

An aerial perspective rendering of a park master plan. The design features a network of winding, light-colored paths that meander through a landscape filled with lush green trees. The paths are bordered by low, light-colored walls. In the upper left, a paved road with a crosswalk and a few cars is visible. The overall scene is bright and detailed, showing various park amenities like benches and small trees along the paths.

The Great Wall of LA Arts & Culture Park Master Plan

LD6: Concept Development
Summer 2026 | Steven Chavez
James Kang

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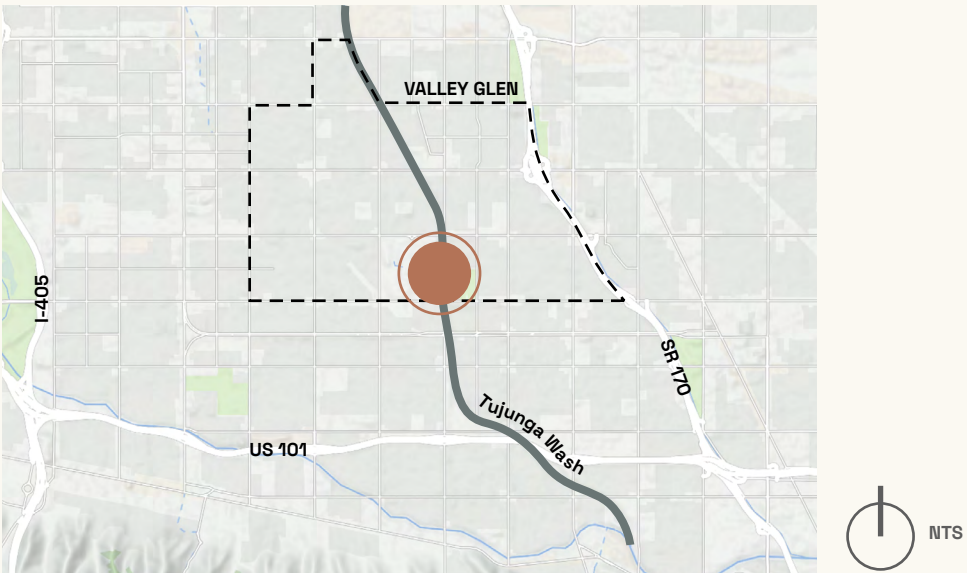
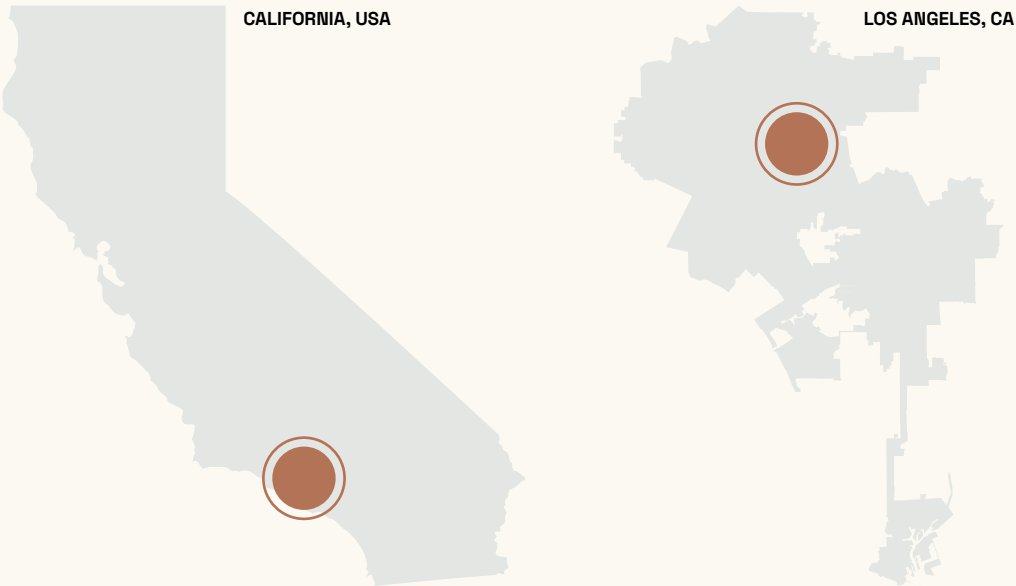
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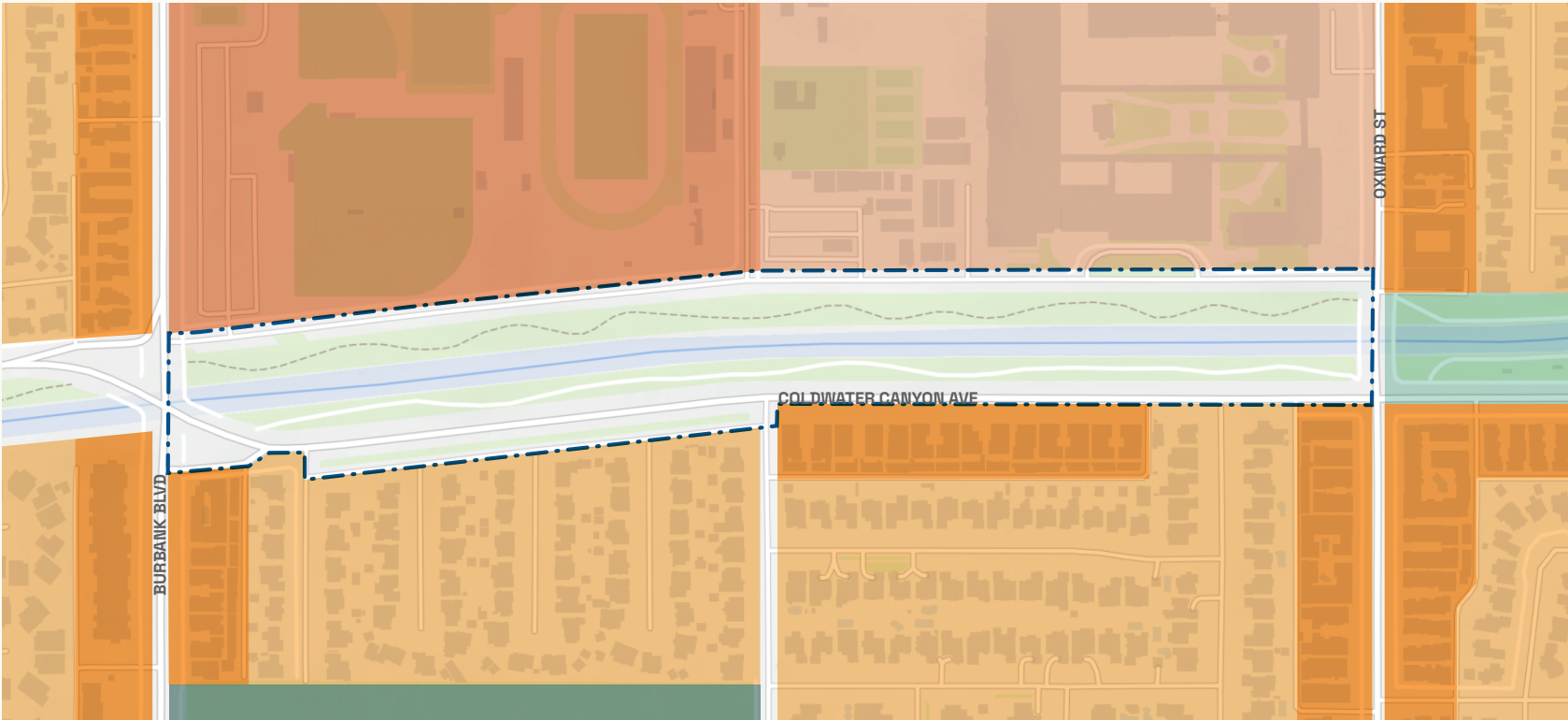
Site Overview



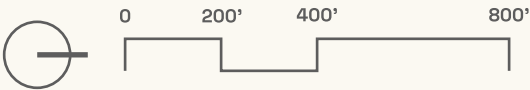
The site is located along the **Tujunga Wash** in Valley Glen, in the San Fernando Valley, extending between Oxnard Street and Burbank Boulevard near Coldwater Canyon Avenue.

The Tujunga Wash is a tributary of the Los Angeles River. It runs 13 miles total and drains about 225 square miles of the **San Gabriel Mountains** watershed. A nine-mile concrete-lined section of the channel, including this reach, was built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers between 1950 and 1952 for flood control. The channel walls at this stretch are roughly **13.5 feet high**.

Los Angeles Valley College, Ulysses S. Grant High School, and Jack London High School are located along the west side of the site. **Multi- and single family residential neighborhoods** border the east side. The channel separates the institutional and residential zones, with a limited number of pedestrian and vehicular crossings connecting the two sides.



- LEGENDS
- LA Valley College
 - Ulysses S. Grant & Jack London High School
 - Tujunga Wash Greenway & Stream Restoration Project
 - Single Family Residential
 - Multi-family Residential
 - Radio Broadcast Towers



Site History



TONGVA/TUJUBIT SETTLEMENT

The Tujubit people—part of the Tongva/Fernandeño nation—inhabit the San Fernando Valley for thousands of years. Their village of Tuyunga (“old woman’s place”) sits along a living, braided wash sustaining oak woodland and chaparral. Spanish colonization begins in 1769, displacing this stewardship permanently.

TUJUNGA WASH CHANNELIZED

Following the catastrophic 1938 flood, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers encases the Tujunga Wash in a concrete flood control channel as part of the largest building project in American history. The living river becomes a scar. Groundwater recharge drops from ~80% to ~8% of rainfall; riparian habitat is lost entirely.

GREAT WALL OF LOS ANGELES PAINTED

In 1974 the Army Corps approaches muralist Judy Baca to beautify the channel. Baca sees the concrete as a wound and conceives the mural as “a tattoo on the scar where the river once ran.” Over five summers, 400+ youth aged 14–21 co-author 2,754 ft of California’s hidden history—prehistory through the 1950s—becoming one of the longest murals in the world

TUJUNGA WASH GREENWAY CONSTRUCTED

Ecological restoration begins alongside cultural repair. A 1.2-mile riparian greenway is established within a 50-ft corridor alongside the channel, planting 19,000+ native trees, shrubs, and groundcovers. A naturalized stream diverts flow from the concrete channel, recharging 118M gal/yr into the San Fernando groundwater basin—partially restoring what channelization erased.

GWOLA ARTS & CULTURE PARK

The Great Wall is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (2017) and fully restored. New mural panels covering the 1960s–90s are in design, a pedestrian bridge with laser-cut ecological railings was completed in 2024, and mural lighting is installed for the first time. The master plan envisions the next act of reclamation—ecological, cultural, and energetic.

Site Inventory

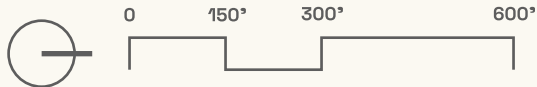
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LEGENDS

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
|  Judy Baca's The Great Wall of Los Angeles Mural |  Chain-link Fence |  Rainwater Collection Bioswale |
|  Future Extension of The Great Wall of Los Angeles Mural |  Municipal Water Line |  Entrance Signage |
| |  Picnic Table |  Existing Tree Canopy |



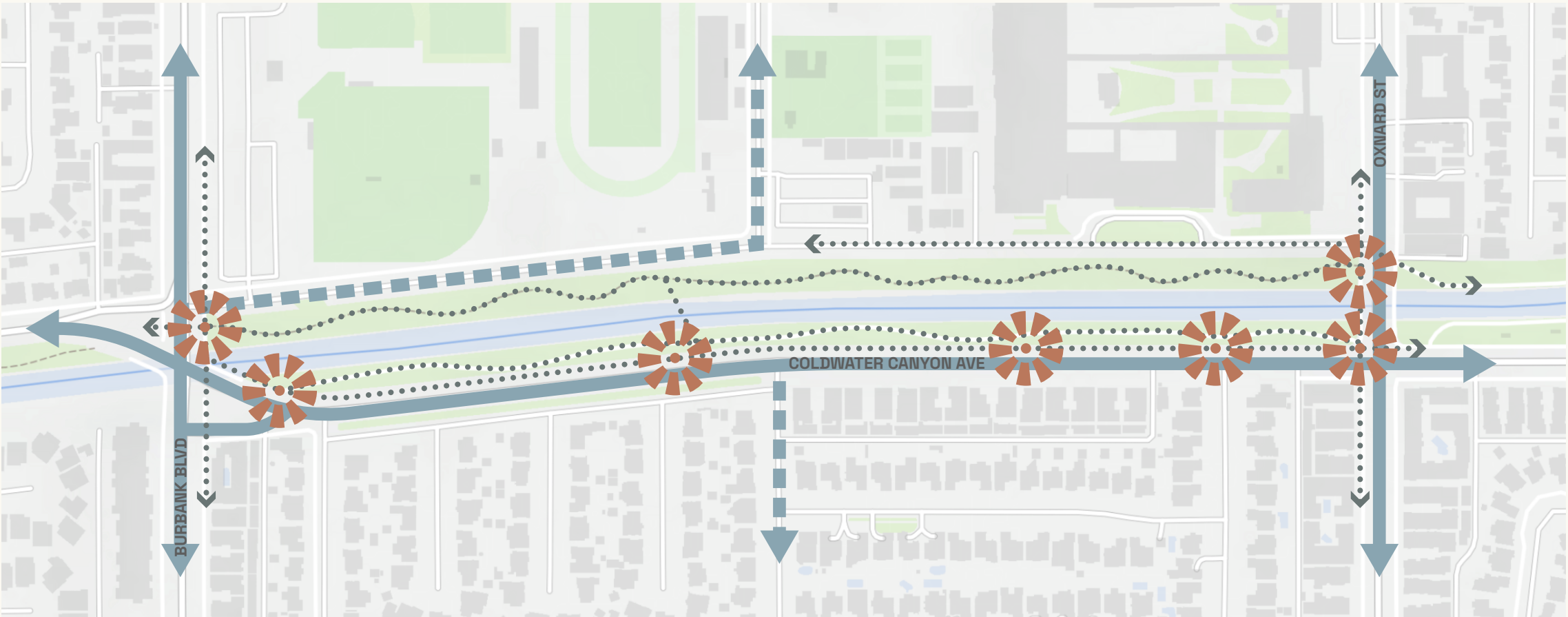
The site is defined by the **Tujunga Wash**, a concrete flood-control channel that serves as its primary infrastructural spine, with no public access to the channel bottom. An **elevated water pipe** crosses the channel, enclosed by its own fencing and fixed in place, unable to be relocated. Southwest of the site, **six bioswale** capture systems run along the Coldwater Canyon Extension, supporting groundwater recharge. **Chain-link** security fencing lines both channel edges, restricting visual and physical access to the wash.

The Great Wall of Los Angeles **mural** runs along the west wall, with a future extension planned along the east wall. A **pedestrian bridge** crosses the channel, currently one of the few connections between its east and west sides, alongside **two entrance signage** markers that provide the site's only existing wayfinding.

Amenities on site remain minimal: a small number of **picnic tables** and benches offer seating but no shade coverage, while **bus stops** along Oxnard St and Burbank Blvd serve the site's north and south edges. Street trees line the pedestrian path but are absent directly over the channel.

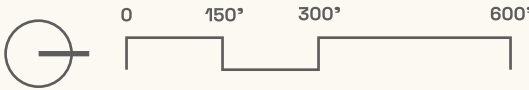
Site Analysis

Circulation



LEGENDS

- Primary Vehicular Circulation
- Secondary Vehicular Circulation
- Pedestrian Circulation
- Entrances



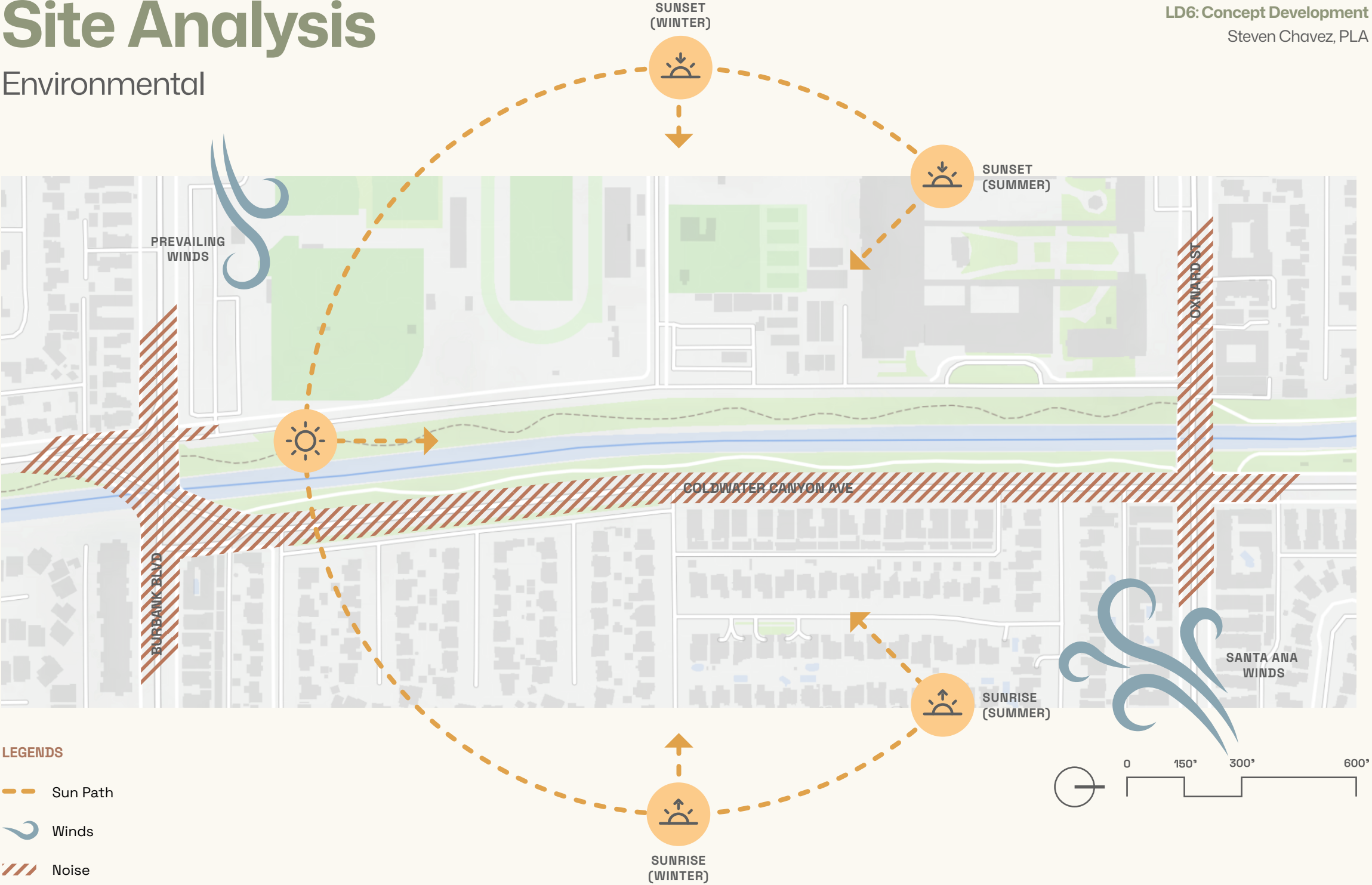
High-speed traffic runs along Coldwater Canyon Ave, Burbank Blvd, and Oxnard St on three sides of the park, with **street parking** available along the Coldwater Canyon Extension on the west side. A **staff-only road** interrupts the western edge, separating the Coldwater Canyon Extension from Oxnard St.

Two trails run along either side of the channel, **decomposed granite** on the west and **asphalt** on the east, but neither forms a continuous loop; visitors must exit onto Burbank Blvd or Oxnard St to cross between sides. A single **pedestrian bridge** crosses the channel at mid-site, but it isn't aligned to any path axis or site node on either bank.

Multiple **bus and Metro lines stop** at Burbank Blvd and Oxnard St. Of the park's seven **perimeter entrances**, five are unmarked, with access occurring informally wherever the grass meets the adjacent sidewalk. Four-way crosswalks exist at the main corner intersections along Burbank Blvd and Oxnard St, but no controlled crossing exists at Hatteras St, at the park's midpoint. No dedicated bike infrastructure exists on any adjacent street; cyclists currently share travel lanes with vehicular traffic on all sides of the park.

Site Analysis

Environmental



The **sun** travels directly east to west over the site, and the west-facing mural wall receives intense direct afternoon sun. Existing tree canopy provides shade along portions of the greenway trails, but the mural wall and park perimeter lack canopy cover entirely, leaving them fully exposed.

The San Fernando Valley runs significantly hotter than coastal LA, as the Santa Monica Mountains block marine fog and sea breezes, intensifying heat accumulation on site. A weak **southwest thermal wind** funnels through the Cahuenga/Sepulveda Pass, a muted, warmer version of the coastal breeze rather than the breeze itself. **Seasonal northeast winds** bring hot, dry conditions in fall and winter, and the channel's orientation funnels and accelerates airflow along the corridor during these events.

High-volume commuter traffic on Coldwater Canyon Ave, Burbank Blvd, and Oxnard St generates substantial, continuous **noise** along the east, north, and south edges of the park. By contrast, the edge adjacent to Grant High School and LA Valley College is substantially quieter than the boulevard-facing sides.

Site Analysis

Topography

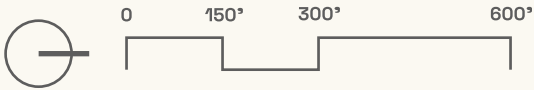


The site reads as predominantly flat in visitor experience, with a slight slope running north to south, parallel to the direction of water flow in the channel. It also slopes north to west, with a 6 ft elevation drop from the Coldwater Canyon Blvd sidewalk down to the flood control channel wall.

The channel itself is **box-shaped concrete**, with **16 ft** walls dropping vertically from pedestrian level; visitors view the mural by looking across the channel and angled downward. Six **rainwater collection bioswales** are installed in the street at the southwest corner by the Coldwater Canyon Extension, capturing stormwater runoff from the adjacent roadway. Overflow from these stormwater structures drains directly to the LA River, with no additional filtration or capture infrastructure beyond that southwest corner.

LEGENDS

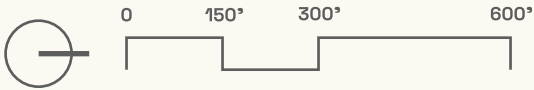
- Surface Drainage
- Storm Drain Inlets
- Storm Pipe Drainage
- Rainwater Collection Bioswale



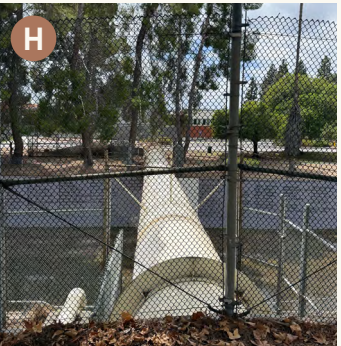
Site Constraints

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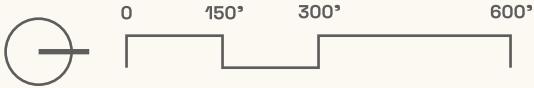
- A** No shade beyond a few tree pockets along the path; mural walls have no canopy
- B** Coldwater Canyon Ave. brings noise, pollution, and pedestrian risk; runoff drains untreated into the channel, worsening downstream contamination
- C** Pedestrians must enter busy Oxnard/Burbank traffic to cross the channel
- D** No crosswalk or entrance at Hatteras St. for central access
- E** Signage and entrances don't attract, invite, or educate visitors, sit next to busy streets, and offer no interpretive info on the mural, park, or channel
- F** Mural sits below grade, visible only behind chain-link fencing
- G** Viewing bridge is awkwardly placed and disconnected from access points; mural's chronological subject calls for a sequential path, not a single viewpoint
- H** Large utility line crosses the channel above grade, an unremovable eyesore
- I** West-side bioswales lack overflow piping and tree canopy
- J** Minimal seating, no space for groups, and no restrooms, drinking fountains, or bike parking
- K** Bus benches lack shade, steps from traffic
- L** Chain-link fencing restricts access and reads as unwelcoming



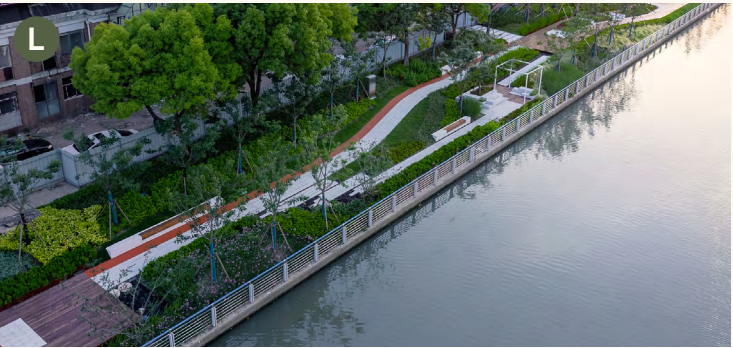
Site Opportunities

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- A** Meandering mural path plus a running lane
- B** Narrow Coldwater Canyon Ave with a crosswalk and set-back buffer: solar/acoustic, moss filtration at gateways, open at crossings
- C** Safe crossings at Burbank Blvd and Oxnard St
- D** Connect to the Tujunga Wash Greenway
- E** Elevated walkway linking Greenway to Hatteras St, crossing the mural path at key moments, with public art, a wind pergola, and environmental interpretation
- F** Viewing platform for fish and bird habitat, framing mountains to ocean
- G** Enclose the utility pipe in a new bridge, resolving the eyesore and adding a crossing; existing bridge becomes secondary
- H** Wayfinding and interpretive signage on the mural, park, and flood channel
- I** Seating, picnic areas, shaded bus stops, drinking fountains, café and visitor center with restrooms and bike parking
- J** Rethink channel fencing to balance safety with connection
- K** Solar lighting distinguishing mural glow from walkway at night
- L** Stormwater network: capture, infiltration, filtration, with a sunken strip across Coldwater Canyon Ave
- M** Restore habitat on-site and in the channel, with a soft-bottom treatment

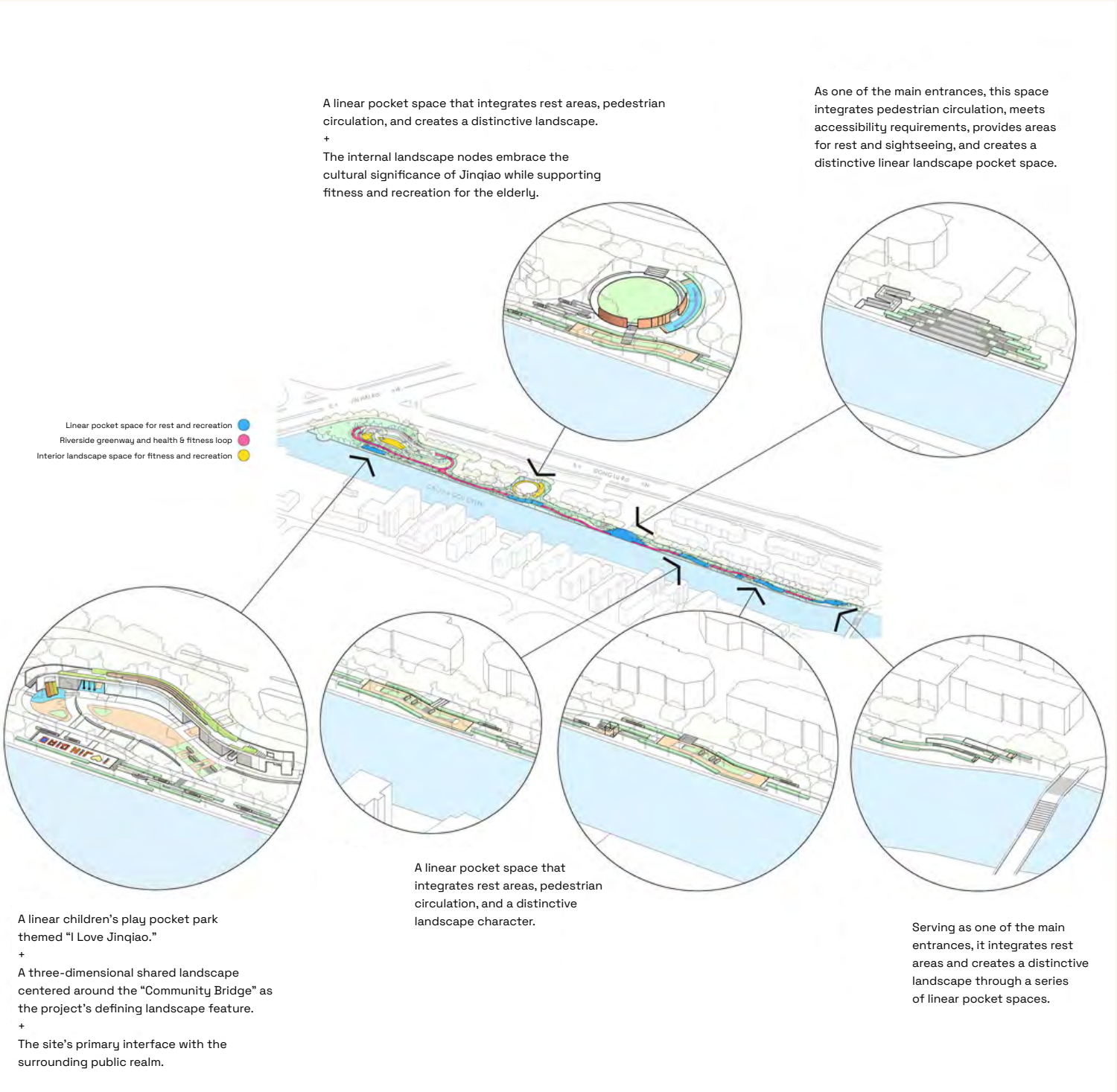


Case Studies 01

Jinqiao Caojiagou Riverfront

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Location: Shanghai, China

Architects: VIASCAPE design

Area: 0.3 miles (~3.2 acres)

Year Completed: 2021

Site Context:

A minor tributary of the Huangpu River, largely overlooked compared to Shanghai's major waterways. Before renewal, the riverfront was enclosed, poorly maintained, and disconnected from daily life. About 70% of the site is only 39 ft wide, so the design had to address how to keep a narrow strip from feeling monotonous.

What Worked:

The "ribbon pocket" strategy turned a narrow, overlooked corridor into an actual destination by breaking one continuous path into separate nodes, each with its own purpose, culture, fitness, play. The Community Bridge is a strong example: the leftover space beneath it became the site's most active area.

What Could Be Improved:

Project materials make no mention of stormwater treatment, habitat, or water quality, despite this being a riverfront project. The design appears to focus entirely on social program and largely skips the ecological side. That's worth watching for GWoLA, where the cultural and ecological pieces need to work together rather than one carrying the whole project.

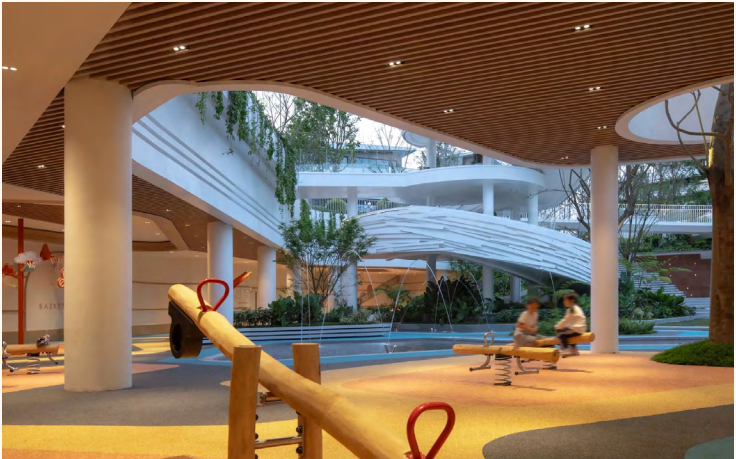
"Jinqiao Caojiagou Riverfront Renewal Design / VIASCAPE design."
ArchDaily, November 9, 2023. <https://www.archdaily.com/1009438/jinqiao-caojiagou-riverfront-renewal-design-viascape-design>

Case Studies 02

Chongqing Luyue Jiangcheng Lushi Peninsula

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Location: Yuelai, Chongqing

Architects: 5+Design Architectural Firm

Area: ~14.6 acres

Year Completed: 2024

Site Context:
A residential development built on a site with 98–131 ft of elevation change, a dramatic grade shift, though not unusual for a city as hilly as Chongqing. The core design problem was connecting these different levels into one cohesive experience.

What Worked:
The Cloud Bridge, descending gradually from about 26 ft to 13 ft, and the woven Bird’s Nest tower both resolve the elevation problem without relying on stairs or elevators the entire way. It’s a strong example of a structure that changes height gradually rather than all at once, close to what’s being proposed for the GWoLA elevated walkway.

What Could Be Improved:
This is private housing, which limits how public the space actually is compared to GWoLA. There’s also no documented stormwater or habitat strategy, which is notable given how much new structure and hardscape the project introduces. It reads as a largely aesthetic and circulation-driven project rather than one considering ecological performance.

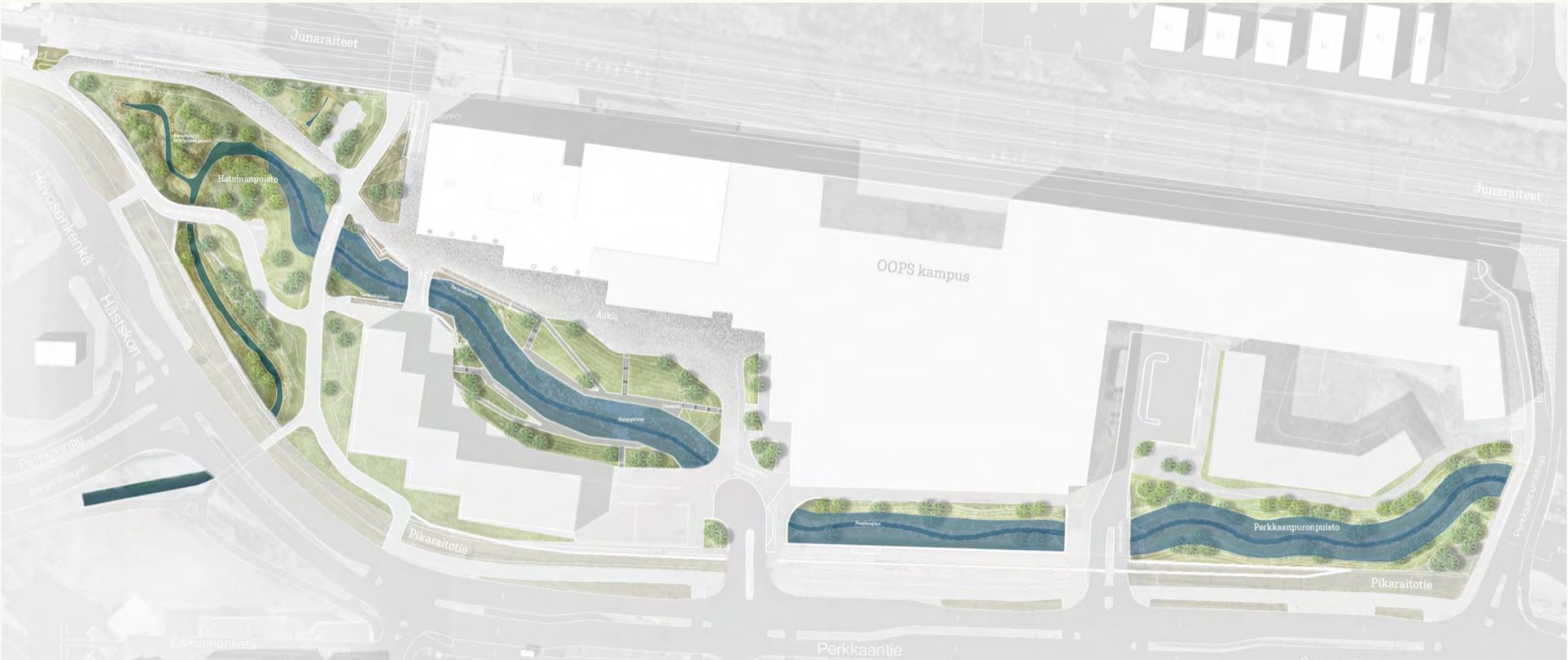
“Chongqing Luyue Jiangcheng Lushi Peninsula by BLUES.” moool. <https://moool.com/chongqing-luyue-jiangcheng-lushi-peninsula-by-blues.html>

Case Studies 03

Hatsinanpuisto

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Location: Espoo (Helsinki metro area), Finland

Architects: Loci Landscape Architects

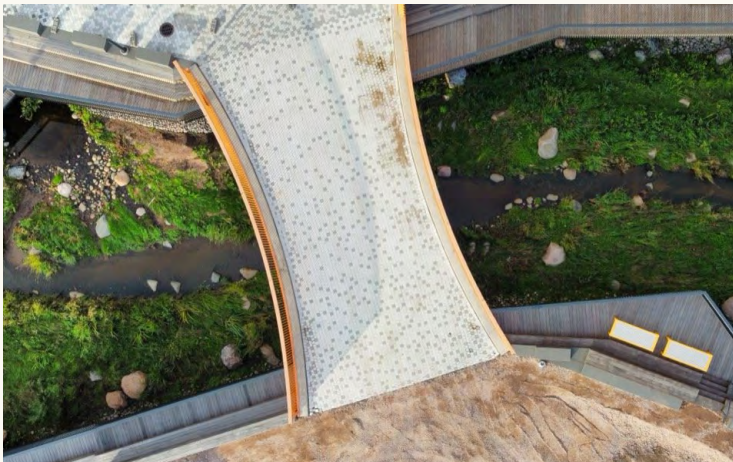
Area: ~4.2 acres

Year Completed: 2024

Site Context:
A former “in-between space” near a busy train station, bordered by roads and a railway. The Monikonpuro creek crosses the site, a valuable trout habitat and a highly flood-prone urban stream, with its relocation making room for adjacent offices, retail, and a hotel while preserving trout habitat.

What Worked:
High retaining walls protecting the surrounding plots from flooding are integrated into the park with connecting seating platforms, inviting people to socialize by the water even during flood events, rather than hiding the infrastructure. Flood-sensitive planting and restored spawning gravel beds have brought trout, trout fry, and even an otter back to the site, earning Finland’s Environmental Structure of the Year award in 2024.

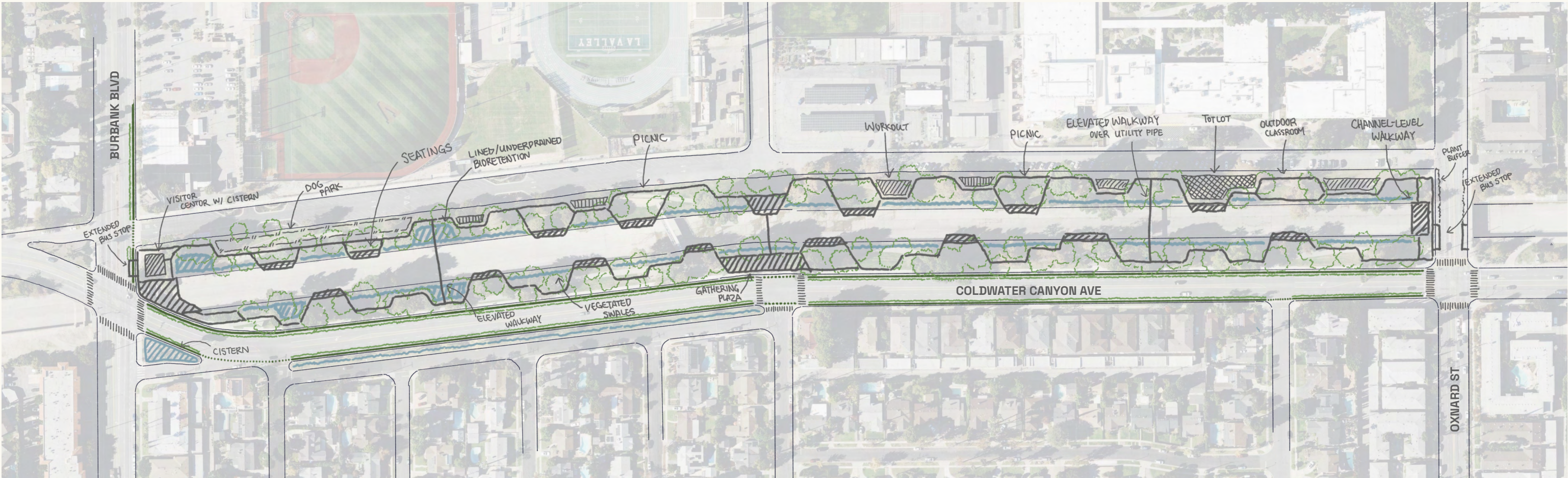
What Could Be Improved:
Relocating the creek bed took multiple construction phases, a major engineering effort that isn’t possible for GWoLA, since the channel wall holds the existing mural and can’t be altered or moved. The habitat restoration here was also partly driven by a need to free up land for new offices and a hotel, not purely ecological or public goals.



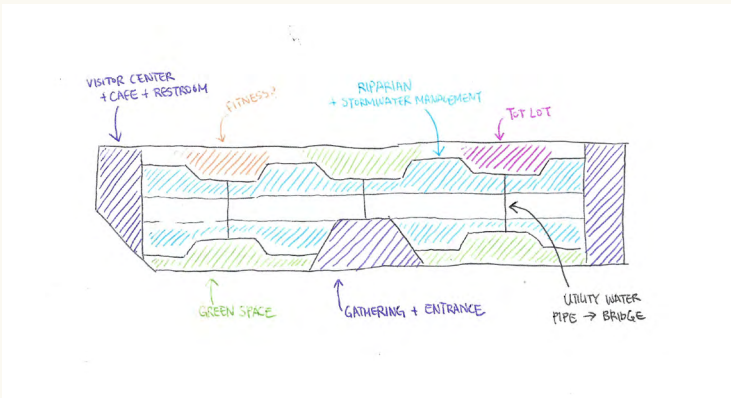
“Tujunga Wash Greenway and Stream Restoration Project.”
Landscape Performance Series, Landscape Architecture Foundation.
<https://www.landscapeperformance.org/case-study-briefs/tujunga-wash-greenway-and-stream-restoration-project>

Design Alternative 01

Stitching the Wound



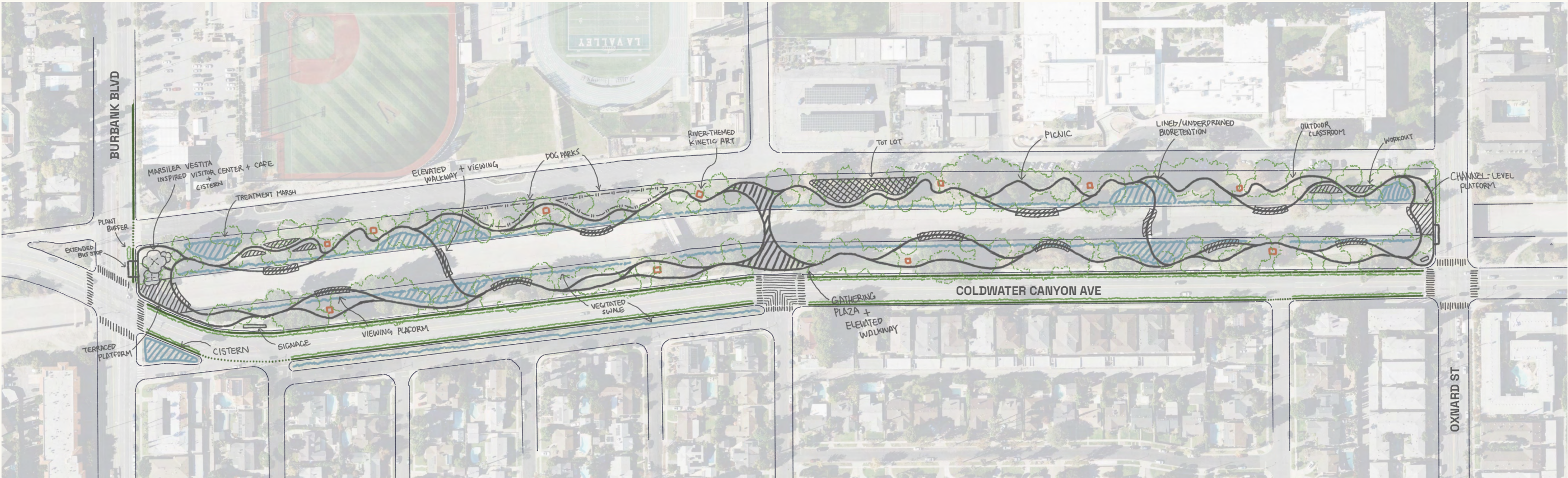
This concept reads the channelized Tujunga Wash as a **scar** across Valley Glen and uses an **orthogonal circulation system** to stitch it back together. Three **pedestrian bridges**—a central bridge aligned with Hatteras Street and flanked by **gathering plazas**, an elevated walkway over the existing utility pipe, and a third crossing for visual balance—knit both banks together at regular intervals. The path occasionally extends over the channel itself, bringing visitors closer to the **mural** and creating **edge seating**, while platforms at both ends allow safe crossing where the corridor meets the street. Program includes a **visitor center with cistern, dog park, picnic area, tot lot, and outdoor classroom**. Stormwater is managed through a layered system of **vegetated swales, lined/underdrained bioretention, and cisterns**—**closing the wound** while keeping the water visible and integrated into daily use.



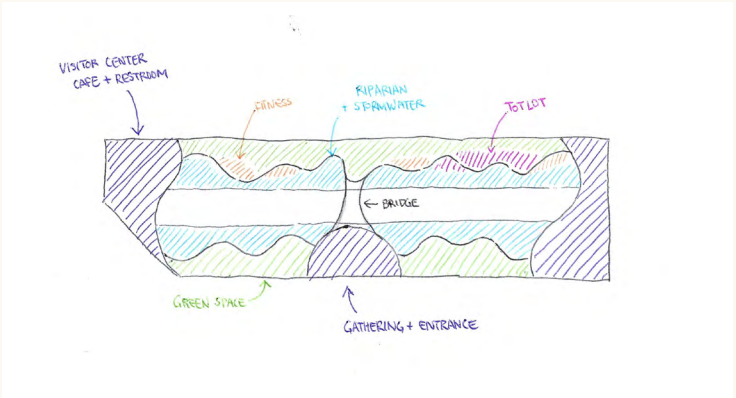
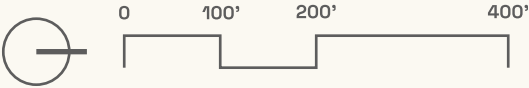
PART I

Design Alternative 02

River Flow



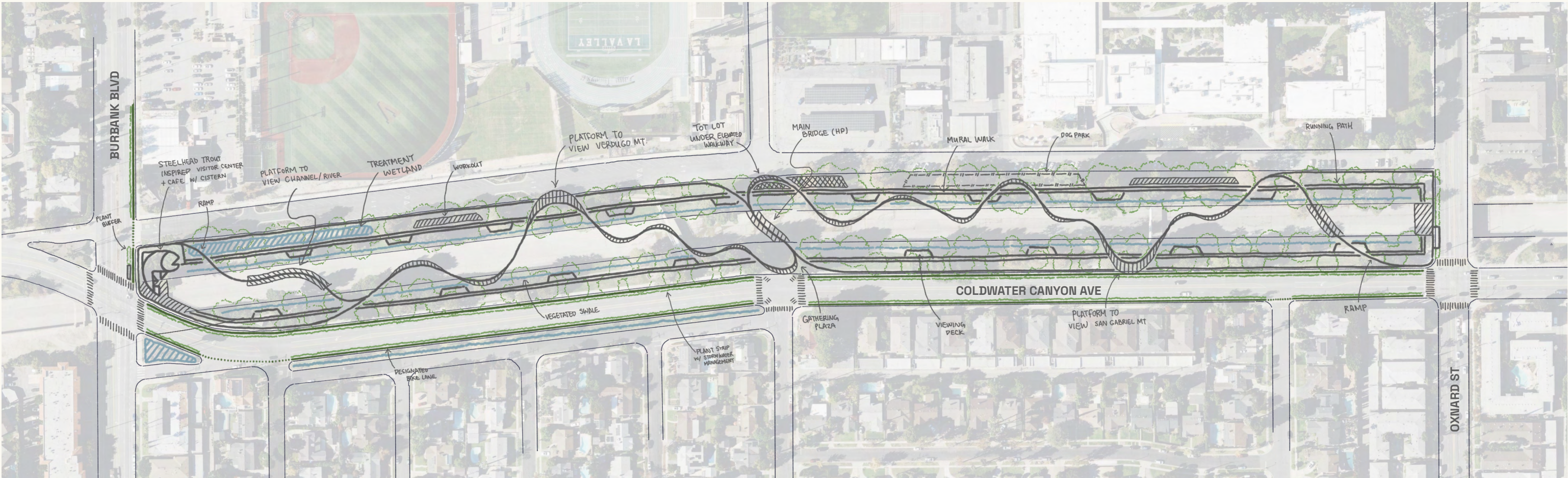
This concept uses **curvilinear circulation** to mimic a **natural river form**, echoing the wash’s **pre-channelization meander**. Art is woven along the path against the **mural backdrop**, and the path occasionally extends over the channel to create **waterside seating**. The **visitor center** takes its form from **Marsilea vestita** and also houses a café, restrooms, and a cistern. A **central pedestrian bridge** opens into a larger **gathering plaza** at Coldwater Canyon Avenue, while two **elevated walkways** on either side double as **viewing platforms** for spotting **trout resting pockets** in the channel below. Program includes a **dog park**, **tot lot**, **picnic areas**, and an **outdoor classroom**. Stormwater is managed through a **lined/underdrained bioretention system** and **vegetated swales**, while **terraced platforms** allow visitors to view the channel and cross it safely—mimicking a **living river system** while keeping habitat, art, and water in constant view.



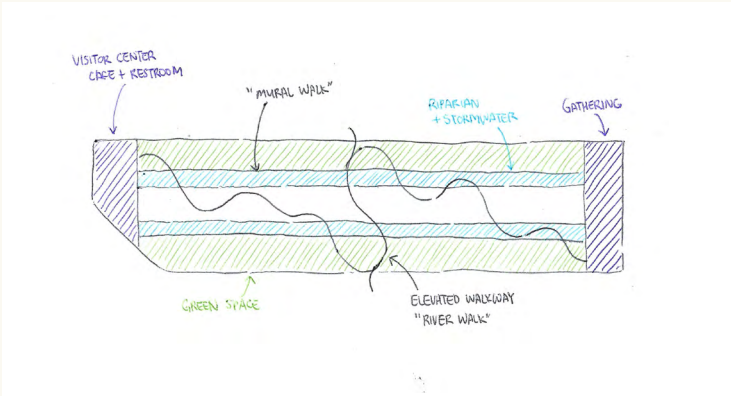
PART I

Design Alternative 03

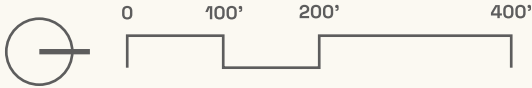
Hybrid



This concept creates **two distinct, parallel paths** rather than blending grid and meander into one. A **ground-level mural walk** with **pause nooks** pairs with a separate **running path** to form a **~1.25-mile loop**, while an **elevated river walk** meanders above, framing views of Verdugo Mountain, San Gabriel Mountain, and Tujunga Wash. The space beneath the elevated walk is activated with a **gathering plaza** at Coldwater Canyon Avenue and a **tot lot** on the opposite side. The **visitor center's** form is inspired by the **steelhead trout** that once migrated up Tujunga Wash, paired with a café and cistern. Stormwater is managed through a **treatment wetland** and a **vegetated swale** along the residential edge. Overall, the concept separates **grounded, social, art-focused movement** from **elevated, contemplative, view-focused movement** — letting visitors choose their relationship to the site.

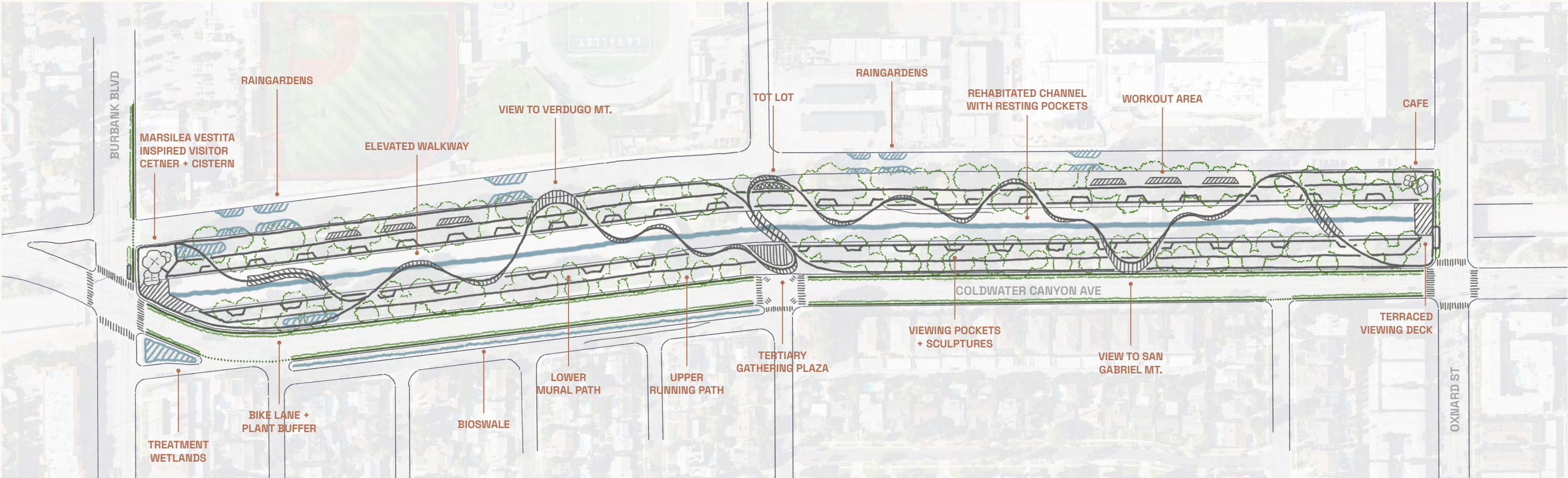


PART I



Final Master Site Plan

Choose Your Own Adventure

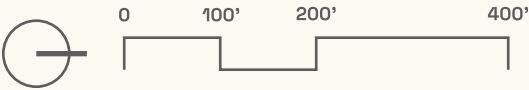


The final design synthesizes all three earlier concepts. **Stitching the Wound** contributes the **suturing logic** of bridges and crossings pulling both sides of the wash back together. **River Flow** contributes the **curvilinear geometry**, recalling the wash’s pre-channelization meander. The **Hybrid concept** contributes **two parallel experiential paths** — one hugging the channel edge, one set back through denser planting — that **braid around each other** and are **stitched together at intervals**, most decisively at the **main bridge**, where both paths merge before splitting apart again.

This is **architecture and landscape held in proximity without contact**: the **elevated walkway** rises and falls along the channel, framing views into the infrastructure itself, while every structural element respects the **liquefaction constraints** and **LACFCD right-of-way** governing the corridor. The park puts the channel on display, and **stitches the community back across it**.

PROGRAM

Program sits like eddies along the meander: the Marsilea Wetland Visitor Center + Café anchors the western gateway; viewing platforms frame the surrounding mountains; the mural walk holds the park’s emotional center; a tot lot, market, gathering plaza, and redwood walk diversify the pace; a second café, channel dive, and residential boardwalk extend the park into neighborhood life.

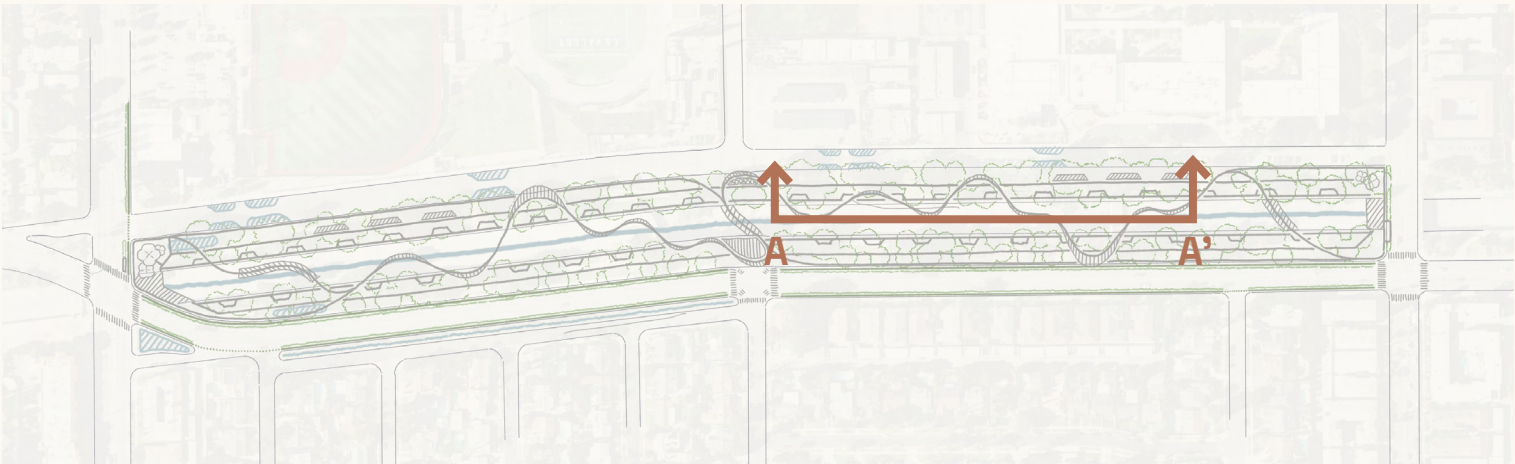


Section/Elevation 01

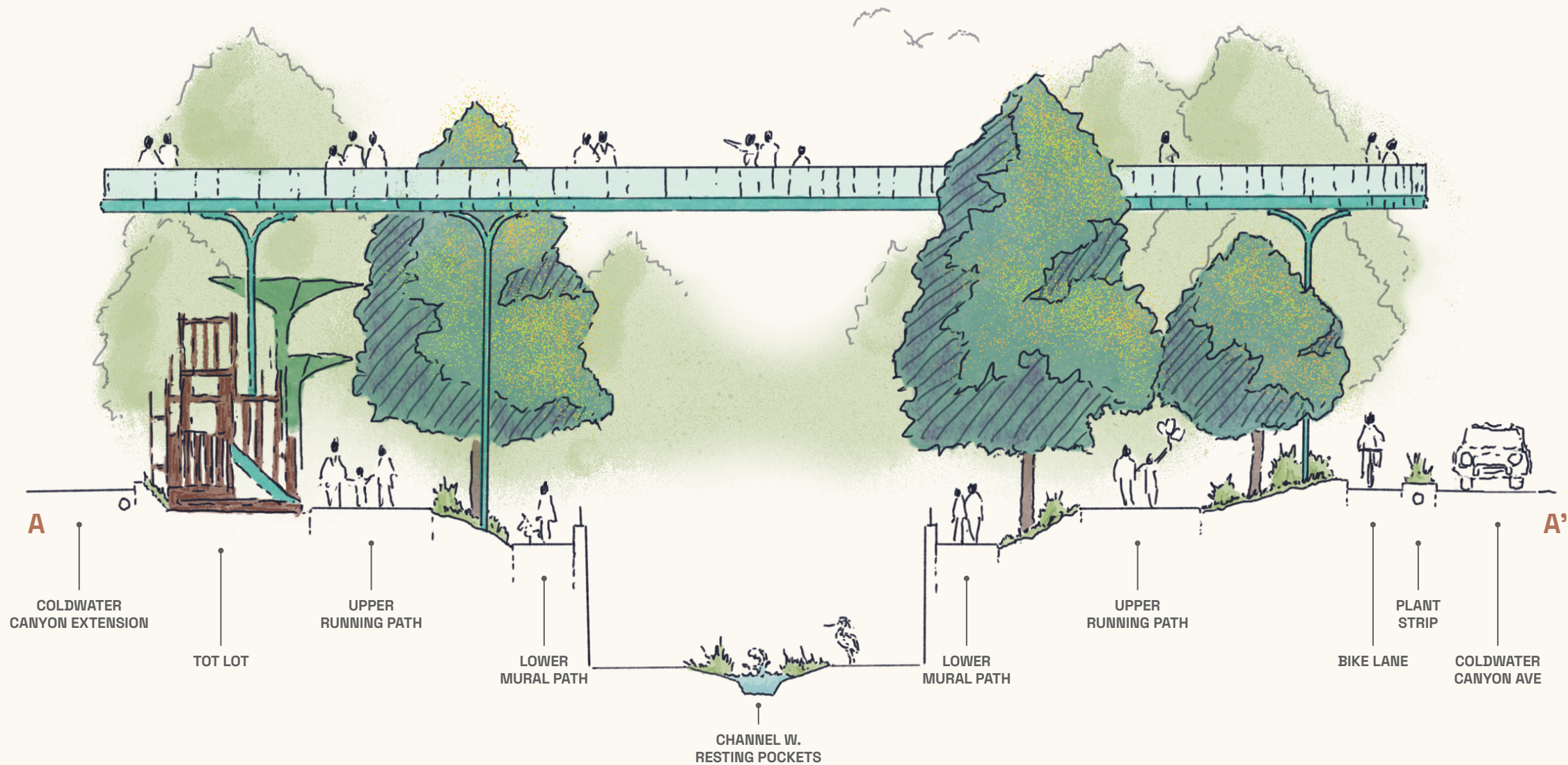


The walkway **rises gradually** above the channel floor, carrying visitors up through gentle climbs until they're moving at **treetop height**. **Steel columns** mark a steady rhythm along the path, holding the structure above the wash while the ground below stays **undisturbed**. The trees respond in kind — **clustering densely** in some stretches to form a real **canopy**, opening up in others to reveal longer views across the site.

Below, the **historic mural** runs along the base of the channel wall, its colors still legible from above even as the walkway keeps a **respectful distance**. Life continues at ground level too: someone walks a dog along the wall, birds cross the canopy, a couple pauses on the walkway to look down. **Two publics** inhabit the same stretch of the Tujunga Wash, moving through it at **different heights** — neither interrupting the other, each shaped by their own relationship to the water, the mural, and the trees.

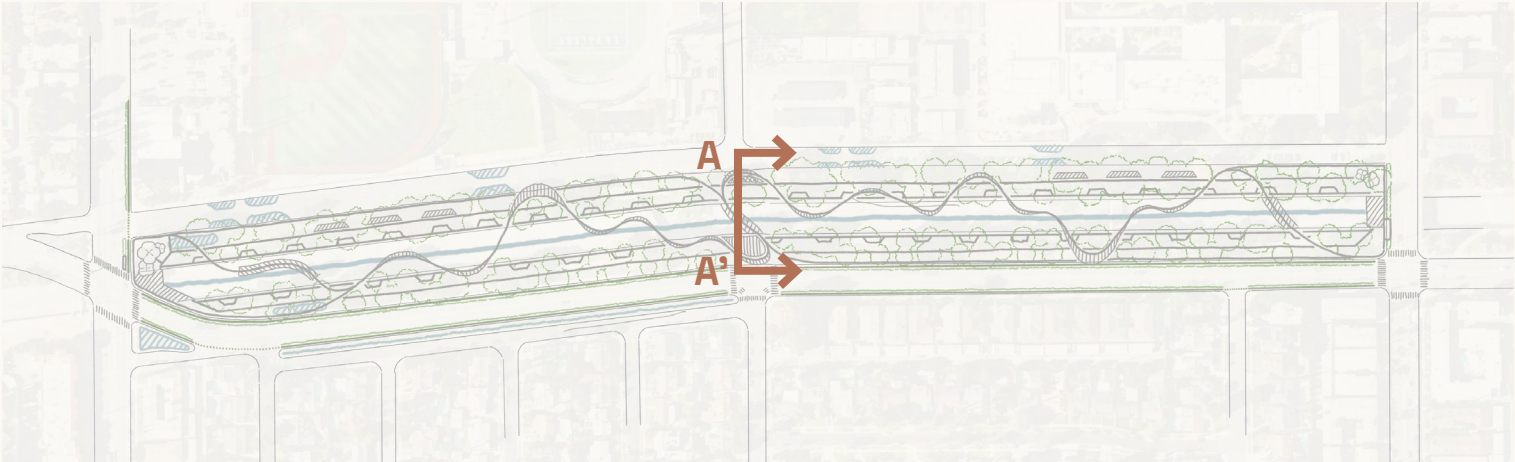


Section/Elevation 02



Here the walkway **lifts up** and **crosses clear over the wash**, leaving the channel floor **completely open** below. A **shallow pool** collects at the base, just enough water to draw in **southern California steelheads** — a small, quiet **habitat left undisturbed** beneath the activity above. On one side, a **play structure and slide** bring children down to grade, tucked into the shade of the canopy. On the other, the edge **transitions out to the street**, where a cyclist and a parked car mark the boundary between the park and the neighborhood beyond.

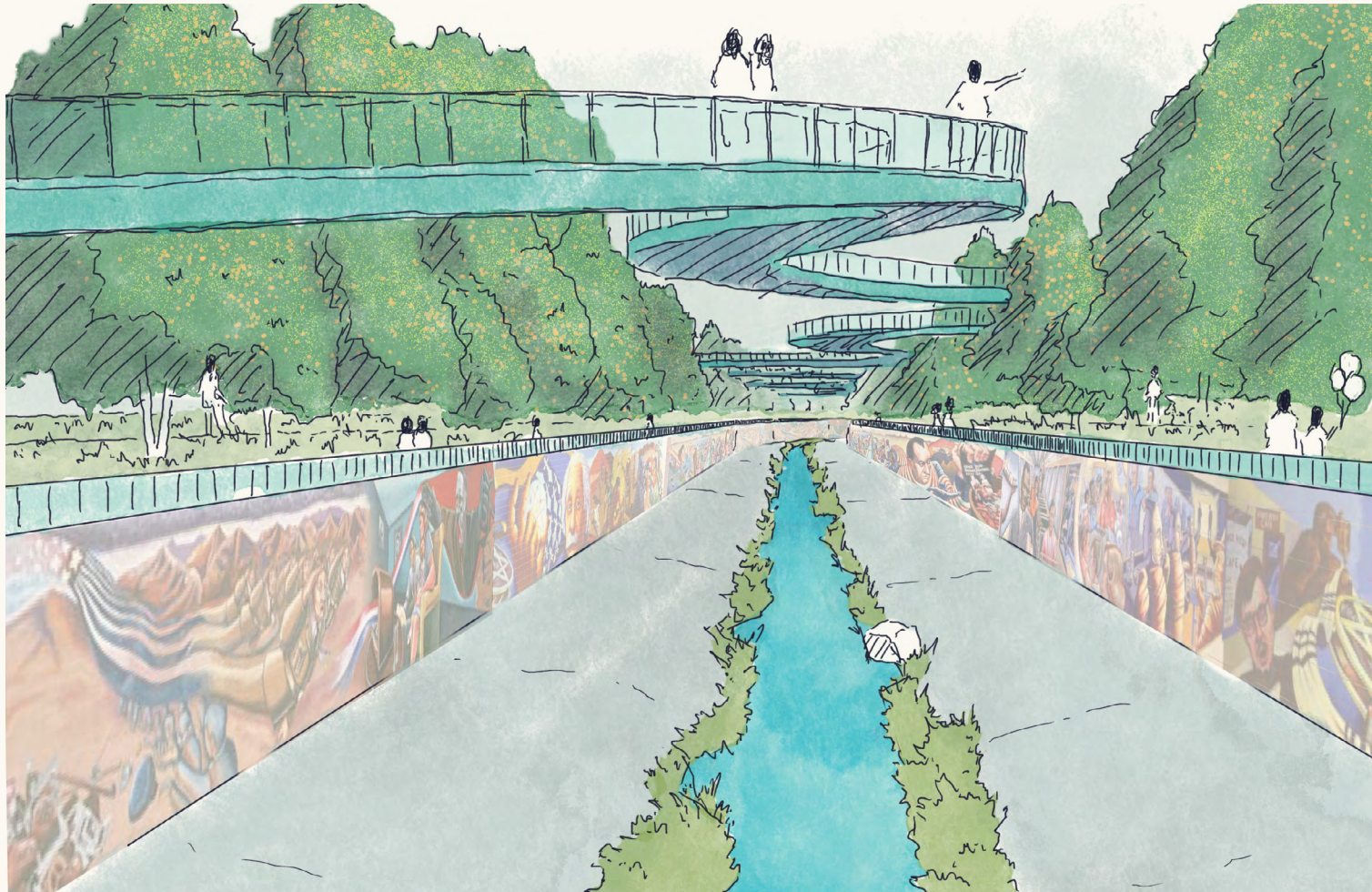
The walkway **threads between these two worlds**, letting people cross from **play to street**, from **shade to open sky**, while the channel below stays **protected** — a space for **water and wildlife to exist on its own terms**, visible but never disturbed.



Perspectives – Sketch

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The Great Wall of LA Arts & Culture Park



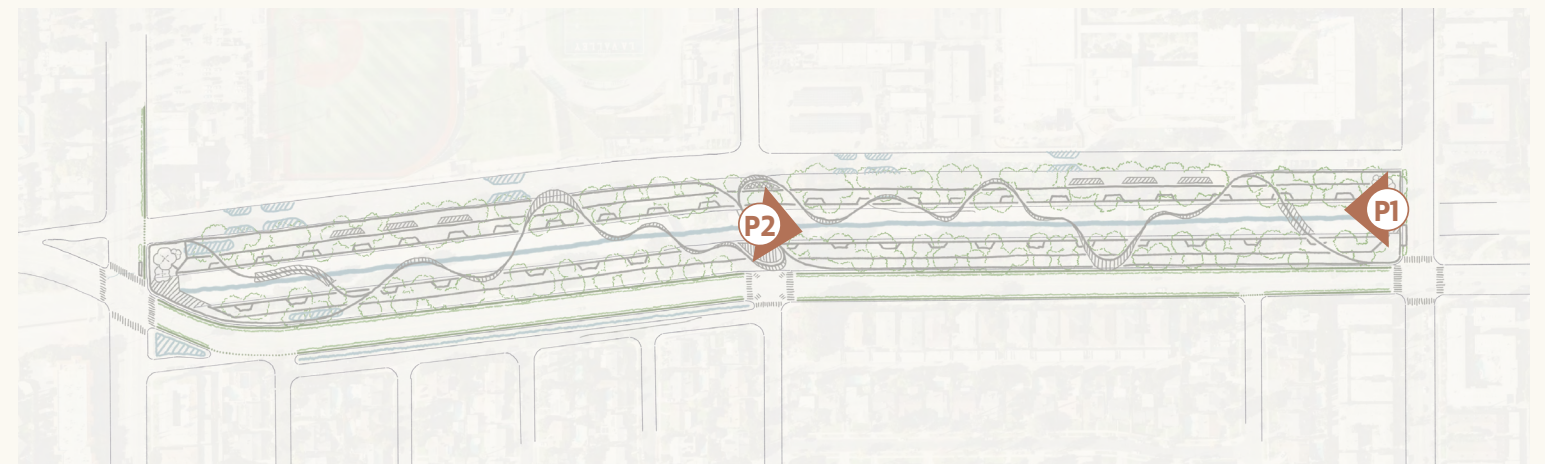
P1 - Looking Down the Wash

P1 - Mural walls rise on either side of the channel floor, framing a **narrow ribbon of water and grasses** down the center. Overhead, the walkway **spirals down in switchbacks** to meet the elevated path above. People pause along the rim to look down, while the mural runs the full length of the wash — a **corridor of color** visitors move through without touching the water's edge.

P2 - Up in the **canopy**, the walkway **curves gently through the trees at treetop height**. Families pause along the railing as the path bends through the greenery. Below, the channel continues on its own track — mural walls and a thin stream of water visible through the foliage. The **gentle curves** offer a **slow move through the trees** rather than a straight commute.



P2 - Along the Elevated Path



Perspectives – Model



Viewing deck / Burbank Blvd



Tujunga Wash with resting pockets for southern California steelhead & murals



Lower mural path, viewing pockets with sculptures



Tot lot under the elevated walkway

Perspectives – Model



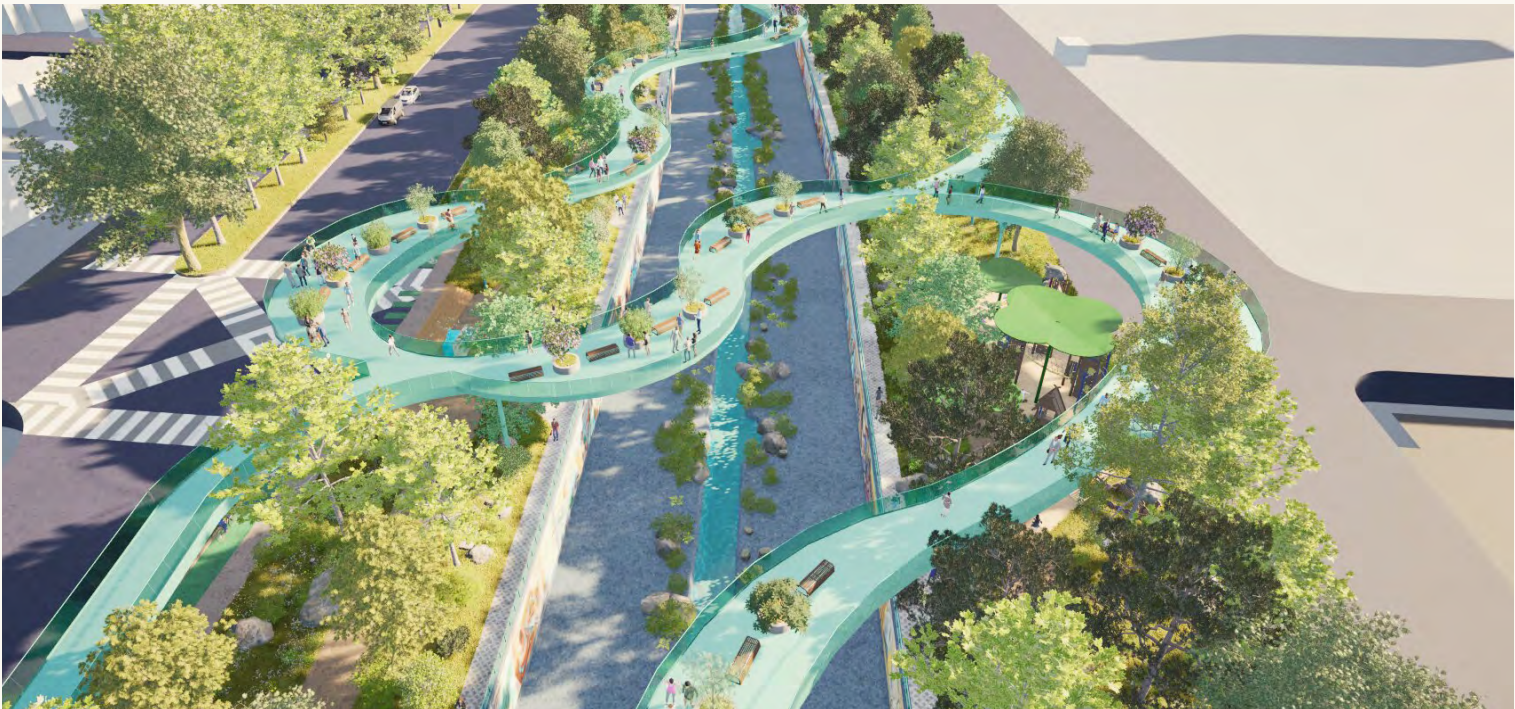
Upper running path



Valley Glen city sign



Viewing platform on elevated walkway



Elevated walkway

Model Walkthrough

