

Rhythms of Place

A Civic Landscape in the Crenshaw Corridor



Photo taken on-site + Adobe Illustrator.

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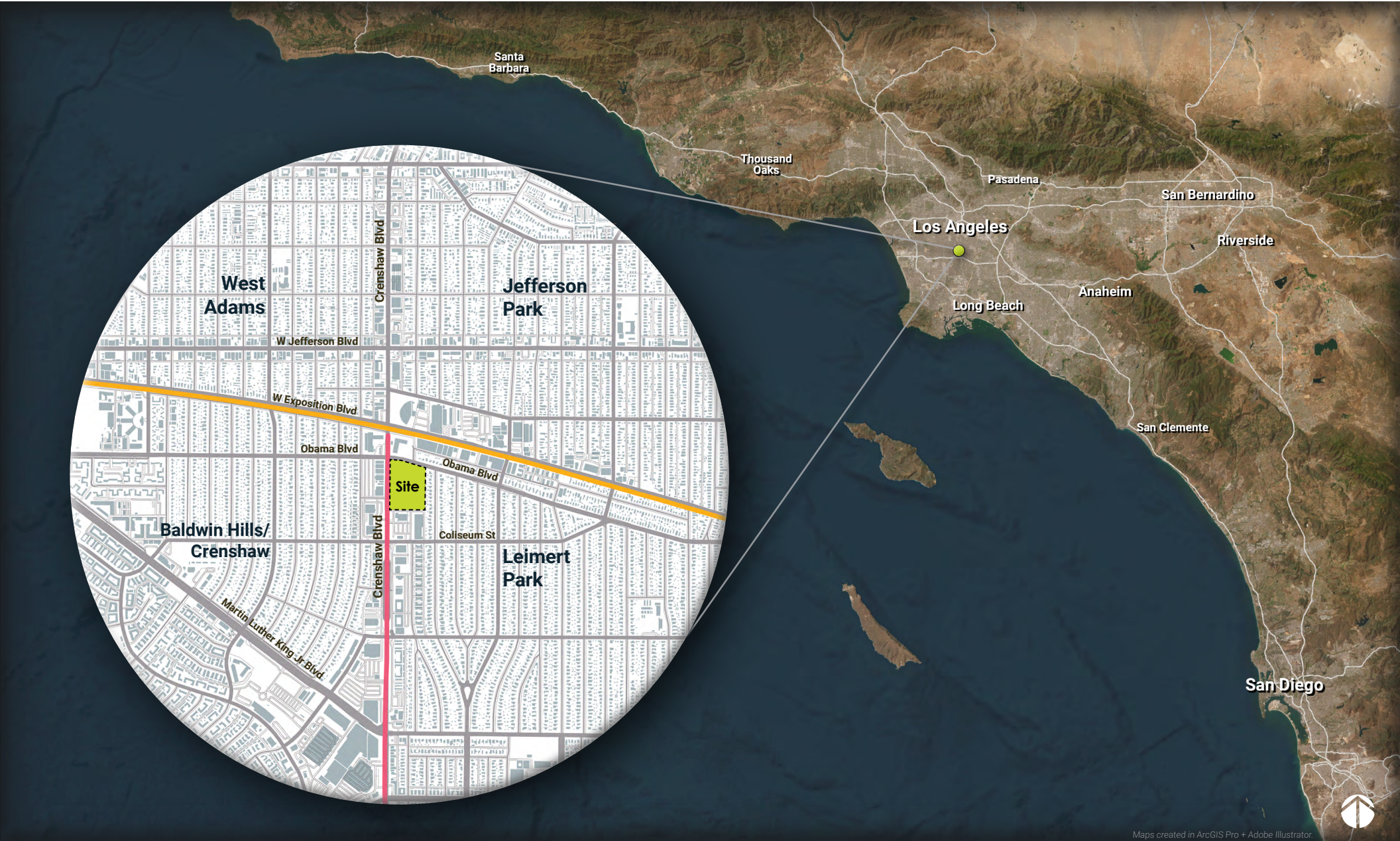
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Location

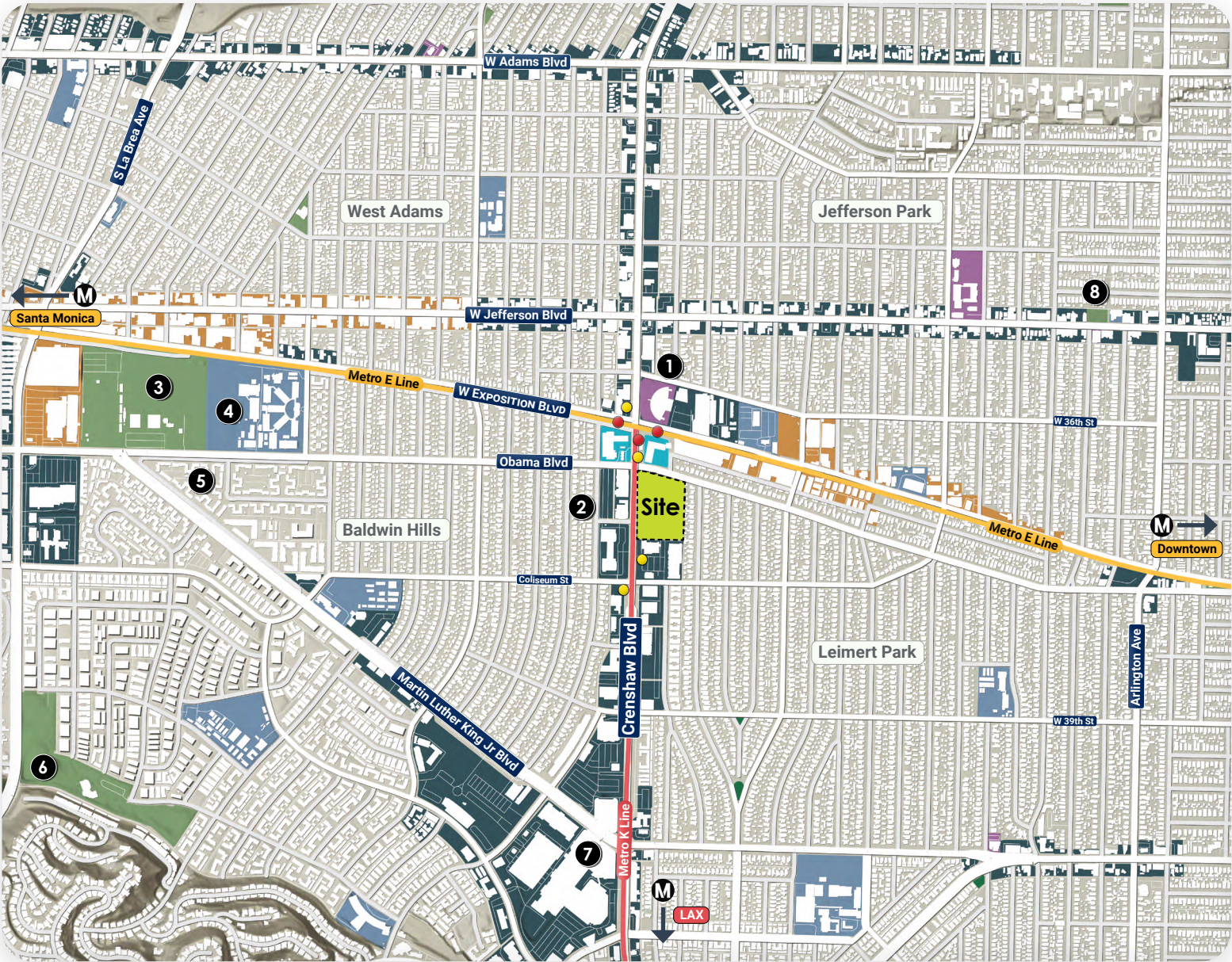
A neighborhood crossroads within Los Angeles’ historic Crenshaw cultural corridor—now shaped by major transit investment.



Maps created in ArcGIS Pro + Adobe Illustrator.

Regional Context

Neighborhood Context



Map created with ArcGIS Pro + Adobe Illustrator.

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Green Space
- Public
- Religious/Institutional
- Crenshaw Crossing (Proposed)

- Metro Stations
- Bus Stops

- Key Local Features**
- 1 West Angeles Church
 - 2 Retail Outdoor Shopping
 - 3 Michelle and Barack Obama Sports Complex
 - 4 Susan Miller Dorsey High School
 - 5 Camp Sankofa
 - 6 Jim Gilliam Park
 - 7 Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Shopping Mall
 - 8 Jefferson Park

History + Background

1960s–1970s — A Center of Black L.A.

As housing barriers weakened, Black families increasingly moved into Crenshaw and surrounding neighborhoods. By the early 1970s, the corridor had become a recognized hub of Black culture, business, and homeownership.

2013 — The Grocery Is Demolished

The store is torn down for K-Line construction and the “District Square” development proposal. Ralphs expands about a mile away, but the walkable grocery store is lost.

2019 — District Square Is Rejected

Residents and community organizations, oppose “District Square” on affordability and displacement grounds. The City rejects the project, and the lot remains vacant.

Decades of Neighborhood Life

For decades, this parcel held a walkable neighborhood grocery at Crenshaw and Rodeo Rd, now Obama Blvd. It was originally a Boys Market, but was later purchased by Ralphs.

2014–2022 — Transit Construction

Transit construction begins, removing mature street trees and intensifying concerns about displacement, visibility, and local authorship.

2022 — The K Line Begins Operation

Crenshaw becomes a major transfer point for the E and K Lines. Investment arrives but the parcel remains empty.

Today — A Vacant Civic Gap Sits in the Middle of a Culturally Significant Neighborhood.

The neighborhood absorbed the loss of a walkable grocery anchor, years of construction disruption, and repeated development uncertainty. This project aims to address this.

Background: Leimert Park Theater: a cultural landmark of the Crenshaw/Leimert corridor. Photograph by Marvin Rand, 1972–77, Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Library of Congress.

Project Justification

A Decade of Loss on One Vacant Lot



Crenshaw Blvd



Obama Blvd



Vacant Site

Photos taken on-site.

What Was Lost

- A walkable neighborhood grocery anchored the site for decades.
- The store was demolished in 2013 for the proposed District Square development.
- The promised replacement grocery and community benefits never arrived.
- The parcel has remained fenced and vacant for more than a decade.

Why It Matters

- The neighborhood lost an important everyday food destination.
- The area remains underserved by parks and public open space.
- Vacancy creates an inactive and uncomfortable edge along Crenshaw and Obama Boulevards.
- Transit investment has increased development and displacement pressure around the site.

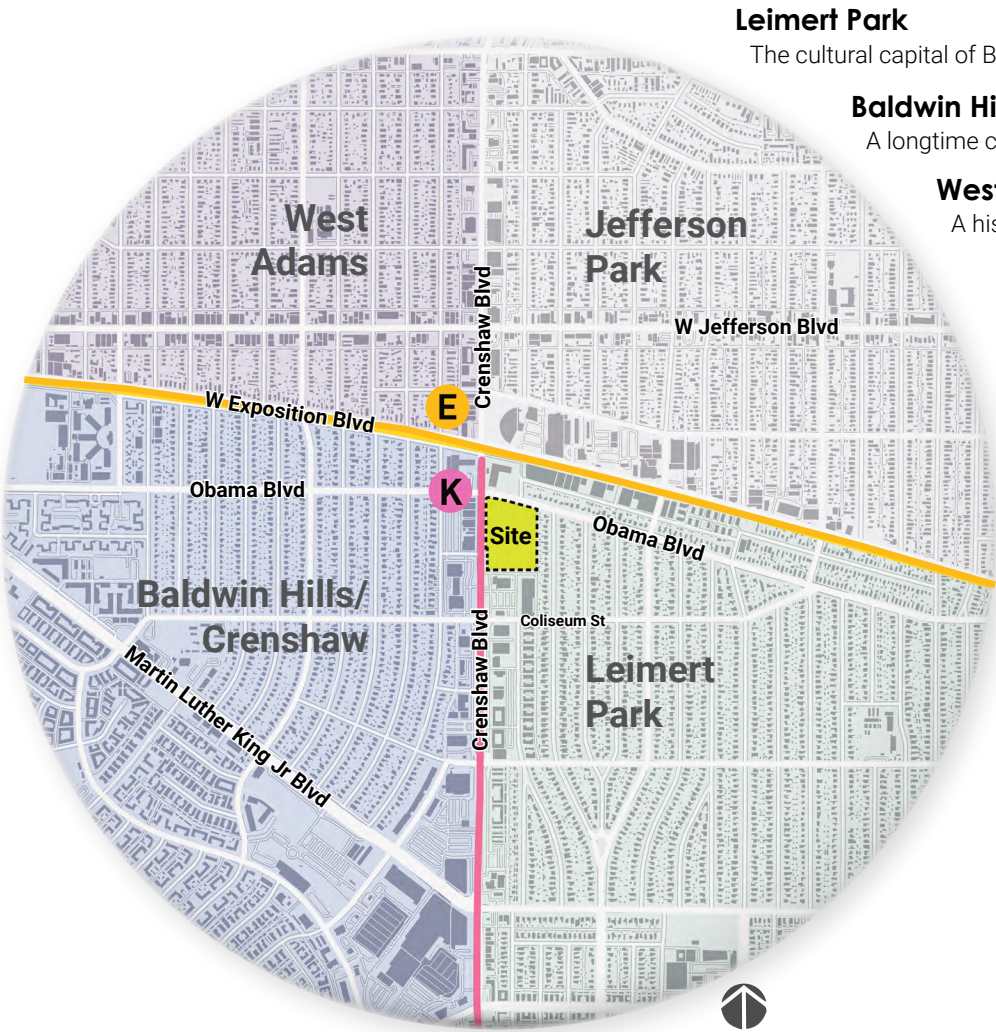
Project Response

- Reclaim the parcel as neighborhood-first civic ground.
- Create a public park centered on shade, recreation, gathering, and everyday use.
- Establish a flexible market that supports food access and local vendors.
- Strengthen pedestrian connections between the neighborhood, transit, and Crenshaw Boulevard.

Intervention is Required

Community Context

The project site sits at the northern gateway of the Crenshaw corridor — a **historic center of Black Los Angeles culture**, enterprise, organizing, and political life. Today, the surrounding community plan area is multiracial, but the corridor’s Black cultural identity remains central to how this site is understood and contested.



Leimert Park
The cultural capital of Black LA.

Baldwin Hills/Crenshaw
A longtime center of Black homeownership, enterprise, and political power.

West Adams
A historic neighborhood shaped by Black homeownership, civil rights struggles, and architecture.

Jefferson Park
Shaped by generations of Japanese American, African American, and Latino families.

West Adams–Baldwin Hills–Leimert Community Plan Area



171,478 Residents
Large urban community plan area



13,421 People Per Square Mile
Dense neighborhood context



37.9% Black or African American
Historic Black cultural corridor



44% Hispanic or Latino
Significant Latino population today

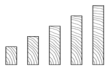
57% English Only / 33% Spanish at Home
Multilingual community context

64.8% Renter-Occupied Households
Large renter community vulnerable to displacement

17.4% Poverty Rate
Improvements should support everyday access and equity

62.7% Multifamily Housing Units
Public space must serve compact residential living

33-Minute Average Commute
Transit access and first/last-mile comfort matter



The map shows a convergence of neighborhoods; the history shows an overlapping civic landscape. The project must center the Crenshaw corridor’s Black cultural legacy while serving the multiracial residents, businesses, renters, homeowners, students, elders, and transit riders who shape the neighborhood today.

Source: LA City Planning, West Adams–Baldwin Hills–Leimert Community Plan; ACS 2018–2022 demographic profile; ACS 2024 PUMA transportation profile; LA Park Needs Assessment.
Map created with ArcGIS Pro + Adobe Illustrator.

Community Needs + Voices

Residents lost a walkable grocery anchor in 2013, absorbed years of rail construction, and organized against a 577-unit, largely market-rate development they concluded would price them out. Their testimony, appeals, and negotiations on nearby projects form a public record of recurring community priorities.

“District Square” Was Rejected



☒ **Affordability Gap**

The project offered 577 largely market-rate units; a late offer of 63 “workforce” units priced at 150% of area median income — up to \$2,910 for a one-bedroom — was rejected as out of reach for existing residents.

☒ **Displacement Pressure**

Residents and the Crenshaw Subway Coalition argued the project would accelerate displacement of long-term neighbors in a rapidly changing corridor.

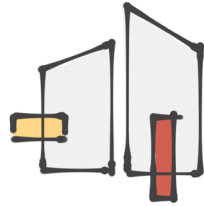
☒ **Broken Promises**

Pitched in 2010 as a shopping center with a grocery and backed by \$26 million in public funds, the project lost its anchors; the grocery never returned to this site, and the lot sat fenced for over a decade.

☒ **Community Excluded**

Appeals argued the project conflicted with the community plan; residents had limited authorship in what would replace the grocery store they lost.

What The Community Asked For



☑ **Homes People Can Afford**

The central demand of the District Square fight — echoed at Crenshaw Crossing and 5401 Crenshaw — was not simply more housing, but housing existing residents could afford, with community control such as CLTs repeatedly raised as a priority.



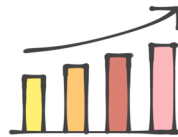
☑ **Walkable Food Access Repaired**

This site’s original loss was a walkable grocery anchor. A market here cannot replace a full-service grocery alone, but it can restore food-related daily use, support local vendors, and complement the proposed grocery north of Obama Boulevard.



☑ **Parks with Shade, Water, Safety, and Gathering**

Council District 10 residents told the City’s Park Needs Assessment: “We just want basics — shade, clean water fountains, safe spaces.” The community plan EIR documents the area’s open-space deficit.



☑ **Local Economic Opportunity**

Black business groups originally backed District Square’s promise of an economic gathering place; Destination Crenshaw shows the importance of local hiring, local vendors, and community benefit.



☑ **Cultural Continuity + Authorship**

Destination Crenshaw’s paid community advisory process shows that residents expect a voice in how Crenshaw’s public realm is shaped and maintained.

Image: <https://la.urbanize.city/post/first-glimpse-district-square-development>

Sources: South LA Area Planning Commission proceedings and appeal filings (2019); Los Angeles Times / LAMag coverage of District Square; Streetsblog LA, Crenshaw Crossing revisions (2019); City of LA Park Needs Assessment, Council District 10 snapshot; Destination Crenshaw community engagement record; Office of Sen. Smallwood-Cuevas, 5401 Crenshaw engagement (2025); Urban Displacement Project,

Project Statement

Reclaiming Civic Ground at Crenshaw and Obama

Rhythms of Place re-centers a long-vacant parcel south of Obama Boulevard at Expo/Crenshaw Station as neighborhood-first civic ground. The lot once held a grocery store residents relied on; it was cleared for District Square, a market-rate development many residents opposed on displacement grounds, then left empty for over a decade. This project responds to that history directly.

With major transit-adjacent housing, retail, and a proposed grocery already planned north of Obama Boulevard, this landscape asks the south parcel to do different civic work: a public park the area has long lacked, an open market that helps repair food access and supports local vendors, and a safer, more active Crenshaw edge that guides people into the park. Together, they form one community hub—built from neighborhood priorities, not imposed around them.



Image: Google Earth + Adobe Photoshop

Project Goals + Objectives



Framework

This project re-centers a long-vacant parcel at Expo/Crenshaw as neighborhood-first civic ground. The project focuses on a public park, flexible market, safer pedestrian connections, and a future Crenshaw edge that supports — rather than dominates — the landscape.

Goal 1: Support Existing Residents and Guide Equitable Future Growth

Objective: Shape the site around everyday neighborhood use, local authorship, and long-term stewardship, so future change benefits existing residents and community-serving institutions.

Goal 2: Improve Safety, Comfort, and Connection

Objective: Create safer, clearer, and more comfortable pedestrian connections between the neighborhood, Expo/Crenshaw Station, Obama Boulevard, Crenshaw Boulevard, and the park.

Goal 3: Repair the Site's Food-Access Role and Support Local Enterprise

Objective: Create a flexible market that complements nearby grocery access while supporting fresh food, prepared food, local vendors, small businesses, and relevant enterprise. A community garden and learning center will support fresh food access.

Goal 4: Increase Green Space, Shade, and Climate Resilience

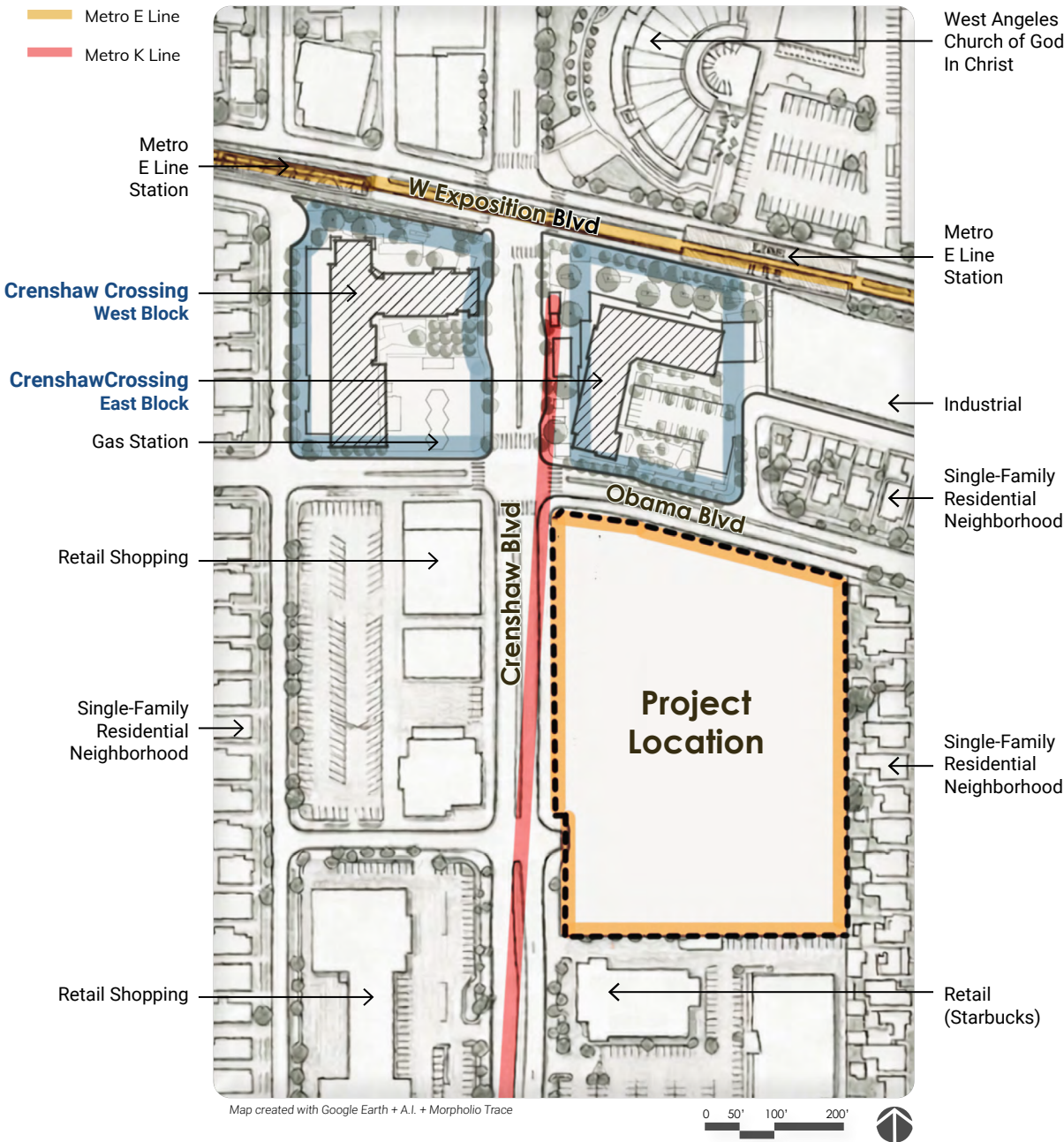
Objective: Expand tree canopy, climate-appropriate planting, and visible stormwater systems to reduce heat, manage runoff, and improve everyday comfort.

Goal 5: Create a Community-Centered Gathering Space

Objective: Shape the site into a welcoming, free, and flexible civic landscape for daily use, informal gathering, play, shaded seating, outdoor rooms, and neighborhood events.

Site Analysis

Existing + Future Edge Conditions



Future Edge Conditions

Crenshaw Crossing

Proposed/Planned



Status:
Pre-Construction Phase

Provides:
Housing
Retail
Grocery
Transit plaza

Design Implications:

Mixed-Use Anchor Development

Currently underway, this two-building, six-story complex integrates residential housing with ground-floor retail, a grocery store, and an active transit plaza.

Complementary Programming

The inclusion of a grocery store and retail provides essential amenities that will directly support future users of the proposed site.

Corridor Catalyst

Serves as a catalyst for broader streetscape improvements, traffic calming, and canopy expansion along Crenshaw Blvd.

Service Edge Interface

Service Edge Interface: The East Block's back-of-house parking deck directly faces the proposed park's Obama Blvd entrance, requiring the design to respond with strategic visual screening and a buffered transition along this northern boundary.

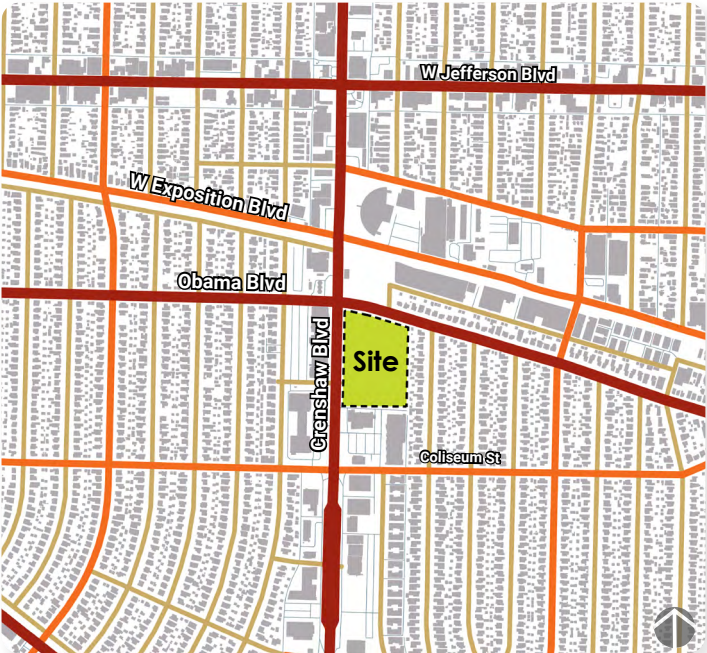
Shared Threshold

Creates an opportunity to design a reciprocal gateway experience on both the north and south sides of Obama Blvd.

Source: <https://planning.lacity.gov/development-services/environmental-review/scea/crenshaw-crossing-project>

Circulation + Access

Vehicular

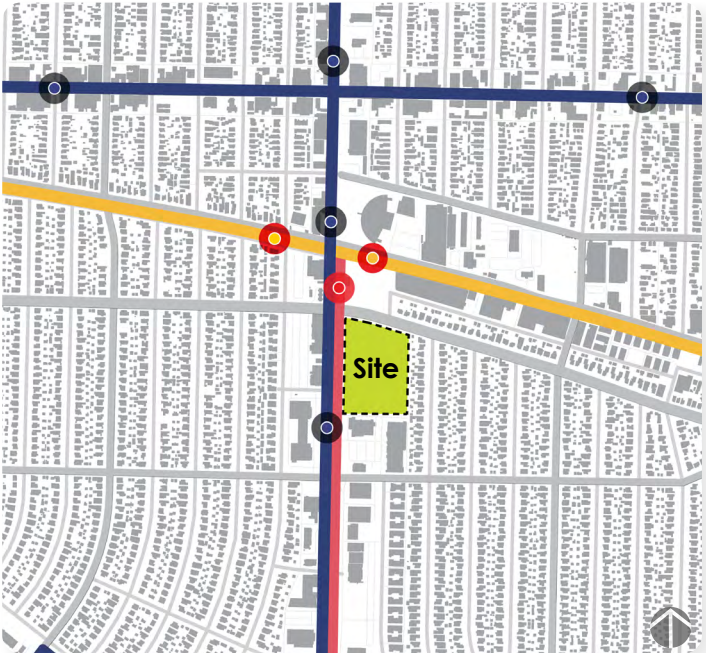


- Primary
- Secondary
- Residential

Vehicular Analysis

The site is framed by three major streets: Crenshaw Boulevard, Exposition Boulevard, and Obama Boulevard. These corridors provide strong visibility and regional access, but they also create hard edges around the project area. Crenshaw carries north-south movement along the west edge, Exposition & Obama connect east-west transit and traffic movement to the north.

Transit

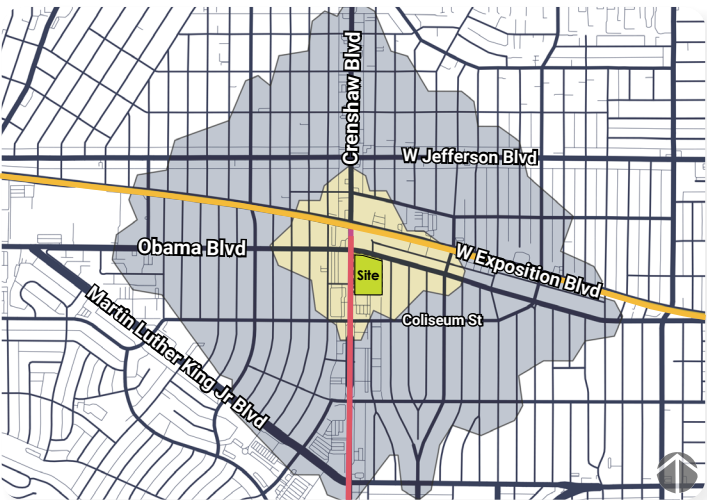


- Metro E Line
- Metro K Line
- Bus Routes
- Metro Stations
- Bus Stops

Transit Analysis

The site is located in a multimodal transit node served by the Metro E Line, Metro K Line, local bus routes, sidewalks, and nearby neighborhood streets. The site connects regional rail movement with local first/last-mile access, making it an important transfer point for riders moving between Downtown Los Angeles, the Westside, South Los Angeles, Inglewood, and the LAX corridor.

Pedestrian Walking Radius



- 5 Minute
- 15 Minute

Pedestrian Crossings

Pedestrian crossings at Crenshaw, Obama, and Exposition should become safer, shaded, and more legible.

Expo-Crenshaw Station Estimated Daily Users

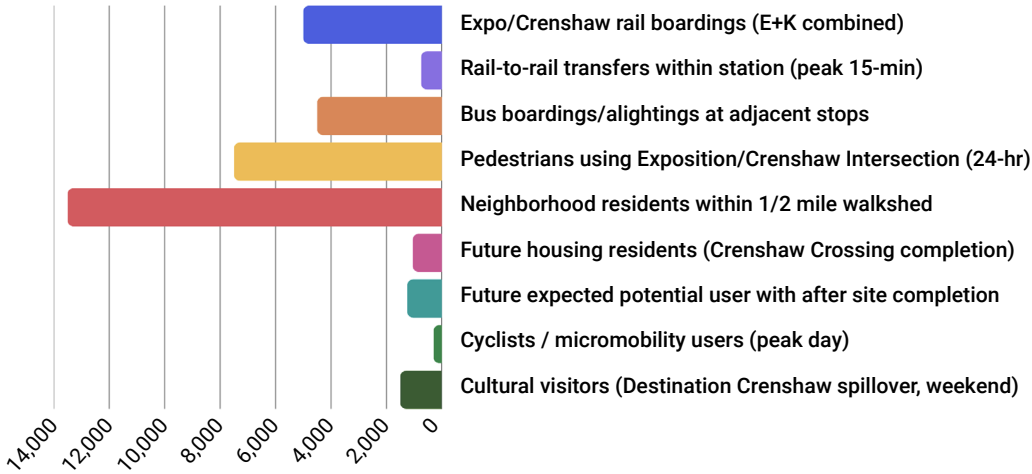


Chart data compiled from Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA) Ridership Statistics; LADOT Intersection Counts; U.S. Census Bureau ACS Walkshed Demographics; and City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning Development Projections (ENV-2019-5426-SCEA).

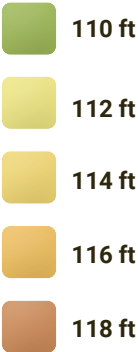
Site Analysis

Elevation + Slope

Elevation Change



Elevation



Elevation Range

The site has a modest elevation range, approximately 110–118 feet, with only subtle grade shifts across the two blocks. Although the terrain is generally flat, these small changes can still influence drainage, pedestrian comfort, and where gathering areas or planting zones are best located.

High + Low Areas

Slightly higher areas occur along portions of the street edges and parcel interiors, while lower pockets appear within the vacant blocks. These low areas may collect runoff after storms and can help identify opportunities for planted basins, bioswales, or permeable landscape zones.

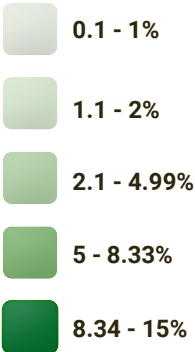
Elevation Analysis

The Expo/Crenshaw site does not require major grading intervention, but its subtle elevation changes can help organize the design. Paths, plazas, seating, planting, and stormwater strategies should respond to existing grade patterns so the landscape feels integrated rather than imposed.

Slope



Slope Percentage



Collection Zones

Shallow low points and disturbed surface areas suggest opportunities for stormwater capture, infiltration planting, and seasonal landscape features. These zones can become bioswales, planted basins, or softer edges that reduce runoff and improve site comfort.

Surface Variation

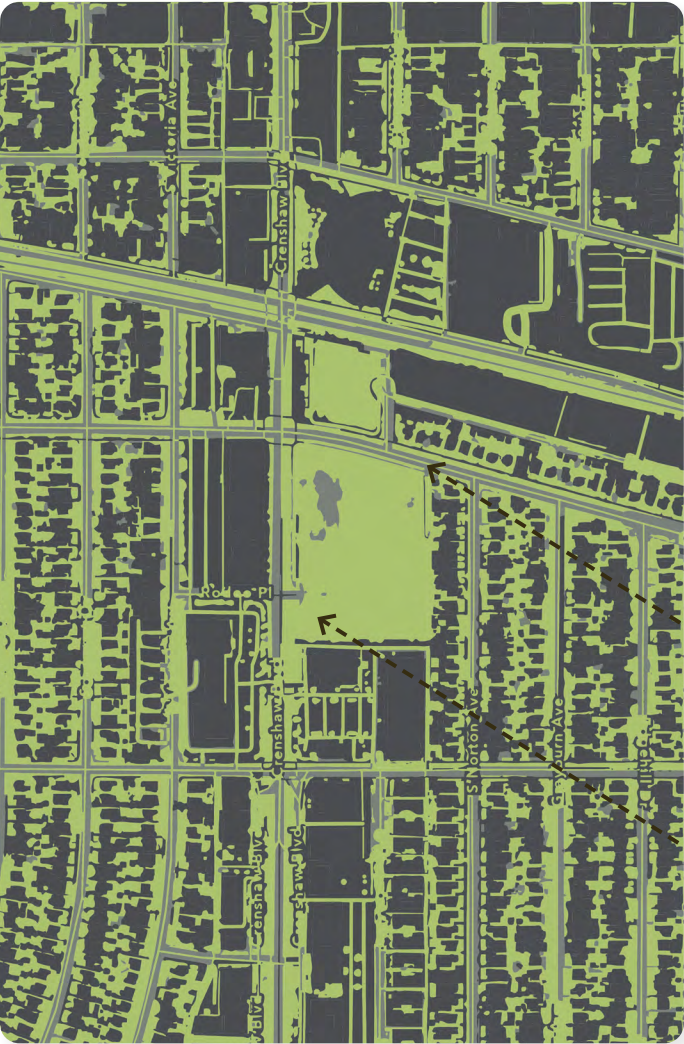
The vacant parcel is mostly flat, but the ground surface is uneven, compacted, and informally graded from years of vacancy, construction staging, and limited maintenance. These subtle grade changes can help identify where paths, planting areas, and flexible open spaces should be organized.

Surface Conditions Analysis

The Expo/Crenshaw site does not require a major slope strategy, but its vacant surface condition is still important. Compacted soil, exposed ground, informal drainage patterns, and limited canopy contribute to heat, runoff, and poor pedestrian comfort. The design opportunity is to use subtle grading, planting, and permeable surfaces to transform vacant land into a functional landscape system.

Impervious Surfaces + Water Flow

Impervious Surface Coverage



Surface Type

- Impervious Streets, Parking, Buildings, Roofs
- Permeable Open Ground, Vacant Parcel, Existing Vegetation

Hardscape Edges

Streets, parking lots, roofs, and station infrastructure create hard urban edges around the site. These impervious surfaces increase runoff and contribute to heat, making landscape capture and shade especially important.

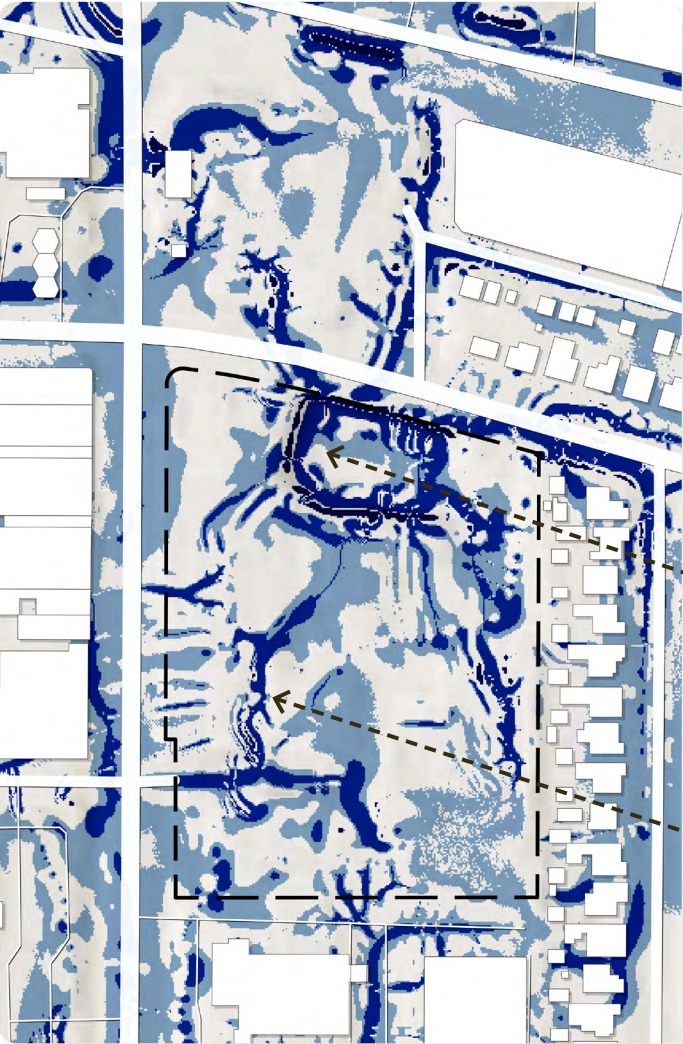
Vacant Open Ground

The two vacant blocks contain large areas of open ground that can be transformed into permeable landscape. These areas offer opportunities for infiltration, planting, shade canopy, and flexible public space.

Impervious Surface Analysis

The Expo/Crenshaw site is surrounded by a high concentration of impervious surfaces, including major streets, sidewalks, parking areas, commercial buildings, and rail infrastructure. Although the selected parcels are currently open and vacant, the surrounding hardscape increases heat, runoff, and pedestrian discomfort. The design opportunity is to use the vacant land as a landscape sponge that can soften the urban edge, increase permeability, and support a more comfortable public realm.

Water Flow + Collection



Flow Type

- Sheet Flow
- Flow Paths
- Collection Zones

Collection Zones

Potential collection areas occur where surface flow gathers near low points, edges, and disturbed ground. These zones can become planted basins, stormwater gardens, or shaded landscape pockets.

Flow Paths

Runoff generally moves across streets, sidewalks, and compacted site surfaces toward lower areas and edges. These paths suggest where bioswales, planted channels, and permeable paving could slow and filter water.

Water Movement Analysis

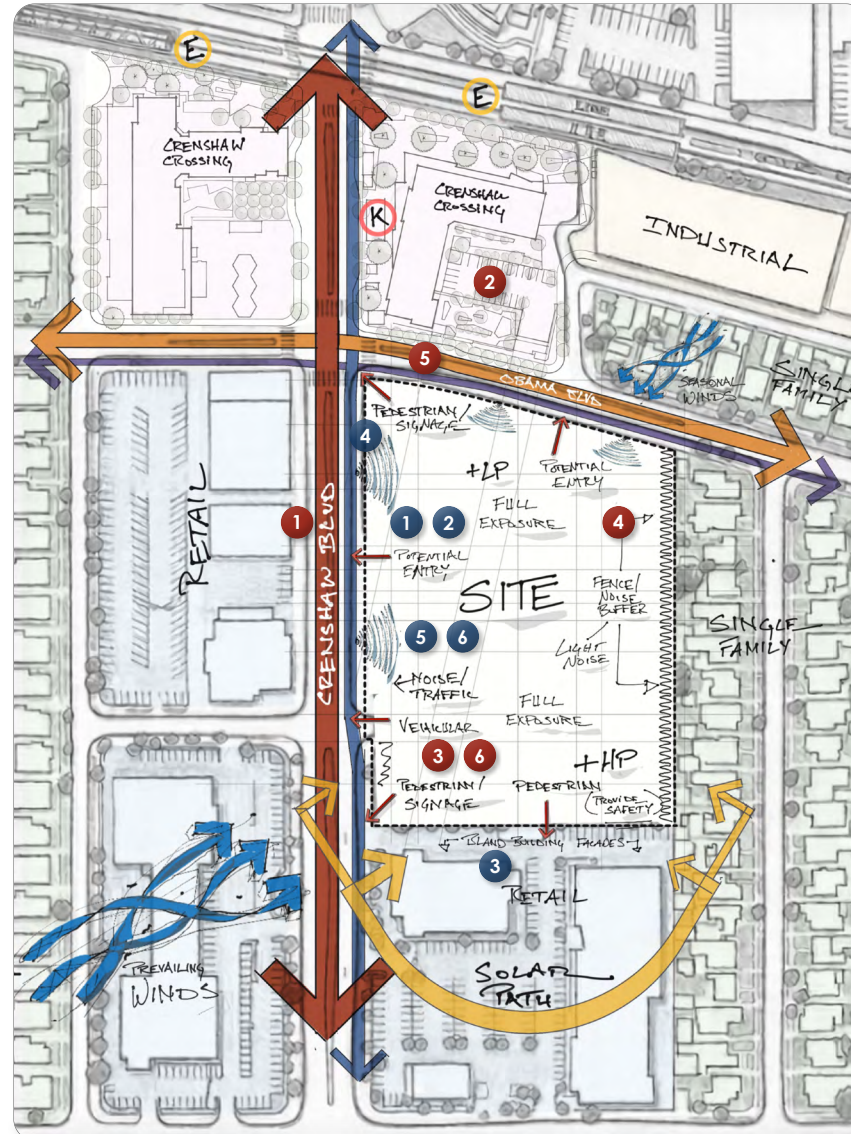
Water movement across the site is shaped less by dramatic slope and more by subtle grade changes, compacted soil, street edges, and existing hardscape. Sheet flow and localized runoff suggest opportunities to collect, slow, and filter stormwater through bioswales, planted basins, permeable paving, and tree canopy zones. These systems can help turn the site from unused open land into functional green infrastructure.

Runoff + Capture

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities

- 1 A Long-Vacant Civic Opportunity:**
The flat, long-vacant parcel south of Obama Boulevard is a rare opportunity near the station for a neighborhood-scale civic landscape.
- 2 A Documented Park Deficit:**
The West Adams–Baldwin Hills–Leimert EIR formally identifies this area as significantly deficient in public open space, making a new park here a recognized, citable unmet need.
- 3 Built-In Daily Users Next Door:**
Crenshaw Crossing's planned housing, retail, grocery, and transit plaza will bring residents, riders, and shoppers within a block, supporting everyday activity, market customers, and eyes on the park.
- 4 A Safer Crenshaw Frontage:**
The site's western edge can become a shaded, active, pedestrian-friendly frontage that buffers traffic, guides people into the park, and anticipates future community-serving development along Crenshaw.
- 5 A Food + Market Anchor:**
The former grocery site makes food a natural anchor. A flexible market can support fresh food, local vendors, and everyday gathering.
- 6 Stormwater + Cooling:**
The large parcel can capture runoff, expand tree canopy, and create shaded planting and gathering spaces that reduce heat.



Map generated with Google Earth + A.I. + Morpholio Trace

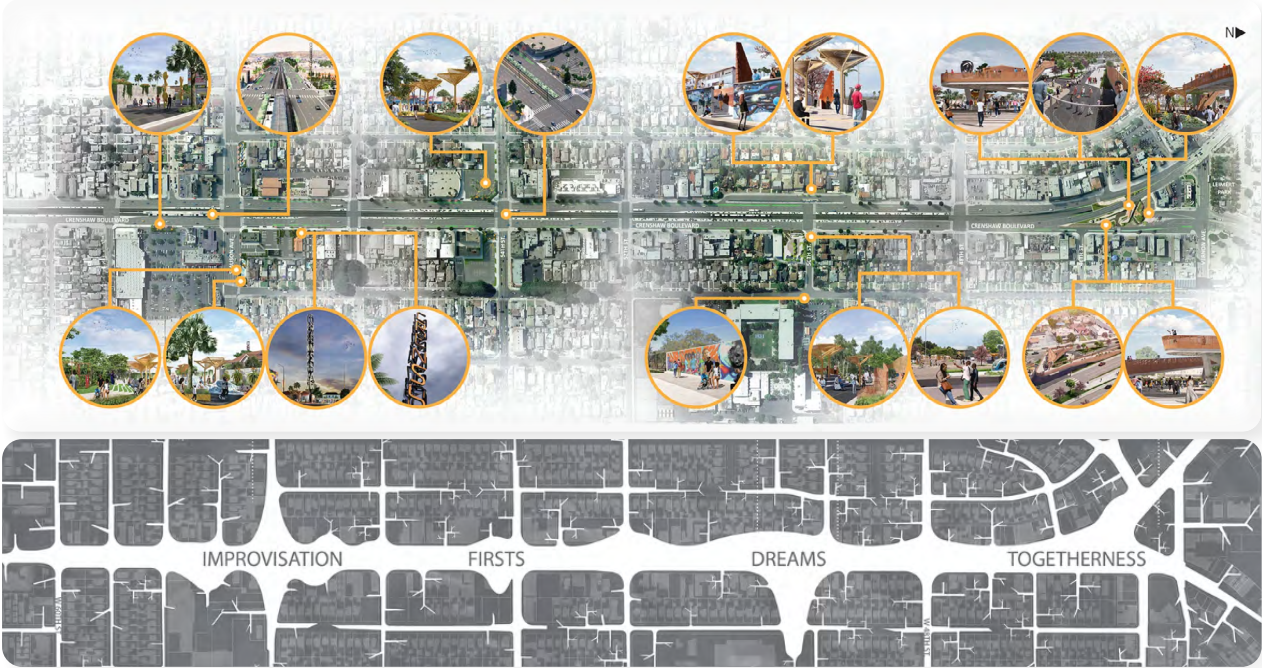
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Constraints

- 1 Noise + Exposure:**
Crenshaw Boulevard creates noise, heat, and traffic exposure, requiring planted buffers, shade, active edges, and careful placement of quieter spaces.
- 2 A Back-of-House Neighbor:**
Crenshaw Crossing turns loading, service, parking, and less active edges toward Obama Boulevard, so the park's northern gateway must screen views, create presence, and make a welcoming arrival from the station.
- 3 Soil + Environmental History:**
Utility, drainage, soil, and easement conditions must be verified before locating major trees, stormwater systems, building footprints, and service areas.
- 4 Neighborhood Edge:**
The site must transition carefully from Crenshaw Boulevard to the single-family residential fabric to the east, including planting buffers, lighting control, privacy, and height setbacks.
- 5 Pedestrian Safety:**
Wide crossings and fast-moving traffic at Crenshaw and Obama create barriers between the site, the station, and the neighborhood that must be addressed through safer, clearer, shaded connections.
- 6 Three Programs, One Parcel:**
Market, play, open lawn, shaded seating, stormwater, circulation, and future edge development must all fit on one parcel. The design must keep the public landscape primary while organizing each use clearly.

Case Study - Destination Crenshaw



Source: <https://perkinswill.com/project/destination-crenshaw/>

Outcomes

The project delivers a massive investment in the public realm, transforming leftover right-of-way parcels into a series of distinct community pocket parks, such as Sankofa Park. These nodal spaces are anchored by bold, sculptural shade structures and extensive new plantings that prioritize drought tolerance and environmental comfort.

Spatially, the design integrates over 100 public art commissions directly into the streetscape. It utilizes custom paving, heavy seating elements, and retaining walls to curate a continuous pedestrian experience.

Relevance

Cultural Continuity: Embed neighborhood identity in planning, local authorship, everyday use, and long-term stewardship—not as surface imagery added afterward. Rhythms of Place translates this lesson at the parcel scale through neighborhood-serving food, local enterprise, shade, play, and gathering.

Corridor Comfort: Combine planting, shade structures, seating, art, and pedestrian improvements to make Crenshaw Boulevard safer, more comfortable, and visibly rooted in the community it serves.

Case Study 1

Location
Los Angeles, California

Designers
Studio MLA, Perkins&Will

Client
Los Angeles County

Size
1.3 Linear Miles

Completed
Opened February 2024 with Ongoing Implementation

Typology
Cultural Infrastructure / Linear Park

Approach

Cultural Identity: Embeds Black LA history directly into the streetscape.

Linear Park: Converts 1.3 miles of the at-grade K Line corridor into an open-air museum instead of a divider.

Tree Canopy: Expands shade and planting along Crenshaw Boulevard.

Pedestrian Comfort: Adds safer crossings and shaded gathering spaces beside the transit line.



Case Study - Gloria Molina Grand Park



Source: <https://inhabitat.com/new-grand-park-green-oasis-set-to-open-this-weekend-in-downtown-los-angeles/los-angeles-grand-park-5/>

Outcomes

The project delivered a 12-acre, continuous civic landscape that successfully spans across Spring Street, Broadway, and Hill Street. The design organizes the massive scale of the site into four distinct programmatic zones: the restored Arthur J. Will Memorial Fountain, a performance lawn, a community terrace, and an event lawn.

The Metro station portal was embraced as a primary anchor of the community terrace. The design utilizes wide staircases and ramps to draw transit riders directly out of the station and into the heart of the park's shaded seating areas.

Project Relevance

Civic Flexibility: Design one landscape to support daily recreation, informal gathering, food and cultural events, and larger public celebrations. Rhythms of Place applies this principle at a smaller neighborhood scale through a market plaza, flexible lawn, shaded outdoor rooms, and spaces that can shift between daily use and special events.

Connected Outdoor Rooms: Organize market activity, play, quiet shade, and event space as distinct but connected places. Grand Park shows how a legible sequence of spaces can make a civic landscape feel active, coherent, and welcoming.

Case Study 2

Location

Downtown, Los Angeles, California

Designers

RIOS

Client

Los Angeles County

Size

12 acres

Completed

In 2012. Renamed Gloria Molina Grand Park in 2023.

Typology

Civic Park / Flexible Event Landscape

Approach

Civic Connector: Links City Hall to the Music Center across four blocks previously severed by high-traffic roadways.

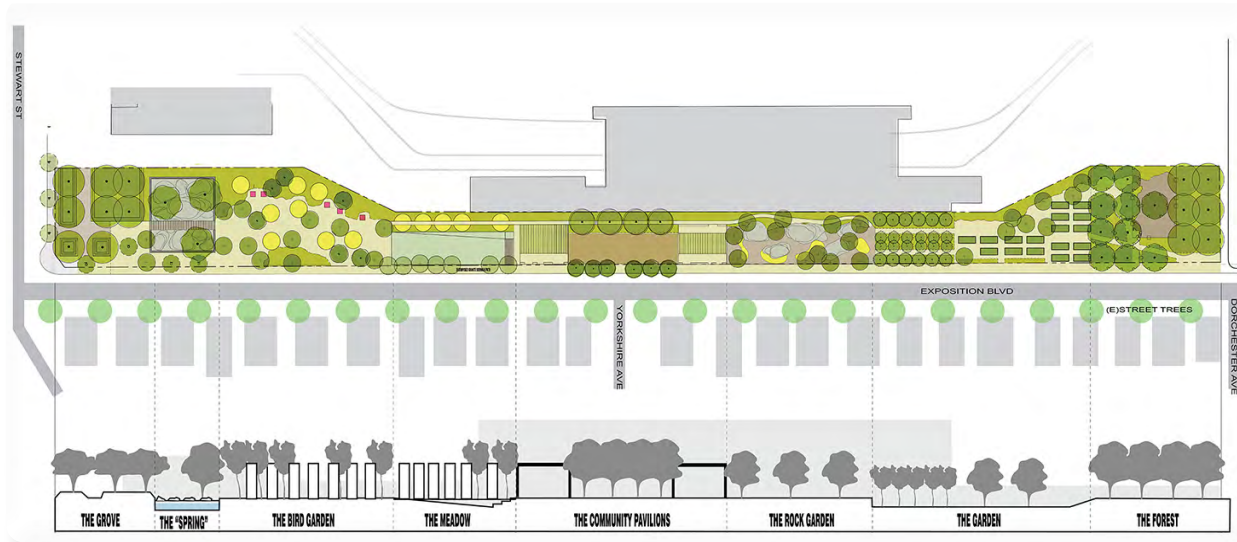
Transit Integration: Draws the Civic Center/Grand Park Metro portal directly into the park's pedestrian flow.

Flexible Realm: Provides an adaptable public landscape capable of hosting large civic events.

Grade Change: Works across a significant topographical drop with staircases, ramps, and terraces.



Case Study - Ishihara Park



Sources: <https://landezine.com/ishihara-park-by-studio-mia/>
<https://studio-mia.com/design/ishihara-park/>



Location

Santa Monica, California

Designers

Studio-MIA

Client

City of Santa Monica

Size

2.35 acres

Completed

2017

Typology

Neighborhood Park / Linear Garden Rooms

Approach

Site Conversion: Turns a former parking lot into a welcoming neighborhood landscape beside transit infrastructure.

Garden Rooms: Organizes the narrow, linear site into distinct rooms for play, eating, gathering, exercise, and strolling.

Sensory Variety: Uses planting, landform, and sculptural elements to make a small site feel varied and discoverable.

Outcomes

The project converted 2.35 acres of paved parking into a structured but flexible public landscape with spaces for walking, exercise, play, picnicking, and community gathering. The City's current park information also identifies a playground, walking path, exercise equipment, barbecues, and a communal learning garden.

The learning garden remains an especially useful part of the precedent. It opened in 2017 as Santa Monica's fourth community garden and operates communally rather than through individual plots, with volunteer workdays, workshops, and public open-house activities.

Project Relevance

Compact Civic Programming: Ishihara Park shows that a relatively small parcel can support many everyday uses when its program is organized as a sequence of purposeful outdoor rooms rather than one large open field. Rhythms of Place can use this approach to connect its market edge, playground, lawn, shaded seating, and fitness loop.

Everyday Neighborhood Use: Combine play, walking, gardens, exercise, food-related gathering, and shade to make a transit-adjacent site useful on ordinary days. Rhythms of Place can create that same daily rhythm south of Obama Boulevard without allowing transit to define the project.



Case Study 3

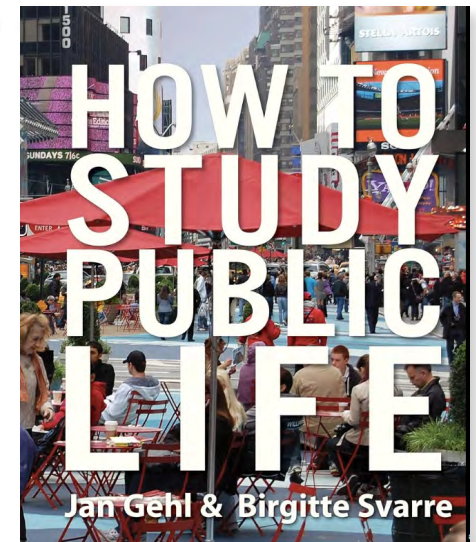
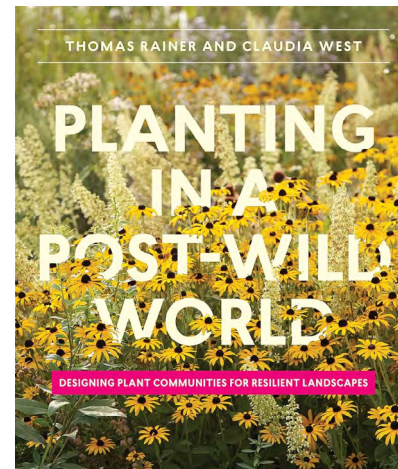
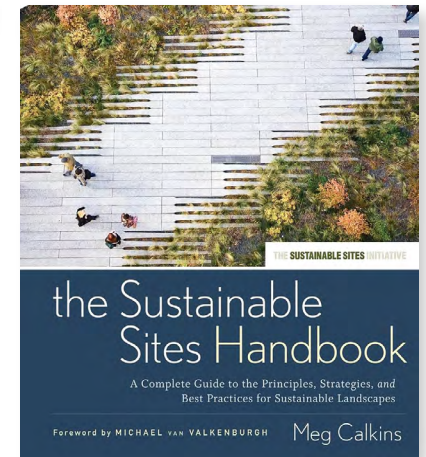
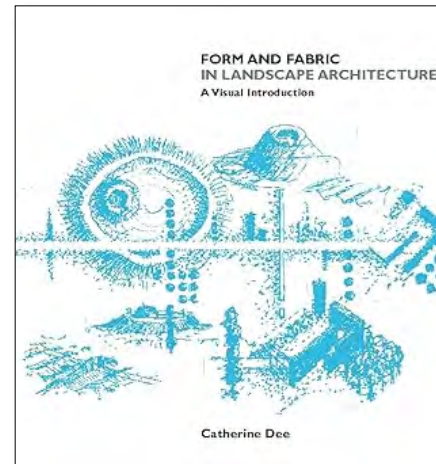
Design Methodology

Research Framework, Theories, Standards, and Precedents

The design methodology combines three bodies of source material: theoretical texts on place and urban form, technical and policy documents for transit-oriented development and public-realm performance, and site-specific planning and environmental documents for Expo/Crenshaw. Together, these sources define how the project will be framed, analyzed, and resolved. The theoretical framework draws from Christopher Alexander's *A Pattern Language* for structuring recurring pedestrian patterns and civic form; Catherine Dee's *Form and Fabric in Landscape Architecture* for paths, thresholds, and spatial organization; Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City* for analyzing paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks; Jan Gehl's *Cities for People* for human-scale observation; Clare Cooper Marcus and Carolyn Francis's *People Places* for public open-space design; Project for Public Spaces for place-based programming; and Mark Francis's case-study method for precedent analysis.

The technical framework includes Metro's First/Last Mile Strategic Plan, NACTO's Urban Street Design Guide and Transit Street Design Guide, FHWA's Proven Safety Countermeasures, Metro's TOC and Joint Development policies, the City of Los Angeles Urban Forest Equity Streets Guidebook, the EPA's urban heat-island guidance, i-Tree ecosystem-service tools, James Urban's *Up By Roots*, and the Los Angeles County LID Standards Manual. Site-specific planning documents include the Crenshaw Crossing SCEA, the Crenshaw Corridor Specific Plan, the West Adams–Baldwin Hills–Leimert Community Plan, and future requests for Phase I/II environmental site assessments, soil management plans, and geotechnical investigations.

The methodology unfolds in four phases. Phase 1 uses Alexander, Dee, Lynch, and Gehl to frame the site as a single civic landscape. Phase 2 uses Gehl's observation methods, PPS tools, and NACTO/FHWA guidance to structure the site analysis and pedestrian evaluation. Phase 3 studies Destination Crenshaw, Gloria Molina Grand Park, and Ishihara Park for lessons in cultural identity, civic flexibility, transit integration, compact programming, and everyday neighborhood use. Phase 4 resolves the proposal through the constraints established by policy documents, environmental records, planting standards, grading, and water-management strategies.



Design Principles

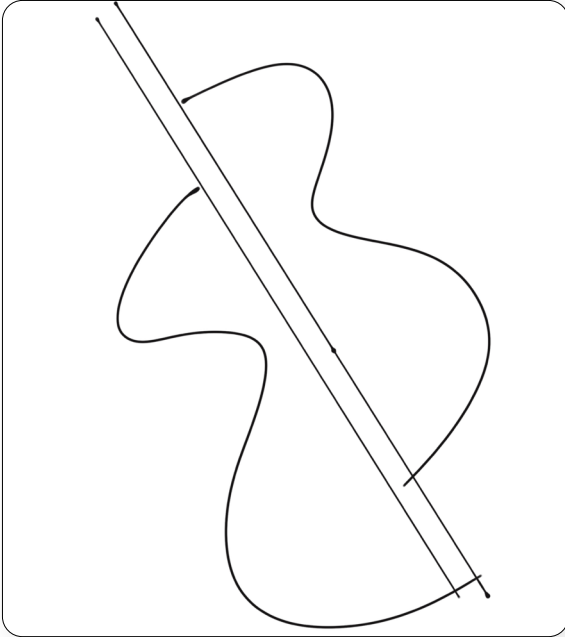
Book covers scanned from personal library

Concept Development

Design Concept

Jazz

Structure + Improvisation



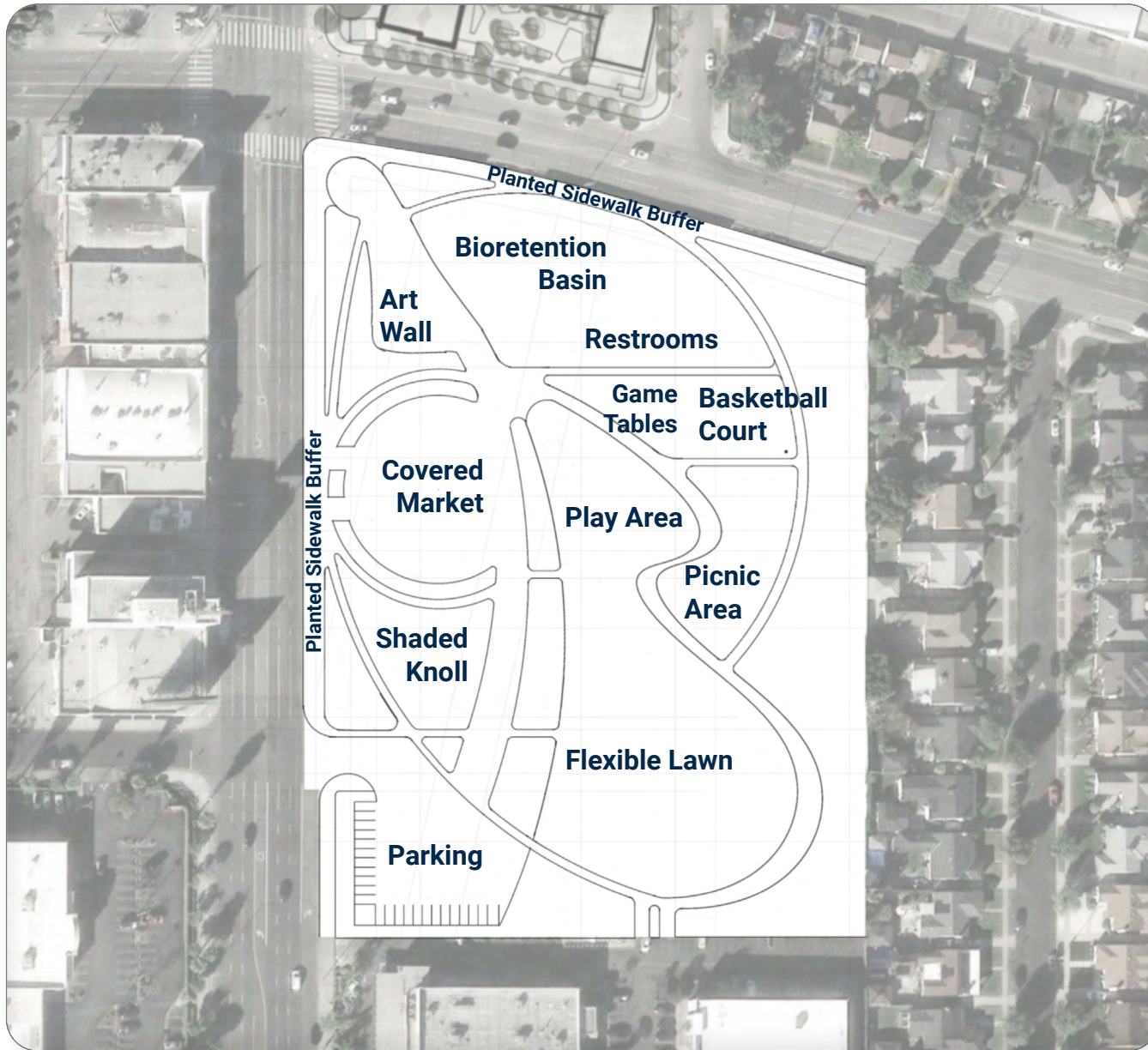
- Draws from the jazz legacy of the Crenshaw–Leimert Park corridor
- Uses the linear market spine as a steady rhythm
- Allows landscape spaces to expand, contract, and change around it
- Creates moments of gathering, play, movement, and pause
- Balances clear organization with flexibility and surprise

Inspiration Images



Images derived from Pinterest.

Concept Zones



Map generated with Google Earth + Morpholio Trace

0' 25' 50' 100'



Zones

- **Primary Spine (Active & Civic)**
Covered Market & Central Plaza: ~18,000 sq ft
Public Art & Expressive Entry Features: ~3,500 sq ft
- **Secondary Zones (Recreation & Play)**
Play Area: ~11,500 sq ft
Basketball Courts & Game Tables: ~10,000 sq ft
Shaded Picnic Area: ~8,000 sq ft
- **Tertiary Zones (Passive, Flexible & Ecological)**
Flexible Multiuse Lawn: ~40,000 sq ft
Shaded Knoll: ~12,000 sq ft
Bioretention Basin: ~4,500 sq ft
- **Utility & Access**
Small Parking Grove: ~15,000 sq ft

Elements

- Covered Linear Market
- Flexible Multiuse Lawn
- Informal Sports + Recreation Field
- Playground / Play Landscape
- Fitness + Walking Loop
- Shaded Outdoor Rooms
- Performance + Cultural Showcase
- Public Art Focal Points
- Stormwater Gardens + Bioswales
- Planted Street Buffer
- Residential Edge Buffer
- Expressive Entry Features
- Market Loading + Service Area
- Small Parking Grove

Preliminary Design Drawing

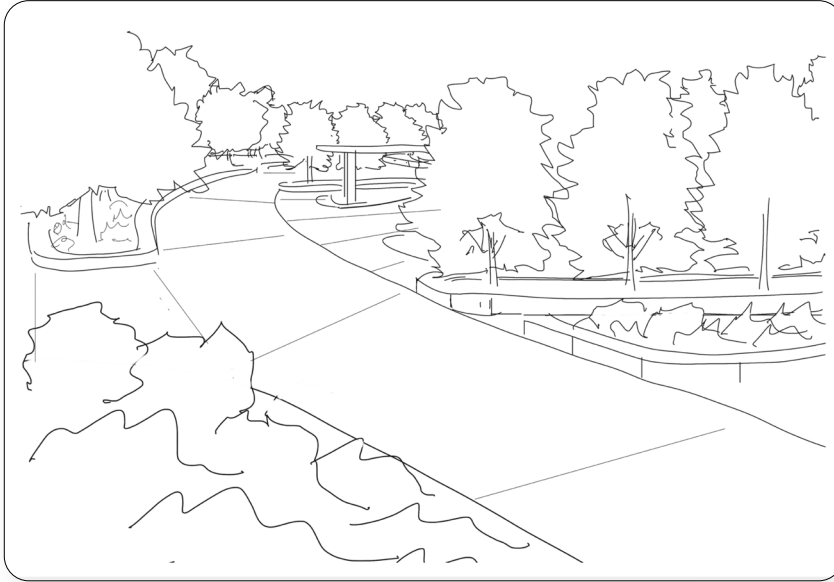


Image created with Morpholio Trace. Background Google Maps.

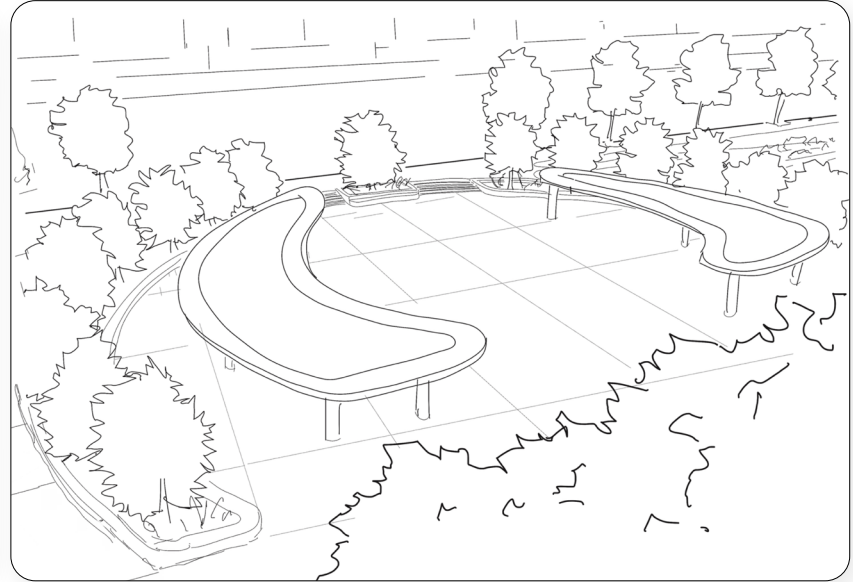
Preliminary Design Drawing

- Covered Market
- Flexible Multiuse Lawn
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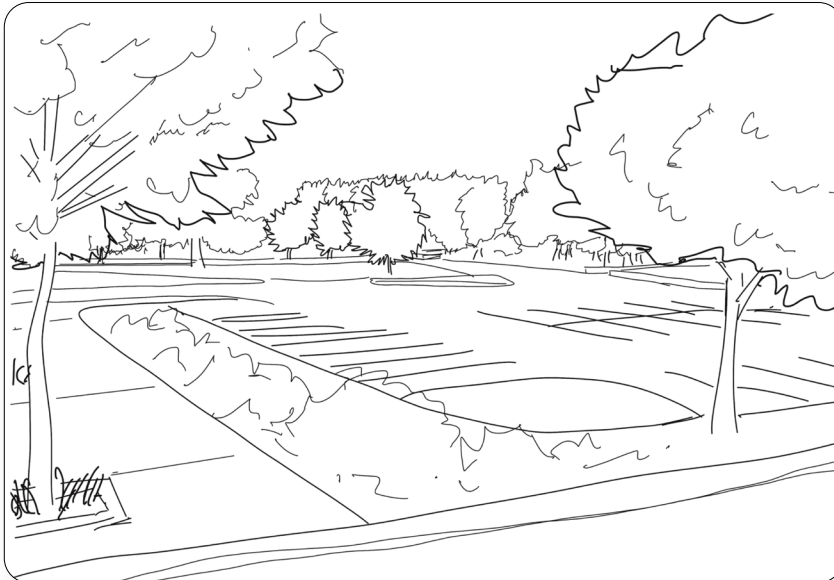
Perspective Studies



Entry from Obama / Crenshaw



Central Market

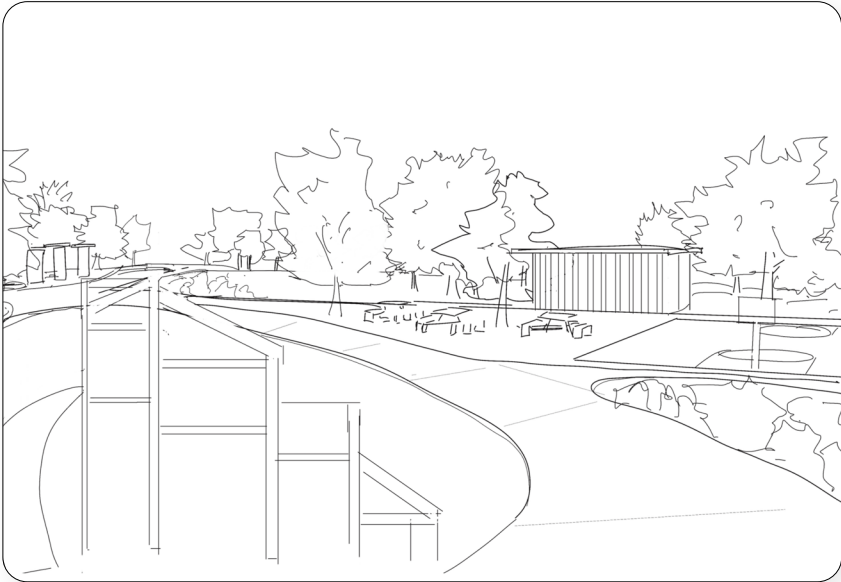


View from Parking Lot

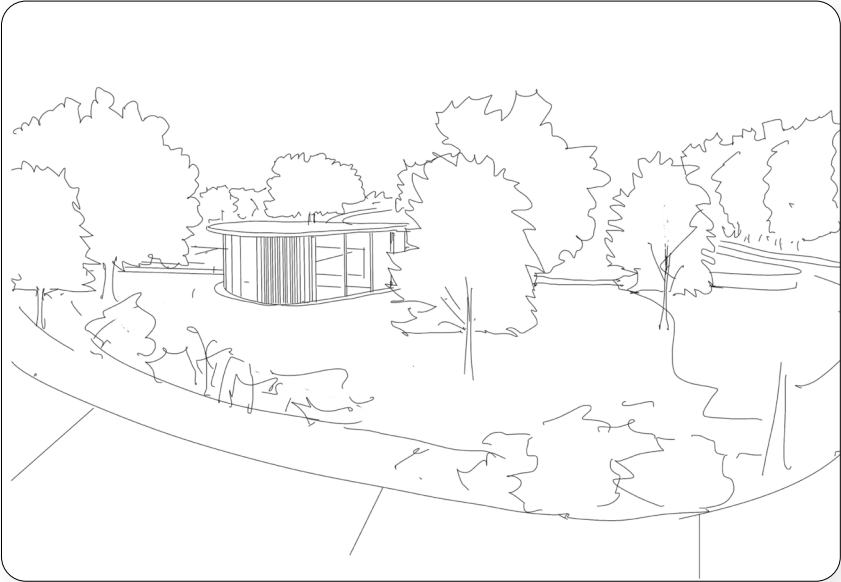


Entry from Parking

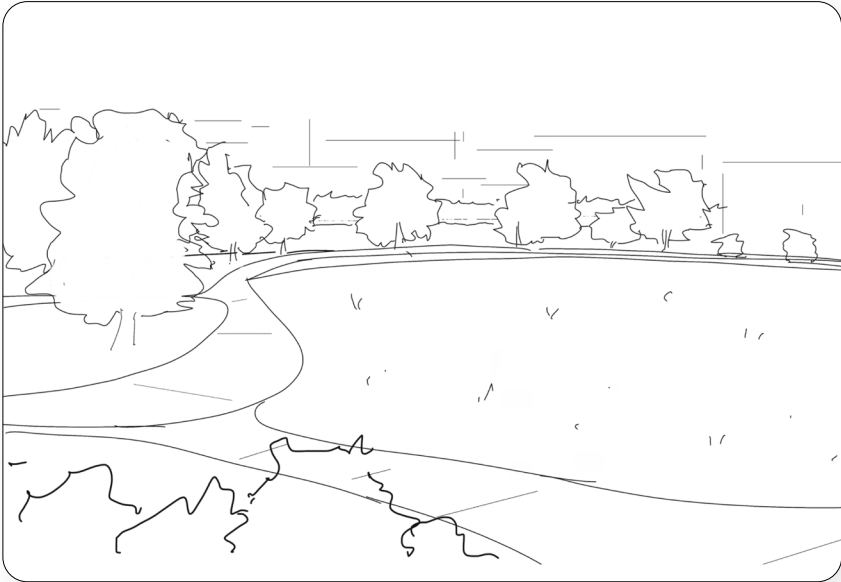
Perspective Studies



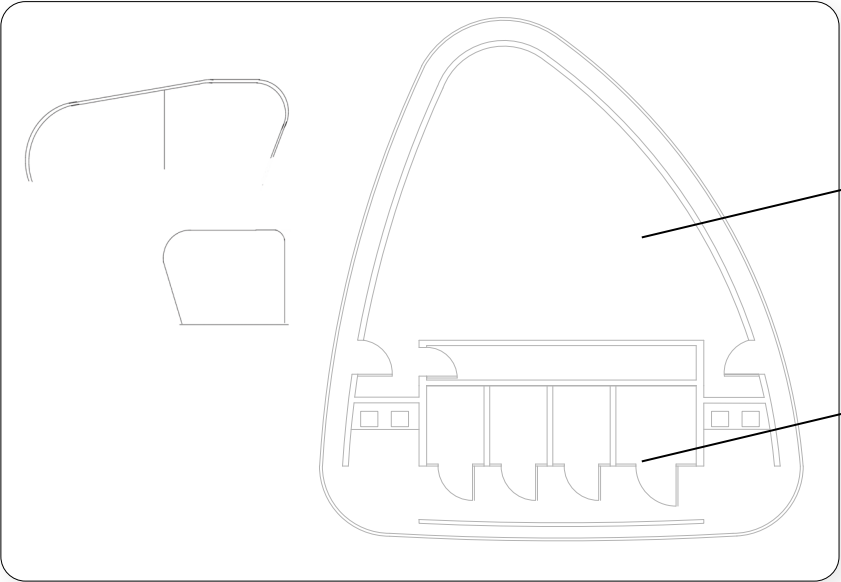
Playground / Restrooms



Community Classroom



Stadium Seating Open Field



Restrooms / Classroom

Adjoining Classroom

Restrooms

Entrance Perspective



Image drawn with Morpholio Trace and Colored with Procreate.

The Threshold: A wide, continuous paved pathway transitions pedestrians smoothly from the street edge into the active park interior.

Terraced Edges: Curved retaining walls flank the primary walkway, doubling as informal, amphitheater-style seating that gently guides users toward the center.

The Focal Point: The primary sightline leads directly to a prominent, flat-roofed pavilion structure, establishing a clear destination for gathering or events.

Enclosing Canopy: A dense, layered grove of shade trees wraps the plaza, creating a distinct "outdoor room" that buffers the interior from the urban streetscape.

Streetscape Integration: A foreground street tree anchored in a grate defines the sidewalk edge, while an open lawn area softens the left boundary of the entryway.

Enlargement

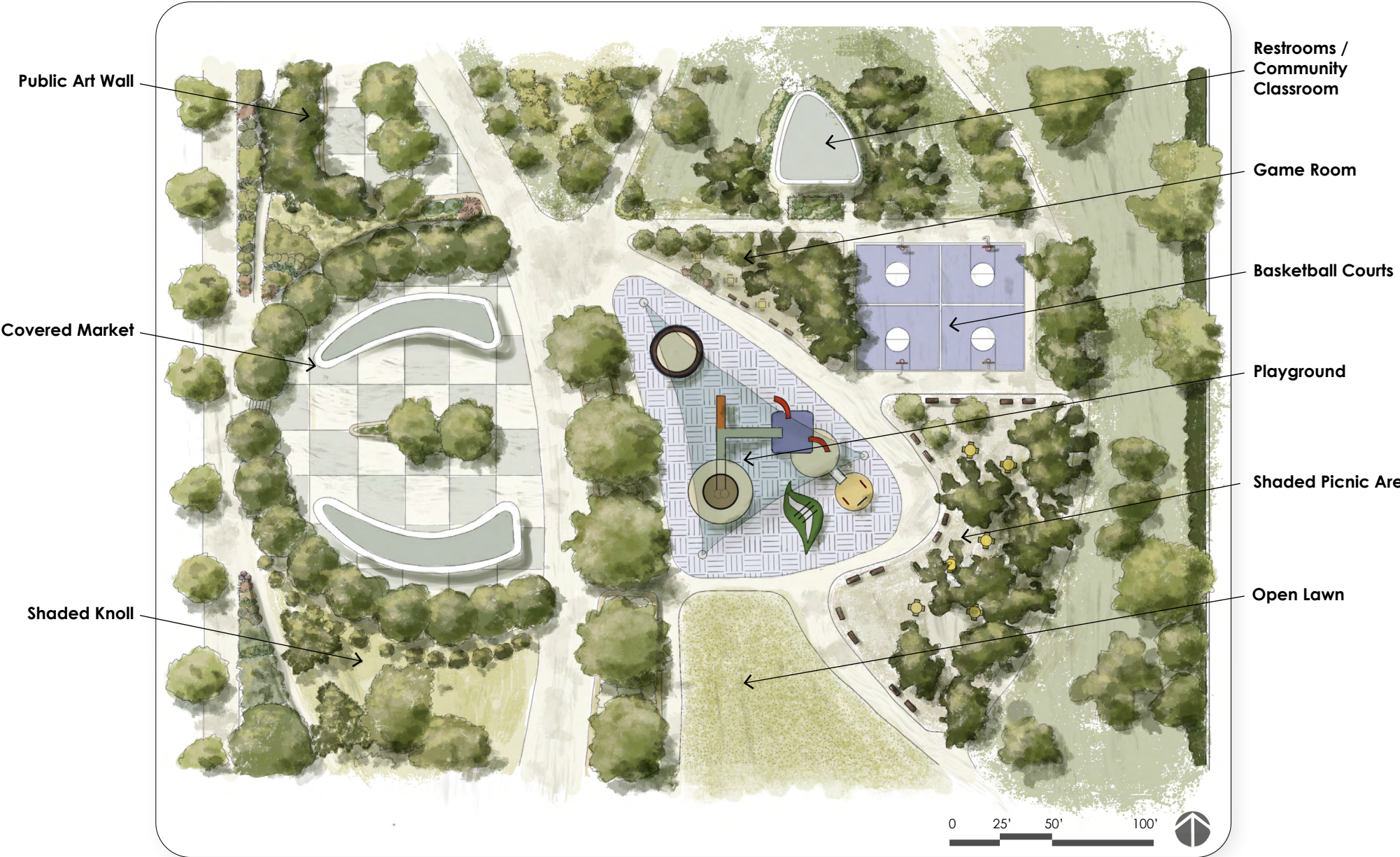
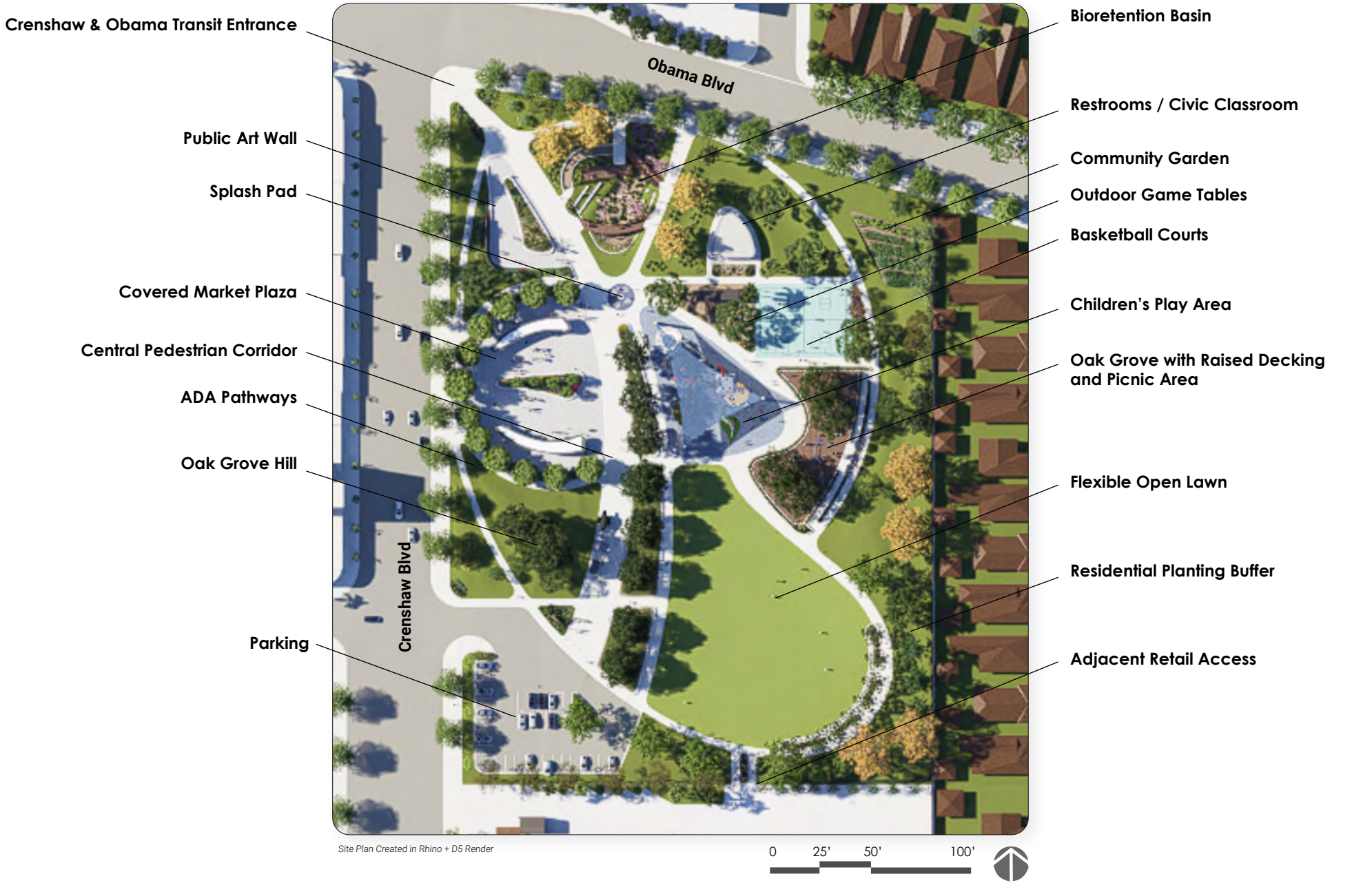


Image drawn with Morpholio Trace and Colored with Procreate.

Site Design

Site Plan



Crenshaw & Obama Transit Entrance



Gateway Elements

- Widened pedestrian threshold for transit flow
- Curved, terraced planter walls for informal seating
- Public art wall acting as a visual anchor
- Dense street-edge tree canopy

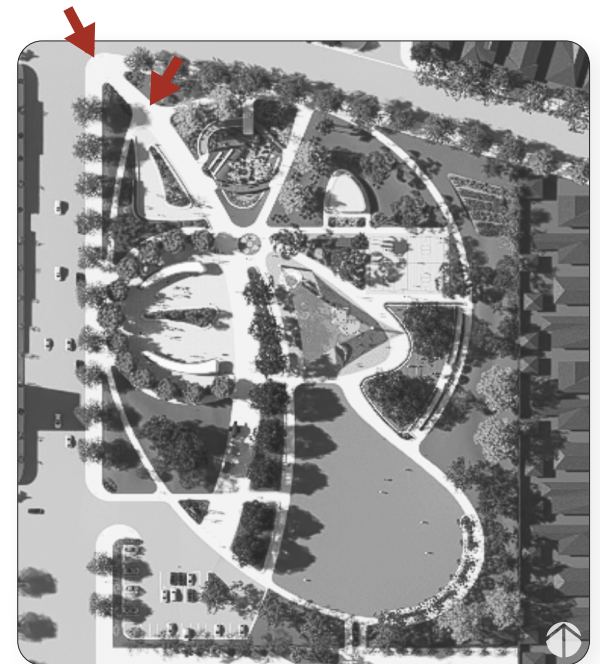
Objective

Buffer urban traffic noise and safely guide transit riders into the park's interior.



Arrival & Street Edge

Images Created in Rhino + D5 Render



Central Market



Market Infrastructure

- Central Market paving area for vendors and gathering
- Linear market spine establishing site rhythm
- Integrated seating edges for daily use

Objective

Establish the structural “rhythm” of the site and provide a central hub for community gathering.



Civic Core

Images Created in Rhino + D5 Render

Crenshaw Entrance



Corridor Elements

- Continuous, wide paved pathway to accommodate heavy foot traffic
- Dense planted buffer separating the park from Crenshaw Boulevard
- Curved, integrated seating walls lining the route

Objective

Create a multifunctional pedestrian corridor that buffers the busy street edge while providing access for food trucks during community events



Stepped Entrance + ADA Circulation

Images Created in Rhino + D5 Render



Parking Entrance



Vehicular & Pedestrian Entrance

- Shaded parking lot
- Clear wayfinding and park entry signage
- Planted buffers separating vehicles from pedestrians

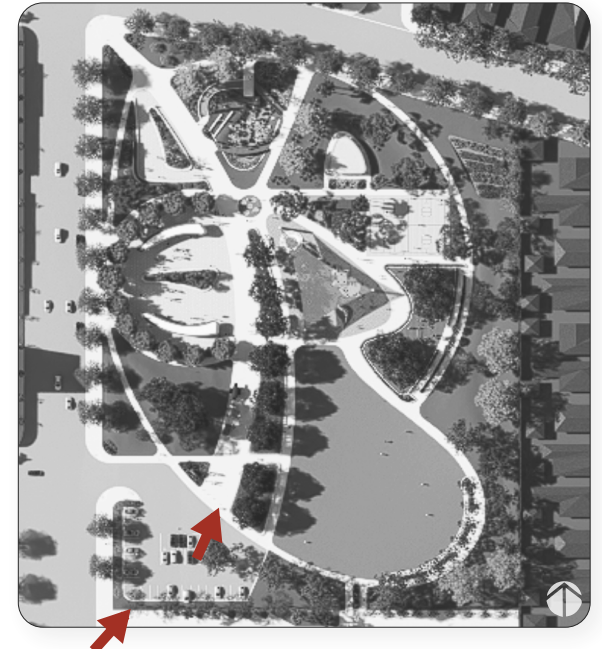
Objective

Accommodate local visitors while maintaining a safe, pedestrian-first landscape.



Images Created in Rhino + D5 Render

Access from Retail



Open Lawn



Open Lawn

- Large open lawn for flexible programming
- Curved exercise path
- Transitional tree canopy buffering the perimeter

Objective

Provide flexible open space while creating a planted transition to the residential neighborhood. There is a perimeter walking path that traverses the site.



Open Lawn + Shaded Perimeter Walk

Images Created in Rhino + D5 Render



Active Play + Recreation



Active Play + Recreation

- Shaded inclusive playground
- Splash pad
- Basketball courts
- Seating + shaded gathering

Objective

Directly answer the community's request for safe, basic park amenities and encourage multi-generational use.



Playground, Basketball Courts, Game Tables

Images Created in Rhino + D5 Render



Native Oak Boardwalk



Elements

- Elevated decking protects roots of newly planted oaks.
- Permeable surfaces and low-impact footings support water infiltration.
- Accessible seating provides gathering spaces as the oak canopy matures.

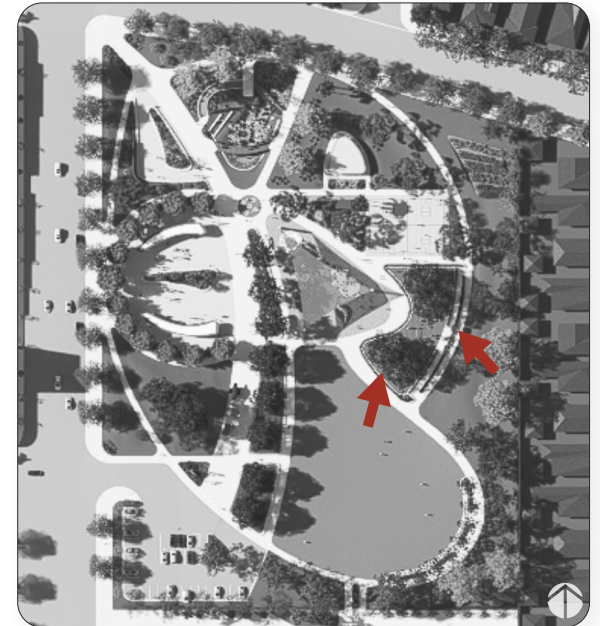
Objective

Create an accessible gathering space within a proposed native oak grove, using elevated decking and permeable surfaces to support healthy root development while providing shaded areas for community use.



Images Created in Rhino + DS Render

Elevated Oak Grove



Civic Room + Community Garden



Elements

- Community classroom + restrooms
- Neighborhood Community Garden

Objective

- The civic classroom provides a dedicated space for community education, supporting hands-on instruction in local horticulture and site-wide stormwater management (basin detailed on the following page).



Obama Street Edge

Images Created in Rhino + D5 Render



Bioretention Basin



Elements

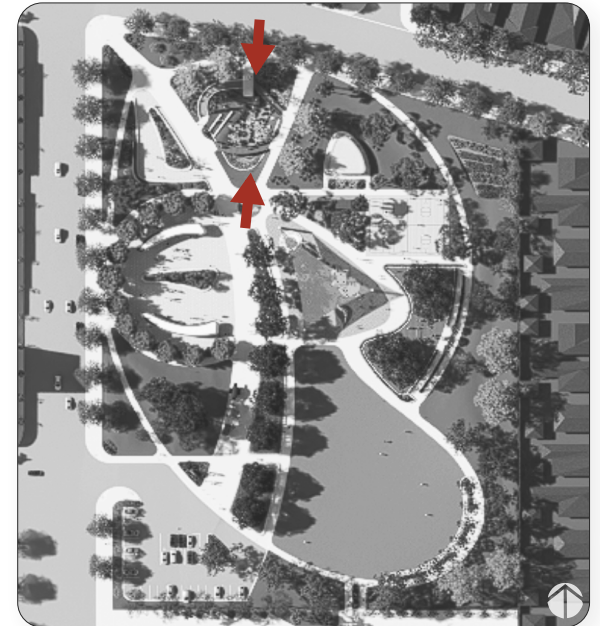
- Flush-deck splash pad providing interactive, universally accessible aquatic play.
- Elevated boardwalks and pedestrian pathways integrating directly with the ecological zones.
- Native planting palettes supporting watershed-wise infrastructure.

Objective

To seamlessly merge high-performance green infrastructure with active community recreation, utilizing the central bioretention basin to capture and filter urban runoff while offering dynamic, engaging public amenities like the interactive splash pad and immersive ecological pathways.



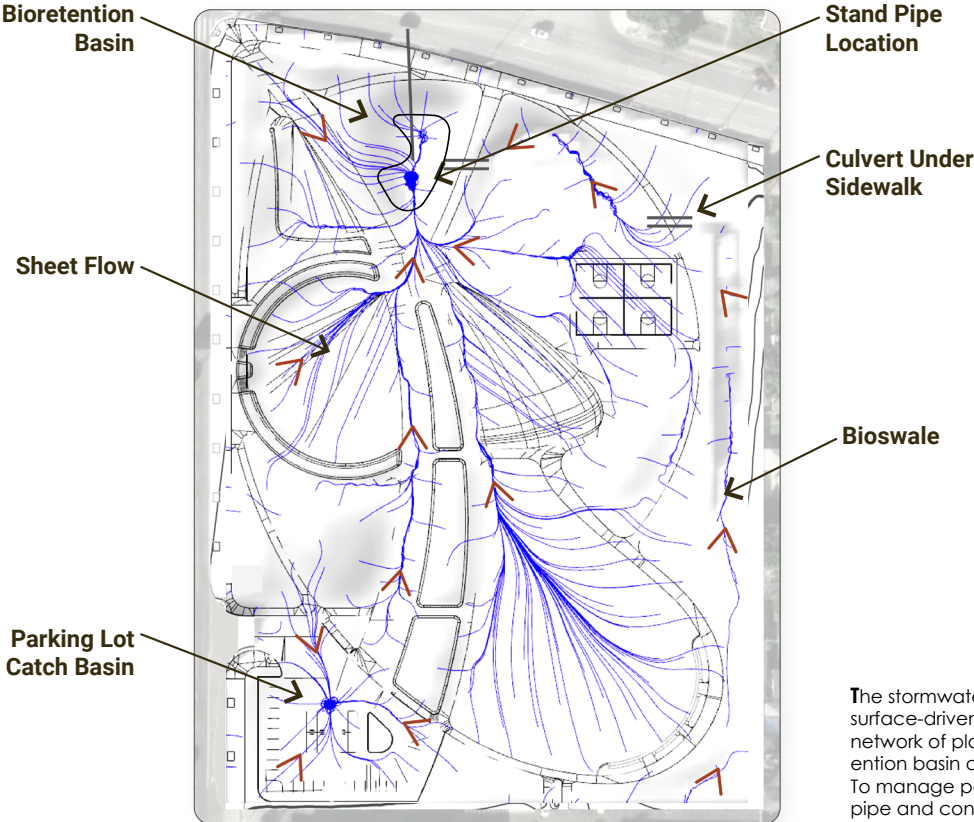
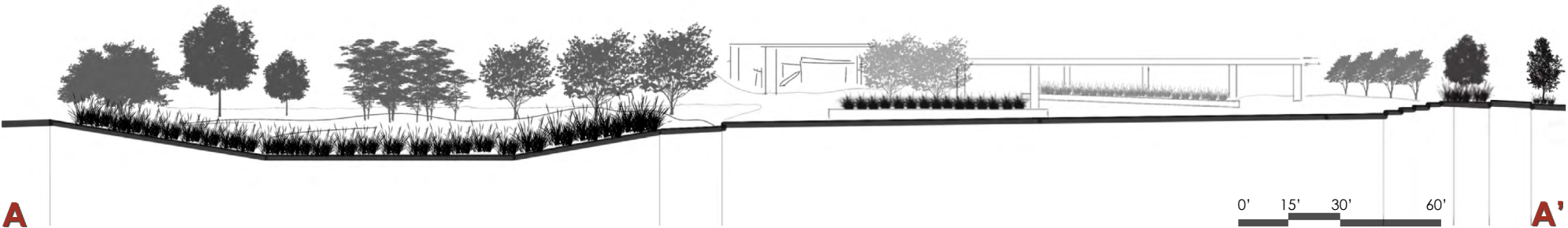
Images Created in Rhino + D5 Render



Obama Street Edge

Design Analysis

Stormwater Capture

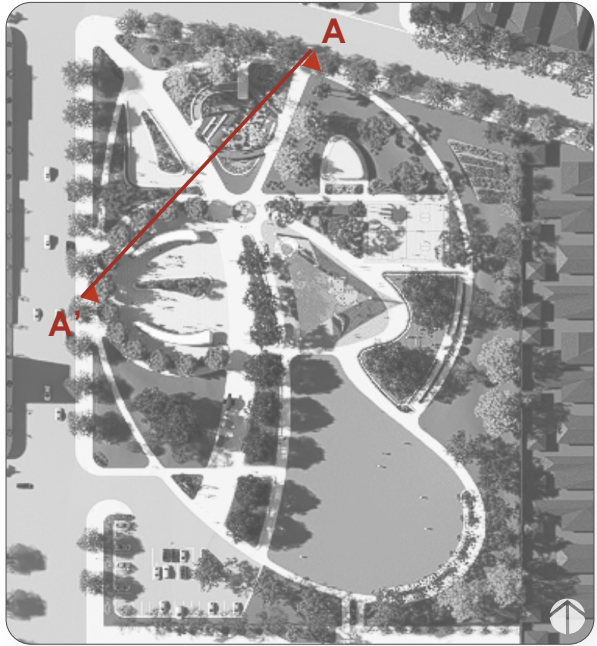


Rhino + Grasshopper Flow Diagram

Diagrams Drawn in Rhino , Grasshopper + Morpholio Trace

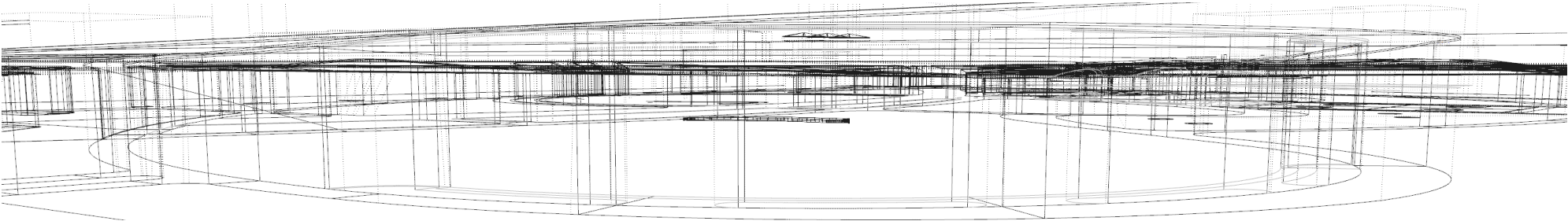
Grading & Water Capture Strategy

- Bioretention basin** slows and filters water
- Bioswales** intercept sheet flow.
- Overflow** is safely conveyed through the standpipe and culvert.
- Catch basins** collect paved-area runoff.

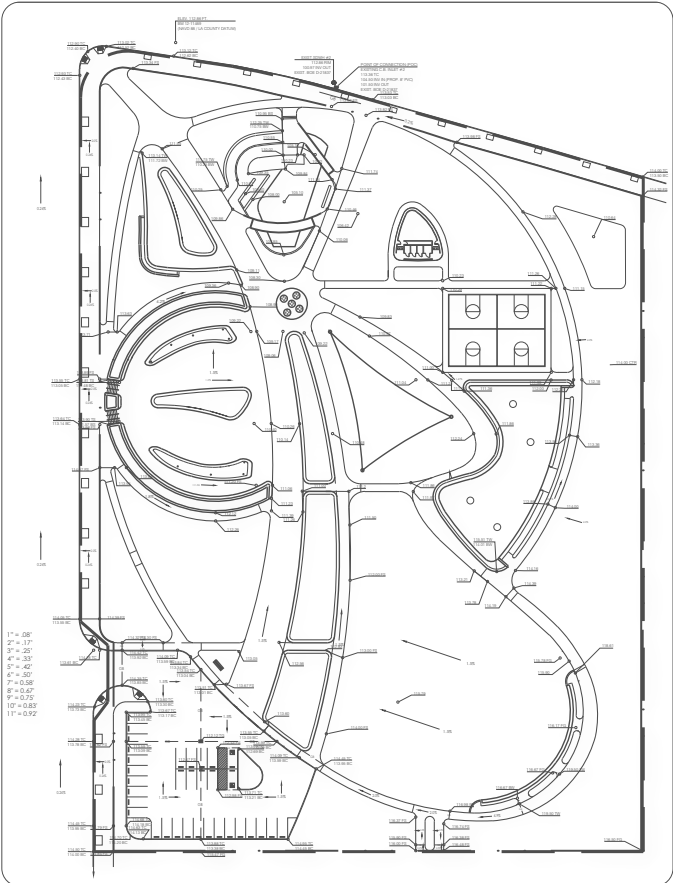


The stormwater management strategy transforms the site into a highly functional hydrological sponge by relying on passive, surface-driven grading. Across the primary pedestrian zones and open lawn, surface sheet flow is carefully guided into a network of planted bioswales designed to intercept the runoff. These swales channel the water directly into the main bioretention basin at the northern edge, where it is effectively slowed and filtered by native plant roots before infiltrating the soil. To manage peak capacity during major storm events, any overflow in the basin is safely captured by an engineered standpipe and conveyed outward through a culvert located beneath the adjacent sidewalk. Meanwhile, to ensure vehicular pollutants do not contaminate the park's central ecological features, the southern parking grove is graded to drain entirely independently, utilizing its own dedicated catch basins to strictly contain and collect paved-area runoff.

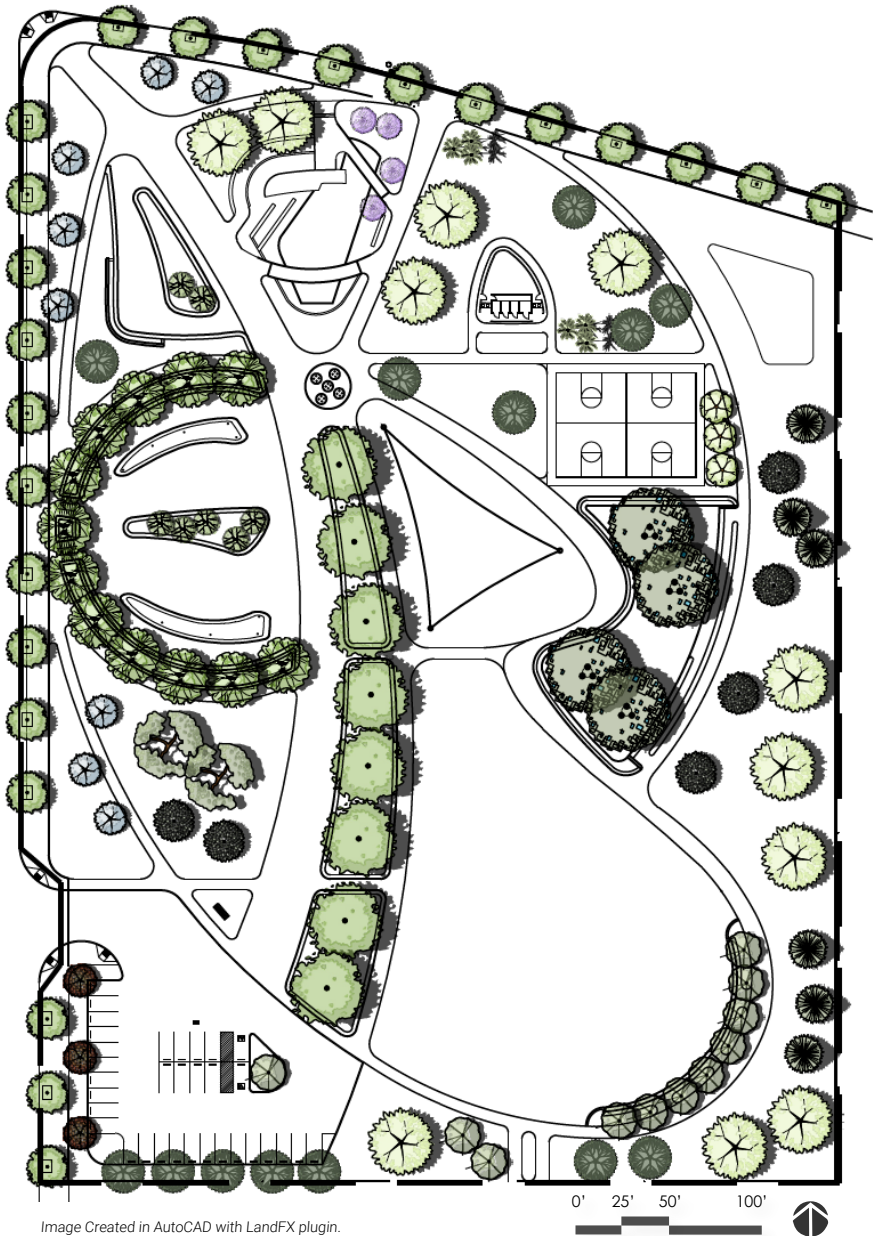
Grading + Accessibility



Rhino Model



Planting Plan



PLANT_SCHEDULE

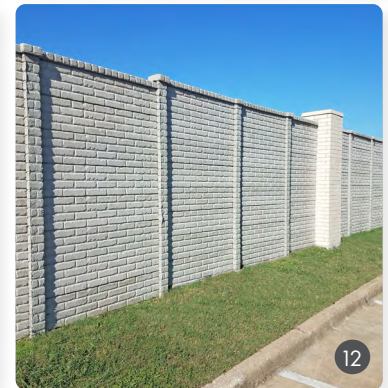
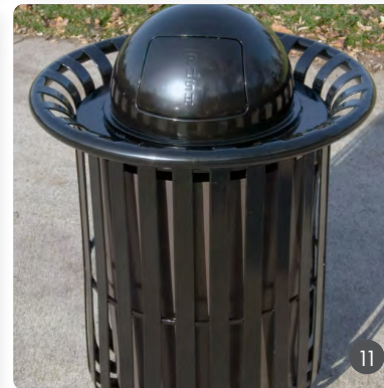
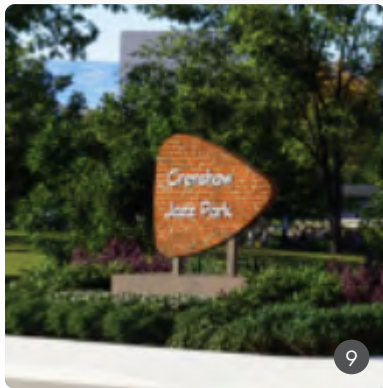
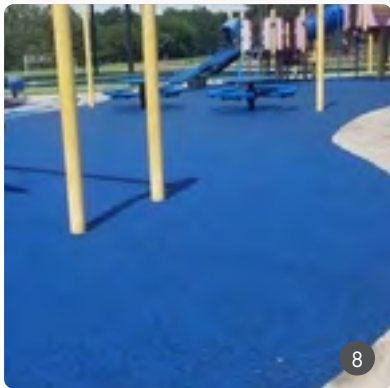
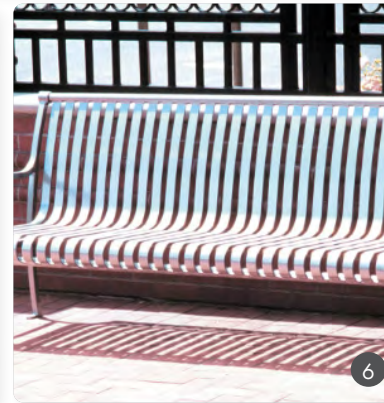
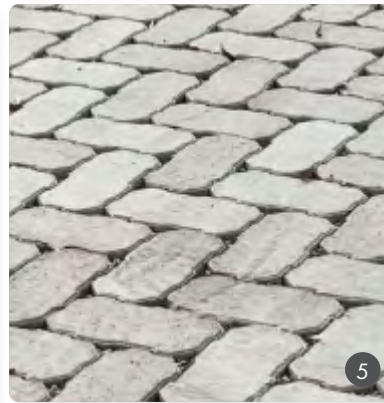
SYMBOL	BOTANICAL / COMMON NAME	Q
TREES		
	Afrocarpus gracilior / African Fern Pine	8
	Afrocarpus gracilior / African Fern Pine	24
	Arbutus x 'Marina' / Marina Strawberry Tree Multi-Trunk	7
	Ceanothus x 'Ray Hartman' / Ray Hartman Wild Lilac	8
	Cercis occidentalis / Western Redbud Multi-trunk	4
	Parkinsonia x 'Desert Museum' / Desert Museum Palo Verde	3
	Pinus brutia eldarica / Afghan Pine	6
	Pistacia chinensis / Chinese Pistache	12
	Platanus racemosa 'Roberts' / Roberts California Sycamore	11
	Prunus ilicifolia lyonii / Catalina Cherry	13
	Quercus agrifolia / Coast Live Oak	4
	Quercus engelmannii / Engelmann Oak	2
	Quercus tomentella / Island Oak	11
	Umbellularia californica / Bay Laurel	6
	Washingtonia filifera / California Fan Palm	6
	x Chitalpa tashkentensis / Chitalpa	3

Planting Strategies

- Urban Streetscape Resilience:**
Afrocarpus gracilior (African Fern Pine) is utilized along high-traffic perimeter zones to provide immediate cooling shade, traffic-emission resilience, and low-maintenance canopy structure.
- Ecological Habitat & Canopy:**
Native keystone species, particularly Quercus agrifolia (Coast Live Oak) and Salvia varieties, anchor the interior civic spaces to actively promote local biodiversity and pollinator habitat.
- Bioretention & Stormwater Capture:**
Strict native plant palettes are concentrated within the site's riparian zones and drainage basins to maximize hydrological performance and support municipal sustainability goals.
- Visual Massing & Seasonal Form:**
Climate-adapted natives like Cercis occidentalis (Western Redbud) and Prunus ilicifolia lyonii (Catalina Cherry) are layered to maintain dense spatial enclosure while replacing traditional, high-water ornamental assets.

Hardscape Materials

1. PlayLSI Playground Equipment
2. Tensioned Shade Sail
3. Concrete Pedestrian Paving
4. Stabilized Decomposed Granite
5. Permeable Interlocking Pavers
6. TimberForm Renaissance Bench
7. TimberForm Accessible Picnic Table
8. Poured-in-Place Rubber Surfacing
9. Custom Park Entry Sign
10. TimberForm Drinking Water Fountain
11. Renaissance Litter Container
12. 8" x 8" x 16" CMU Property Line Wall



Images sourced from Pinterest.com

Sustainable Materials

Conclusion

Community Response

Rhythms of Place responds to the needs identified through the site's history and community research by creating a public landscape centered on everyday use, local opportunity, comfort, and community life.



Community Garden



Community Learning Center

Images Created in Rhino + D5 Render

Community Response

The park translates community priorities into clear landscape responses.

Public Open Space

Lawn, play, recreation, shade, and flexible gathering space.

Food + Local Enterprise

Covered market and community learning garden support food, vendors, and education.

Safety + Connection

Clear pedestrian routes, shaded entrances, and planted buffers improve access and comfort.

Gathering + Education

Market plaza, civic classroom, picnic areas, and recreation support daily and organized use.

Cultural Continuity

Public art, local enterprise, and the jazz-inspired design connect the park to the Crenshaw–Leimert Park corridor.

Cultivating Resilience

Rhythms of Place establishes a resilient urban ecology, integrating working green infrastructure to manage stormwater, expand native habitats, and mitigate climate impacts within the Crenshaw corridor.



Images Created in Rhino + D5 Render

Ecological Performance

Stormwater Infiltration

The central bioretention basin captures, filters, and infiltrates surface runoff, reducing the burden on municipal systems and returning water to the water table.

Heritage Asset Preservation

Elevated boardwalks and permeable surfaces protect oak root zones, supporting healthy tree growth while providing accessible, shaded gathering spaces.

Urban Heat Mitigation

A robust framework of native shade trees expands the urban canopy, significantly lowering surface temperatures and improving microclimate comfort for everyday transit users.

Habitat + Conservation

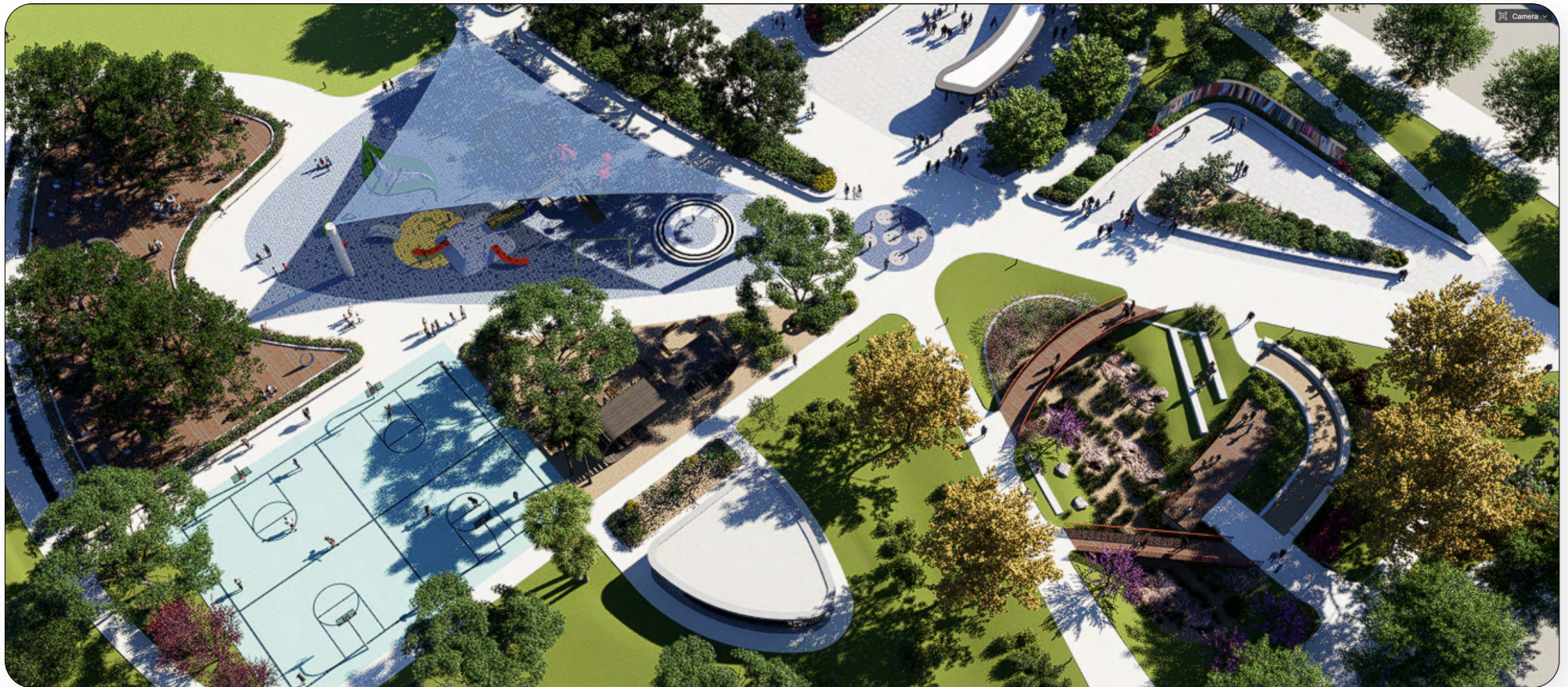
A targeted palette of drought-tolerant and California native species establishes new pollinator corridors while dramatically reducing the landscape's long-term irrigation demands.

Reclaiming Civic Ground

Rhythms of Place transforms a long-vacant parcel into a civic landscape designed around the everyday needs of the surrounding community.

The project provides recreation, shade, gathering space, local food and economic opportunities, stronger pedestrian connections, and working green infrastructure.

Together, these elements create a flexible public landscape that responds to the site's history, supports the neighborhood today, and carries forward the cultural identity of the Crenshaw corridor.



Images Created in Rhino + D5 Render

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Ishihara Park, Santa Monica, CA. Sources: 1) <https://landezine.com/ishihara-park-by-studio-mla/>; 2) <https://studio-mla.com/design/ishihara-park/>

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