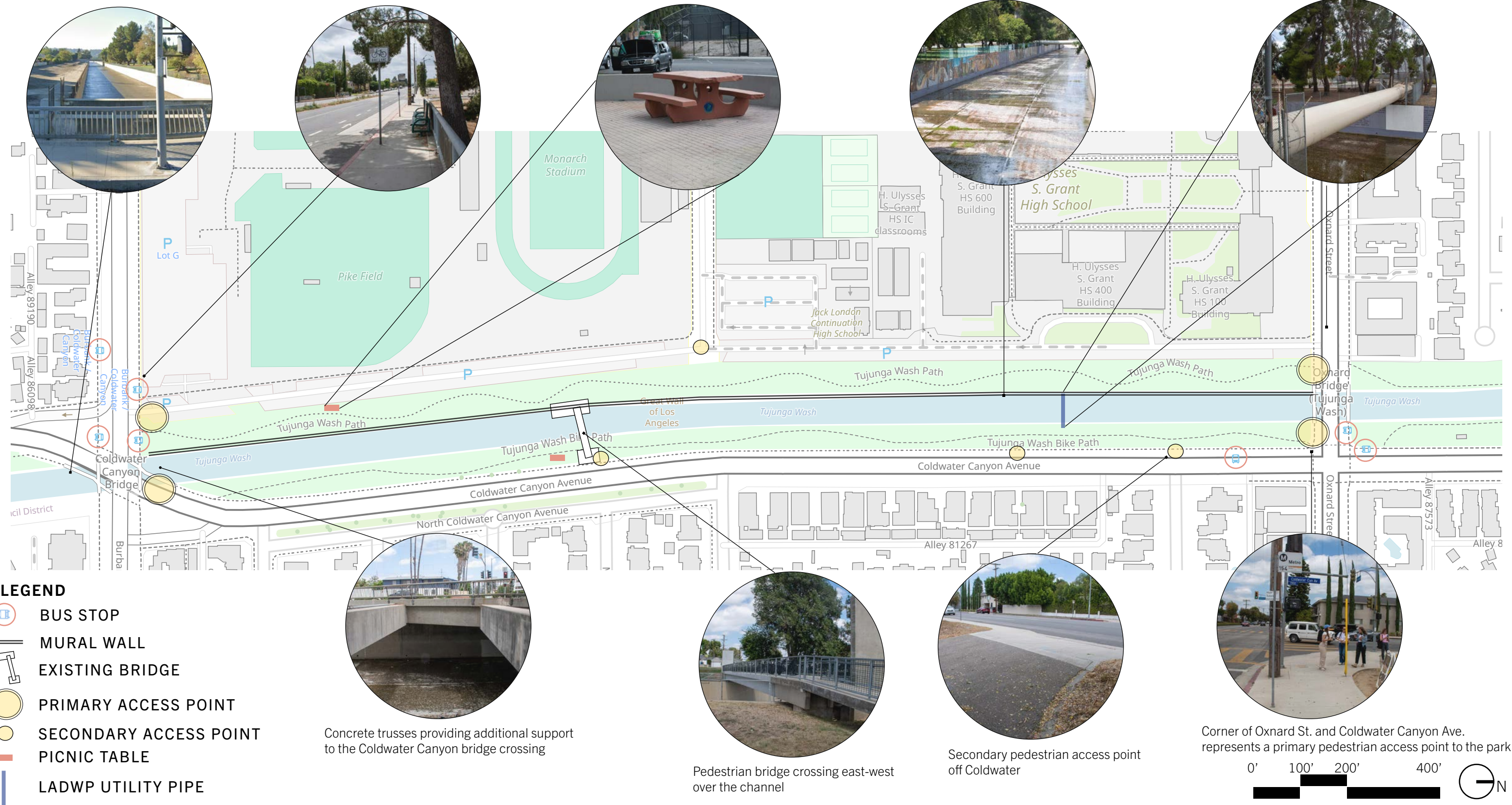
Southern extension of Tujunga Wash identified as opportunity for future development

Metro Bus stops located at the North and South terminals of the park

One of two picnic tables. Not under any canopy and not in vicinity of mural

The Mural wall expands the length of the western wall of the Tujunga wash channel

LADWP Water Distribution Pipe runs east-west crossing over the channel



SITE ANALYSIS

KEY FACTORS

PREVAILING WINDS

West to West-South West

In summer, the prevailing winds can make temperatures feel 5–10°F cooler through evaporative cooling. Users walking or biking during the afternoon will generally experience a pleasant breeze.

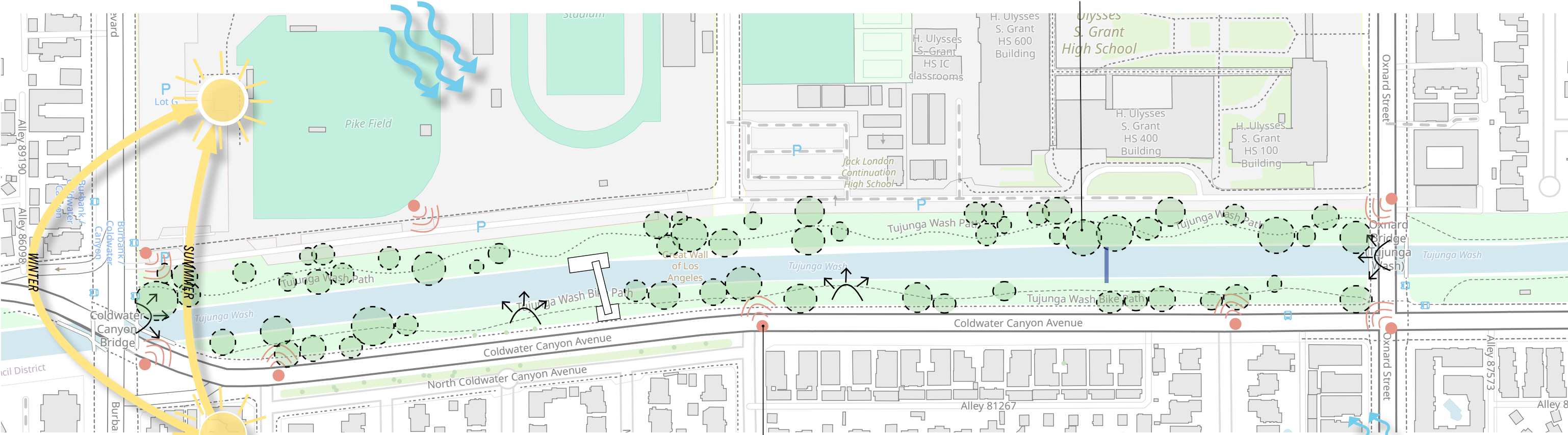
Areas blocked by dense vegetation or walls may feel noticeably hotter because they lose that natural ventilation. The cooling breeze from the west can encourage visitors to walk the mural’s full length, and stop at key moments, particularly during summer afternoons when unshaded spaces elsewhere in the Valley become less comfortable. In that sense, the prevailing wind subtly supports the park’s role as an outdoor museum by making prolonged visits more pleasant.

EXISTING CANOPY

A mature existing tree canopy throughout the park provides shade and some buffer from the street including noisy Coldwater Canyon. However, significant gaps in the canopy leave visitors exposed to prolonged sun making the experience uncomfortable.

The canopy also maintains strong visual connections to the adjacent high school, college, and athletic fields. It reinforces the park’s relationship to the surrounding context but raises questions about whether the mural should feel more integrated with the neighbors or establish a stronger sense of separation.

In several locations, tree placement could more effectively frame views of the mural and strengthen its identity as an outdoor museum.



LEGEND

- EXISTING TREE
- TRAFFIC NOISE
- VIEWS

SUN PATH

With an east-facing existing mural and a planned west-facing mural, the sun path is an important factor affecting both the artwork and the user experience.

Adjacent pedestrian paths receive substantial sun exposure, particularly during summer afternoons, making tree canopy, shade structures, and comfortable seating essential to support longer visits and enhance the outdoor museum experience.

Afternoon sun more intense along the west-facing channel wall which could create glare on planned future mural, making viewing more difficult.

TRAFFIC NOISE

Heavy traffic along Coldwater Canyon Avenue creates a persistent acoustic barrier that diminishes the outdoor museum experience.

Elevated noise levels reduce pedestrian comfort, discourage users from partaking in the experience, and make key entrances feel less welcoming which is unfortunate given the cultural significance of the site.

SEASONAL SANTA ANA WINDS

Northeast to East-Northeast

On typical days, the prevailing breeze cools the park and promotes comfortable afternoon use. During Santa Anas, the environmental conditions reverse creating distinct microclimates on both sides of the mural. When both mural faces are completed, visitors may naturally choose one side over the other depending on the season, time of day, and wind conditions.



SITE ANALYSIS

FLOOD RISK, CONTOURS, STORM DRAINS & SEWERS

100-YEAR FLOOD RISK

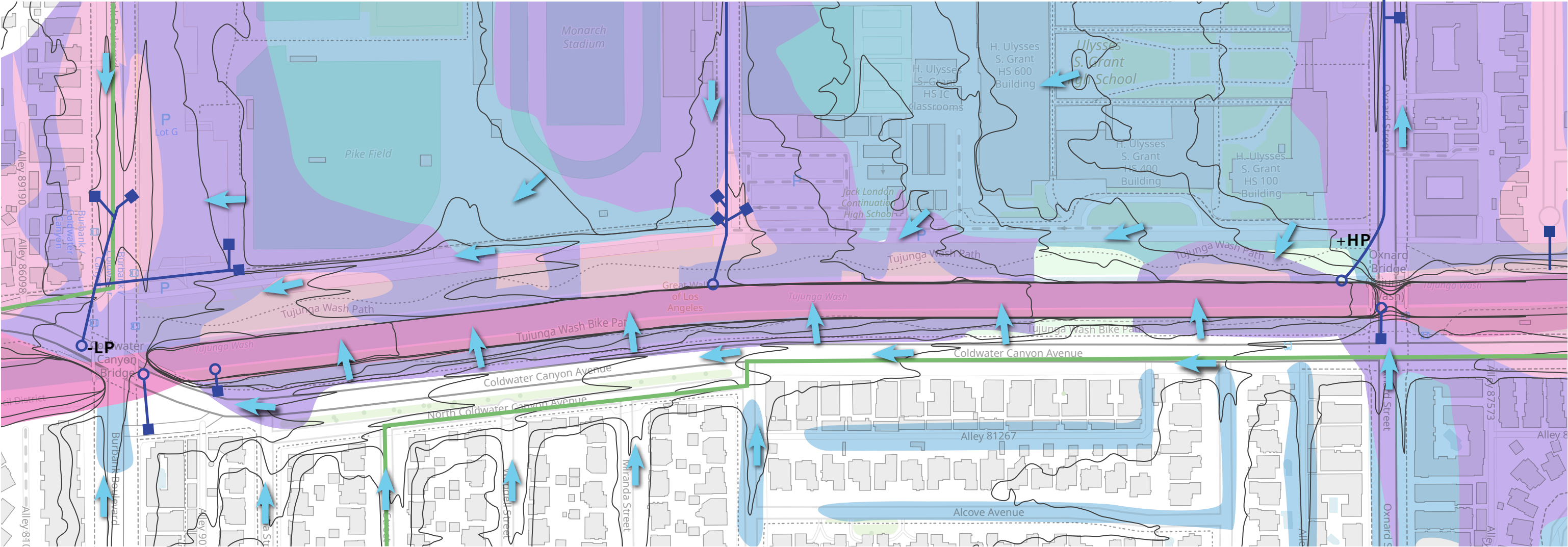
There is a large discrepancy between FEMA Flood Maps and UCI Flood Labs Maps. Flood Lab, pictured below, shows much of the site and surrounding area flooding during a 100 year storm event. Precipitation totals would need to reach 7-10 inches in 24 hours according to NOAA to generate flooding of this magnitude. FEMA Flood Maps show significant flooding in Hansen Dam, with localized flooding north of Vanowen Street, but none to the south where the Great Wall is.

CONTOURS

The Tujunga Wash lies 15 feet below the park, with park topography having a variation of up to six feet from the top of Coldwater Canyon down to the fence on the east side, to four feet on the west side. From north to south, the park falls 14 feet, with the highest point at Oxnard and the lowest section at the entry at Coldwater Canyon Extension and Burbank Boulevard. These height differentials present opportunities for seeing into the park to increase safety and security as well as different viewing angles

SURFACE WATER FLOW

The site and surrounding area have been graded so water predominantly runs towards the Tujunga Wash. The only exception to this is Oxnard, where water flows west, away from the Wash, only to enter a storm drain that directs the water into the Wash. For the north-south streets like Coldwater Canyon and Coldwater Canyon Extension, water flows downhill from the north to the south. This presents opportunities to collect, treat and infiltrate rainwater before its release into the Wash.



100 YEAR FLOOD LEGEND

- Head (>5.5')
- Waist-Head (3'-5.5')
- Knee-Waist (1.5'-3')
- Ankle-Knee (0.3'-1.5')

LEGEND

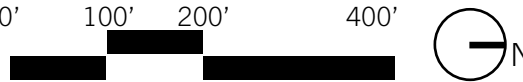
- SURFACE FLOW
- STORM DRAIN BASIN
- STORM DRAIN OUTLET
- SANITARY SEWER

STORM DRAINS

Within the site boundary, there are three storm drains that collect rainwater from Coldwater Canyon, Hatteras Street, and Oxnard Street. These are large diameter storm drains that collect water from the street and convey it into the Tujunga Wash. The line on Hatteras drains a significant amount of the Los Angeles Valley College. A pair of catch basins drain all of Lot G near Burbank Boulevard. Each of these lines on the West side of the park present an opportunity to infiltrate and treat stormwater via an infiltration gallery before it is discharged into the Wash.

SANITARY SEWERS

The closest sanitary sewer on the west side of the park runs along Burbank Boulevard. A line exists along Coldwater Canyon but it is not be deep enough to create positive flow since the bottom of the park is at roughly the same elevation as the depth of the sewer pipe. This means any facilities that require sewage connections will need to be close to Burbank Boulevard.

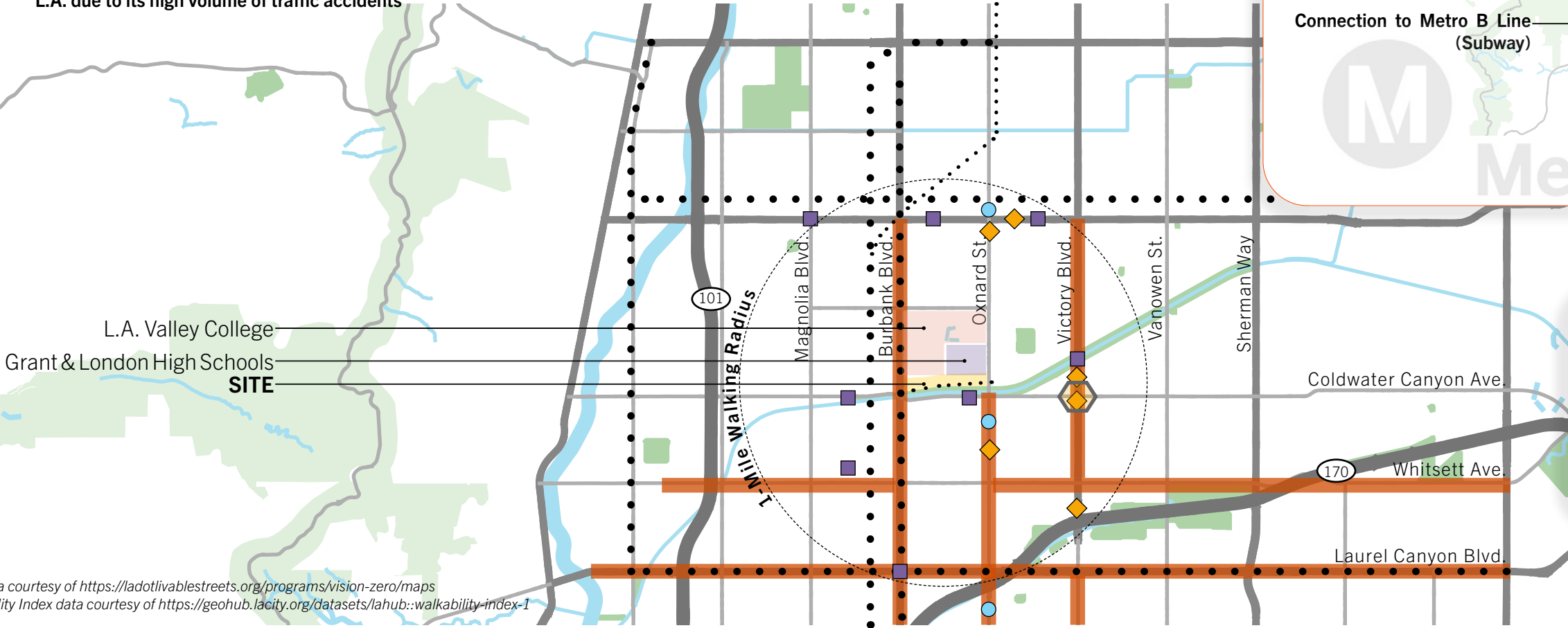


SITE ANALYSIS

MULTIMODAL STUDY

HIGH INJURY NETWORK

- The High-Injury Network (HIN) represents 6% of city streets (over 450 miles) that account for 70% of deaths and severe injuries for people walking from 2010-2021.
- Victory Blvd. & Coldwater Canyon Ave.** (two blocks from the site) is **one of 3 intersections within a 5-mile radius** of the Site that has been marked by LADOT as a **priority intersection**, meaning it is to undergo major improvements in order to reduce the risk of fatalities. It is also in the **Top 60 Priority intersections in the City of L.A. due to its high volume of traffic accidents**
- Burbank Blvd. and Oxnard St.** bookend the site and both sections of those streets at the park intersection **are on the HIN**.
- Bicyclist fatalities noticeably occurred on Oxnard St. where there is neither an existing bike lane nor bike path currently.
- While Coldwater Canyon itself is not on the HIN, all three major roads that intersect Coldwater at or near the Site location are in the network.



HIN data courtesy of <https://ladotlivablestreets.org/programs/vision-zero/maps>
Walkability Index data courtesy of <https://geohub.lacity.org/datasets/lahub::walkability-index-1>

LEGEND

- METRO G LINE (BUS)
- METRO LOCAL BUS
- METROLINK RAIL
- METRO B LINE (TRAIN)
- PRIORITY INTERSECTION
- VEHICLE FATALITY
- BICYCLIST FATALITY
- PEDESTRIAN FATALITY
- HIGH INJURY NETWORK STREET
- EXISTING BIKE LANE
- EXISTING BIKE PATH

WALKABILITY

- L.A. City Walkability Index: -2.1 (VERY LOW)**
- The L.A. Department of City Planning calculates a standardized Walkability Index at the census tract level. Rather than tracking just “business proximity,” it scores the structural pedestrian environment using a raw Z-score weighted across four criteria.
- In this system, a score of 0 represents the absolute average walkability for Los Angeles. Because it is a statistical curve, scores generally fall between -3.0 and +3.0.
- The Metrics:** Intersection Density (heavily weighted), Land Use Mix (Diversity), Retail Density (Floor-Area Ratio), Residential Density

EXPANDED FRAMEWORK

- While a bike path runs through the site, it stops just short of the surrounding bike routes and is not fully integrated, while sharing the path with pedestrians.
- The street layout of this location features larger suburban block lengths. Because intersection density is heavily weighted by the city, this specific stretch of **Oxnard Street scores lower on structural walkability compared to its surrounding commercial nodes**.
- High intersection density means small blocks, which forces cars to slow down at frequent intersections and gives walkers multiple route options. Low density, as is the case here, creates **massive “superblocks,” forcing pedestrians to walk out of their way just to cross the street**.

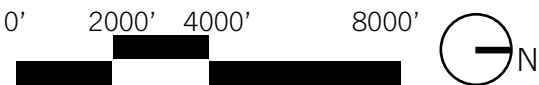
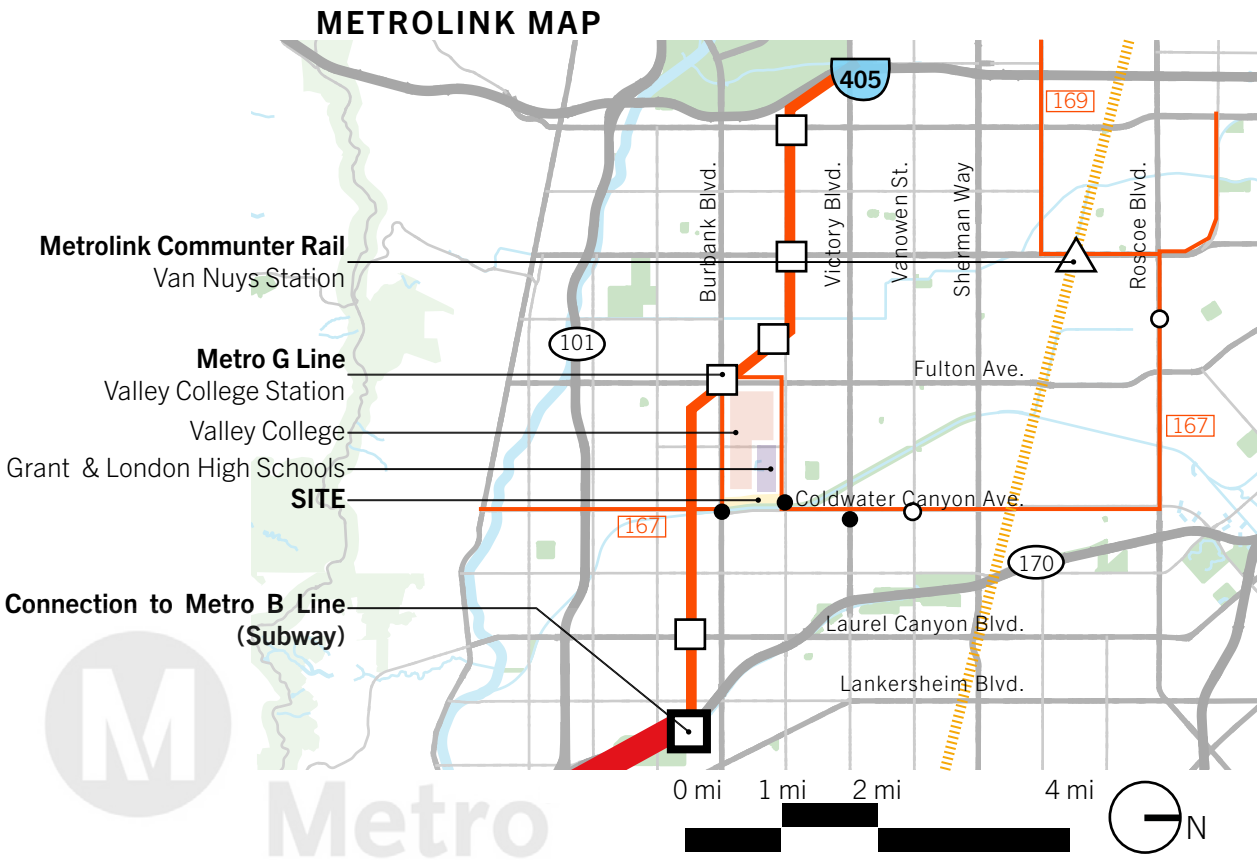
METRO CONNECTIVITY

The Metro G Line arrives at stops every 15 minutes, L.A. Valley College being one of those nearby stops, a short walk to the park from there. Local bus routes that connect directly to the park are more infrequent.

Major transit connection exists at the North Hollywood station where the Metro B Line subway train (formerly the Red Line) connects to the G Line busway that connects to that L.A. Valley College stop. Prior to that stop, the B Line stops at the popular Universal City location.

SOLUTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Area-Wide Traffic Calming or Upstream Speed Management.** Rather than treating Victory & Coldwater as an isolated danger zone, treating the surrounding blocks conditions, driver behavior before reaching this major junction could help reduce risk.
- The residential-adjacent block of Oxnard behaves as a high-speed arterial feeder putting a premium on **pedestrian visibility**.

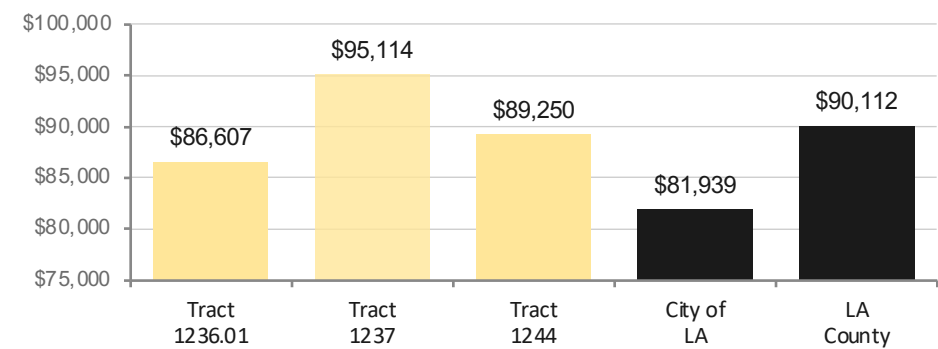


SITE ANALYSIS

DEMOGRAPHICS AND ECONOMICS

WHO LIVES IN THE VICINITY TODAY

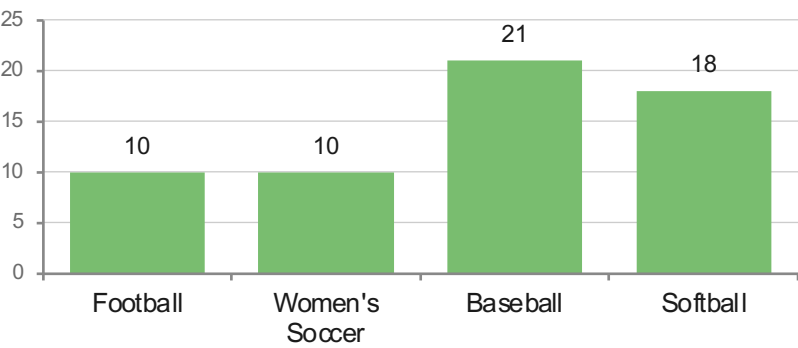
Household-weighted across the three census tracts immediately surrounding the site (1236.01, 1237, and 1244): median household income of roughly \$90,200, essentially matching the LA County median (\$90,112), with a poverty rate of about 16.0% — closer to the City of LA’s rate (16.6%) than the county’s (13.7%). The area is majority-renter (60%) with a notably **high work-from-home share (27% of commuters)**, pointing to a substantial daytime residential presence beyond who commutes out.



Sources: Census Reporter, ACS 5-Year Estimates, Census Tracts 1236.01 / 1237 / 1244

INSTITUTIONAL & EVENT DEMAND

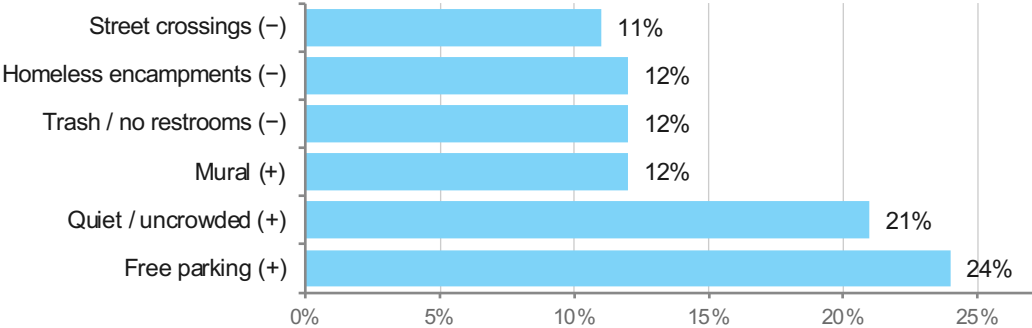
L.A. Valley College, immediately adjacent to the site, reported a Fall 2024 headcount of 18,188 students — a daytime population far exceeding the surrounding residential catchment. Its athletics program adds **59 home games per year across four sports** at Monarch Stadium (**1,500-seat capacity**) and dedicated baseball/softball fields. Spring baseball and softball alone produce roughly 39 home dates over 16 weeks — a near-continuous, semester-long game-day condition rather than an occasional. event



Sources: Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) Fact Sheet, Los Angeles Valley College (LAVC) Fall 2024; LAVC Athletics home schedules, 2025–26 season

CURRENT TRAIL USE

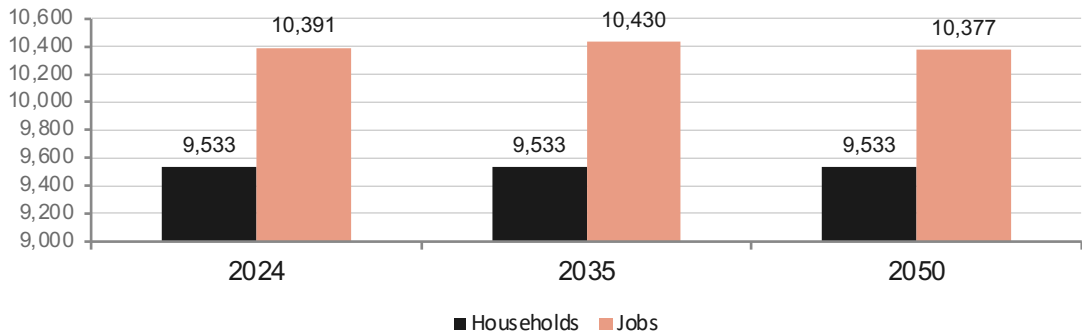
The existing Tujunga Wash Path holds a 4.0-star rating across 151 AllTrails reviews, of which 85 contain written comments or tags. Free parking and low crowding are the most frequently cited positives; homeless encampments, **unsafe street crossings**, and **trash/absent restrooms** are the most frequently cited concerns — a usage pattern of a quiet, convenient, but under-maintained neighborhood trail rather than a destination park.



Source: AllTrails, “The Great Wall Of Los Angeles: Tujunga Wash Path,” accessed Jul 2026 (n=85 reviews with content, of 151 total)

25-YEAR GROWTH OUTLOOK

SCAG’s preliminary Connect SoCal 2050 forecast projects **zero net household growth** for the half-mile catchment around the site — 9,533 households in 2024, 2035, and 2050 alike — with **employment essentially flat as well**. This is a built-out, stable residential fabric, not a growing one: demand for the redesigned park cannot rely on population growth, and instead has to be built on the site’s draw as a regional destination.



Source: Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) SED_TAZTier2_Prelim_poly_scag (Connect SoCal 2050), preliminary — pending Local Data Exchange review, Nov 2026

CONCLUSIONS

- Resident growth won’t drive demand (flat to 2050, per SCAG)
- Institutional and event populations already provide a large, recurring, currently-uncaptured local audience (LAVC’s 18,188 headcount, 59 home games/year, plus 1665 LAVC employees)
- Local audience is capped - the design also has to actively pull a citywide audience beyond the immediate catchment, since there’s no local population growth to eventually fill that gap on its own
- The site’s current safety/circulation problems are suppressing it from capturing either audience today

Three tiers of demand to design for:

- Institutional/event population (already there, recurring, underexploited)
- Local residents (flat, stable, but not a growth source) — a baseline to serve, not a demand driver to build around.
- Regional/citywide draw (mural tourism, cultural programming, event destination status) — the actual growth lever, since it’s the only one of the three that isn’t capped by something fixed (a stadium’s seating, a college’s enrollment).

Tiers 1 and 2 are both hard ceilings — LAVC’s headcount and game schedule are fixed by the institution, and resident population is fixed by SCAG’s forecast. If the park’s success is measured only against those two, it has a hard growth ceiling no design decision can raise. The citywide-draw tier is the only one where design quality itself can expand the audience — better circulation, better programming, better safety, better cultural marketing can pull in visitors who have no institutional or residential tie to the site at all.

Goal: “Regional Destination Park”

- Not just filling a demand gap, but the only lever in this model that isn’t yet explored

SITE CONSTRAINTS

EXPERIENCE

1 — Noise Pollution

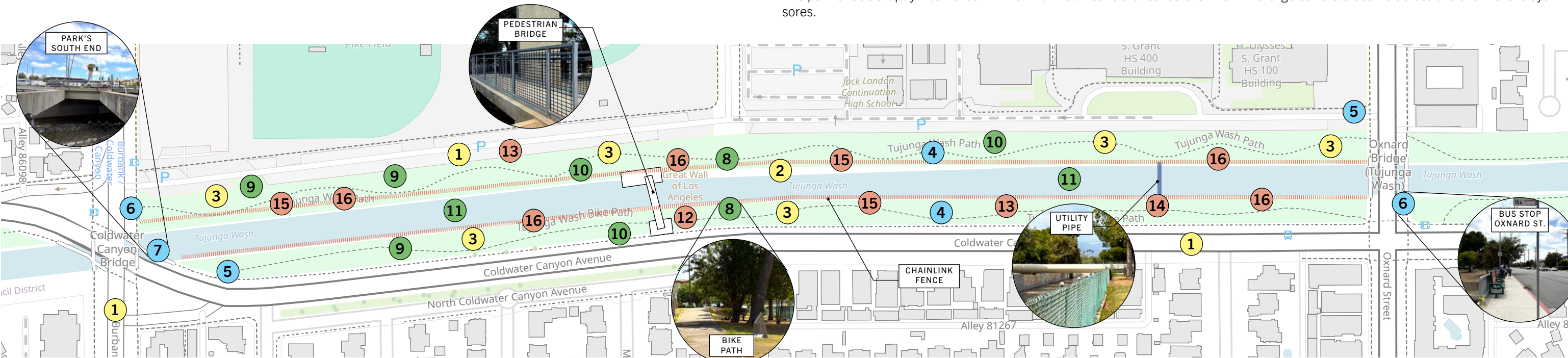
Burbank Blvd., Coldwater Cyn., and the adjacent school generate substantial noise with no landscape buffer along park edges.

2 — Compromised Mural Access & Solar Exposure

The Great Wall sits below grade behind chain-link fencing with no viewing corridor or accessible path. The east-facing channel wall receives direct solar exposure, posing long-term preservation risk.

3 — Lack of Restrooms plus Critical Seating Deficit & Incoherent Furnishings

Six benches across 450,000 SF with no group gathering configuration. Benches, gym equipment, picnic tables, and trash receptacles all mismatched, undermining the park's visual cohesion. No restrooms at all.



ECOLOGY/ ENVIRONMENTAL

8 — Ecologically Inert Ground Plane

Non-native grass monoculture dominates all planted areas, with extensive dead patches. It provides no habitat value, no ecological function and is not drought-tolerant.

9 — Non-Native & Invasive Canopy

Tree canopy is predominantly non-native. Pine trees root systems are actively undermining the bike path, creating safety and maintenance liabilities. *Schinus terebinthifolias* are invading surroundings.

10 — Insufficient Shade

Existing shade is limited to scattered tree canopy. No shade structures are present, leaving the majority of the site thermally unmitigated in a high-heat urban valley climate.

11 — Urban Heat Island Effect

The exposed concrete flood channel surface absorbs and radiates heat, intensifying thermal stress across the site.

CIRCULATION

4 — Constrained Site Geometry

Site dimensions (60' x 1300' on East bank and 70' x 1300' on West bank) limit programmatic variety and the capacity for meaningful gathering spaces.

5 — Poor Park Ingress & Vehicular Circulation

No dedicated entries or wayfinding signage exist along park borders. The Oxnard St. gate is out of register with available parking behind it, creating confusion for both drivers and pedestrians.

6 — Deficient Transit Infrastructure

Bus stops at Burbank Blvd. and Oxnard St. sit on narrow, unshaded sidewalks directly adjacent to moving traffic, offering neither comfort nor safety.

7 — Abrupt Southern Terminus

The park ends abruptly into Burbank Blvd. with no threshold or sense of arrival. Two large concrete beams across the channel are eye sores.

INFRASTRUCTURE

12 — Lack of Cross-Site Circulation

The Tujunga Wash bisects the park for its entire length, eliminating cross-site circulation and ground infiltration potential. There is currently only one pedestrian bridge crossing the channel, however it is not ADA-compliant

13 — Deficient Stormwater Infrastructure

Runoff converges at the western end and discharges into the Wash with minimal filtration or retention, missing opportunities for on-site water management and contributing to downstream contamination.

14 — Above-Grade Utility Conflict

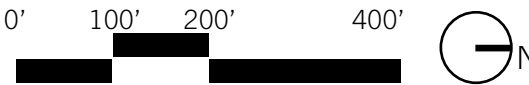
A 3'+ diameter conveyance pipe crosses the channel above grade, obstructing views and precluding intervention. On the eastern side, its buried alignment creates grade discontinuity.

15 — Absent Or Compromised Lighting

Lighting is sparse, partially missing due to theft, and insufficient for safe evening use.

16 — Chain-Link Fencing

Perimeter fencing along the flood channel is visually obtrusive and reinforces the disconnect between visitors and the mural.



SITE OPPORTUNITIES

MURAL & CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

1 — Immersive Mural Experience

New ways and angles to engage with the mural, including visual, audible and sensorial. Protect the experience with a threshold zone. Potential for overlook platforms lowered into the channel, curated evening lighting, wind and water sculptures, plus interpretive signage that contextualizes the artwork and the community that made it.

2 — Community & Cultural Programming Hub

A community facility with restrooms, café, and flexible space for art classes — including mural and graffiti workshops with the adjacent high school. The school parking lot activated for larger events and revenue generation.

3 — Cohesive Site Identity

A unified design language across all park furnishings — seating, lighting, signage, bike infrastructure — reflecting the cultural character of the site. Solar-powered lighting and green roofs reinforce its identity as an ecologically and culturally forward public space.



Wynwood Walls - Miami, FL



ECOLOGY & INFRASTRUCTURE

8 — Ecological Restoration & Native Planting

Generic lawn replaced with a diverse native palette supporting habitat, shade, and reduced irrigation. Low riparian vegetation introduced within channel margins.

9 — Green Stormwater Infrastructure

Bioswales, curb cuts, rain gardens, infiltration basins, and permeable paving capture runoff before it reaches the Wash. Check dams or low-flow structures and infiltration points within the channel slow water movement and increase groundwater absorption.



Lion Mountain Park - Suzhou, China

CIRCULATION & ACCESS

4 — Cross-Channel Connectivity

New pedestrian bridges distributed along the channel's length, green crossings with native planting doubling as habitat corridors.

5 — Traffic Calming & Street Buffer

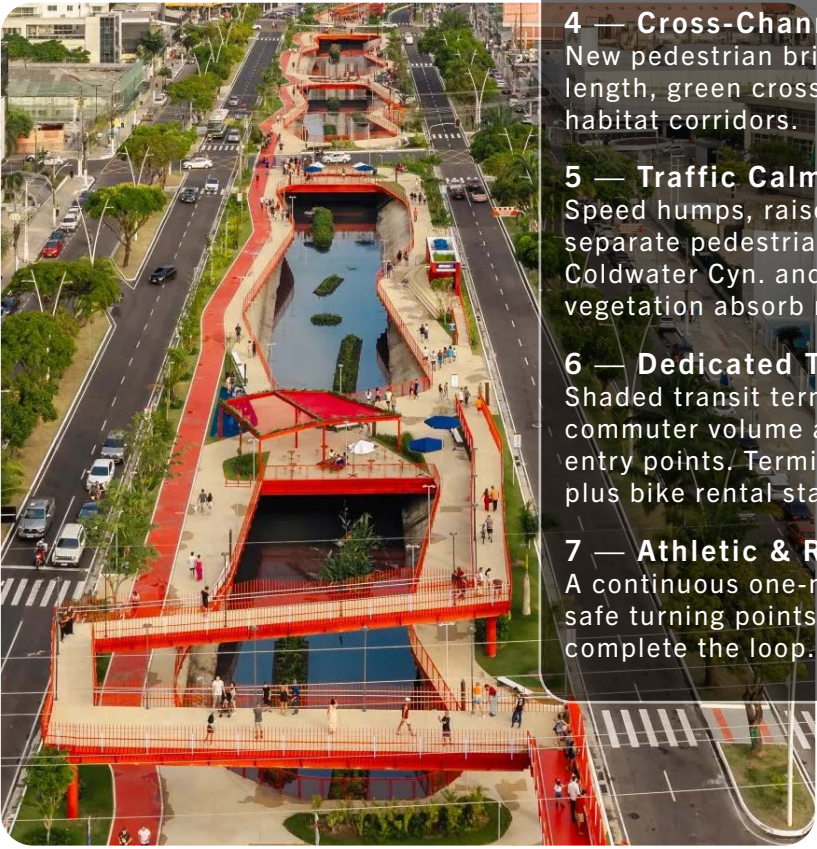
Speed humps, raised crosswalks, and planted berms separate pedestrians and cyclists from moving vehicles on Coldwater Cyn. and Burbank Blvd.. Topography and dense vegetation absorb noise and define the park edge.

6 — Dedicated Transit Infrastructure

Shaded transit terminals at both ends of the park, sized for commuter volume and designed to function as legible park entry points. Terminals include the two existing bus stops plus bike rental stations and bike locks structures.

7 — Athletic & Recreational Loop

A continuous one-mile path along both channel margins with safe turning points at each end and mid-park crossings that complete the loop.



Linear Park Doca - Belem do Para, Brazil

COMFORT & AMENITIES

10 — Shade, Water, Seating & Restrooms

Shade structures, multiple seating opportunities, water stations and picnic areas distributed throughout both margins, with emphasis on the western edge adjacent to the high school for community activation.

11 — Interpretive & Wayfinding Infrastructure

A cohesive signage system orienting visitors and narrating the ecological and cultural history of the site, with clear entry thresholds at all major access points.



Scribbly Gum Park - Pelican Waters, Australia

SAN PEDRO CREEK CULTURE PARK

CASE STUDY 1

AT A GLANCE

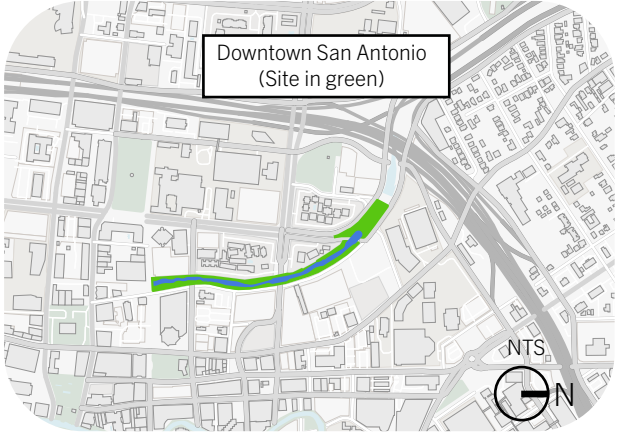
- **Scope:** Public Space
- **Client:** San Antonio River Authority, Bexar County, City of San Antonio
- **Firm:** Grupo Diseño Urbano, HDR, Rialto Studio, Alta Architects
- **Size:** 2.2 Linear miles, 11 acres of landscaped green space
- **Built:** 2015 (Phase 1)- 2025 (Phase 3)
- **Cost:** \$300 Million over all three phases

32 ARTWORKS
BUILT INTO THE PARK

9 BIOSWALES
FILTER DIRTY WATER

2930 FEET
OF HISTORIC WALL

1070 NATIVE
AQUATIC PLANTS



CHALLENGES

- **Flooding:** Located in Downtown San Antonio, this area was nicknamed “Flash Flood Alley” since it is located in the flood plain of the San Antonio River
- **Social:** After the channelization of the creek and creation of the highway system, residents felt historic neighborhoods and urban fabric had been divided.
- **Economic:** The channelized creek was blighted with trash, industrial waste and stagnant, anaerobic conditions. This led to declining property values and impacted tourism since this creek was only a few blocks from the historic River Walk.
- **Ecology & Water Quality:** Poor water quality affected both residents and local ecology due to stagnant water and pollution. The city of San Antonio is entirely dependent on groundwater; channelized creeks do not recharge aquifers.
- **History:** The site occupies a historic section of the river that has been continuously inhabited by indigenous people and immigrants of all nationalities since around 9000 BC. Excavation work unearthed historic sites and artifacts.

SOLUTIONS

- **Flooding, Ecology & Water Quality:** A trio of flood control gates maintain the river at a safe level during normal use but lower to allow maximum outflow during flood events. By deepening the channel and elevating walkways, infrastructure is safely out of the way of the 100-year flood plain. Bioswales, vegetation, and over six hundred trees slow, filter and soak in rainwater while supporting 27 species of wildlife like heron, turtles and fish.
- **Social:** The park aims to celebrate the unique history of the site including the indigenous people as well as the Spanish, Mexican and American settlers who call San Antonio home. Large scale public art installations were made well as numerous temporary displays.
- **Economic:** By revitalizing the creek, property values increased by 150% yielding \$227 million ad valorem tax revenue while creating thousands of jobs.
- **History:** The park utilizes reclaimed limestone blocks from the original retaining walls. The flood tunnel inlet wall is perforated and lit at night to recreate the night sky on May 5th, 1718 when San Antonio was founded.

CRITIQUES

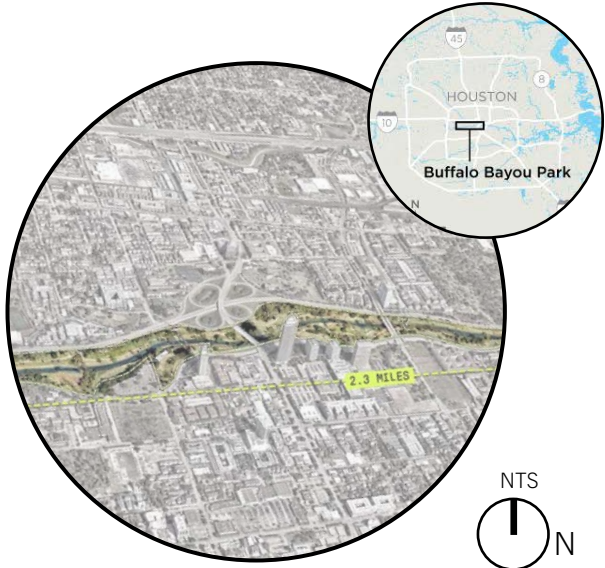
- **Expense:** At \$300 million dollars, the 2.2 mile long park is not cheap. Maintenance on the flood control gates will be expensive and will dominate the maintenance budget during budgetary crises.
- **Misuse:** While the water is filtered and signage states that water is for wading only, people have been swimming in non-potable water, representing a health hazard.
- **Gentrification:** As land values rise, residents worry that they’ll be priced out of their homes.

BUFFALO BAYOU PARK

CASE STUDY 2

AT A GLANCE

- **Scope:** Public Space
- **Client:** Buffalo Bayou Partnership; Harris County Flood Control District
- **Firm:** SWA Group
- **Area:** 2.3 Miles
- **Year:** 2015
- **Cost:** \$58 million



38K RESIDENTS
WITHIN 1/2 MI SERVED

12K
DAILY VISITORS

\$2 BILLION
IN ADJACENT INVESTMENT

90% VISITORS
IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

- Once viewed primarily as flood-control infrastructure, Buffalo Bayou was disconnected from surrounding neighborhoods and lacked the access, circulation, and public spaces needed to function as a continuous urban park.
- The master plan envisioned a connected landscape that would link communities, celebrate the bayou, and make it a destination for everyday life.
- **THE QUESTION:** So how can a linear park transform movement into a meaningful experience?



CHALLENGES

- **Access Points:** Neighborhoods were physically close to the park but difficult to reach. Allen Parkway and Memorial Drive acted as barriers with very few safe pedestrian crossings and neighborhood access points.
- **Circulation:** A single, disconnected and incomplete path with limited public space along the bayou did not accommodate the range of ways people could interact with the park.
- **Orientation:** Visitors had few cues to orient themselves within the long linear corridor.
- **Discovery:** Designers felt Buffalo Bayou could benefit from Public Art since it can invite users to return to the park, but how do you create meaningful encounters with public art in a linear park where most visitors are simply passing through?

SOLUTIONS

- **Access Points:** Creation of Shaded "Green Streets", streets connecting to the Park System on either side of the Bayou, through the neighborhoods they serve by creating a continuous canopy and an increase of access points, which improved access to transit as well. Width of crosswalks and sidewalks were increased after determining that wider sidewalks and narrower street lanes can create safer streets.
- **Circulation:** Hierarchy of paths are created, the higher and wider path for those commuting through the park, the lower, more narrow path for those enjoying the park, and then plazas open up at intentional points of observation.
- **Orientation:** Existing bridges, historic structures, skyline views, and major destinations became landmarks that helped users understand their location and navigate the park.
- **Discovery:** Views were opened to the bayou and existing topography and landmark spaces were used to frame moments of discovery. Public art was integrated into these natural pause points.

CRITIQUES

- **Flood Control:** Although the park was intentionally designed to flood, three consecutive 500-year flood events (including Hurricane Harvey) caused greater damage than anticipated.
- **Lower Trail Closure:** Because the lower trail sits within the floodway, flood events have caused it to close causing circulation hierarchy to disappear.
- **Safety After Dark:** Some users have expressed concerns about feeling less safe at night, despite the park's lighting, patrols, and emergency call boxes. These concerns are tied more to perceptions/broader citywide issues, but they have influenced discussions about ongoing management and programming.

DOCA LINEAR PARK

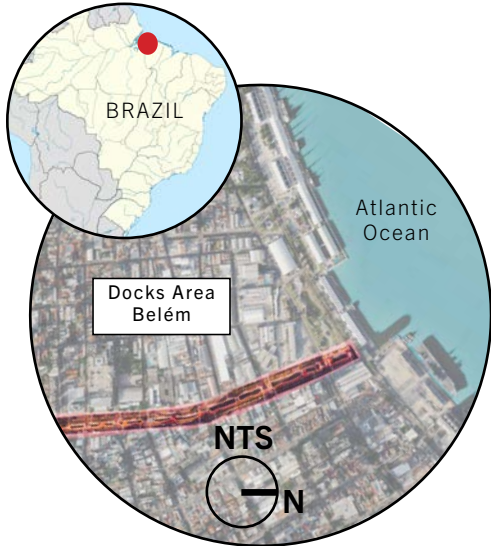
CASE STUDY 3

0.75 miles
CANAL-SIDE PARK

500K
PEOPLE SERVED

COP30
URBAN LEGACY PROJECT

- AT A GLANCE**
- **Scope:** Public Space
 - **Client:** Government of Pará
 - **Firm:** Natureza Urbana
 - **Area:** 40080 m² (9.9 acres)
 - **Year:** 2023
 - **Cost Approx.:** \$58 million USD



- THE CHANGE**
- **Before:** Igarapé das Almas — a river branch of the Reduto basin, buried into an artificialized canal choked with waste, no shade, car-dominated median.
 - **After:** continuous elevated structure turns the canal edge into a democratic, multifunctional public space.
 - Co-designed with residents, schools & local stakeholders to match real neighborhood needs.
 - Reconnects Belém's urban fabric to water it had spent decades erasing.

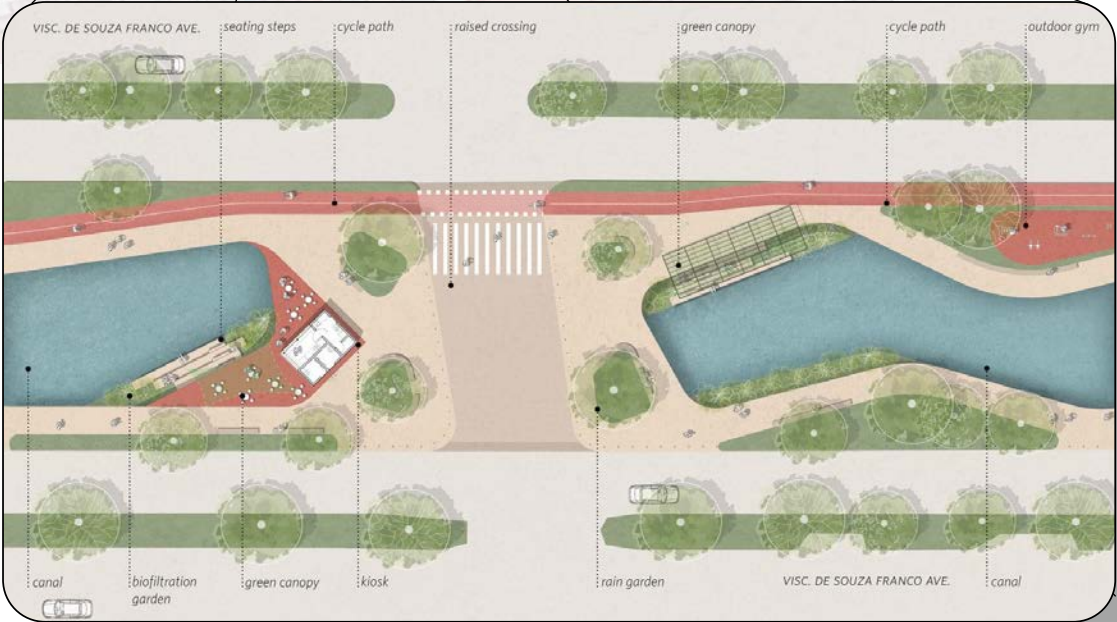
- CRITIQUES**
- **Flooding failure:** Gates couldn't hold an 11.5-ft tide; residents filmed swimming in the flooded avenue (Mar 2026).
 - **Misuse/health:** Children entered contaminated floodwater.
 - **Vandalism:** Benches, wiring & kiosks stripped within months; 5+ arrests; 40 cameras added since.
 - **Expense:** \$58M cost drawing scrutiny amid rapid deterioration.
 - **Equity:** Academic critique names Doca in a "showcase city vs. real city" argument.



- BRIDGES & CONNECTIVITY**
- **Structure alternates** — spanning directly over the canal, then running alongside it — varying the visitor's relationship to water.
 - **Multiple elevated crossings** stitch together two neighborhoods long split by the avenue and canal.
 - **New pedestrian + cycling network** adds both longitudinal and cross-canal connections.
 - **Elevated walkways & viewpoints** place visitors directly over the water for an immersive, sensory crossing experience.

- CHALLENGES**
- **Flooding:** Low, flood-prone site on a buried canal, exposed to river tides.
 - **Social:** Car-choked avenue split the Reduto & Umarizal neighborhoods; no shade or public space.
 - **Ecology:** Impermeable lining; canal clogged with waste and debris.
 - **History:** A historic waterway erased by decades of car-first planning.

- SOLUTIONS**
- **Flooding:** Floodgates, elevated walkways, widened canal, new sewage line.
 - **Social:** Community-designed program — kiosks, playgrounds, dog park, bike path, sports courts for 500K residents.
 - **Ecology:** Vegetated lining, phytoremediation, native planting (176 trees, 1.6 new acres of green cover).
 - **History:** "Memory of water" concept guided by Ailton Krenak's writing.



PERCOLATION PARK

DESIGN ALTERNATIVE 1

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DESIGN STATEMENT

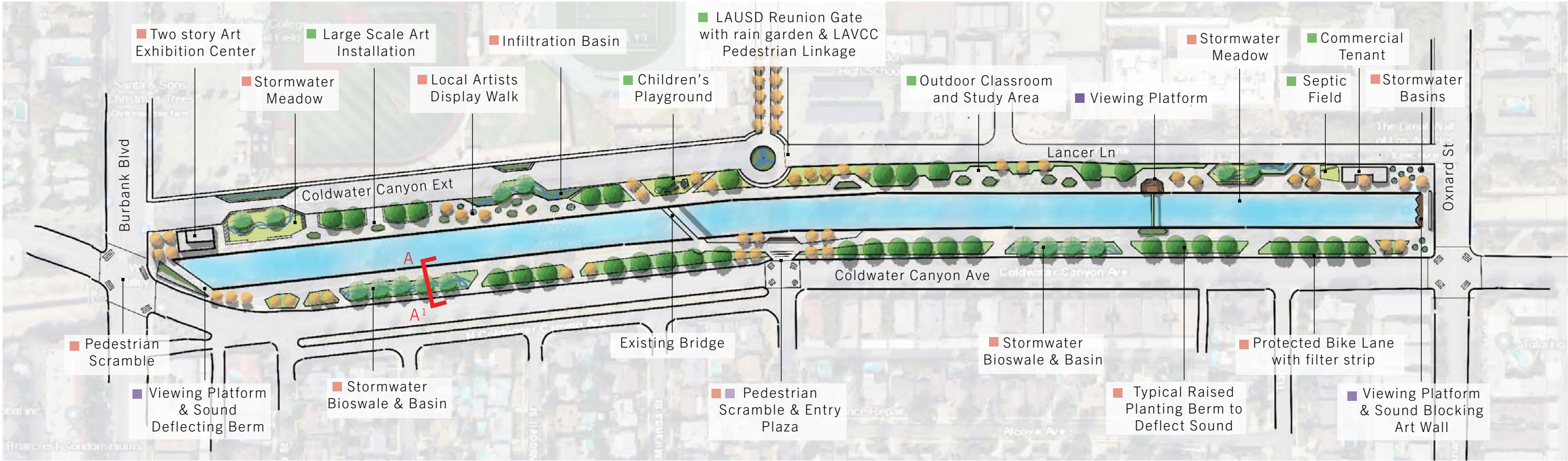
This design is inspired by the fast draining, alluvial soils of the Tujunga Wash and how water percolates into the vast aquifer beneath San Fernando Valley. The design slows, filters and infiltrates plenty of storm water into the soil. It also attempts to percolate people through the space, slowing them to enjoy ample green space, the mural, and a rotating display of artwork. Multiple interventions increase pedestrian and cyclist safety while incentivizing longer stays in the park via new programming, from kids play, art exhibitions, restrooms to a potential commercial client on the site.

STORM WATER

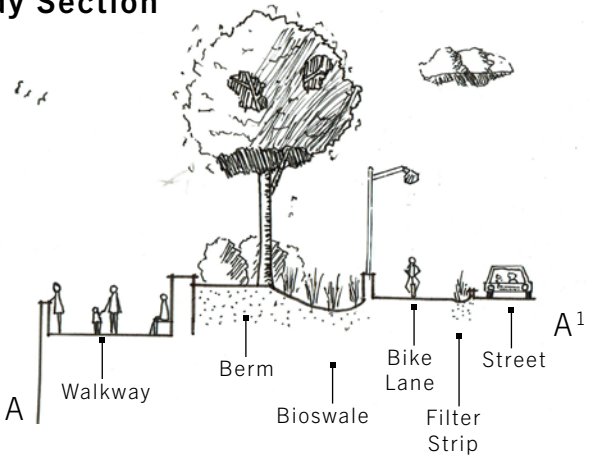
The design increases storm water capture by having multiple large scale bioswales spread throughout the park's watershed to manage runoff from the parking lot and from Coldwater Canyon. Other smaller scale treatment options are more artful to help showcase the value of storm water. Finally, a large flood-able meadow manages particularly large flows from Lancer Lane and Coldwater Canyon before releasing it into existing drainage infrastructure.

PROGRAMMING

Programming focuses on increasing every day utility to locals while improving linkages to the surrounding residences and LAVCC. The Art Exhibition Center features a second story for an institutional user like the Valley Neighborhood Council who are hosted next door at LAVCC or the Department of Cultural Affairs. Additional art walks, large scale art installations, and mural walls where graffiti is welcomed round out the park's programming.



Study Section

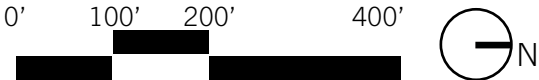


Funding and Phasing

Many of the storm water features can be funded via Measure W. The Upper Los Angeles River Watershed receives approximately \$39 million a year for storm water projects. This allows us to fund storm water features throughout the park in Phase 1 despite their extensive use. Art installations, a children's water play feature, and further linkages to the LAVCC Community College can be installed in Phase 2. A lack of sewer connection in the northern part of the park requires the commercial tenant to be on a septic system and thus, can be installed in Phase 2 after feasibility studies are conducted. Large structures like viewing platforms that require substantial engineering and multi-agency regulatory oversight are accomplished last in Phase 3.

Legend

- Phase 1: 1-5 Years
- Phase 2: 5-10 Years
- Phase 3: 10-15 Years
- Evergreen Trees
- Riparian Trees
- Flowering Trees



OPERA BOXES

DESIGN ALTERNATIVE 2

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DESIGN STATEMENT

Inspired by the intimate viewing experience of an opera box, this proposal transforms the Tujunga Greenbelt into a sequence of outdoor galleries where landscape and history are experienced together. Organized as a three-act journey, the design reimagines the park as a theater of history, where carefully framed moments of observation, learning, and gathering transform a linear walk into an immersive cultural experience.

DESIGN STRATEGIES

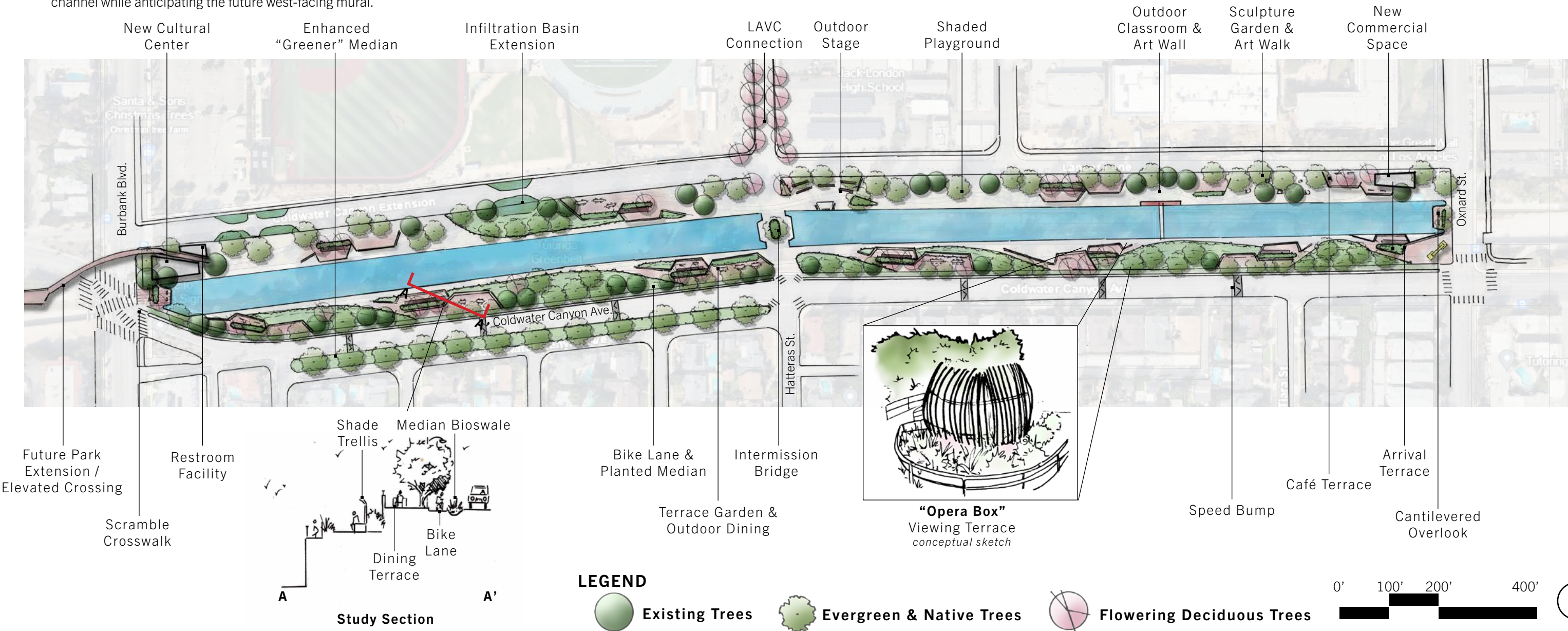
- **Opera Boxes:** Framed viewing in various elevated terraces encourage visitors to pause and experience individual chapters of the mural rather than simply passing by.
- **Three Acts:** The park unfolds as a theatrical journey from arrival & orientation, to climax with the various recreational and outdoor education spaces, to reflection in a cantilevered observation deck.
- **Intermission Crossing:** A central bridge creates a civic gathering space that offers new perspectives of the mural while connecting both sides of the channel.
- **Complementary Programming:** Educational, recreational, and community spaces activate the opposite side of the channel while anticipating the future west-facing mural.

RESPONDING TO THE SITE

- Redirects pedestrian circulation away from Coldwater Canyon Avenue and into the park, improving both safety and the quality of the visitor experience.
- Strengthens the tree canopy to buffer traffic noise, provide shade, and define a series of outdoor “theater rooms.”
- Creates welcoming gateways with cantilevered viewing terraces that announce arrival and establish the mural as the park’s focal point.

PROGRAMMING

The proposal integrates low impact development strategies to improve stormwater management while reinforcing the park experience. An existing detention basin is expanded to capture additional runoff, bioswales along Coldwater Canyon filter and infiltrate street runoff while buffering cyclists from traffic, and the eastern bank is reshaped to intercept and slow stormwater before it enters the channel. These interventions reduce runoff, improve water quality, and demonstrate how ecological infrastructure can become an educational feature within the landscape.



NEW CONNECTIONS

DESIGN ALTERNATIVE 3

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DESIGN STATEMENT

This design envisions new ways to connect — both to the adjacent geographic vicinity and to the artwork of the mural itself. Multiple pedestrian **Viewing Bridges** criss-cross the length of the channel and its adjacent channels, connecting one side to the other. From a bird’s-eye view, the effect reads as pieces of urban cloth being stitched together. Vertically, the bridges bring visitors closer to the mural itself, offering an immersive experience buffered by native vegetative screening.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

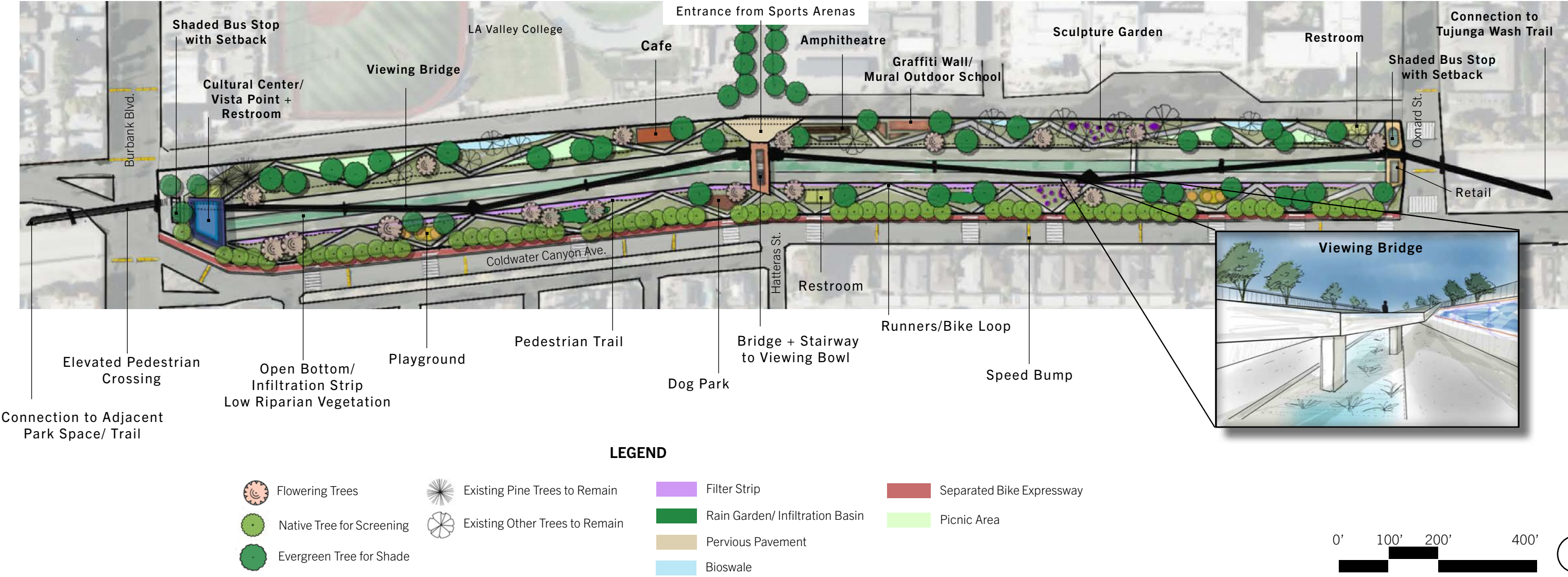
The center of the channel bottom will be opened up and planted with low riparian vegetation, functioning as a biofiltration basin. **Various stormwater BMPs** are distributed throughout the site to capture and redirect the neighborhood’s stormwater before it reaches the channel.

CIRCULATION

Coldwater Canyon Ave. is reworked with a planter-separated **Expressway Bike Lane**, along with speed bumps and stop-sign crosswalks to slow traffic. Inside the park, a zigzag route accommodates slow bikers and joggers, while a separate pedestrian-only trail runs the full length of the channel.

PROGRAMMING

Programming centers on building connection with the adjacent communities, expanding usability for neighborhood families and students, visitors from other parts of the city, and the public drawn in by college and high school sporting events. A parallel focus goes into **art programming** — a sculpture garden, amphitheater, cultural center, and a painting school dedicated to developing mural and graffiti technique. Restrooms and retail opportunities flank the park on both sides, supporting visitor retention and generating income.



VALLEY OF THE ARTS

FINAL CONCEPT & SOLUTION

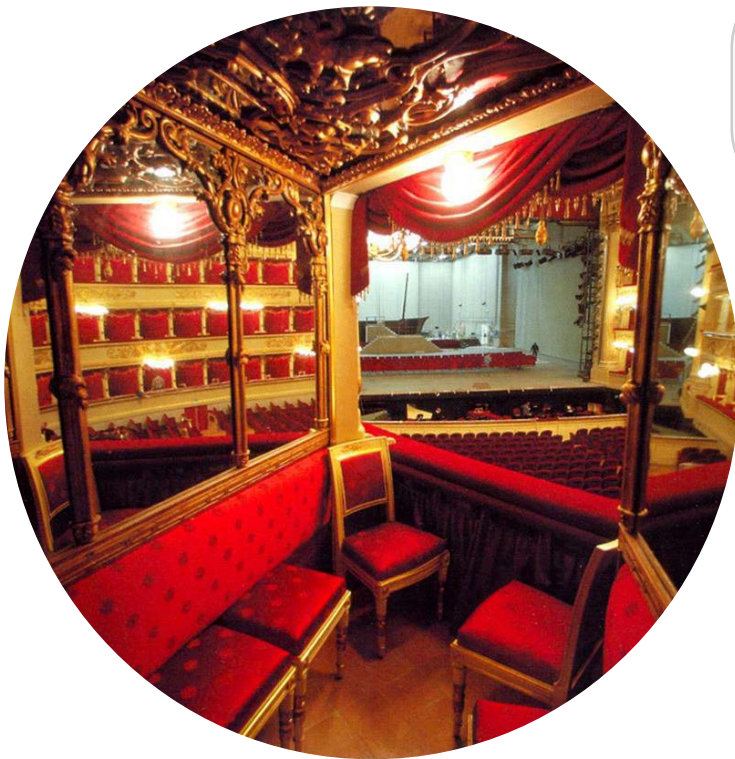
A NEW EXPERIENCE

The **Great Wall of Los Angeles** already makes this site extraordinary. It transforms an ordinary piece of infrastructure into a monumental record of people, culture, struggle, and belonging. **Valley of the Arts** begins with the belief that the landscape surrounding it should be just as meaningful.

Rather than treating the mural as an object to visit and leave, the park extends its story into the landscape. Art, education, play, performance, ecology, gathering and movement become part of the experience, creating new ways to encounter the mural and new reasons to spend time beside it, with four key goals in mind:

- 1 Draw people toward the wall.
- 2 Expand the art beyond the wall.
- 3 Invite participation through art, play, and performance.
- 4 Return people to the wall with a new perspective.

This new experience turns the mural from an edge into a center, and the park into a destination.



The **OPERA BOX** becomes the organizing idea for **Valley of the Arts**, turning the Great Wall into the stage and the park into the experience around it.



MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

No two boxes experience the performance in quite the same way. Across **Valley of the Arts**, the changes in the user perspective while navigating the park allows one to continually rediscover the Wall while revealing new layers of the landscape.

AUDIENCE & PARTICIPATION

Opera comes alive through the presence of an audience. **Valley of the Arts** builds that same energy by giving people reasons to stay, learn, play, create, and perform. It's no longer simply a space to pass through.

FRAMED VANTAGE

From an opera box, the stage is only part of the experience. The view also takes in the audience, the architecture, and the larger theater itself. **Valley of the Arts** carries that idea into the park, where the Great Wall remains the anchor but the surrounding landscape is designed to offer more to see, experience, and discover.



The Great Wall gave this place a voice. **Valley of the Arts** gives it a stage.

VALLEY OF THE ARTS

Great Wall of Los Angeles Master Plan

\$\$\$ - Phased High Budget

DESIGN STATEMENT

This design is inspired by the **opera boxes** found at opera houses. The metaphor of the opera box is extended by creating viewing platforms that are cantilevered over the edge of the Wash, allowing for **new angles** and **closer observations**. Our design embraces cultural interventions like sculpture walks, performance spaces, and graffiti murals. The mural takes the **center stage** within a new culture park.

STORM WATER

Storm water is captured via multiple **large scale bioswales** spread throughout the park's watershed to manage runoff from impervious surfaces. Smaller scale interventions are more artful to showcase the value of storm water. Large **floodable meadows** manage flows from adjacent streets. Subterranean **infiltration galleries** create district scale stormwater infiltration at either end of the park.

PROGRAMMING

Programming focuses on increasing **every day utility** to locals while **improving linkages** to the surrounding residences and LAVCC. Space for an **institutional user** like the Valley Neighborhood Council or the Department of Cultural Affairs ensures stewardship of the park. Additional **art walks**, large scale **art installations**, and **graffiti mural walls** round out the park's programming.



Stormwater Mitigation Practices

- 1 Subsurface Infiltration Gallery
- 2 Stormwater Meadow
- 3 Stormwater Bioswale
- 4 Vegetated Low Flow Channel
- 5 Infiltration Basin
- 6 Stormwater Sculpture Meadow
- 7 Subsurface Infiltration Gallery

Funding and Phasing

Phase 1: 1-5 Years

Stormwater improvements can be phased in earlier due to funding from local and state governments.

- **Measure W:** \$39 million per year for Upper Los Angeles River Watershed projects that clean and infiltrate water.
- **Proposition O:** State Bond that funds projects which clean up and filter stormwater before its discharged into rivers and oceans.

Phase 2: 5-10 Years

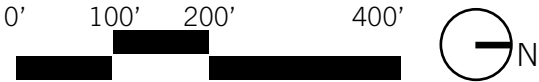
Art improvements can be phased in second as funding is more limited than stormwater funding.

- **California Arts Council Grant:** State grant program focused on impact projects, arts and youth.
- **DCA's 1% for Capital Projects:** Local program that allocates 1% of the construction budget of capital improvements goes to art.

Phase 3: 10-15 Years

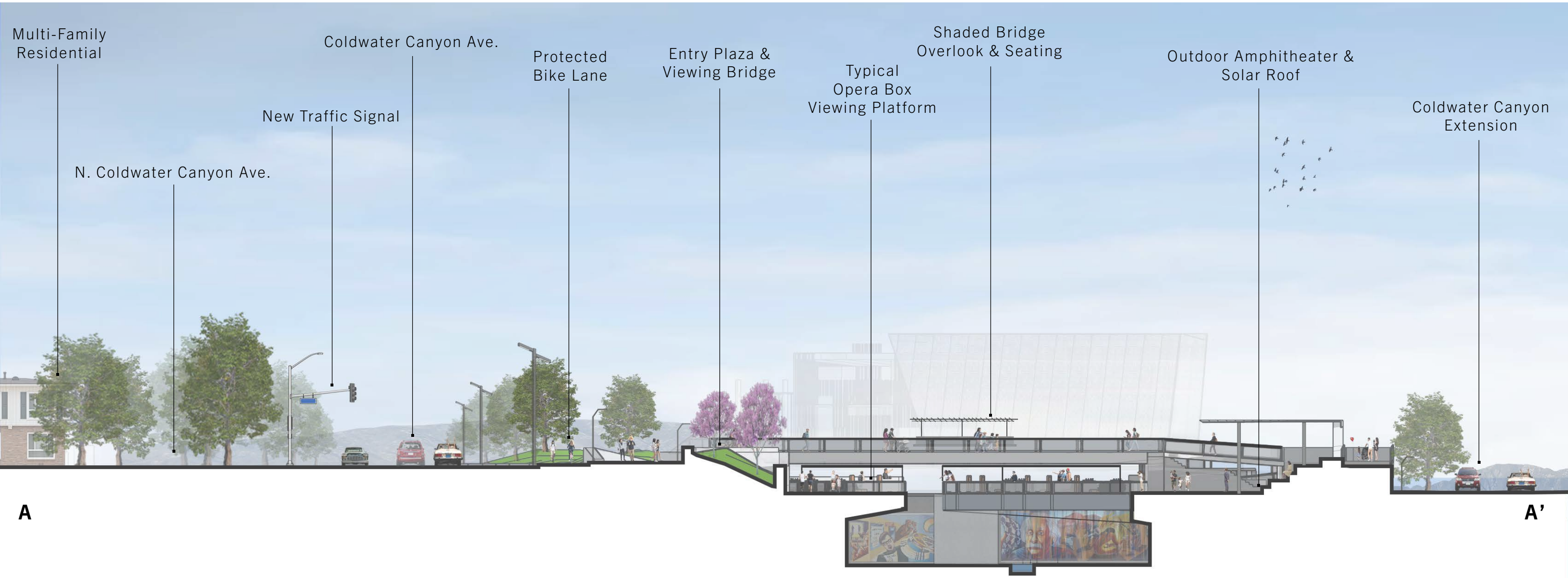
Pedestrian links can be built last since their construction is contingent on the surrounding parks.

- **Metro MAT:** Funded by Measure M, allocates money for walking, biking and scooting
- **California Active Transportation Program:** State funding meant for bike paths and pedestrian safety improvements.

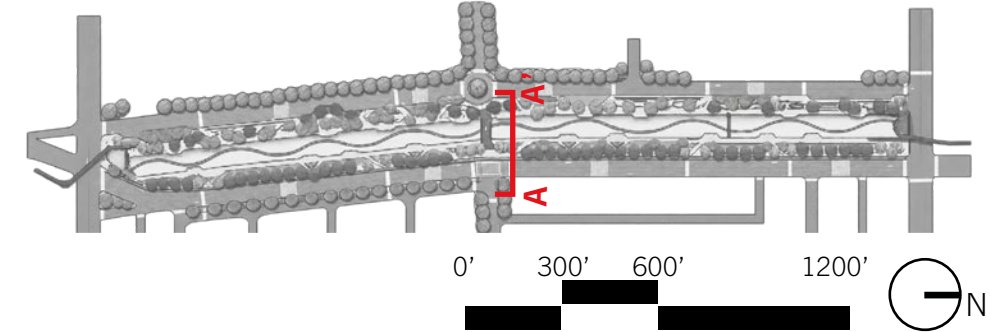


SECTION ELEVATION

A - A' LOOKING SOUTH

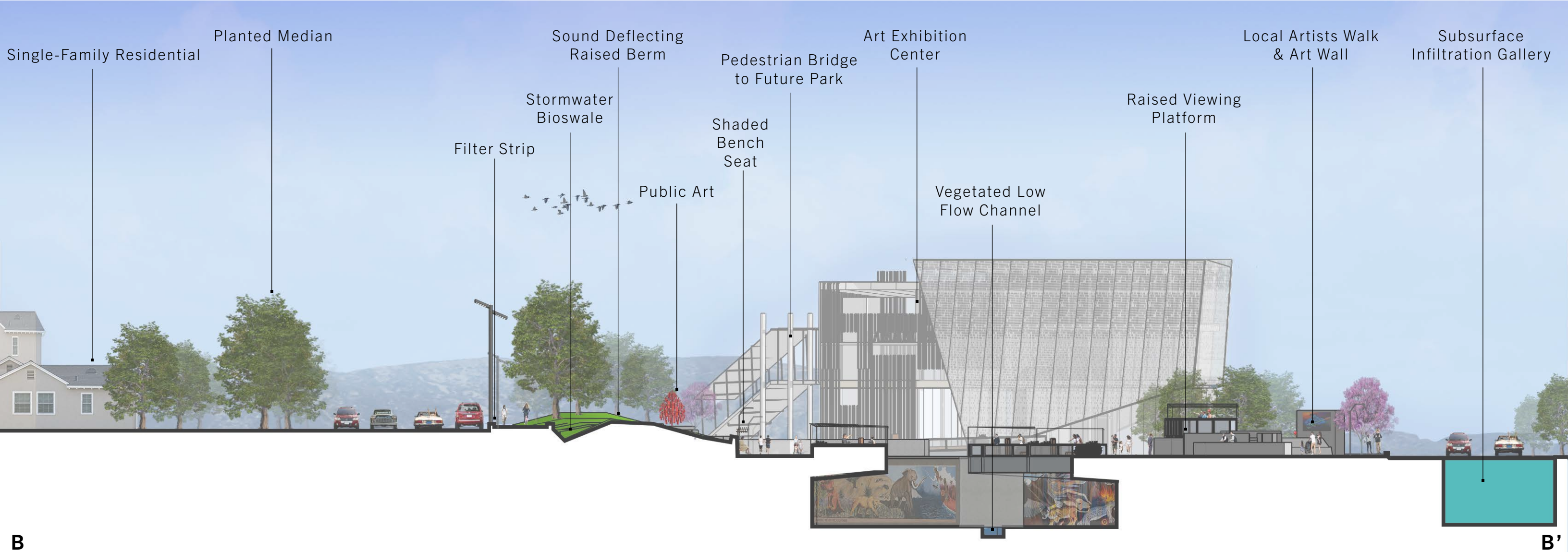


KEY MAP

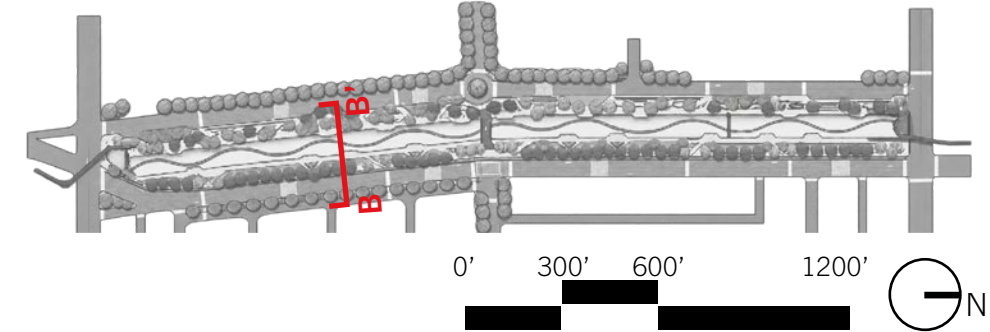


SECTION ELEVATION

B - B' LOOKING SOUTH



KEY MAP



PERSPECTIVE

OPERA BOX OVERLOOK



PERSPECTIVE

MURAL SCHOOL & AMPHITHEATER



PERSPECTIVE

CAFE TERRACE & DINING PLATFORM



PERSPECTIVE

NORTH ARRIVAL GATEWAY / COLDWATER & OXNARD



PERSPECTIVE

MID-PARK ENTRY PLAZA / COLDWATER & HATTERAS



PERSPECTIVE

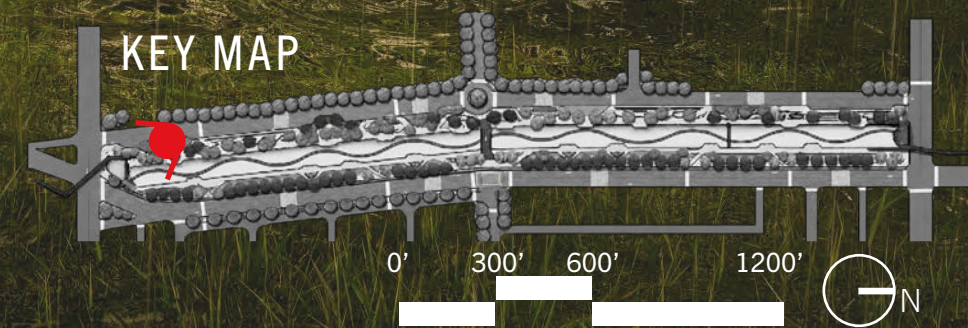
STORMWATER MEADOW & SEASONAL HIGH CHANNEL



Storm Event Flow

Infiltration Basin

Coldwater Canyon Extension



PERSPECTIVE

STORMWATER SCLUPTURE MEADOW



Infiltration Basin

Floodable Sculpture Meadow

LADWP Utility Pipe

Curb Cut

Pipe Sculpted Art Installation

KEY MAP

0' 300' 600' 1200'



PERSPECTIVE

STORMWATER BIOSWALE



Filter Strip

Bike Lane

Stormwater Bioswale

Raised Berm

KEY MAP



PERSPECTIVE SOUTH ARRIVAL GATEWAY / BURBANK BLVD. & COLDWATER CANYON EXT.



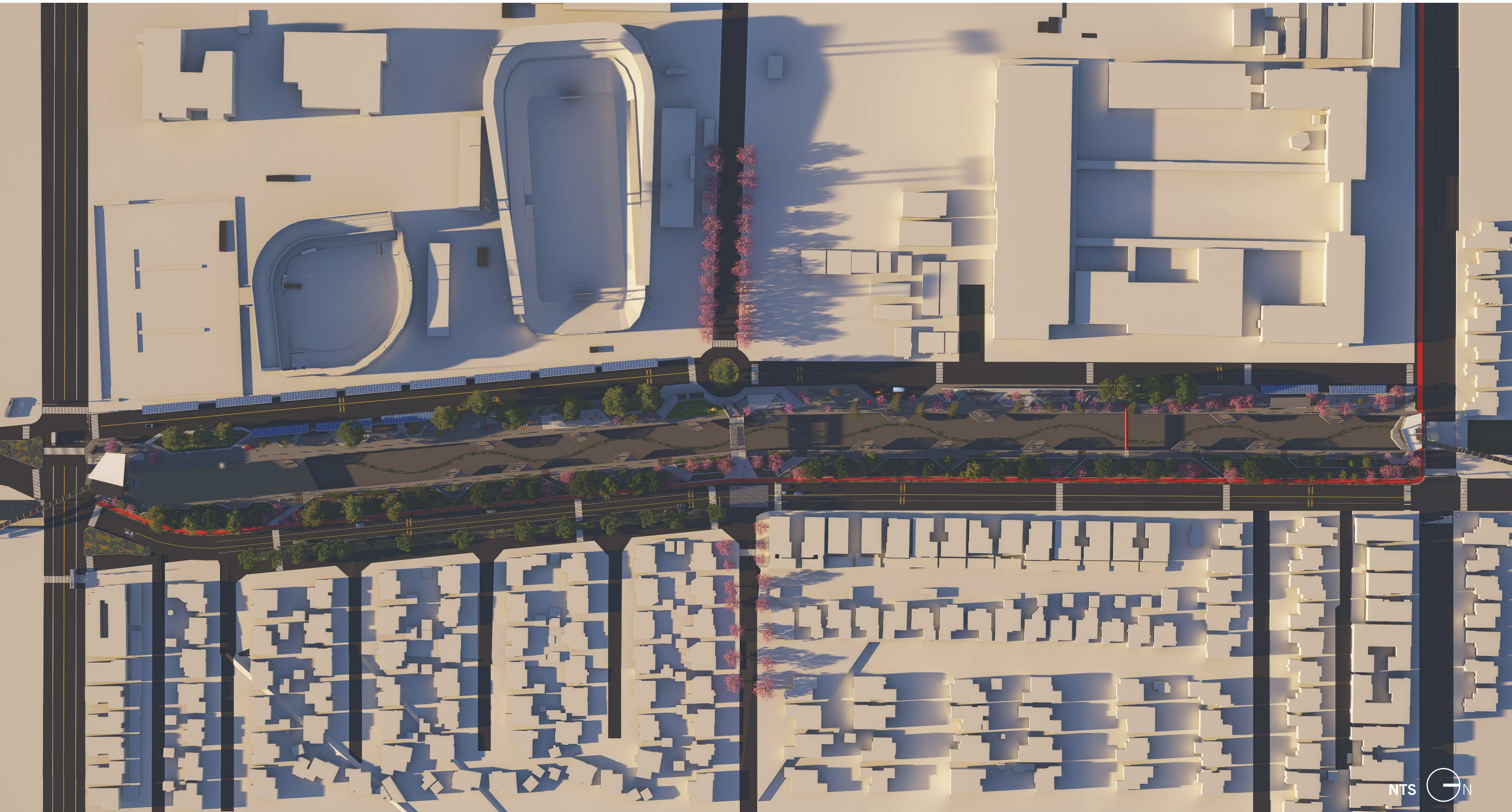
SITE IN MOTION

CLICK THE QR CODE BELOW



<https://vimeo.com/1225080538?fl=pl&fe=sh>

THANK YOU



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Unless otherwise noted, all photography, graphics, renderings, and design work are original work by the project team.